

STUDY GUIDE

THE

PURPOSE

DRIVEN

Life

Group Leader Edition

What On Earth Am I Here For?



A Journey With a Purpose

Introduction

I will not offer to the Lord my God sacrifices that have cost me nothing.
2 Samuel 24:24 (TEV)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So as to be clear regarding authorship, the following acknowledgement needs to be made. This study guide was written specifically for Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Nearly all of the questions, and all of the quotations and prayers, were derived either directly from *The Purpose Driven Life* or *The Purpose Driven Life Journal*. Therefore, I have not attempted to footnote or mark in any way direct excerpts from the book. All of the nonscriptural material is Rick Warren's and is covered by copyright of Rick Warren and Zondervan publishing.

HOW THIS STUDY GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

Since this study guide is meant to be used with *The Purpose Driven Life*, it is organized into the same sections and chapters as the book. At the beginning of each section there will be a title page which contains the memory verse for that section. Following that, there will be a two (sometimes three) page study guide for each chapter. The study guides contain several parts, each denoted by it's own icon. Explanations given below



Questions: These will be directly from the text. Their purpose is to help bring out the key themes in the chapter and may be used during small group study. Format is short answer, fill in the blank, and True/False.



Key Truths: This area is for you to write down the two or three things that really spoke to you out of this chapter. It may be a direct quote, or simply something God revealed to you.



Application: There will usually be two to three application questions. These cannot be answered directly from the text, but are meant to help you apply the text to your everyday life.



Exercise: Depending on the chapter, you are often asked to do something specific. I tried to pull each of these things out and put them in an area of their own so that you would know specifically what action(s) to take. Some of the chapters contain this area, some don't.



Prayer: These prayers come directly out of *The Purpose Driven Life Journal* and help you to pray about what you learned from the chapter. They are a great way to finish up your devotional or study time.

Also included at the back of the Study Guide is a Resources section and Journal pages. Rick strongly encourages keeping a spiritual journal (how else are we to remember what we have learned unless we write it down). If you need more room for the application questions, or you would just like to write down anything else God has spoken to you about, or to write out your prayers to God, this is the purpose of the journal pages.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE AND OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Study Guide is fairly self-explanatory, there are a few tips I would recommend as you go through this 16-week study.

You will be averaging between 2 and 4 chapters per week, so you will get to spend an average of 2 to 3 days on each chapter.

During the first day, read the chapter and answer the questions which come directly from the text. Also read the application questions, but don't answer them yet. Think about them throughout the day. Finish in prayer.

The following day, reread the chapter. Jot down any Key Truths that you want to remember or discuss with the group and then answer the application questions. Finish by praying the prayer.

I find it very useful to have a highlighter and a pen or pencil handy as I read the chapters. When something strikes me, I either highlight it, or make a note to myself in the margin -- or both. You may even want to record the page number on the inside cover of the book so that you can find it easily.

Make a commitment -- to yourself, God, and your small group. Commit to staying current on the readings. Commit to being at the small group sessions every week-- whether you feel like it or not. When you get to Chapter 19, you'll be glad you did.

Get a spiritual partner. This is another of the strong recommendations that Rick makes in the book. There are many good reasons for this. Share your commitments with your partner and ask them to help keep you accountable. Do the same for them. Call them once a week to see how they are coming along and if they will be at small group. If you have trouble finding a spiritual partner, talk to your small group leader and see if they can help. They may have had someone else looking for one also.

Do not get discouraged. In some ways, 16 weeks is not a long time, but in some ways it is. If you find yourself getting behind on the readings, or you miss a group session or two, don't give up. Simply pick up on the current readings and get back into fellowship. You'll be glad you did -- and so will your small group.

DATES AND CHAPTERS

Week 1 - Introduction to the Study

Week 2 - Chapters 1-3

Week 3 - Chapters 4-7

Week 4 - Chapters 8-10

Week 5 - Chapters 11-14

Week 6 - Chapters 15-16

Week 7 - Chapters 17-19

Week 8 - Chapters 20-21

Week 9 - Chapters 22-23

Week 10 - Chapters 24-25

Week 11 - Chapters 26-28

Week 12 - Chapters 29-30

Week 13 - Chapters 31-32

Week 14 - Chapters 33-35

Week 15 - Chapters 36-38

Week 16 - Chapter 39-40 (Wrap-Up)



What On Earth Am I Here For?

*For we are God's workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus to do good works, which God
prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

"Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him."

Colossians 1:16b (Msg)



Questions

If you want to know why you were placed on this earth, you must begin with

Why has the search for the purpose of life puzzled people for so long?

Because we typically begin at the wrong starting point--ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like 'What do I want to be?'

If you were given an invention you had never seen before, what would be the best way to determine it's purpose?

Ask the inventor.

Job 5:2

True/**False**: If you are successful, then you are fulfilling your life's purpose. Explain.

These are not at all the same issue. You could reach all your personal goals, becoming a raving success by the world's standard, and still miss the purpose for which God created you.

This is not a self help book. . . It is about becoming what God created you to be.

1 Cor. 2:7

What are your two options to discovering the purpose for which you were created?

1) *Speculation*

Ephesians 1:11

"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone."

(Ephesians 1:11 - Msg.)

What three insights does this verse give us into our purpose?

1. *You discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ.*
2. *God was thinking of you long before you ever thought about him.*
3. *The purpose of your life fits into a much larger purpose that God has designed for eternity.*

*You may have felt in the dark about your purpose in life.
Congratulations, you're about to walk into the light.*

Point to Ponder: It's not about me.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Have you ever used something for a purpose other than that for which it was intended? What was the result? How does this relate to how we live our lives?

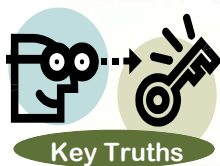
Without God, life makes no sense.

What is the purpose of an owner's manual? What is our owner's manual? How should we be using it?

Life is about letting God use you for his purposes, not you using him for your own purposes.

In spite of all of the advertising around me, how can I remind myself that life is really about living for God, not myself?

Father, as I begin this journey, help me to realize that building my life around myself instead of you will only lead to emptiness and meaninglessness. I was made by you and for you, and I want to discover my purpose in you.



Key Truths



Application



Prayer

"I am your creator.

You were in my care even before you were born," says the Lord.

Isaiah 44:2 (CEV)



Questions

Psalms 139:15

Psalms 139:16

Acts 17:26

You are not an accident. You are alive because God wanted to create you. What are some of the things that God chose or determined for you even before you were born? (the book lists at least 11)

- 1) race
- 2) color of your skin
- 3) color of your hair
- 4) natural talents
- 5) uniqueness of your personality
- 6) when you would be born
- 7) how long you would live
- 8) exact time of your birth and death
- 9) where you would be born
- 10) where you would live for his purpose
- 11) how you would be born

While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children.

Eph. 1:4a

James 1:18

What was God's motive in creating you?

His love.

God never does anything accidentally and he never makes mistakes.

Isaiah 46:3-4

God made you so he could love you. This is a truth to build your life upon.

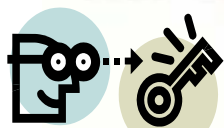
If there was no God, we would all be accidents, the result of astronomical

"The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us."

Romans 12:3

You Are Not an Accident

Point to Ponder: I am not an accident.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

Knowing that God uniquely created you, what areas of your personality, background, and physical appearance are you struggling to accept?

If there was no God, we would all be accidents. What impact would this have on the purpose or significance of your life?

Nothing in your life is arbitrary. It's all for a purpose.

Knowing that there is a God who loves you and made you for a purpose, how does that make you feel?



Prayer

God, your plan is amazing. Thank you that I was custom made for a reason. Help me to trust your wisdom in choosing my parents, race, background, gifts, and appearance.

What Drives Your Life?

Day 3

*"You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm
and put their trust in you."*

Isaiah 26:3 (TEV)



Questions

Job 5:2

While there are hundreds of circumstances, values, and emotions that can drive your life, what are the five most common?

- 1) *Guilt*
- 2) *Resentment and anger*
- 3) *Fear*
- 4) *Materialism*
- 5) *Need for approval*

*We are products of
our past, but we
don't have to be
prisoners of it.*

What is the only way you can continue to be hurt by those who have hurt you in the past? What should you do instead?

By holding on to the pain through resentment. Learn from it and let it go.

1 John 4:18

What are the characteristics of a fear driven person? How do you overcome fear?

*Playing it safe. Maintain the status quo. Often miss great opportunities.
With the weapons of faith and love. (1 John 4:18)*

What myths and misconceptions characterize those who are driven by materialism?

Having more will make me happy, more important, or more secure.

Matthew 6:24

Rick Warren says he may not know all the keys to success, but he does know one key to failure. What is it?

To try and please everyone.

Jer. 29:11

Eph. 3:20

Isaiah 49:4

Job 7:6

Job 7:16

What are the five great benefits of living a purpose-driven life?

- 1) *Gives meaning to your life.*
- 2) *Simplifies your life.*
- 3) *Focuses your life.*
- 4) *Motivates your life.*
- 5) *Prepares you for eternity.*

*The greatest
tragedy is not
death, but life
without purpose.*

Proverbs 13:7

How does knowing your purpose simplify your life?

*It becomes the standard you use to evaluate which activities are essential
and which aren't; the foundation on which to base decisions, allocate your
time and use your resources.*

Eph. 5:17

Phi. 3:13

How does knowing your purpose focus your life?

It concentrates your effort and energy on what's important.

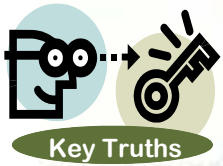
*You become
effective by
being selective.*

Purpose always produces passion.

True/False: It is usually overwork that wears us down, saps our strength and robs our joy.

What Drives Your Life?

Point to Ponder: Living on purpose is the path to peace.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Everyone's life is driven by something. What is the driving force in your life?

What would your family and friends say is the driving force in your life? What do you want it to be?

On that day when we stand before God, what two crucial questions will he ask us? How would you answer them today?

- 1) What did you do with my son Jesus Christ?
- 2) What did you do with what I gave you?

Self worth and net worth are not the same.

Never confuse activity with productivity. You can be busy without a purpose, but what's the point?

You weren't put on earth to be remembered, you were put here to prepare for eternity.

Unfortunately, those who follow the crowd usually get lost in it.



Prayer

Father, I don't want my life to be driven by anything but love for you. Help me to center my life on your plan and purpose for me, and not worry about the expectations of others.

*This world is fading away, along with everything it craves.
But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.*

1 John 2:17 (NLT)



Questions

Ecc. 3:11
2 Cor. 5:1

This life is not all there is. If that is the case, what is the purpose of this life?

This life is preparation for the next.

Why is it that we often feel like we should live forever?

God wired our brains with that desire.

While life on earth offers many choices, eternity offers only two: heaven or hell. Your relationship to God on earth will determine your relationship to him in eternity.

Surely God would not have created such a being as man to exist only for a day! No, no, man was made for immortality.

Abraham Lincoln

Rick Warren uses the phrase, 'living in light of eternity'. What does this phrase mean?

It means you will have an eternal perspective and you will handle every relationship, task, and circumstance taking into account that there is more to life than just the here and now.

Phi. 3:7

When you live in the light of eternity, how might your values change?

Use your time and money more wisely. Place a higher premium on relationships and character instead of fame or wealth or achievements or even fun. Your priorities are reordered.

What is the most damaging aspect of contemporary living?

short-term thinking

Only a fool would go through life unprepared for what we all know will eventually happen.

1 Cor. 2:9

What is it going to be like in eternity with God? What glimpses of eternity has he given us in his word?

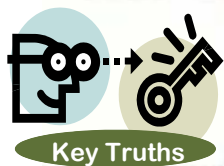
- 1) eternal home in heaven
- 2) reunited with loved ones who are believers
- 3) released from all pain and suffering
- 4) rewarded for our faithfulness here on earth
- 5) reassigned to do work that we will enjoy
- 6) enjoy unbroken fellowship with God
- 7) he will enjoy us for an unlimited, endless forever

2 Cor. 5:6

"It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our final day."

Matthew Henry

Point to Ponder: There's more to life than just here and now.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Since I was made to last forever, what is the one thing I should stop doing today?

What is the one thing I should start doing?

As you begin to live in light of eternity, what values may need to change? What priorities may need to be reordered?

There are two kinds of people: those who say to God 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, 'All right then, have it your way.'

C.S. Lewis

The closer you live to God, the smaller everything else appears.



Prayer

God, open my eyes to see that there are eternal consequences in even the smallest choice of my life. Remind me to look past what is temporary and focus on what will last forever. Teach me to live in light of eternity.

*Unless you are faithful in small matters,
you won't be faithful in large ones.*

Luke 16:10 (NLT)



Questions

Romans 12:2

The way you see your life shapes your life. Explain.

Your perspective will influence how you invest your time, spend your money, use your talents, and value your relationships.

What three metaphors does the Bible offer to teach us God's view of life?

- 1) *Life is a test.*
- 2) *Life is a trust.*
- 3) *Life is a temporary assignment.*

*When you realize that
life is a test, you realize
that nothing is
insignificant in your life.*

What are some of the things that God tests in people?

character, faith, obedience, love, integrity, and loyalty

True/False: You are always being tested. Explain.

God constantly watches your response to people, problems, success, conflict, illness, disappointment, and even the weather!

2 Chron. 32:31

What kinds of things will God use to test you?

major changes, delayed promises, impossible problems, unanswered prayers, undeserved criticism, and even senseless tragedies

1 Cor. 10:13
James 1:12

What is the good news about the tests of life? What happens if we pass them?

God wants us to pass them. He will never allow them to be greater than the grace He gives. God makes plans to reward us in heaven.

Psalms 24:1
1 Cor. 4:7b
1 Cor. 4:2

To have the correct concept of stewardship, what must we first recognize?

God is the owner of everything and everyone on earth. We never really own anything during our brief stay on earth.

Mat. 25:21

If you treat everything as a trust, what three rewards does God promise in eternity?

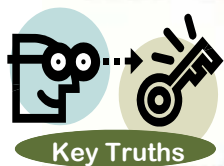
- 1) *God's affirmation.*
- 2) *A promotion with greater responsibility.*
- 3) *A celebration.*

Luke 16:11
Luke 12:48b

Money is both a test and a trust from God.

True/False: There is a direct relationship between how we use our money and the quality of our spiritual lives? Explain.

Point to Ponder: Life is a test and a trust.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is your view of life? What is your *life metaphor*?

What kinds of things does God normally use to test you? What has happened to you recently that you now realize was a test from God?

What are the greatest trusts God has entrusted to you?

Is the way you manage your money preventing God from doing more in your life? What money habits should you look at changing?

Every day is an important day, and every second is a growth opportunity to deepen your character, to demonstrate love, or to depend on God.



Prayer

Gracious God, give me the wisdom to see life as you see it. Help me to pass the test of character you place before me and to treat everything you give me as a sacred trust. You own it all; I just get to use it while I'm on earth.

*We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.
For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*
2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV)



Questions

Psalms 39:4

Psalms 119:19
1 Peter 1:17

James 4:4
1 Peter 2:11
1 Cor. 7:31

2 Cor. 4:18b

John 16:20
John 16:33

1 Peter 2:11

What are some of the metaphors the Bible uses to convey the temporary, transient nature of our life here on earth?

a mist, a fast runner, a breath, a wisp of smoke, a shadow

To make the best use of your life, what two truths must you never forget?

- 1) *compared with eternity, life is extremely brief*
- 2) *earth is only a temporary residence*

What terms does the Bible use to describe our brief stay here on earth?

alien, pilgrim, foreigner, stranger, visitor, traveler, temporary residents

Christians should carry spiritual green cards to remind us our citizenship is in heaven.

