



TEAM Groups Manual

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CHAPELSTREET MEN

The Chapelstreet Men's Ministry exists for men to experience grace, grow in faith and to make an impact where they are, whether it's in the home, our community or the greater world.

We believe every man leaves a legacy and our desire is for men to leave a legacy of gospel impact, we are focused on being disciples of Jesus, who are actively making disciples while walking with and alongside other disciples

- Our first and foremost priority is to be men who are following and obeying Jesus and growing in discipleship (***John 15:5***)
- Our second priority is to be actively sharing our faith with the goal of leading others to follow and obey Jesus as well (***2 Timothy 2:2***)
- Our third priority is to each other. We believe that no man goes alone, so we engage regularly with a team of other men who committed to walking together as we follow Jesus (***Ecclesiastes 4:11-12***)

What does Chapelstreet Men's ministry do?

1. **Events:** Events are important for the men's ministry and they serve several functions. Some events are designed for fun and to be a relational way to introduce men to the Men's ministry and to other men. Other events are celebratory in nature to look back on what God is doing and has done through the ministry and still over events are designed to strengthen men in their faith and to help men grow in their discipleship.
2. **First Friday:** On the first Friday of every month, men from all 4 Chapelstreet campuses gather at 6:00 AM at our Keslinger Campus. This large group gathering is designed to be a time of fellowship, teaching, and hearing the faith-stories of other men in the church. Each man who attends is assigned a specific table for the purpose of connecting with and engaging with other men.

3. TEAM Groups: In the 3 weeks between each First Friday, many men continue to meet together in smaller groups known as TEAM Groups. These groups meet every day of the week and they often meet at any of the four Chapelstreet campuses, in coffee shops, or in individual homes. The purpose of these groups is for men to have the opportunity to continue to grow in faith while engaging deeply with other like minded men. These Groups will typically meet for 90 minutes.

CHAPELSTREET MEN'S TEAM GROUPS

A Chapelstreet Men's Group is a group of men who meet together for the purpose of mutual accountability, encouragement, Scripture memory, and prayer.

Our primary goal is to pursue Christ together. We are challenged to go deeper and reveal more than merely the surface level things about our lives. We challenge each other to know the other members and be known by them on a deeper level than the typical small group. We want to help each other grow into the kind of men that God desires us to be!

What Do We Do in Small Groups?

We Share - We are committed to sharing our progress in spiritual growth together; this means we will share both our victories and our struggles and defeats.

We Pray - We keep a running list of prayer concerns and update it weekly with victories, struggles and needs. We expect that members will be in prayer for each other on a consistent basis.

We Read and Study - This year, we will be following the current sermon series and implementing the **S.O.A.P.** method of Bible journaling. **S.O.A.P.** stands for **S**cripture, **O**bservation, **A**pplication and **P**rayer. This method is a great way to get more out of reading your Bible.

We Memorize - We challenge each other to commit passages of Scripture to memory together and we hold each other accountable to this by reciting these passages in front of the other group members.

We Practice - We understand that what we do together during our meetings is of little value if it does not make a difference in our daily lives as husbands, fathers, employees, etc. This is why we are committed to following up with each other and challenging each other to make our faith in Christ real.

We Show Up - We “show up” early and often because we know that growth is a process and it takes commitment over time. We “show up” for each other whenever a brother from your group should have a need or crisis of any kind. We understand that there is no genuine growth without commitment and sacrifice.

Who? Christian men who are willing to make the necessary commitment.

When? Various mornings throughout the week.

Where? On our Chapelstreet Church campuses, in coffee shops, or in a home.

In our Team Groups, We Are Committed to the Following Values:

- 1. Priority.** Because we believe in the value of community, we agree to give priority to our group meetings. We will give this group priority over all life events that are non-emergency