What is the danger of living for the *here and now* and adopting the values, priorities, and lifestyles of the world around us? What does God call this?

Your loyalties and commitment will change from God to the things of earth. God calls this spiritual adultery.

True/False: The pursuit of happiness should be the driving force in your life. Explain.

With all the fascinating attractions, mesmerizing media, and enjoyable experiences available today, it's easy to forget that the pursuit of happiness is not what life is about. Instead, we need to keep an eternal perspective.

What does God do in order to keep us from becoming too attached to earth?

God allows us to feel a significant amount of discontent and dissatisfaction in life--longings that will never be fulfilled on this side of eternity.

True/False: Faithfulness to God does not guarantee success in your career or your ministry. Explain.

The abundant life has nothing to do with material abundance. The Bible is full of examples of faithful men who were not successful by earthly standards: Paul and

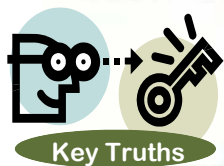
It is a fatal mistake to assume God's goal for your life is material prosperity or popular success.

Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul.

1 Peter 2:11

Life is a Temporary Assignment

Point to Ponder: This world is not my home.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

Many people worry about 'having it all' here on earth. If your identity is in eternity and your homeland is in heaven, how should this affect your attitude toward material possessions here on earth?

How should the realization that life on earth is just a temporary assignment alter your values? Is there any one thing that you are doing right now that needs to be changed?

*All that is not
eternal is eternally
useless.*
C.S. Lewis

When life on earth gets tough, when you're overwhelmed with doubt, or when you wonder if living for Christ is worth the effort, remember that you are not home yet. At death you won't leave home--you'll go home.



Prayer

Lord, help me remember that there is more to life than just here and now. Remind me to live like a temporary resident, not getting too attached to the things of this world because they are not what is going to last.

The Reason for Everything

Day 7

*For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by his power,
and everything is for his glory.*

Romans 11:36b (LB)



Questions

*Creation reveals our
Creator's glory.*

What is the ultimate goal of the universe?

To bring glory to God.

What is the glory of God? Where is the glory of God?

It is who God is. It is the essence of his nature . . . the expression of his goodness and all his other intrinsic, eternal qualities.

Everywhere. Everything created by God reflects his glory in some way.

God's glory is best seen in Jesus Christ.

Why does God deserve ALL the glory?

Because he made everything, including us.

At its root, what is sin?

Failing to give God glory. Loving anything else more than God.

What is the worst sin and biggest mistake we can make? On the other hand, what is the greatest achievement we can accomplish with our lives?

Failing to give God the full glory he deserves is our biggest mistake.

Living for God's glory is the greatest achievement.

Jesus honored God by fulfilling his purpose here on earth. How can we honor God?

The same way. When anything in creation fulfills its purpose, it brings glory to God.

We can bring glory to God in many ways, but they can be summarized in God's five purposes for your life. What are they?

- 1) *We bring glory to God by worshiping him.*
- 2) *We bring glory to God by loving other believers.*
- 3) *We bring glory to God by becoming like Christ.*
- 4) *We bring glory to God by serving others with our gifts.*
- 5) *We bring glory to God by telling others about him.*

"They are my own people, and I created them to bring me glory."

Isaiah 43:7 (TEV)

Psalms 19:1

Hebrews 1:3

Rev. 4:11a

Romans 3:23
Isaiah 43:7

John 17:4

Romans 6:13b

Romans 15:7

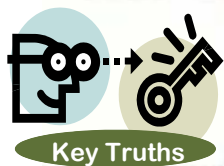
2 Cor. 3:18

1 Pet. 4:10-11

2 Cor. 4:15

The Reason for Everything

Point to Ponder: It's all for him.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

John 12:27-28 says: *Knowing he was about to be crucified, he cried out: "My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."* What do these verses teach us about fulfilling our purpose?

Living the rest of your life for the glory of God will require a change in your priorities, your schedule, your relationships, and everything else. Are you willing to make the changes necessary, given the eternal rewards God promises?

More immediately, will you commit the remaining weeks of this study to discovering God's purposes for your life? Will you commit to spending 15 minutes a day on this study - reading and recording your lessons learned? Will you commit to be present and accountable to your small group each week (they are counting on you, as we shall see)? If so, this study can change your life.

It's time to settle this issue.

Who are you going to live for--yourself or God?



Exercise



Prayer

- 1) Real life begins by committing yourself completely to Jesus Christ. If you have never committed your life to Christ, now is the time. All you have to do is receive and believe. Will you accept God's offer? Please talk with your group

Wonderful God, it is my deepest desire to bring you glory. Help me to see your glory all around me today. Nothing would exist without you. It's all for your glory!

PURPOSE #1

*You were planned
for
God's pleasure*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your
mind and with all your strength.*

Mark 12:30 (NIV)

The Lord takes pleasure in his people.

Psalm 149:4a (TEV)



Questions

Ephesians 1:5
Psalms 147:11

God did not need to create you, but he chose to create you for his own enjoyment. You exist for his benefit, his glory, his purpose, and his delight.

Bringing pleasure to God is called worship and it is the first purpose of your life.

True/False: Every part of a church service is an act of worship.

What kind of music does God love?

All kinds of music - fast and slow, loud and soft, old and new. He invented it all! If it is offered in spirit and in truth it is an act of worship.

Is there such a thing as 'Christian' music? Explain.

No, only Christian lyrics. It is the words that make the song sacred.

True/False: Worship is for your benefit.

What should be our goal in worship?

To bring pleasure to God . . . not ourselves.

Isaiah 29:13

Which touches God's heart: tradition in worship or **passion and commitment**?

1 Cor. 10:31

How can we transform every activity into an act of worship?

When we do it for the praise, glory, and pleasure of God.

Col. 3:23

How is it possible to do everything for the glory of God, or, in other words, what is the secret to a lifestyle of worship?

God wants us to enjoy life, not just endure it.

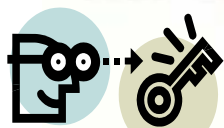
Worship is not a part of your life, it is your life.

This is what real worship is all about—falling in love with Jesus.

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

Point to Ponder: I was planned for God's pleasure.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Before reading this chapter, how would you have defined worship? How do you define it now?

In Isaiah 29 God complains about worship that is half-hearted and hypocritical. The people were offering God stale prayers, insincere praise, empty words, and man-made rituals without even thinking about the meaning. How are we guilty of this today? How can we correct this?

What common task could you start doing as if you were doing it directly for Jesus?

*You created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist
and were created.*

Revelation 4:11 (NLT)



Prayer

*Father, thank you for creating me for your own pleasure!
I would not even exist if you had not chosen to make me.
If I don't get anything else done today, help me to know and love
you a little bit more before I go to sleep tonight.
Help me to develop a lifestyle of worship.*

The Lord is pleased with those who worship him and trust his love.

Psalm 147:11 (CEV)



Questions

Gen. 6:8
Gen. 6:96
Heb. 11:7
Hosea 6:6
Matt. 22:37-38

Since pleasing God is the first purpose of your life, your most important task is to find out how to do that. Fortunately, the Bible gives us a clear example. From Noah's life we learn five acts of worship that make God smile.

- 1) God smiles when we love him supremely.
- 2) God smiles when we trust him completely.
- 3) God smiles when we obey him wholeheartedly.
- 4) God smiles when we praise and thank him continually.
- 5) God smiles when we use our abilities.

*The smile of God
is the goal of
your life.*

Hosea 6:6 says, "I don't want your sacrifices--I want your love; I don't want your offerings--I want you to know me." According to this verse, what does God want most from us?

A relationship.

Every parent knows that delayed obedience is really disobedience.
Discuss.

True/False: God is responsible for giving you an explanation for everything he asks you to do. Explain.

Understanding can wait, but obedience can't. You will never understand some commands until you obey them first. Obedience unlocks understanding.

Psalm 119:33

What are we offering God when we try to pick and choose the commands we want to obey (i.e. I'll attend church but I won't tithe)? What are we actually doing?

Partial obedience. We are actually disobeying.

Psalm 37:23

What areas of our lives does God enjoy watching?

God enjoys watching every detail of our lives.

Isaiah 45:9

True/False: Anytime you reject any part of yourself, you are rejecting God's wisdom and sovereignty in creating you.

*Trusting God
completely means
having faith that
he knows what is
best for your life.*

There are no unspiritual abilities, just misused ones.

2 Cor. 5:9

When you live in light of eternity, your focus changes from 'How much pleasure am I getting out of life' to what?

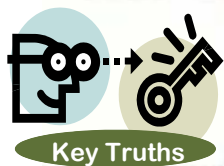
*How much
pleasure*

Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it.

Ephesians 5:10

what makes god smile?

Point to Ponder: God smiles when I trust him.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*" In what areas of your life do you need to trust God completely?

Noah obeyed God wholeheartedly. That means doing whatever God asks without reservation or hesitation. You don't procrastinate and say, "I'll pray about it." You do it without delay. In what areas are you offering God delayed obedience? Partial obedience?

For those of you with children, how do you feel when you watch them do something for the first time on their own that you have spent time teaching them? Have you ever just sat and enjoyed watching them sleep? How does it make you feel to know that your Heavenly Father feels the same way about you?

*Will you make pleasing God the goal of your life?
There is nothing God won't do for the person
totally absorbed with this goal.*



Prayer

Dear God, I want my life to bring a smile to your face. Empower me to love you supremely, trust you completely and obey you wholeheartedly today.

The Heart of Worship

Day 10

Give yourselves to God . . . surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes.

Romans 6:13 (TEV)



Questions

The heart of worship is surrender. Why is this such an unpopular word?

It implies losing, and no one wants to be a loser. Evokes unpleasant images. Almost always used in a negative context.

What are the three barriers that block our total surrender to God?

- 1) Fear 2) Pride 3) Confusion

*We aren't God
and never will be.*

If fear keeps us from surrendering, what is the solution?

Love. Perfect love casts out all fear. The more you realize how much God loves you, the easier surrender becomes.

Genesis 3:5

What desire is the cause of so much stress in our lives?

Pride. The desire to have complete control of our lives.

*God wants your
life—all of it.
Ninety-five percent
is not enough.*

Rick asserts that we accept our humanity intellectually, but not emotionally. What does he mean by this?

When faced with our own limitations, we react with frustration, anger and resentment. We want to have it all and do it all, and we become upset when it doesn't happen.

In defining what it means to surrender, we first learn what it does not mean. What is it not? (he lists 6 things)

passive resignation, fatalism, an excuse for laziness, accepting the status quo, giving up rational thinking, repressing your personality

Luke 5:5
Psalm 37:7a

What are the two key aspects to surrender?

Obedience and trust.

*To say "no, Lord" is
to speak a
contradiction.*

Matthew 6:24
Matthew 6:21

What is the most difficult area to surrender for many people?

Their money

Mark 14:36

The supreme example of self-surrender is Jesus.

Job 22:21
Romans 6:17
Josh. 5:13-15

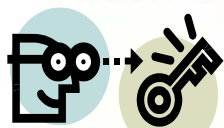
What three benefits do you receive when you surrender your life to God?

- 1) Peace 2) Freedom 3) God's power

What will you eventually discover is the the greatest hindrance to God's blessing in your life?

The Heart of worship

Point to Ponder: The heart of worship is surrender.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

You know you're surrendered to God when you rely on God to work things out instead of trying to manipulate others, force your agenda, and control the situation. You let go and let God work. You don't have to be in charge. Are there circumstances or situations that you are still trying to control? What are they?

Everybody eventually surrenders to something or someone. If not to God, you will surrender to the opinions and expectations of others, to money, to resentment, to fear, or to your own pride, lusts, or ego. You are free to choose what you surrender to, but you are not free from the consequences of that choice. What have you surrendered to? What have the consequences been?

If God is going to do his best work in you, it will begin with this. So give it all to God: your past regrets, your present problems, your future ambitions, your fears, dreams, weaknesses, habits, hurts, and hang-ups. Put Jesus Christ in the driver's seat of your life and take your hands off the steering wheel. Don't be afraid. Nothing under his control can ever be out of control. What is keeping you from doing this today? Pray and ask God to help you.

Now is your time to surrender--to God's grace, love, and wisdom.



Prayer

Dear loving Father, when I think of all you've done for me, I want to surrender all my life to your will. I want to give up my need to control things and trust in you instead. Help me to hold back nothing from you today.

Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence him.

Psalms 24:15 (LB)



Questions

2 Cor. 5:18a
John 15:15
Jeremiah 9:24

Where in the Bible do we see God's ideal relationship with us? How was that relationship lost?

Eden. The fall.

What makes friendship with God possible now?

The grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus.

Knowing God is our greatest privilege, and being known and loved is God's greatest pleasure.

What does it mean when God wants you as a friend? By looking at the lives of God's friends in the Bible, we learn six secrets of friendship with God. What are the first two?

- 1) *Through constant conversation*
- 2) *Through continual meditation*

True/False: You will never grow a close relationship with God by just attending church once a week or even having a daily quiet time.

A common misconception is that "spending time with God" means being alone with him.

Brother Lawrence, who wrote the classic book on learning how to develop a constant conversation with God, says the key to friendship with God is not changing what you do, but changing what?

Your attitude towards what you do. What you normally do for yourself you begin doing for God.

What was another of Brother Lawrence's helpful ideas?

To pray shorter conversational prayers continually throughout the day.

The Bible tells us to "pray all the time." How is it possible to do this?

One way is to use "breath prayers."

Meditation is often misunderstood as some difficult, mysterious ritual practiced by isolated monks and mystics. What is it actually? How is it similar to worry?

You can't love God unless you know him, and you can't know him without knowing his Word.

Meditation is simply focused thinking. Thinking about God's Word throughout the day. If you know how to worry, you know how to meditate. Simply switch your

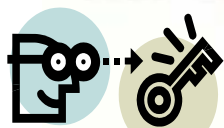
God wants to be included in every activity, every conversation, every problem, and even every thought.

Because God is with you all the time, no place is any closer to God than the place where you are right now.

1 Thess. 5:17

Becoming Best Friends with God

Point to Ponder: God wants to be my best friend.



Key Truths



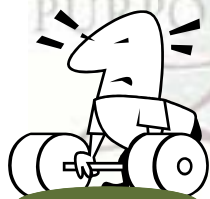
Application

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- 2.
- 3.

Think about your best friend, or a best friend you have had in the past. What made them your best friend? What did you share with them? How often did you talk to them? If you talked to them as often as you talk to God, would they still be your best friend?

Practicing the presence of God is a skill, a habit you can develop. Just as musicians practice scales everyday in order to play beautiful music with ease, you must force yourself to think about God at different times in your day. You must train your mind to remember God. What can you do to remind yourself to think about God and talk to him more often throughout the day?

Prayer lets you speak to God and meditation lets God speak to you. In any friendship, there are times when we share and there are times when we listen. Do you need to set aside some time each day just to listen to God, to meditate on what you have read or heard? This is essential to all good friendships.



Exercise

1) Create visual reminders to bring your thoughts back to the awareness that God is with you at that moment and place them where you will see them at different points throughout the day.

2) Choose one or two brief sentences or short phrases of scripture to use as "breath prayers" and pray it as often as possible so it is rooted deep in your



Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for being too busy to develop a friendship with you. I want to develop a running dialogue, a continual conversation with you throughout the day.

Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you.

James 4:8 (NLT)



Questions

If you want a deeper, more intimate connection with God you must learn to do four things. What are they?

- 1) *honestly share your feelings*
- 2) *trust him when he asks you to do something*
- 3) *learn to care about what he cares about*
- 4) *desire his friendship more than anything else*

*We are friends
with God, but we
are not his equals.*

God doesn't expect you to be perfect, but he does insist on complete honesty.

What may appear as audacity, God views as authenticity. You must be honest with God, sharing your true feelings, not what you think you ought to say.

Job 7:17-21
Psalm 93:13
Ruth 1:20

Bitterness is the greatest barrier to friendship with God. What is the antidote?

To realize that God always acts in your best interest, even when it is painful and you don't understand it. Tell God exactly how you feel.

True/False: Expressing doubt is sometimes the first step toward the next level of intimacy with God.

1 Sam. 15:22

We are often challenged to do 'great things' for God. Actually, God is more pleased when we do small things for him out of loving obedience. Why is this?

Great opportunities may come once in a lifetime, but small opportunities surround us every day.

The more you become God's friend, the more you will care about the things he cares about. What does God care about most?

The redemption of his people. He wants all his lost children found.

*Friends of God tell
their friends about
God.*

Psalm 27:4
Gen. 32:26
Phil. 3:10

We must desire friendship with God more than anything else. What three biblical examples of this desire does Rick give?

- 1) *David*
- 2) *Jacob*
- 3) *Paul*

Jer. 29:13

Pain is the fuel of passion--it energizes us with an intensity to change that we don't normally possess. There is an easier way to reignite your passion, however. What is it?

Start

"When you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed."

Jeremiah 29:13 (Msg.)

Developing Your Friendship with God

Point to Ponder: I'm as close to God as I choose to be.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

Like any friendship, you must work at developing your friendship with God. It won't happen by accident. What kinds of things do you do to develop your earthly friendships? Can you apply any of these to your friendship with God?

The truth is--you are as close to God as you choose to be. Intimate friendship with God is a choice, not an accident. Do you really want it--more than anything? What is it worth to you? Is it worth giving up other things? Is it worth the effort of developing the habits and skills required? What practical choices will you make today in order to grow closer to God?

Your problems are not punishment; they are wake-up calls from a loving God. God is not mad at you; he's mad about you, and he will do whatever it takes to bring you back into fellowship with him. Are you currently experiencing any 'wake-up calls' from God? What do you need to do to get back into fellowship with him?



Exercise

1) To be God's friend, you must be honest with God. If you have any hidden anger or resentment at God for certain areas of your life where you have felt cheated or disappointed, confess them now. Tell him how you truly feel.

2) If you don't have a passion for God, ask him for it. Pray this throughout the day: "Dear Jesus, more than anything else, I want to get to know you more



Prayer

Jesus, I want a deeper relationship with you. Help me to be completely honest with my feelings and my faults. Nothing matters more than my relationship to you.

Worship That Pleases God

Day 13

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your mind and with all your strength.*

Mark 12:30 (NIV)



Questions

John 4:23

What are the four characteristics of the kind of worship that pleases God?

- 1) *God is pleased when our worship is accurate*
- 2) *God is pleased when our worship is authentic*
- 3) *God is pleased when our worship is thoughtful*
- 4) *God is pleased when our worship is practical*

*Worship is your
spirit responding to
God's spirit.*

What must our worship be based on?

The truth of scripture -- not on our opinions about God.

We can worship God imperfectly, but we cannot worship him insincerely.

What is our biggest distraction in worship?

Ourselves -- our interest and worries over what others may think about us.

What is the best style of worship?

*The one that most authentically represents your
love for God, based on the background and
personality God gave you.*

*One thing is certain: You
don't bring glory to God by
trying to be someone he never
intended you to be. God
wants you to be yourself.*

Matthew 6:7

If worship is mindless, it is meaningless. You must
engage your mind. *Discuss.*

It is so easy to offer clichés in worship instead of making the effort to honor God in
fresh words and ways. What are some ideas Rick gives to expand our expression
of worship?

*Read scripture in different translations and paraphrases; try praising God
without using the words praise, hallelujah, thanks, or amen; be specific;
make a list of the different names of God and focus on them.*

1 Cor. 4:16-17

Being sensitive to unbelievers who visit your worship gatherings is a biblical
command. To ignore this command is to be both disobedient and unloving.

Romans 12:1

Why does God want your body? Why doesn't he say, "Offer your spirit"?

*As long as you're on earth, your spirit can only be where your body is. If
your body isn't there, neither are you.*

2 Sam. 24:24

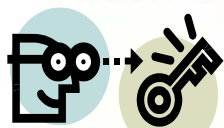
Real worship costs. What are some things worship may cost or
require of us?

*The heart of the
matter is a matter
of the heart.*

Our self-centeredness. You shift the focus to God. Our

worship That pleases God

Point to Ponder: God wants all of me.



Key Truths



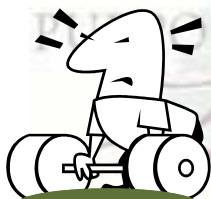
Application

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- 2.
- 3.

In his book *Sacred Pathways*, Gary Thomas identified nine of the ways people draw near to God (pg. 103). Do you identify with any of these? If not, when do you feel the most connected to God?

In 1 Corinthians chapter 14 we are commanded to be sensitive to visitors (strangers) in our worship services. What can you do personally in this area? What should we be doing as a church?

Passive worship is an oxymoron. Worship is not always convenient or comfortable. When you praise God even when you don't feel like it, when you get out of bed to worship when you're tired, or when you help others when you are worn out, you are offering a sacrifice of worship, which pleases God. Do you worship only when it is convenient or comfortable? What kind of commitment do you need to make to God in this area?



Exercise

- 1) Try praising God without using the words *praise, hallelujah, thanks* or *amen*.
- 2) Make a list of the different names of God and focus on them.



Prayer

Father, I want to bring you pleasure today by loving you with all my heart and soul and mind and strength. Help me to identify and develop the sacred pathway that fits how you created me to know you.

God said, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you."

Hebrews 13:5 (TEV)



Questions

Psalm 10:1
Psalm 22:2
Psalm 43:2
Hebrews 13:5
Job 23:8-10

What are some characteristics of the deepest level of worship?

Praising God in spite of pain, thanking God during a trial, trusting him when tempted, surrendering while suffering, and loving him when he seems distant.

Why does God test your friendship with him with periods of seeming separation--times when it feels as if he has abandoned or forgotten you?

To mature it.

Every Christian goes through times when God feels a million miles away. How did the following people refer to these times?

St. John of the Cross -- *'the dark night of the soul'*

Henri Nouwen -- *'the ministry of absence'*

A.W. Tozer -- *'the ministry of the night'*

Others -- *'the winter of the heart'*

Seeking a feeling, even a feeling of closeness to Christ, is not worship.

What is the most common mistake Christians make in worship today?

Seeking a feeling rather than seeking God. They look for a feeling and if it happens, they conclude that they have worshiped. Wrong!

What is the difference between God's omnipresence and the manifestation of his presence? Why is it important to distinguish between the two?

One is a fact, the other is often a feeling. God is always present, even when you are unaware of him.

Job 1:20-21
Job 7:11
Job 29:4
Psalm 116:10
Job 23:14
Job 23:10
Job 23:12

How do you praise God when you don't understand what's happening in your life and God is silent? How do you stay connected in a crisis without communication?

1. *Tell God exactly how you feel.*
2. *Focus on who God is--his unchanging nature.*
3. *Trust God to keep his promises.*
4. *Remember what God has already done for you.*

A friendship based on emotion is shallow indeed.

During times of spiritual dryness, what must you rely on? What can't you rely on?

The promises of God. You can't rely on your feelings.

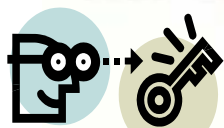
2 Cor. 5:21

If God never did anything else for you, why would he still deserve your continual praise for the rest of your life?

Jesus gave up everything so you could have everything. He died so you could live forever. Never again should you wonder what you have to be

When God Seems Distant

Point to Ponder: God is real, no matter how I feel.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

Friendships are often tested by separation and silence; whether you are divided by physical distance or you are unable to talk. Think of a time when you were separated from a spouse or loved one. What did you do to keep them close at heart?

When Job's life fell apart, and God was silent, Job still found things he could praise God for. List some specific things you can praise God for, no matter the circumstances.

Jesus could have saved himself—but then he could not have saved you.

Never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light.

V. Raymond Edman

God, when I don't hear your voice or feel your presence, help me to seek you, not a feeling. Then help me remember your promise that you will never leave me nor forsake me.



Prayer

PURPOSE #2

You Were Formed for God's Family

*In Christ we who are many form one body,
and each member belongs to all the others.*

Romans 12:5 (NIV)

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:5a (NLT)



Questions

James 1:18
1 Peter 3:15

Galatians 3:26

Galatians 4:7b

Eph. 1:7,
3:16, 2:4

Rom. 2:4,
9:23, 11:23

1 Thes. 5:10

1 John 3:2

Rev. 21:14

Mark 9:41

Rom. 8:17

1 Peter 1:4

Matthew 28:19

What is the second purpose of your life?

To be a part of God's family.

True/False: God needed a family, so he created us. Explain.

God did not need a family--he desired one, so he devised a plan to create us, bring us into his family, and share with us all he has.

Every human being was created by God, but not everyone is a child of God.

The invitation to be a part of God's family is universal, but there is one condition:
faith in Jesus.

What birthday gifts did you receive the moment you were born into the family of God?

the family name, the family likeness, family privileges, family intimate access, and the family inheritance

The Bible gives great emphasis to our rich inheritance. As children of God we get to share in the family fortune. What are we given while still here on earth?

"the riches . . . of his grace. . . kindness. . . patience. . . glory. . . wisdom. . . power. . . and mercy."

In eternity we will inherit even more. What does that inheritance include?

- 1) *we will get to be with God forever*
- 2) *we will be completely changed to be like Christ*
- 3) *we will be freed from all pain, death, and suffering*
- 4) *we will be rewarded and reassigned positions of service*
- 5) *we will get to share in Christ's glory*

Retirement is a short-sighted goal. You should be living in light of eternity.

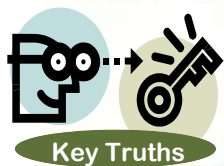
What are the characteristics of our eternal inheritance? Why is it better than any earthly inheritance we may receive?

priceless, pure, permanent, and protected. No one can take it from you; it can't be destroyed by war, a poor economy, or a natural disaster

Why is baptism so important? Why is it 'pregnant with meaning'?

It symbolizes God's second purpose for your life: Participating in the fellowship of God's eternal family. Baptism declares your faith, shares Christ's burial and resurrection, symbolizes your death to your old life, announces your new life in Christ, and is a celebration of your inclusion in God's family.

Point to Ponder: I was formed for God's family.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

James 1:18 says, "It was a happy day for him when he gave us our new lives, through the truth of his Word, and we became, as it were, the first children in his new family." For those of you who have children, think back to the day when your first child was born--the preparation that went into getting your home ready, how excited you were to be able to share your love with a new baby, the love you felt towards them. How does it make you feel to know that God experiences those emotions and feels that way towards you?

Hebrews 2:11 says, "Jesus and the people he makes holy all belong to the same family. That is why he isn't ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters." Let that amazing truth sink in. You are a part of God's family. There is no greater privilege. How can this truth help you when you feel unimportant, unloved, or insecure?



Exercise



Prayer

- 1) There are no delayed baptisms in the New Testament. If you haven't been baptized as an expression of your faith in Christ, do so as soon as possible, as

Thank you dear God that you made me to be a part of your family forever. What a privilege it is to be included. Help me to never take your church for granted.

*No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do,
I'm bankrupt without love.*

1 Corinthians 13:3b (Msg)



Questions

Galatians 5:14
1 Peter 2:17b

Galatians 6:10
John 13:35

1 Cor. 1:1a

Gal. 6:10
Eph. 5:16

1 Cor. 13:3
1 Cor. 13:13
Matthew 25:40

Life is all about love.

The most important lesson God wants you to learn on earth is how to love.

Love is the foundation of every command he has given us.

God wants us to love everyone, but he is particularly concerned that we learn to love who?

Other members of his family.

Why does God insist that we give special love and attention to other believers? Why do they get priority in loving?

Because God wants his family to be known for its love more than anything else.

What is essential if you are to develop the skill of loving?

You must be in regular, close fellowship with other believers. Love cannot be learned in isolation. You have to be around people.

What three important truths do we learn through fellowship?

- 1) *The best use of life is love.*
- 2) *The best expression of love is time.*
- 3) *The best time to love is now.*

It's not enough to say, "One of the things I want in life is to be loving," as if it's in your top ten list. Relationships must have top priority in your life above everything else. Why?

- 1) *Life without love is really worthless.*
- 2) *Love will last forever.*
- 3) *We will be evaluated on our love.*

What is wrong with *finding* time for our children, or *making* time for people?

It gives the impression that relationships are just a part of our lives along with many other tasks. God says relationships are what life is all about.

Jesus said our love for each other—not our doctrinal beliefs—is our greatest witness to the world.

In our final moments we all realize that relationships are what life is all about. Wisdom is learning that truth sooner rather than later.

The entire law is summed up in a single command:

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:14 (NIV)



Questions

Why is busyness such a great enemy of relationships?

We become preoccupied with making a living, doing our work, paying bills, and accomplishing goals as if these tasks are the point of life. They are not. What's most important to God is displaced by what's urgent.

What is the most enduring impact you can leave on earth?

How you treat other people -- NOT your wealth or accomplishments.

Gal. 5:6

When you die, what is the only thing you will take with you?

Your character.

How can you determine a person's priorities?

Look at how they use their time. The importance of things can be measured by how much time we are willing to invest in them.

Why should God give you another day if you're going to waste it?

Why is time the greatest and most precious gift you can give someone?

We only have a set amount of time. You can make more money, but you can't make more time. Your time is your life.

1 John 3:18

The best way to spell love is T I M E.

Eph. 5:2

Whenever you give your time you are making a sacrifice and sacrifice is the essence of love?

You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

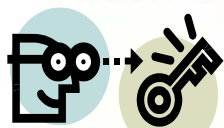
Gal. 6:10
Eph. 5:16
Prov. 3:27

Why is now the best time to express love? (read verses)

Because you don't know how long you will have the opportunity. Circumstances change. People die. Children grow up. You have no guarantee of tomorrow.

*The best use of life is love.
The best expression of love is time.
The best time to love is now.*

Point to Ponder: Life is all about love.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Relationships, not achievements or the acquisition of things, are what matters most in life. Do you agree with this statement? If so, why do we so often allow relationships to get the short end of the stick?

Who do you need to start spending more time with?

What do you need to cut out of your schedule to make that possible?

What sacrifices do you need to make?



Exercise

- 1) When you wake up every morning, kneel by your bed, or sit on the edge of it, and pray this: "God, whether I get anything else done today, I want to make sure that I spend time loving you and loving other people--because that's what life is all about. I don't want to waste this day."



Prayer

*Father, help me to remember that life is all about love.
Today I will take the time to love the people you place in my path.
Remind me that loving others is never a waste of time.
Teach me to love those who seem unlovable and give them what they
need, not what they deserve.*

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

*In Christ we who are many form one body,
and each member belongs to all the others.*

Romans 12:5 (NIV)



Questions

Romans 12:5

True/False: We can fulfill God's purposes on our own.

While your relationship to God is personal, God never intended it to be private.

In churches today, what does membership often consist of?

Simply adding your name to a roll, with no requirements or expectations.

What is usually the first symptom of spiritual decline?

Inconsistent attendance at worship services and other gatherings of believers.

Many believe one can be a "good Christian" without joining a local church, but God would strongly disagree.

Eph. 5:25

The person who says, "I don't need the church," is either arrogant or ignorant. The church is so significant that Jesus died on the cross for it.

True/False: The New Testament assumes membership in a local congregation.

The bible says a Christian without a church home is like what?

An organ without a body, a sheep without a flock, a child without a family

What are some of the reasons the bible gives for needing a church family?

- 1) A church family identifies you as a genuine believer
- 2) A church family moves you out of self-centered isolation
- 3) A church family helps you develop spiritual muscle
- 4) The Body of Christ needs you
- 5) You will share in Christ's mission in the world
- 6) A church family will help keep you from backsliding

You are not the Body of Christ on your own.

Jesus has not promised to build your ministry, he has promised to build his church.

James 5:19

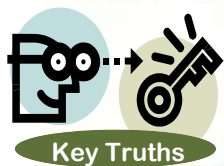
True/False: As good Christians, if we see a brother backsliding or sinning, we should mind our own business. Explain.

"Mind your own business" is not a Christian phrase. We are called and commanded to be involved in each other's lives. If you know of someone who is wavering spiritually right now, it is your responsibility to go after them and bring them back into the fellowship.

What is the difference between being a church member and a church attender?

Commitment. Attenders are spectators. Members get involved. Attenders are consumers, members are contributors. Attenders want the benefits without sharing the responsibility.

Point to Ponder: I'm called to belong, not just believe.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

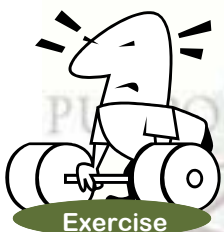


To Paul, being a "member" of the church meant being a vital organ of a living body, an indispensable, interconnected part of the Body of Christ. We need to recover and practice the biblical meaning of membership. Are you a member of a local church? What does membership mean to you?

You can spend a lifetime searching for the perfect church, but you will never find it. You are called to love imperfect sinners, just as God does.

The Christian life is more than just a commitment to Christ; it includes a commitment to other Christians. Does your level of involvement in your local church demonstrate that you love and are committed to God's family? If not, what can you do to change this?

"Mind your own business" is not a Christian phrase. We are called and commanded to be involved in each other's lives. If you know of someone who is wavering spiritually right now, it is your responsibility to go after them and bring them back into the fellowship. List anyone who came to mind as you read this.



If you have not yet become a "member" of a local church, please pray about this now. You were created for a specific role, but you will miss this second purpose of your life if you're not attached to a living, local church.



Dear God, help me to remember that whenever I become careless about fellowship with other believers, I'm moving away from you. Forgive me for the times I've gotten detached from your Body, the church. Help me to stay connected and committed, and love your church the way you do.

*Share each other's troubles and problems,
and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2 (NLT)



Questions

Real fellowship is so much more than just showing up at services. What else does it include?

unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the other "one another" commands

You can worship with a crowd, but you can't fellowship with one. Why not?

When it comes to fellowship, size matters. Smaller is better. Once a group becomes larger than about 10 people, someone stops participating.

Why does every Christian need to be involved in a small group within their church?

The life of the body of Christ, like your body, is contained in the cells.

1 John 1:7-8
James 5:16a

What is the difference between real and fake fellowship?

- 1) *In real fellowship people experience authenticity*
- 2) *In real fellowship people experience mutuality*
- 3) *In real fellowship people experience sympathy*
- 4) *In real fellowship people experience mercy*

1 Cor. 12:25
Col. 3:12
Gal. 6:2
2 Cor. 2:7

You are not responsible for everyone in the Body of Christ, but you are responsible to them.

Being authentic requires both courage and humility.

1 Cor. 12:25
Romans 1:12
Romans 12:10
Romans 14:19

What is mutuality?

The art of giving and receiving. The heart of fellowship: building reciprocal relationships, sharing responsibilities, and helping each other.

If sympathy is not giving advice or offering quick, cosmetic help, what is it? What two needs does it meet?

*Entering in and sharing the pain of others.
The need to be understood and the need to have your feelings validated.*

Phil. 3:10
Heb. 10:33-34

What are the different levels of fellowship? What is the deepest, most intense level?

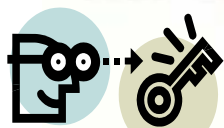
- 1) fellowship of sharing, studying God's Word, 2) a deeper level is the fellowship of serving, 3) deepest level is the fellowship of suffering, where we enter into each other's pain and grief and share each other's burdens.*

Many people are reluctant to show mercy because they don't understand the difference between trust and forgiveness. What is the difference?

Forgiveness is letting go of the past and must be immediate, whether or not a person asks for it. Trust has to do with future behavior and must be

Experiencing Life Together

Point to Ponder: I'm called to belong, not just believe.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

What one step can you take today to connect with another believer at a more genuine heart-to-heart level?

*You can't have
fellowship
without
forgiveness.*

*Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other
and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed.*

James 5:16a (Msg.)



Prayer

*Father, I want you to use me to build real fellowship in my church.
Help me to be authentic with others and not wear a mask,
Teach me to show sympathy to those who are hurting and offer mercy
to those who have stumbled.*

We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave his life for us. That means we must give our lives for other believers.

1 John 3:16 (GW)



Questions

Eph. 4:3

Eph 4:15

Prov. 24:26

Gal. 6:1-2

Eph. 4:25

Prov. 28:23

Ecc. 8:6

1 Tim. 5:1-2

1 Peter 5:5b

Rom. 12:16

Phil. 2:3-4

Rom. 12:10

It takes both God's power and our effort to produce a loving Christian community.

If we want to cultivate real fellowship in our small groups and in our church we will have to make some tough choices and take some risks. What five things will it take?

1) honesty

2) humility

3) courtesy

3) confidentiality

5) frequency

Which is easier, to gloss over a problem so that no one gets their feelings hurt or to address the issue or person? Why? What does the Bible tell us to do?

It is easier to remain silent. Fear. The Bible, however, tells us to "speak the truth in love", because you can't have community without candor.

Why do many church fellowships and small groups remain superficial?

Because they are afraid of conflict. Everyone knows about the problem but no one talks about it openly.

What happens when conflict is handled correctly.

We grow closer to each other by resolving and facing our differences.

True/**False**: Another benefit of honesty or frankness is that it allows us to say whatever we want, whenever we want.

The proper dress for fellowship is a humble attitude.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. Explain.

Humility is thinking more of others. Humble people are so focused on serving others, they don't think of themselves.

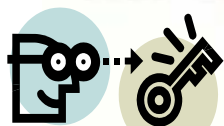
The truth is, we all have quirks and annoying traits. But community has nothing to do with compatibility. If this is so, what is the basis for our fellowship?

Our relationship to God. We're family, and in a family acceptance is not based on how smart or beautiful or talented you are. It is based on the fact that we belong to each other.

In this context, what does confidentiality mean? What doesn't it mean?

Confidentiality means that what is shared in your group stays in your group,

Pride builds walls between people; humility builds bridges.



Key Truths

Prov. 16:28

Point to Ponder: Community requires commitment.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

God hates gossip, especially when?

When it is thinly disguised as a "prayer request."

Titus 3:10

True/False: We are to confront those who cause divisions among Christians, unless we think they will get mad and leave our group or church.

Heb. 10:25
Acts 2:46

Why is fellowship so shallow in many churches?



Application

In every church and in every small group, there is always at least one "difficult" person. These people may have special emotional needs, deep insecurities, irritating mannerisms or poor social skills. You might call them EGR people-- "Extra Grace Required." God put these people in our midst for both their benefit and ours. How has your attitude toward these people changed from reading this chapter? What can you do to extend them courtesy?

Community is not built on convenience. Relationships take time. We are to develop the habit of meeting together. A habit is something you do with frequency, not occasionally. If you want to cultivate real fellowship, it will mean meeting together even when you don't feel like it, because you believe it is important. Do you truly believe that fellowship is important? Does your attendance at Sunday School, church, and/or your small group bear this out?



Prayer

God, help me not to settle for superficial relationships with other believers. Help me connect to a small group of believers in my church where I can learn what real love is all about.

Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.

Romans 12:18 (TEV)



Questions

2 Cor. 5:18
Phil. 2:1-2
Romans 15:5

Relationships are always worth restoring. The Bible tells us that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. In fact, our ability to get along with others is a mark of spiritual maturity.

Why is broken fellowship such a disgraceful testimony to unbelievers?

Because Christ wants his family to be known for our love for each other.

What two things is peacemaking not?

Avoiding conflict. Appeasement.

*Peacemakers are rare
because peacemaking is
hard work.*

What are the seven biblical steps to restore fellowship?

- 1) *Talk to God before talking to the person*
- 2) *Always take the initiative*
- 3) *Sympathize with their feelings*
- 4) *Confess your part of the conflict*
- 5) *Attack the problem, not the person*
- 6) *Cooperate as much as possible*
- 7) *Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution*

James 4:1-2

What are you doing when you expect anyone--a friend, spouse, boss, or family member--to meet a need that only God can fulfill?

Setting yourself up for disappointment and bitterness.

Matt. 5:23-24

True/False: God says the offender should always take the initiative in restoring a relationship.

*Sometimes we need
to avoid conflict,
sometimes we need to
create it, and
sometimes we need to
resolve it.*

Phil. 2:4

Before attempting to solve any disagreement, what must you do first?

Listen to people's feelings. Use your ears more than your mouth.

Matt. 7:5
1 John 1:8

Since we all have blind spots, what may you need to do before meeting with the person with whom you have a conflict?

Ask a third party to help you evaluate your own actions.

Prov. 15:1

In conflict resolution, what two things must you choose between?

Fixing the problem or fixing the blame. You can't do both.

Prov. 16:21

In resolving conflict, how you say it is as important as what you say. You are

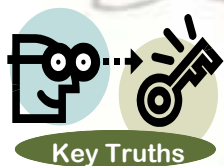
Restoring Broken Fellowship

What is the difference in focus between reconciliation and resolution? Which should we concentrate on?

Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem. We should

God expects unity, not uniformity, and we can walk arm in arm without seeing eye to eye.

Point to Ponder: Relationships are always worth restoring.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

Of the seven biblical steps of restoration in this chapter, which do you find the most difficult? Why?

When fellowship is strained or broken, plan a peace conference immediately. Don't procrastinate, make excuses, or promise "I'll get around to it someday." Schedule a face-to-face meeting as soon as possible. Delay only deepens resentment and makes matters worse. In conflict, time heals nothing; it causes hurts to fester. Who do you need to contact as a result of this chapter? With whom do you need to restore fellowship?



Exercise

Pause right now and talk to God about the person(s) you listed above. Then pick up the phone and begin the process of



Prayer

Father, give me clear vision to see how best to restore a broken relationship. I need wisdom, humility, love, and courage to do the right thing and take the first step toward restoration.

*Let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony
and the growth of our fellowship together.*

Romans 14:19 (PH)



Questions

Eph. 4:3

Romans 10:12

12:4-5

1 Cor. 1:10

8:6, 12:13

Eph. 4:4, 5:5

Phi. 2:2

Eph. 4:2

You are commissioned by Jesus Christ to do everything possible to preserve the unity, protect the fellowship, and promote harmony in your church family and among all believers. How are we to do this?

- 1) *Focus on what we have in common, not our differences*
- 2) *Be realistic in your expectations*
- 3) *Choose to encourage rather than criticize*
- 4) *Refuse to listen to gossip*
- 5) *Practice God's method for conflict resolution*
- 6) *Support your pastor and elders*

Unity is the soul of fellowship. Destroy it and you rip the heart out of Christ's body.

As believers, what do we have in common?

one Lord, one body, one purpose, one Father, one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism, one love, same salvation, same life, same future

Longing for the ideal while criticizing the real is evidence of immaturity.

Settling for the real without striving for the ideal is complacency.

Maturity is living with the tension.

If a church must be perfect to satisfy you, what is the problem with that?

That same perfection will exclude you from membership.

Rom. 14:4, 10

Whenever you judge another believer, what four things instantly happen?

- 1) *You lose fellowship with God.*
- 2) *You expose your own pride and insecurity.*
- 3) *You set yourself up to be judged by God.*
- 4) *You harm the fellowship of the church.*

Nothing on earth is more valuable to God than his church. He paid the highest price for it and he wants it protected.

What is Rick's definition of gossip?

Passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.

What is the fastest way to end a church or small group conflict?

Lovingly confront the people that are gossiping and insist they stop it.

People who gossip to you will also gossip about you. They cannot be trusted.

Pastors will one day stand before God and give an account of how well they watched over you. How does this affect you?

You are accountable, too. You will give an account to God of how well you followed your leaders.

Prov. 17:4

Jude 1:19

Gal. 5:15

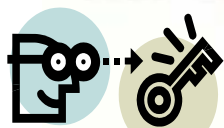
Prov. 20:19

Prov. 26:20

Heb. 13:17

Protecting Your Church

Point to Ponder: It's my responsibility to protect the unity of my church.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It is always easier to stand on the sidelines and take shots at those who are serving than it is to get involved and make a contribution to God. Have you ever been tempted to criticize the work of another member within the church? What should you do instead?

You know spreading gossip is wrong, but you should not listen to it, either, if you want to protect the church. Listening to gossip is like accepting stolen property, and it makes you just as guilty of the crime. What can you do the next time you hear someone start to gossip?

Protecting and promoting the unity of the church will not always be easy. Sometimes you will have to do what's best for the Body, not yourself, showing preference to others. That's one reason God puts us in a church family--to learn unselfishness. How good are you at yielding to the preferences of others? What did you learn from this chapter that can help you when these times come?



Prayer

Father, I need your wisdom to act in ways that protect the unity of your church. Help me to squelch gossip and instead be an encourager. I want to be a unifier, not a divider.

PURPOSE #3

*You Were Created
to Become Like*

*Your attitude should be the same
as that of Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

"As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more."

2 Corinthians 3:18b (NLT)



Questions

Gen. 1:26
2 Cor. 4:4
Col. 1:15
Heb. 1:3

In all of creation, only human beings are made "in God's image." While we don't know all this phrase covers, we do know some of the aspects it includes. What are they?

- 1) we are spiritual beings - our spirits our immortal
- 2) we are intellectual - we can think, reason and solve problems
- 3) we are relational - we can give and receive love
- 4) we have a moral consciousness - we can discern right from wrong

What does the full "image and likeness" of God look like?
Jesus Christ

Christlikeness is all about transforming your character not your personality.

God's ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development.

What happens when you forget that character is one of God's purposes for your life?

You will become frustrated by your circumstances. You'll wonder, "Why is this happening to me? Why am I having such a difficult time?"

John 10:10

How do many Christians misinterpret Jesus' promise of the abundant life in John 10:10?

many interpret it to mean perfect health, a comfortable lifestyle, constant happiness, full realization of your dreams, and instant relief from problems through faith and prayer.

2 Cor. 3:18b

The process of changing us to become more like Jesus is called sanctification, and it is the third purpose of your life on earth.

Obedience unlocks God's power.

Col. 1:27

Christlikeness is not produced by imitation, but by inhabitation. How does this happen in real life?

Through the choices we make. We choose to do the right thing in situations and then trust God's Spirit to give us his power, love, faith, and wisdom to do it.

Never forget that life is not about you. You exist for God's purposes, not vice versa.

When does the Holy Spirit release His power?

The moment you take a step of faith.

Luke 13:24

While effort has nothing to do with your salvation, it has much to do with your

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. . . . We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.

Colossians 1:15 (Msg)



Questions

Eph. 4:22-24

Paul explains in Ephesians 4:22-24 our three responsibilities in becoming like Christ.

- 1) *We must choose to let go of the old ways of acting.*
- 2) *We must change the way we think.*
- 3) *We must "put on" the character of Christ by developing new, godly habits.*

What three things does God use to mold us? How does He use them?

- 1) his Word
- 2) people
- 3) circumstances

God's Word provides the truth we need to grow, God's people provide the support we need to grow, and circumstances provide the environment we need to practice Christlikeness.

Spiritual maturity is not a solitary, individual pursuit.

True/False: Every issue in life can be solved by Bible study and prayer alone.

God uses people.

Why do you need to be a part of a church and community of believers in order to grow to Christlikeness?

Because true spiritual maturity is all about learning to love like Jesus, and you can't practice being like Jesus without being in relationship with other people.

Eph. 4:13

1 Cor. 10:31

Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic; it is a gradual, progressive development that will take the rest of your life.

True/False: There are many different careers that could be in God's will for your life. Explain.

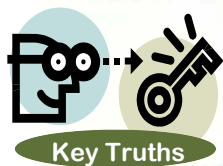
God is far more interested in what you are than in what you do. What God cares about most is that whatever you do, you do in a Christlike manner.

Your character is essentially the sum of your habits, it is how you habitually act.

What do many popular Christian books teach, in contrast to living for God's great purposes? What is this?

*personal fulfillment and emotional stability;
this is narcissism, not discipleship*

Point to Ponder: I was created to become like Christ.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus on your own strength. New Year's resolutions, willpower, and best intentions are not enough. Why are these things not enough? If this is the case, how can we make the changes God wants us to make in our lives?

Much confusion in the Christian life comes from ignoring the simple truth that God is far more interested in building your character than he is anything else. We worry when God seems silent on specific issues such as "What career should I choose?" The truth is, there are *many* different careers that could be in God's will for your life. What God cares about most is that whatever you do, you do in a Christlike manner. How should this truth affect the way you pray? The things for which you pray?

In what area of your life do you need to ask for the Spirit's power to be like Christ today?



Prayer

Jesus, I want to learn to think like you, speak like you, feel what you feel, and act the way you would act. Please use your Words and your Spirit to make me like you.

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

*Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind.
Then you will be able to know the will of God--what is good and is
pleasing to him and is perfect.*

Romans 12:2 (TEV)



Questions

Matthew 9:9
Phil. 2: 12:13

Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment. You must want to grow, decide to grow, make an effort to grow, and persist in growing.

What does discipleship always begin with?

a decision. That's all you need to get started: decide to become a disciple.

God wants you to grow up. Sadly, millions of Christians grow older, but never grow up.

The Bible says, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." This verse shows the two parts of spiritual growth. What are they? Whose responsibility is each?

"work out" - your responsibility

"work in" - God's role

When people are casual about their spiritual growth, what does this show?

it shows they do not understand the eternal implications

Every choice has eternal consequences, so you had better choose wisely.

Prov. 4:23

What are your two options for producing change in your life?

Willpower. Change your autopilot, the way you think.

What is wrong with using willpower to produce change?

Willpower can produce change, but it creates constant internal stress because you haven't dealt with the root cause.

Eph. 4:23

The way you think determines the way you feel, and the way you feel influences the way you act.

Phil. 2:5

We are commanded to "think the same way that Christ Jesus thought." There are two parts to doing this. What are they?

- 1) *Stop thinking immature thoughts, which are self-centered & self-seeking.*
- 2) *Start thinking maturely, which focuses on others, not yourself.*

True/False: Spiritual maturity is best measured by the amount of biblical information and doctrine you know.

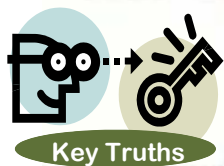
1 Cor. 2:12a

What is the best evidence of spiritual growth?

Thinking of others. This is the heart of Christlikeness.

To be like Christ, you must develop the mind of Christ.

Point to Ponder: It's never too late to start growing.



Key Truths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Application

Nothing shapes your life more than the commitments you choose to make. Your commitments can develop you or they can destroy you, but either way, they will define you. Tell me what you are committed to, and I'll tell you what you will be in twenty years. We become what we are committed to. What are your commitments? List them here. Are these the things you want to shape your life? If not, list some commitments that do reflect what you would like to be.

To change your life, you must change the way you think. Behind everything you do is a thought. Every behavior is motivated by a belief, and every action is prompted by an attitude. In what specific areas do you need to start changing the way you think and start thinking God's way?

Christianity is not a religion or a philosophy, but a relationship and a lifestyle.



Prayer

Dear Father, I want to cooperate with your Spirit's work in my life today. Help me to listen to your teachings and develop my mind like Christ's.

Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:31-32 (KJV)



Questions

John 17:17
2 Tim. 3:17
John 8:31

Sanctification requires revelation. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God. To become like Jesus, we must fill our lives with his Word.

In day-to-day living, abiding in God's word includes three activities:

- 1) *I must accept its authority*
- 2) *I must assimilate its truth*
- 3) *I must apply its principles*

Spiritual growth is the process of replacing lies with truth.

Many of our troubles occur because we base our choices on four unreliable authorities. What are they? Why are they flawed?

- 1) *culture (everyone is doing it)*
- 2) *tradition (we've always done it that way)*
- 3) *reason (it seemed logical)*
- 4) *emotion (it just felt right)*

All four of these are flawed by the Fall.

Every choice has eternal consequences, so you had better choose wisely.

Prov. 30:5
2 Tim. 3:16

What should we base our choices on? What must always have the first and last word in our lives?

The Bible. It must become the authoritative standard for your life; the compass you rely on for direction, the counsel you listen to for making wise decisions, and the benchmark you use to evaluate everything.

It is not enough just to believe the Bible; you must fill your mind with it so that the Holy Spirit can transform you with the truth. What are the five ways to do this?

- 1) *receive it*
- 2) *read it*
- 3) *research it*
- 4) *remember it*
- 5) *reflect on it*

Luke 8:18
James 1:21b

Anytime you feel you are not learning anything from a sermon or a Bible teacher, what should you do?

check your attitude, especially for pride, because God can speak through even the most boring teacher when you are humble and receptive.

What is the difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible?

- 1) *Asking questions of the text.*
- 2) *Writing down your insights. You haven't really studied the Bible unless you have written your thoughts down on paper or a computer.*

*People need more than bread for their life;
they must feed on every word of God.*

Matthew 4: 4 (NLT)



Questions

Psalms 19:11,
49-50, 105
Jer. 15:16
Prov. 22:18
1 Peter 3:15

2 Cor. 3:18
Psalm 119:97

John 15:17
Joshua 1:8
Psalm 1:2-3
James 1:22
Matthew 7:24
John 13:17

Your capacity to remember is a God-given gift. You may think you have a poor memory, but the truth is you have millions of ideas, truths, facts, and figures memorized. What kinds of things do we remember? How can this truth help us remember God's Word?

*We remember what is important to us.
If God's Word is important, you will take the time to remember it.*

What are some of the benefits of memorizing scripture?

It will help you resist temptation, make wise decisions, reduce stress, build confidence, offer good advice, and share your faith with others.

The three keys to memorizing scripture are review, review, review.

No other habit can do more to transform your life and make you more like Jesus than what?

daily reflection on scripture -- meditation

Serious reflection on God's truth is a key to answered prayer and the secret to successful living.

Receiving, reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting on the Word of God are all useless if we fail to do what?

put them into practice

The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.

Rick says that he cannot overstate the value of being a part of a small Bible study discussion group. What are some benefits as it relates to applying God's Word?

Allows us to discuss our personal applications with other people. We always learn other truths we would never learn on our own. Other people will help us see insights we would miss and help us apply God's truth in a practical way.

What is the best way to become a 'doer of the Word'?

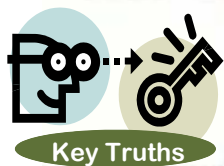
Write out an application step as a result of your reading or studying or reflecting on God's Word.

Each action step should have what three characteristics?

- 1) *personal (involving you)*
- 2) *practical (something you can do)*
- 3) *provable (with a deadline to do it)*

Satan doesn't mind you going to Bible studies as long as you don't do anything with what you learn.

Point to Ponder: The truth transforms me.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Many believers are more faithful to reading their daily newspaper than their Bibles. It's no wonder we don't grow. We can't watch television for three hours, then read the Bible for three minutes and expect to grow. Evaluate your priorities in this area. How can you spend more time in God's Word?

Acts 24: 14

The most important decision you can make today is to settle the issue of what will be the ultimate authority of your life. Resolve that when God says to do something you will trust God's Word and do it whether or not it makes sense or you feel like doing it. Have you made this decision? If not, will you today? If no,



Exercise

- 1) Develop or acquire a daily Bible Reading Plan. (see Resources section)
- 2) Write down a few Bible verses you would like to memorize.
- 3) Develop a practical weekly plan which includes the following: (see Resource section)
 - Time for daily bible reading
 - Time for Bible study
 - Time for scripture memorization
 - Time for reflection



Prayer

*Father, I thank you for your powerful, life-changing Word.
I want my mind to be saturated with Scripture.
Help me to build my life on your truth.*

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28 (NIV)



Questions

Psalms 34:18

Rom. 8:28-29

Heb. 12:2a
2 Cor. 4:17

Why does God depend more on circumstances to make us like Jesus than he depends on our reading the Bible?

You face circumstances 24 hours a day.

When will your most profound and intimate experiences of worship likely be? Why?

During your darkest days. It is during suffering that we learn to pray our most authentic, heartfelt, honest-to-God prayers. When we're in pain, we don't have the energy for superficial prayers.

*You'll never know
that God is all you
need until God is all
you've got.*

True/False: Everything that happens to you has spiritual significance.

What is one of the most misquoted and misunderstood passages in the Bible? Is the promise in these verses for everyone?

*Romans 8:28-29. Read this to the group.
No, the promise is only for God's children. It is not for everyone.*

What is our hope in difficult times based on? What is it not based on?

Based on the truths that God is in complete control of our universe and that he loves us. It is not based on positive thinking, wishful thinking, or natural optimism.

Problems don't automatically produce what God intends. Many people become bitter, rather than better, and never grow up. What is the secret?

You have to respond the way Jesus would.

How did Jesus endure the pain of the cross? What example did he set that we should follow?

He stayed focused on God's plan, not on his immediate pain or problem. This is what we need to do also. We cannot give in to short-term thinking.

*"If you look at the world,
you'll be distressed. If you
look within, you'll be
depressed. But if you look
at Christ you'll be at rest!"*

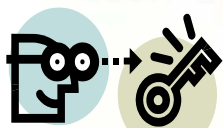
Corrie ten Boom

Character building is a slow process. What happens when we try to avoid or escape the difficulties in life?

We short-circuit the process, delay our growth, and actually end up with a worse kind of pain--the worthless type that accompanies denial and avoidance.

Transformed by Trouble

Point to Ponder: There is a purpose behind every problem.

**Key Truths****Application**

Heb. 5:8-9

Hebrews 10:36

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Since God intends to make you like Jesus, he will take you through the same experiences Jesus went through. That includes loneliness, temptation, stress, criticism, rejection, and many other problems. Why would God exempt us from what he allowed his own Son to experience? Have you ever thought about your problems from this perspective? How can understanding this truth offer comfort, understanding, or insight to the problems you will face in life?

If you are facing trouble right now, don't ask, "Why me?" Instead ask, "What do you want me to learn?" Then trust God and keep on doing what's right. "You need to stick it out, staying with God's plan so you'll be there for the promised completion." Think of a problem you are facing right now and apply this principle.

**Prayer**

*Dear God of all comfort, help me to remember that there is a loving purpose behind every problem that you allow in my life.
Teach me to respond to the difficulties the way Jesus would.
Cultivate my character through the circumstances of life.
Help me to trust your purpose in my pain.*

God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12 (NLT)



Questions

Gal. 5:22-23

On the path to spiritual maturity, even temptation becomes a stepping-stone rather than a stumbling block when you realize what?

That it is just as much an occasion to do the right thing as it is to do the wrong thing. Temptation simply provides the choice.

My temptations have been my masters in divinity.

Martin Luther

How does God develop the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

By allowing you to experience circumstances in which you're tempted to express the exact opposite quality! This is one of the most important spiritual truths you will ever learn.

What are some examples of the above principle?

God teaches us love by putting some unlovely people around us. It takes no character to love people who are lovely and loving to you.

Patience is developed in circumstances in which we're forced to wait and are tempted to be angry or have a short fuse.

A little sin is like being a little pregnant, it will eventually show itself.

2 Cor. 2:11

True/False: All temptations follow the same pattern.

James 1:14-16

Mark 7:21-23

James 4:1

Hebrews 3:12

John 8:44

What is temptation's four-step process?

- 1) *Desire. Satan identifies a desire inside of you.*
- 2) *Doubt. Satan tries to get you to doubt what God has said about sin.*
- 3) *Deception. Satan is the 'father of lies.'*
- 4) *Disobedience. What began as an idea gets birthed into behavior.*

In addition to understanding how temptation works, what specific steps must you take to overcome it?

- 1) *Refuse to be intimidated.*
- 2) *Recognize your pattern of temptation and be prepared for it.*
- 3) *Request God's help.*

1 Cor. 10:13

Should we feel ashamed for being tempted? Why or why not?

No. We will never outgrow temptation or be able to avoid it completely. It is a normal part of being human and living in a fallen world.

How is it that temptation can be considered a compliment?

Satan does not have to tempt those who are already doing his will.

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)



Questions

Temptation only becomes a sin when you give in to it.

What is the difference between physical attraction or sexual arousal and lust? Are they the same thing? Are they both sins?

Attraction and arousal are the natural, spontaneous, God-given responses to physical beauty, while lust is a deliberate act of the will. Lust is a choice to commit in your mind what you'd like to do with your body.

They are not the same thing.

You can be attracted or even aroused without choosing to sin by lusting.

There are certain situation that make you more vulnerable to temptation than others. Why is it important that you identify what these are?

*Wise planning
reduces temptation.*

Because Satan knows exactly what trips you up, and he is constantly working to get you into those circumstances.

If God is waiting to help us defeat temptation, why don't we turn to him more often?

Sometimes we don't want to be helped! We want to give in to temptation even though we know it's wrong.

At other times we're embarrassed to ask God for help because we keep giving in to the same temptation

*Temptation keeps us
dependent upon God.*

Happy is the man who doesn't give in and do wrong when he is tempted, for afterwards he will get as his reward the crown of life that God has promised those who love him.

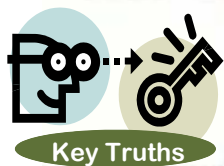
James 1:12 (LB)

1 Peter 5:8
Matthew 26:41
Eph. 4:27
Prov. 4:26-27
Prov. 16:16

Psalms 50:15
Hebrews 4:15
Hebrews 4:16

Growing Through Temptation

Point to Ponder: Every temptation is an opportunity to do good.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

There are certain situations that make you more vulnerable to temptation than others. Some circumstances will cause you to stumble almost immediately, while others don't bother you much. These situations are unique to your weaknesses, and you need to identify them because Satan surely knows them! He knows exactly what trips you up, and he is constantly working to get you into those circumstances. Take some time to answer the following questions in order to prepare you to be able to avoid these situations.

When are you most tempted? What day of the week? What time of the day?

Where are you most tempted? At work? At home? At a neighbor's house? At a sports bar? In an airport or motel room out of town?

Who is with you when you are the most tempted? Friends? Co-workers? A crowd of strangers? When you are alone?

How do you usually feel when you are the most tempted? Tired? Lonely? Bored? Depressed? Under stress? Hurt? Angry? Worried? Proudful?

What Christlike character quality could you develop by defeating the most common temptation you face?



Prayer

*Wonderful Father, thank you for the gift of choice.
Help me to remember that temptation is always an opportunity to do
the right thing. Today I choose your will for my life.*

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)



Questions

James 4:7

Job 31:1
Psalm 119:37a

God has promised never to allow more *on* you than he puts *within* you to handle it. He will not permit any temptation that you could not overcome. However, you must do your part also by practicing what four biblical principles?

- 1) *Refocus your attention on something else.*
- 2) *Reveal your struggle to a godly friend or support group.*
- 3) *Resist the devil.*
- 4) *Realize your vulnerability.*

When tempted, we are advised to refocus our attention, because resisting a thought does not work. What happens every time you try to block a thought out of your mind?

You drive it deeper into your memory. By resisting it, you actually reinforce it.

Since temptation always begins with a thought, what is the quickest way to neutralize its allure?

Turn your attention to something else.

What is the correlation between temptation, attention, emotions, and behavior?

Temptation begins by capturing your attention. What gets your attention arouses your emotions. Then your emotions activate your behavior.

Ignoring a temptation is far more effective than fighting it. Sometimes this means physically leaving a tempting situation. What are some examples of what you might have to do?

Get up and turn off the TV. Walk away from a group that is gossiping. Leave the theater in the middle of a movie.

Rick mentions the 'principle of replacement'. What is this?

You overcome evil with good. You defeat bad thoughts by thinking something better. Keep your mind occupied with God's Word.

True/False: There are some temptations that you cannot overcome on your own. Explain.

You need the help of other people. Some temptations are only overcome

The battle for sin is won or lost in the mind. Whatever gets your attention will get you.

To avoid being stung, stay away from the bees.

You need at least one person you can honestly share your struggles with.

Romans 12:21
Hebrews 3:1
2 Timothy 2:8
Philippians 4:8
Proverbs 4:23
2 Cor. 10:5
Ecc. 4:9-10
James 5:16

Defeating Temptation

Day 27

When people are tempted and still continue strong they should be happy. After they have proved their faith, God will reward them with life forever.

James 1:12 (NCV)



Questions

Revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing.

You are only as sick as your secrets.

What does Rick mean by these two statements?

Hiding your hurt only intensifies it. Problems grow in the dark and become bigger and bigger, but when exposed to the light, they shrink.

You won't be able to say 'No' to the devil unless you've said 'Yes' to Christ.

Why do we hide our faults? What is the reality?

Pride. We want others to think we have everything "under control." The truth is, whatever you can't talk about is already out of control in your life.

James 4:7
Eph. 6:17

After we have humbled ourselves and submitted to God, we are then told to defy the Devil. How can we resist the Devil?

- 1) *Accept God's salvation.*
- 2) *You must use the Word of God as your weapon against Satan.*

True/False: Even if you are a believer, Satan can still force you to do anything.

He can only suggest.

Jer. 17:9

True/False: Given the right circumstances, any of us are capable of any sin.

Prov. 14:16
1 Cor. 19:12

It is easier to stay out of temptation than to get out of it.

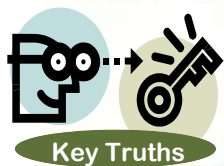


Application

If you're serious about defeating temptation, you must manage your mind and monitor your media intake. The wisest man who ever lived warned, "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts." Don't allow trash into your mind indiscriminately. Be selective. Choose carefully what you think about. Given this warning, evaluate your media intake on a daily and weekly basis. What TV shows do you watch each week? What do they contain? What movies have you watched in the past three months?

Defeating Temptation

Point to Ponder: There's always a way out.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Let me be clear: If you're losing the battle against a persistent bad habit, an addiction, or a temptation, and you're stuck in a repeating cycle of good intention-failure-guilt, you will not get better on your own. You need the help of other people. Some temptations are only overcome with the help of a partner who prays for you, encourages you, and holds you accountable. You need at least one person you can honestly share your struggles with. Do you have an accountability partner? If not, think of some people who may fill this role. Pray this week for God to allow you to select the right person and for that person to be willing.

Let me ask you a tough question: What are you pretending isn't a problem in your life? What are you afraid to talk about? You're not going to solve it on your own. Lack of humility is the very thing that is keeping you from getting better.



Exercise

- 1) If you do not have one, find an accountability partner.
- 2) Identify your persistent sins.
- 3) Make a list of verses to fight each sin and begin memorizing them.



Prayer

Father, I need your grace in defeating the persistent temptations in my life. Give me the courage to share my struggle with a friend who can hold me accountable and give me support.

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again.

Philippians 1:6 (NCV)



Questions

While we worry about how fast we grow, God is concerned about how strong we grow.

"You can only give God as much of you as you understand at that moment." What does this statement mean?

You may think you have surrendered all of your life to Christ, but the truth is, there is a lot to your life that you aren't even aware of. That's okay.

There are no shortcuts to maturity. Spiritual growth, like physical growth, takes time.

Eph. 4:13

Discipleship is the process of conforming to Christ.

Why does it take so long to change and grow up?

- 1) *We are slow learners. We often have to relearn a lesson 40 or 50 times to get it right.*
- 2) *We have a lot to unlearn.*
- 3) *We are afraid to humbly face the truth about ourselves.*
- 4) *Growth is often painful and scary.*
- 5) *Habits take time to develop.*

Christlikeness is your destination, but your journey will last a lifetime.

There is no growth without change; there is no change without fear or loss; and there is no loss without pain.

Your character is the sum total of your habits.

1 Tim. 4:15

What is the only way to develop the habits of Christlike character?

You must practice them--and that takes time.

Ecc. 3:1
James 1:4
Hab. 2:3

As you grow to spiritual maturity, there are several ways to cooperate with God in the process?

- 1) *Believe God is working in your life, even when you don't feel it.*
- 2) *Keep a notebook or journal of lessons learned.*
- 3) *Be patient with God and with yourself.*
- 4) *Don't get discouraged.*

There are no instant habits.

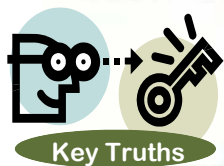
Ps. 102:18
2 Tim. 3:14
Hebrews 2:1

What is the reason we must relearn lessons? What can we do to help ourselves in this area?

We forget them.

Keep a spiritual journal.

Point to Ponder: There are no shortcuts to maturity.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Today we're obsessed with speed, but God is more interested in strength and stability than swiftness. We want the quick fix, the shortcut, the on-the-spot solution. We want a sermon, a seminar, or an experience that will instantly resolve all problems, remove all temptation, and release us from all growing pains. In what areas of your spiritual growth do you need to be patient and persistent?

People often build their identity around their defects. We say, "It's just like me to be . . ." and "It's just the way I am." The unconscious worry is that if I let go of my habit, hurt, or my hang-up, who will I be? This fear can definitely slow down your growth. Have you become too comfortable with any of your defects? Do you use these to rationalize your behavior? If so, ask God to help you overcome these things.

*Remember that
God is never in a
hurry, but he is
always on time.*



Exercise

- 1) Begin a spiritual journal and write down the insights and life lessons God teaches you about him, about yourself, about life, relationships, and everything else.
- 2) Review your spiritual journal regularly.



Prayer

Lord, when I get discouraged help me to see how far I've come, not just how far I still have to go. Thank you that you will never give up on me and will complete what you've started.

PURPOSE #4

You were shaped for serving God

We are simply God's servants. . . Each one of us does the work which the Lord gave him to do: I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plant, but it was God who made the plant grow.

1 Corinthians 3:5-6 (TEV)

*We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)



Questions

Eph. 2:10b
Jeremiah 1:5
2 Tim. 1:9
1 John 3:14

Eph. 4:1-14

Matthew 20:28

Romans 14:12

What is God's fourth purpose for your life?

Ministry or service.

You're not saved by service, but you are saved for service.

We don't (or shouldn't) serve God out of guilt or fear or even duty, but out of what?

Joy, and deep gratitude for what he's done for us. We owe him our lives.

If you have no love for others, no desire to serve others, and you are only concerned about your needs, what should you question?

Whether Christ is really in your life.

True/False: Only certain believers are called to *full-time* Christian service. Explain.

*Your call to salvation included your call to service.
The Bible says every Christian is called to service.*

Why are thousands of local churches dying today?

Because of Christians who are unwilling to serve. They sit on the sidelines as spectators, and the Body suffers.

True/False: For Christians, service is not optional.

It is not something to be tacked onto our schedules if we can spare the time. It is the heart of Christian life.

Impression without expression causes depression. Explain.

Study without service leads to spiritual stagnation.

What is the last thing many believers need today? Why?

To go to another Bible study. They already know far more than they are putting into practice. What they need are serving experiences in which they can exercise their spiritual muscle.

One day God will compare how much time and energy we spent on ourselves compared with what we invested in serving others. At that point, all our excuses for self-centeredness will sound hollow. To all excuses, how might God respond?

"Sorry, wrong answer. I created, saved and called you, and commanded you to live a life of service. What part did you not understand?"

What matters most is not the duration of your life, but the donation of it.

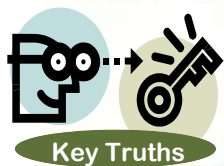
*You were put
on earth to
make a
contribution.*

*A "non-serving"
Christian is a
contradiction in terms.*

*There is no small
service to God, it
all matters.*

Accepting Your Assignment

Point to Ponder: Service is not optional.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Bible says, *"Now you belong to him . . . in order that we might be useful in the service of God."* How much of the time are you being useful in the service of God? What is holding you back from accepting God's call to serve him?

If you're not involved in any service or ministry, what excuse have you been using? Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered . . . Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. God used each of them in his service. He will use you, too, if you stop making excuses.

Most of the time we're more interested in "serve us" than service.

You are going to give your life to something. What will it be--a career, a sport, a hobby, fame, wealth? None of these will have lasting significance. Service is the pathway to real significance. It is through ministry that we discover the real meaning of our lives. What are you currently giving your life to? Is it helping you discover your purpose in life? To what should you be giving your life?



Prayer

Wonderful God, help me remember today that I was put on earth to serve you by serving others. Thank you for the privilege of being a part of what you are doing through your church in the world.

God works through different people in different ways, but it is the same God who achieves his purpose through them all.

1 Corinthians 12:6 (PH)



Questions

Ephesians 2:10

Why are you the way you are?

Because you were made for a specific ministry. Before God created you, he decided what role he wanted you to play on earth, exactly how he wanted you to serve him, and then he shaped you for those tasks.

Whenever God gives us an assignment, he always equips us with what we need to accomplish it. This custom combination of capabilities is called your

Spiritual Gifts

Hearth

Abilities

Personality

Experience

You are a custom-designed, one-of-a-kind original masterpiece.

God gives every believer spiritual gifts to be used in ministry. What are six characteristics of spiritual gifts given in the book?

1 Cor. 2:14
Ephesians 4:7
1 Cor. 12:11
1 Cor. 12:29-30

- 1) They are only given to believers.
- 2) You can't earn your spiritual gifts or deserve them.
- 3) You do not get to choose them. God determines who gets what.
- 4) No single gift is given to everyone.
- 5) No one receives all the gifts.
- 6) They were not given for your own benefit but for the benefit of others.

1 Cor. 12:7

1 Cor. 12:5

What are two-common problems with spiritual gifts?

- 1) gift-envy
- 2) gift-projection

Prov. 27:19

In the Bible, the term *heart* describes what?

the bundle of desires, hopes, interests, ambitions, dreams, and affections you have. The source of all your motivations.

Another word for heart is passion.

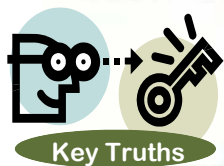
Passion drives perfection.

How do you know when you are serving God from your heart?

- 1) *Enthusiasm. When you are doing what you love to do, no one has to motivate you or challenge you or check up on you. You enjoy it.*
- 2) *Effectiveness. Whenever you do what God wired you to love to do, you get good at it.*

Proverbs 15:6

Point to Ponder: I was shaped for serving God.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

God gives each believer spiritual gifts to be used in ministry. If others don't use their gifts, you get cheated, and if you don't use your gifts, they get cheated. Have you taken the time to discover your spiritual gifts? An unopened gift is worthless. What are your spiritual gifts? List what you believe they are and then take some time to ask others that are close to you. (see list on next page)

God has given each of us a unique emotional "heartbeat" that races when we think about the subjects, activities, or circumstances that interest us. We instinctively care about some things and not about others. Where do those interests come from? They come from God . . . and they are clues to where you should be serving. Don't ignore your interests. Consider how they might be used for God's glory. Take some time to list your interests. What are those things you

Don't settle for just achieving the "good life," because the good life is not good enough.



Exercise

- 1) Determine your spiritual gifts. Make your own list, and then ask other Christians that you trust.
- 2) Determine your interests and list some ways you may use them in service to God.



Prayer

God, you are an amazing Creator. Thank you for all your attention to the details in my life. Thank you for shaping me to serve you in a way that no one else can.

God never wastes anything. He would not give you abilities, interests, talents, gifts, personality, and life experiences unless he intended to use them for his glory. By identifying and understanding these factors you can discover God's will for your life.

Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament

1 Cor. 12:8-10

- word of wisdom
- word of knowledge
- faith
- effecting of miracles
- prophecy
- distinguishing spirits
- kinds of tongues
- interpreting tongues

1 Cor. 12:28-30

- apostles
- prophets
- teachers
- miracles
- healings
- helps
- administrations
- various kinds of (interpretation,

Romans 12:3-8

prophecy
service
teaching
exhortation
giving
leading
mercy

Ephesians 4:11

- apostles
- prophets
- evangelists
- pastors/teachers

1 Peter 4:10-11

serving
speaking

The image displays three horizontal sections of a notebook page, each featuring a faint background watermark. The watermark consists of the words "PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE" in a bold, sans-serif font, with the word "Life" written in a large, elegant cursive script below it. The sections are separated by thin horizontal lines, and the overall design is clean and minimalist.

Life Life Life

PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE
Life Life Life

PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE
Life Life Life

PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE DRIVEN PURPOSE
Life Life Life

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God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings.

1 Peter 4:10 (LB)



Questions

1 Cor. 12:4-6
Ex. 31:3-5
1 Cor. 12:6

No one else on earth will ever be able to play the role God planned for you. What implications does this have on the Body of Christ?

If you don't make your unique contribution to the Body of Christ, it won't be made and the Body of Christ will suffer for it.

What is the definition of abilities?

The natural talents you were born with.

True/False: Your spiritual gifts are more important than your natural abilities. Explain.

Since your natural abilities are from God, they are just as important and as "spiritual" as your spiritual gifts. The only difference is that you were given them at birth.

What is one of the most common excuses people use for not serving? Is it valid? Why or why not?

"I just don't have any abilities to offer."

This is ludicrous. Many studies have revealed that the average person possesses from 500 to 700 different skills and abilities.

1 Cor. 10:31

True/False: Only certain abilities can be used for God's glory.

Heb. 13:21
1 Peter 4:10

What is the relationship between the abilities God has given you and the purpose he has for you?

The abilities you do have are a strong indication of what God wants you to do with your life. He will not ask you to dedicate your life to a task you have no talent for.

1 Cor. 12:6

True/False: There is no "right" or "wrong" temperament for ministry.

The Bible gives us plenty of proof that God uses all types of personalities.

Your personality will affect how and where you use your spiritual gifts and abilities. Explain.

For instance, two people may have the same gift of evangelism, but if one is introverted and the other is extroverted, that gift will be expressed in different ways.

What happens when you are forced to minister in a manner that is "out of character" for your temperament?

It creates tension and discomfort, requires extra effort and energy, and produces less than the best results. This is why mimicking someone else's

Your abilities were not given just to make a living; God gave them to you for your ministry.

*You shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.*

Psalm 139:13 (Msg)



Questions

When you minister in a manner consistent with the personality God gave you, you experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness.

In determining your shape for serving God, you should examine at least six kinds of experiences from your past:

- 1) Family experiences: What did you learn growing up in your family?
- 2) Educational experiences: What were your favorite subjects in school?
- 3) Vocational experiences: What jobs have you been most effective in and enjoyed the most?
- 4) Spiritual experiences: What have been your most meaningful times with God?
- 5) Ministry experiences: How have you served God in the past?
- 6) Painful experiences: What problems, hurts, thorns, and trials have you learned from?

2 Cor. 1:4

Which type of experiences does God use the most to prepare you for ministry?

Painful experiences. God never wastes a hurt!

If you really desire to be used by God, you must understand a powerful truth regarding experiences. What is it?

The very experiences that you have resented or regretted most in life--the ones you've wanted to hide and forget--are the experiences God wants to use to help others.

God intentionally allows you to go through painful experiences to equip you for ministry to others.

2 Cor. 1:8-10

For God to use your painful experiences, what must you be willing to do?

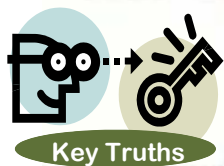
Share them.

You will be most effective when you use your spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of your heart's desire, and in a way that best expresses your personality and experiences.

*"Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you."
Adolph Huxley*

understanding your shape

Point to Ponder: Nobody else can be me.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



God will never ask you to dedicate your life to a task you have no talent for. On the other hand, the abilities you do have are a strong indication of what God wants you to do with your life. To discover God's will for your life, you should seriously examine what you are good at doing and what you're not good at. Make a list of the abilities God has given you.

In the book, Rick mentions many different kinds of service being provided by the members of Saddleback, many of which you would not think of as "Christian" service. Given your abilities, what types of ministry or service could you provide to your church? Be creative.



NOTE: Pages for each of the following are included in the next chapter.

- 1) Make a list of your abilities. Seriously examine what you are good at doing and what you're not good at doing.
- 2) Determine your personality. There are many books and tools that can help you understand your personality. Ask those close to you as well.
- 3) Take some time and reflect on the six kinds of experiences mentioned in this



Gracious Father, I want you to use all the experiences that have shaped my life--both good and bad--for your glory. I am so grateful that you can even use the mistakes and failures of my life. Help me to help others the way you've helped me.

Life Life Life

Life Life Life

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Life Life Life

Life Life Life

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)



Questions

Ephesians 5:17
Romans 12:3b
Galatians 6:4b
Deut. 11:2
Galatians 3:4
John 13:7

What happens when you attempt to serve God in ways that you aren't shaped to serve?

It feels like forcing a square peg into a round hole. It's frustrating, produces limited results, wastes your time, talent and energy.

The Bible says, "Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to find out and do whatever the Lord wants you to." What are the steps to discovering your SHAPE?

- 1) *Begin by assessing your gifts and abilities.*
- 2) *Consider your heart and your personality.*
- 3) *Examine your experiences and extract the lessons you have learned.*

True/False: Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are always confirmed by others.

What is the best way to discover your gifts and abilities?

Experiment with different areas of service.

What do most books teach regarding discovering your spiritual gifts? Why is this process backwards?

They say, "Discover your spiritual gifts and then you'll know what ministry you're supposed to have." It actually works the exact opposite way. Just start serving, experimenting, and then you'll discover your gifts. You have dozens of hidden abilities and gifts you don't know you've got because you've never tried them out.

Extracting the lessons from your experiences takes time. What does Rick recommend in this area?

An entire weekend for a 'life review retreat,' where you pause to see how God has worked in the various defining moments of your life and consider how he wants to use those lessons to help others.

Rom. 9:20-21
Ephesians 4:7

2 Cor. 10:13

Hebrews 12:1

True/False: Since only you know what's best for you, you should be actively trying to change the way God made you to become what you think he would have you to be.

Part of accepting your shape is recognizing your limitations.

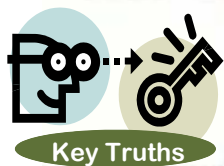
If we are experiencing stress in our ministry area, what may be the problem?

We may be trying to extend our ministry reach beyond that which God shaped us for.

What you are is God's gift to you; what you do with yourself is your gift to God.

Forgotten experiences are worthless; that's a good reason to keep a spiritual journal.

Point to Ponder: God deserves my best.



Key Truths



Questions

Galatians 6:4
2 Cor. 10:12

1 Cor. 10:12-18

Matthew 25:28
1 Tim. 4:14-15

2 Timothy 2:15



Prayer

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Satan will try to steal the joy of service from you in a couple of ways:

- 1) *by tempting you to compare your ministry with others*
- 2) *by tempting you to conform your ministry to the expectation of others*

There are two reasons you should never compare your shape, ministry, or the results of your ministry with anyone else.

- 1) *You will always find someone who seems to be doing a better job than you and you will become discouraged.*
- 2) *You will always find someone who doesn't seem as effective as you and you will get full of pride.*

What will often happen with people who do not understand your shape for ministry? What should you do about it?

They will criticize you and try to get you to conform to what they think you should be doing. Ignore them. Avoid comparisons, resist exaggerations, and seek only God's commendation.

Does the old axiom, "Use it or lose it" apply to the abilities and skills God has given you? Explain.

Yes. Fail to use what you've been given and you will lose it. Use the ability and God will increase it.

Whatever gifts and abilities you have been given can be enlarged and developed through practice.

"If my life is fruitless, it doesn't matter who praises me, and if my life is fruitful, it doesn't matter who criticizes me."

John Bunyan

*Lord, you deserve my best.
Help me to be creative in making the most of what you've given me.
I want to spend my life serving you.*

The first step to discovering your SHAPE is to assess your gifts and abilities. Take a long, honest look at what you are good at and what you're not good at. Paul advised, *"Try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities."* Make a list. Ask other people for their candid opinion. Tell them you're searching for the truth, not fishing for a compliment. Ask questions like these: Where have I seen fruit in my life that other people confirmed? Where have I already been successful?

The second step to discovering your SHAPE is to consider your heart and your personality. Paul advised, *"Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that."* Again, it helps to get feedback from those who know you best. Ask yourself questions: What do I really enjoy doing most? When do I feel the most fully alive? What am I doing when I lose track of time? Do I like routine or variety? Do I prefer serving with a team or by myself? Am I more introverted or

Examine your experiences and extract the lessons you have learned. Review your life and think about how it has shaped you. Moses told the Israelites, *"Remember today what you have learned about the LORD through your experiences with him."* Forgotten experiences are worthless.

1) *Family* experiences: What did you learn growing up in your family?

2) *Educational* experiences: What were your favorite subjects in school?

3) *Vocational* experiences: What jobs have you been most effective in and enjoyed the most?

4) *Spiritual* experiences: What have been your most meaningful times with God?

5) *Ministry* experiences: How have you served God in the past?

6) *Painful* experiences: What problems, hurts, thorns, and trials have you learned from?

If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.

Matthew 10:42 (NLT)



Questions

How does the world define greatness? How does Jesus measure greatness?

The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige, and position. If you can demand service from others, you've arrived. Jesus measured greatness in terms of service, not status. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve.

While knowing your shape is important for serving God, having the heart of a servant is even more important. Why?

Without a servant's heart you will be tempted to misuse your shape for personal gain. You will also be tempted to use it as an excuse to exempt yourself from meeting some needs.

True/False: It is possible to serve in church for a lifetime without ever being a servant.

Matthew 7:16

Jesus said, "You can tell what they are by what they do." How can you know if you have the heart of a servant?

- 1) Real servants make themselves available to serve.
- 2) Real servants pay attention to needs.
- 3) Real servants do their best with what they have.
- 4) Real servants do every task with equal dedication.
- 5) Real servants are faithful to their ministry.
- 6) Real servants maintain a low profile.

Your shape reveals your ministry, but your servant's heart reveals your maturity.

2 Tim. 2:4

True/False: If you only serve when it's convenient for you, you're not a real servant.

Proverbs 3:28

Great opportunities to serve never last long. Explain.

You may only get one chance to serve that person, so take advantage of the moment.

Less than perfect service is always better than the best intention.

Ecc. 11:4

True/False: If it can't be done with excellence, don't do it.

Acts 28:3

Luke 16:10-12

The little things in life determine the big things. Explain.

Great opportunities often disguise themselves in small tasks. There will always be more people willing to do "great" things for God. The race to be a leader is crowded, but the field is wide open for those willing to be servants.

Galatians 1:10

Self-promotion and servanthood don't mix.

Col. 3:4

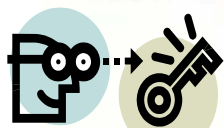
1 Cor. 12:22-24

Notoriety means nothing to real servants because they know the difference between prominence and significance.

Faithful servants never retire.

How Real Servants Act

Point to Ponder: I serve God by serving others.



Key Truths



Application

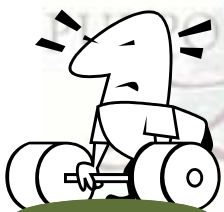
- 1.
- 2.
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If you only serve when it's convenient for you, you're not a real servant. Real servants do what's needed, even when it's inconvenient. Are you available to God anytime? Can he mess up your plans without you becoming resentful? Do you see interruptions as divine appointments for ministry?

Most people don't know the meaning of commitment. They make commitments casually, then break them for the slightest reason without any hesitation, remorse, or regret. Every week, churches and other organizations must improvise because volunteers didn't prepare, didn't show up, or didn't even call to say they weren't coming. Can you be counted on by others? Are there promises you need to keep, vows you need to fulfill, or commitments you need to honor? This is a test. God is testing your faithfulness.

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."

John Wesley



Exercise

- 1) Remind yourself at the beginning of each day that you are God's servant. This way interruptions will not frustrate you as much.
- 2) Begin looking for small tasks that no one else wants to do. Identify one task today and do it (or make plans to do it). Do these little things as if they were great things, because God is watching.



Prayer

Jesus, today I make myself available to be used by you to serve others in your name. I want to spend my life in serving you.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)



Questions

2 Chron. 25:2

God is always more interested in why we do something than in what we do.
Attitudes count more than achievements.

Real servants serve God with a mindset of five attitudes:

- 1) *Servants think more about others than about themselves.*
- 2) *Servants think like stewards, not owners.*
- 3) *Servants think about their work, not what others are doing.*
- 4) *Servants base their identity in Christ.*
- 5) *Servants think of ministry as an opportunity, not an obligation.*

Phil. 2:4, 7

What happens when we stop focusing on our own needs?

We become aware of the needs around us.

Luke 16:13

What has the greatest potential to replace God in your life?

Money. More people are sidetracked by materialism than anything else.

This is true humility, not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less.

How can you make money serve you, instead of you being a slave to it?

Make Jesus your master and it will serve you. If money is your master, you will become its slave.

True/False: Wealth is a sin. Explain.

Wealth is not a sin, but failing to use it for God's glory is.

Galatians 5:26

Why is competition between God's servants illogical?

We're all on the same team; our goal is to make God look good, not ourselves; we've been given different assignments; we're all uniquely shaped.

When you're busy serving, you don't have time to be critical.

Nehemiah 6:3

True/False: We must always defend ourselves against criticism.

John 13:3-4

If you're going to be a servant, you must settle your identity in Christ. Why?

Only secure people can serve. Insecure people are always worrying about how they appear to others. The more insecure you are, the more you will want people to serve you, and the more you will need their approval.

Psalms 100:2

John 12:26

Hebrews 6:10

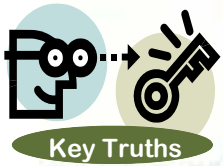
Real servants "serve the Lord with gladness." Why do they serve with gladness?

Because they love the Lord, they are grateful for his grace, they know serving is the highest use of life, and they know God has promised a reward.

The closer you get to Jesus, the less you need to promote yourself.

Thinking Like a Servant

Point to Ponder: To be a servant I must think like a servant.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Living for ministry and living for money are mutually exclusive goals. To become a real servant you are going to have to settle the issue of money in your life. Jesus said, *"No servant can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve both God and Money."* Which one will you choose?

When you're busy serving, you don't have time to be critical. Any time spent criticizing others is time that could be spent ministering. Real servants don't complain of unfairness, don't have pity parties, and don't resent those not serving. Real servants just trust God and keep on serving. Are you guilty of any of the above? If so, ask God to change your attitude to that of a real servant.

Imagine what could happen if just 10 percent of all Christians in the world got serious about their role as real servants. Imagine all the good that could be done. Are you willing to be one of those people?

"The only really happy people are those who have learned how to serve."

Albert Schweitzer



Prayer

*Father, help me to do what I can, with what I have, for you today.
Help me not to compare or compete with others who serve you.
Help me to focus solely on what you've called me to do.*

"My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness."

2 Corinthians 12:9a (NIV)



Questions

1 Cor. 1:27

2 Cor. 12:7

God loves to use weak people. Everyone has weaknesses. The important issue is what we do with them. What do we normally do with our weaknesses? What is the problem with this?

Usually we deny them, defend them, excuse them, hide them, and resent them. This prevents God from using them the way he desires.

Your weaknesses are not an accident. Why did God allow them in your life?

For the purpose of demonstrating his power through you.

What is the definition of a weakness? What is it not?

Any limitation that you inherited or have no power to change. Could be a physical, emotional, talent, or intellectual limitation.

A weakness is not a sin or a vice or a character defect that you can change.

God will use us if we allow him to work through our limitations. How do we do this?

- 1) *Admit your weaknesses.*
- 2) *Be content with your weaknesses.*
- 3) *Honestly share your weaknesses.*
- 4) *Glory in your weaknesses.*

Paul gives us several reasons to be content with our inborn weaknesses:

- 1) *They cause us to depend on God.*
- 2) *They prevent arrogance and keep us humble.*
- 3) *They encourages fellowship between believers.*
- 4) *They increase our capacity for sympathy and ministry.*

True/False: In order to be humble, you must put yourself down and deny your strengths. Explain.

Humility is neither of these . . . it is being honest about your weaknesses.

At some point in your life you must decide whether you want to impress people or influence people. You can impress people from a distance, but you must get close to influence them.

What is the most essential quality for leadership? How do you build it?

Credibility. People must be able to trust you or they won't follow you. By being honest . . . not by pretending to be perfect.

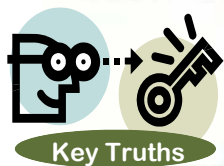
If God only used perfect people, nothing would ever get done.

God is never limited by our limitations.

2 Cor. 12:10
2 Cor. 12:7
Numbers 12:3
Judges 6:12
Romans 4:11
Matthew 16:18
Acts 13:22

God's Power in Your Weakness

Point to Ponder: God works best when I admit my weakness.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Are you limiting God's power in your life by trying to hide your weaknesses? What do you need to be honest about in order to help others?

Ministry begins with vulnerability. The more you let down your guard, take off your mask, and share your struggles, the more God will be able to use you in serving others. Of course, vulnerability is risky. It can be scary to lower your defenses and open up your life to others. But the benefits are worth the risk. Are you afraid to admit your weaknesses? Are you holding God back from using you to serve others? If so, ask God to give you the strength and confidence to openly share your failures, feelings, frustrations and fears.



Exercise

- 1) Take the time to identify your personal weaknesses. You might make a list of them.



Prayer

Father, use my weaknesses to show your glory. Let my weaknesses cause me to depend on you completely. Let my life be an example of what you can do through ordinary people who are yielded to you.

PURPOSE #5

You Were Made For a Mission

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
and he who wins souls is wise.*

Proverbs 11:30 (NIV)

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)



Questions

Colossians 1:25

2 Cor. 5:18, 20

God wants you to have both a ministry in the Body of Christ and a mission in the world. Your ministry is your service to believers, and your mission is your service to unbelievers.

What is God's fifth purpose for your life?

Fulfilling your mission in the world.

The mission Jesus had while on this earth is now our mission because we are the body of Christ. What is that mission?

Introducing people to God.

The Bible gives several reasons why your mission is so important:

- 1) *Your mission is a continuation of Jesus' mission on earth.*
- 2) *Your mission is a wonderful privilege.*
- 3) *Telling others how they can have eternal life is the greatest thing you can do for them.*
- 4) *Your mission has eternal significance.*
- 5) *Your mission gives your life meaning.*
- 6) *God's timetable for history's conclusion is connected to the completion of our commission.*

The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.
William James

Ezekiel 3:18

2 Cor. 5:18

2 Cor. 6:1

2 Cor. 5:20

True/False: God holds you responsible for the nonbelievers who live around you.

Your mission involves two great privileges. What are they?

Working with God and representing him.

Everybody needs Jesus.

Acts 4:12

What is one problem that long-term Christians have?

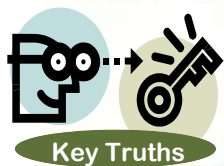
They forget how hopeless it felt to be without Christ. We must remember that no matter how contented or successful people appear to be, without Christ they are hopelessly lost and headed for eternal separation from God.

Why is your mission more important than any job, achievement, or goal you will reach during your life on earth?

It will impact the eternal destiny of other people. Your job will not.

If you want to be used by God, you must care about what God cares about. What does God care about most?

Point to Ponder: I was made for a mission.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Jesus said, "Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you." These words of Jesus are not the Great Suggestion. If you are a part of God's family, your mission is mandatory. To ignore it would be disobedience. There are people on this planet whom only you will be able to reach. If just one person will be in heaven because of you, your life will have made a difference for eternity. Start looking around at your personal mission field and pray, "God, who have you placed in my life for me to tell about Jesus?" Make a list of those people.

To fulfill your mission will require that you abandon your agenda and accept God's agenda for your life. You can't just "tack it on" to all the other things you'd like to do with your life. You must say, like Jesus, "Father, . . . I want your will, not mine." If you will commit to fulfilling your mission in life no matter what it costs, you will experience the blessing of God in ways that few people ever experience. There is almost nothing God won't do for the man or woman who is committed to serving the kingdom of God. Are you ready to abandon your own agenda and commit to serving the kingdom of God? If not, why not?



- 1) Ask, "God, who have you put in my life for me to tell about Jesus?" then . . .
- 2) Start looking for people God places in your path with whom you can share the gospel.



Father, thank you for the privilege of being a part of your plan for the world. I want you to use me to bring others into your family for eternity. Help me to reach even more people for Jesus.

Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (TEV)



Questions

1 John 5:10a
1 Peter 2:9
Acts 1:8

God has given you a life message to share. What four things are included in your Life Message?

- 1) Your testimony: the story of how you began a relationship with Jesus
- 2) Your life lessons: the most important lessons God has taught you
- 3) Your godly passions: the issues God shaped you to care about most
- 4) The Good News: the message of salvation

What is the job of a witness? What isn't a witness expected to do?

simply sharing your personal experiences regarding the Lord. A witness isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict. Witnesses simply report what happened to them or what they saw.

Acts 22-26

Why is your personal testimony more effective than a sermon?

- 1) see pastor's as salesman, but you as a satisfied customer, more credibility
- 2) personal stories are easier to relate to than principles
- 3) people love to hear personal stories
- 4) capture our attention
- 5) remember them longer
- 6) natural curiosity about experiences they've never had
- 7) build a relational bridge that Jesus can walk across
- 8) bypasses intellectual defenses

Proverbs 25:12

While it is wise to learn from experience, it is wiser to learn from the experience of others.

True/False: Everyone should be passionate about the things you are passionate about.

Romans 1:17
2 Cor. 5:19

What is the Good News?

The Good News is that when we trust God's grace to save us through what Jesus did, our sins are forgiven, we get a purpose for living, and we are promised a future home in heaven.

2 Cor. 5:14

All the training in the world will not motivate you to witness for Christ until what?

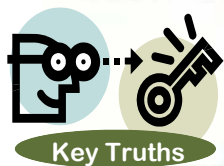
Until you internalize the eight convictions covered in the previous chapter. Most important, you must learn to love lost people the way God does.

1 John 4:18

What should you do if you've been afraid to share the Good News with those around you?

Sharing Your Life Message

Point to Ponder: God wants to say something to the world through me.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

As long as there is one person in your community who isn't in the family of God, your church must keep reaching out. The church that doesn't want to grow is saying to the world, "You can go to hell." What are you willing to do so that people you know will go to heaven? Invite them to church? Share your story? Give them this book? Take them a meal? Pray for them every day until they are saved? Is anyone going to be in heaven because of you? Make a list of some practical things you can do to move people you know closer to heaven.

As you reflect on your testimony and your life lessons, who does God want you to



- 1) Write out your personal testimony and then memorize the main points.
- 2) Make a list of your life lessons. You haven't really thought about them unless you have written them down.



Lord, give me the courage to speak the unique Life Message you've given to me. Help me to break out of my comfort zone so you can speak through me. Put someone in my path today so that I can share your message.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:15-16, *"Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect."* The best way to "be ready" is to write out your testimony and then memorize the main points. Divide it into four parts.

1. What my life was like before I met Jesus

2. How I realized I needed Jesus

3. How I committed my life to Jesus

Your Life Message includes your life lessons. These are lessons and insights you have learned about God, relationships, problems, temptations, and other aspects of life. Write down the major life lessons you have learned so you can share them with others. You haven't really thought about them unless you have written them down. Here are a few questions to jog your memory and get you started.

What has God taught me from failure?

What has God taught me from a lack of money?

What has God taught me from pain or sorrow or depression?

What has God taught me through waiting?

What has God taught me through illness?

What has God taught me from disappointment?

Send us around the world with the news of your saving power and your eternal plan for all mankind.

Psalm 67: 2 (LB)



Questions

You have a choice to make. You will either be a *world-class* Christian or a *worldly* Christian. What is the difference?

Worldly Christians look to God primarily for personal fulfillment. They are saved, but self-centered. Their prayers focus on their own needs, blessings, and happiness. It's a 'me-first' faith.

World-class Christians know they were saved to serve and made for ministry. They are eager to receive a personal assignment and excited about the privilege of being used by God.

It has never been easier in history to fulfill your commission to go to the whole world. Why is this so?

Internet, phones, faxes, airplanes, ships, trains, buses, automobiles

To be a world-class Christian, your perspective and attitudes must change. What mental shifts do you need to make?

- 1) *Shift from self-centered thinking to other-centered thinking.*
- 2) *Shift from local thinking to global thinking.*
- 3) *Shift from "here and now" thinking to eternal thinking.*
- 4) *Shift from thinking of excuses to thinking of creative ways to fulfill your commission.*

What should be your goal when talking to unbelievers?

To figure out where others are in their spiritual journey and then do whatever will bring them a step closer to knowing Christ.

What three ways does Rick give to start thinking globally?

- 1) *Begin praying for specific countries.*
- 2) *Read and watch the news with "Great Commission eyes."*
- 3) *Just get up and go on a short-term mission project to another country.*

Why is prayer the most important tool for your mission in the world? What should we pray for?

People may refuse or reject our message, but they are defenseless against our prayers.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1) <i>opportunities to witness</i> | 2) <i>courage to speak up</i> |
| 3) <i>for those who will believe</i> | 4) <i>the rapid spread of the message</i> |
| 5) <i>more workers</i> | 6) <i>missionaries and others involved</i> |

What must we do to make the most of our time here on earth? Why?

Maintain an eternal perspective. This keeps us from majoring on the minor issues and helps us distinguish between what's urgent and what's ultimate.

1 Cor. 14:20

Phil 2:4

John 3:16

Acts 17:26-27

Colossians 1:6

2 Cor. 4:18

Luke 9:62

1 Cor. 7:31

1 Cor. 10:33

Colossians 1:6

Psalm 2:8

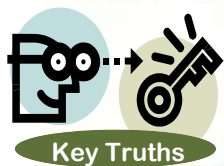
2 Cor. 4:18

Luke 9:62

1 Cor. 7:31

Becoming a world-class christian

Point to Ponder: The Great Commission is my commission.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are some common excuses people use for not fulfilling their mission in the world? Have you used any of these excuses? What is the Lord's response?

- 1) *I only speak English*
- 2) *I don't have anything to offer*
- 3) *I'm too old (or too young)*

"Don't say that," the Lord replied, "for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you."

Why have many Christians missed God's plan for their lives? What can you do to make sure this will not happen to you?

Because they have never asked God if he wanted them to serve as a missionary somewhere.

What steps can you take to go on a short-term mission project in the next year?



Exercise



Prayer

- 1) Are you an Acts 1:8 Christian? Set a goal to participate in a mission project to each of the four targets listed in Acts 1:8.

*Father, I want to care about the whole world the way you do.
Let my heart be moved by the millions who have yet to hear the Good
News of your love. I accept the Great Commission as my commission.
Here I am, send me.*

Live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do.

Ephesians 5:15 (PH)



Questions

Proverbs 27:17
1 Thess. 5:11

What two statements sum up what this book is all about?

The Great Commandment and the Great Commission of Jesus.

What four important activities can help you keep your life balanced and on-track?

- 1) *joining a small group for accountability*
- 2) *regularly evaluating your spiritual health*
- 3) *recording your progress in a personal journal*
- 4) *passing on what you learn to others*

What benefits does a small reading group provide that a book by itself cannot?

*Can give and receive feedback about what you are learning.
Can discuss real-life examples. You can pray for, encourage, and support each other as you begin to live out these purposes.*

2 Cor. 13:5
Lam. 3:40

What is the best way to *balance* the five purposes in your life?

Evaluate yourself periodically.

Hebrews 2:1
Numbers 33:2

What is the best way to *reinforce* your progress in fulfilling God's purposes for your life?

Keep a spiritual journal. This is not a diary of events, but a record of the life lessons you don't want to forget.

Psalms 56:8
Psalms 102:18

How does God use problems to fulfill all five purposes in your life?

- 1) *Problems force you to focus on God*
- 2) *Problems draw you closer to others in fellowship*
- 3) *Problems build Christlike character*
- 4) *Problems provide you with a ministry*
- 5) *Problems give you a testimony*

Proverbs 11:25
2 Timothy 2:2
James 4:17

If you want to keep growing, what is the best way to learn more?

To pass on what you have already learned.

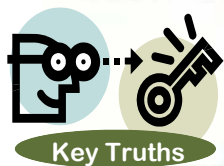
John 17:4
John 17:6-26

The night before he was crucified, Jesus reported to his Father, *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."* When Jesus prayed these words, he had not yet died for our sins, so what "work" had he completed?

A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will make you a great Christian.

We remember what we record.

Point to Ponder: Blessed are the balanced; they shall outlast everyone.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which of the four activities do you need to begin in order to stay on track and balance God's five purposes for your life? List specifics and dates you will begin.

To maintain your physical health, you need regular check-ups with a doctor who can assess your vital signs--blood pressure, temperature, weight, and so on. At least five times in scripture we are told to test and examine our own spiritual health. For your spiritual health you need to regularly check the five vital signs of worship, fellowship, growth in character, ministry, and mission. Jeremiah advised, "Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God." Take some time to go through the Purpose-Driven Life Spiritual Health Assessment in the Resources section of this study guide.



Exercise

- 1) If you have not already, create or join a small study group.
- 2) Give yourself a regular spiritual check-up. (see Resources section)
- 3) Write down your progress in a journal.



Prayer

Jesus, now that I know your five purposes for my life, I ask you to help me balance them. Don't let me overemphasize one of them to the neglect of the others.

David . . . served the purpose of God in his own generation.

Acts 13: 36 (NASB)



Questions

Psalms 33:11
Proverbs 4:26
Proverbs 17:24
Phil. 1:10

Most people struggle with three basic issues in life. What are they?
Where are the answers to all three of them found?

- 1) Identity: "Who am I?"
- 2) Importance: "Do I matter?"
- 3) Impact: "What is my place in life?"

The answers to all three questions are found in God's five purposes for you.

It's easy to drift away from what matters most and slowly get off course. To prevent this, you should develop a purpose statement for your life and then review it regularly. What is a Life Purpose Statement?

- 1) It's a statement that summarizes God's purposes for your life.
- 2) It's a statement that points the direction of your life.
- 3) It's a statement that defines "success" for you.
- 4) It's a statement that clarifies your roles.
- 5) It's a statement that expresses your shape.

Whatever is at the center of your life is your God.

Psalms 33:11

A purpose statement is not a list of goals. What is the difference between goals and purposes?

Goals are temporary; purposes are permanent.

2 Chron. 14:4
Ephesians 3:17
2 Peter 1:5
2 Cor. 9:12
John 15:16a
Joshua 24:15
Phil. 1:27
Ephesians 5:25

What are life's five great questions you should consider as you prepare your life purpose statement?

- 1) What will be the center of my life?
- 2) What will be the character of my life?
- 3) What will be the contribution of my life?
- 4) What will be the communication of my life?
- 5) What will be the community of my life?

Goals are temporary; purposes are eternal.

Phil. 4:7

How do you know when God is at the center of your life?

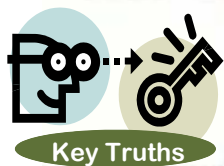
When God is at the center, you worship. When he's not, you worry.

John 15:16a

True/False: God expects us to meet the needs of everyone. Explain.

Even Jesus didn't meet the needs of everyone while on earth. You have to

Point to Ponder: Living with purpose is the only way to really live.



Key Truths



Application

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

God is still looking for people to use. The Bible says, "*The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*" Will you be a person God can use for his purposes? Will you serve God's purpose in your generation?

When will you take the time to write down your answers to life's five great questions? When will you put your purpose on paper? It may take you weeks or months to craft your life purpose statement just the way you want it. Pray, think about it, talk with close friends, and reflect on Scripture. You may go through several rewrites before you get to your final form. Even then, you will probably make minor changes as time goes by and God gives you more insight into your



Exercise

- 1) Develop a purpose statement for your life and review it regularly. Take your time. Do not try to complete it in a single setting.
- 2) Develop a shorter statement or slogan that summarizes the five purposes in a



Prayer

Dear God, I commit the rest of my life to serving your purposes in my generation--anywhere, anytime, anyway. Help me to spread this message to others so they can become what you made them to be.

What will be the center of my life? This is the question of *worship*. Who are you going to live for? What are you going to build your life around? Include any scriptures that speak to you about this purpose.

What will be the *character* of my life? This is the question of *discipleship*. What kind of person will you be? Make a list of the character qualities you want to work on and develop in your life. You might begin with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 or the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. Include any scriptures that speak to you about this purpose.

What will be the *contribution* of my life? This is the question of *service*. What will be your ministry in the Body of Christ? Knowing your combination of spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences (SHAPE), what would be your best role in the family of God? How can you make a difference? Is there a specific group in the Body that you are shaped to serve? Include any scriptures that speak to you about this purpose.

What will be the *communication* of my life? This is the question of your *mission* to unbelievers. Your mission statement is a part of your life purpose statement. It should include your commitment to share your testimony and the Good News with others. You should also list the life lessons and godly passions you feel God has given you to share with the world. As you grow in Christ, God may give you a special target group of people to focus on reaching. Be sure to add this to your statement. Include any scriptures that

What will be the *community* of my life? This is the question of your *fellowship*. How will you demonstrate your commitment to other believers and connection to the family of God? Where will you practice the “one another” commands with other Christians? To which church family will you be joined as a functioning member? You should include an expression of your love for God’s church in your statement. Include any scriptures that

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What On Earth Am I Here For?

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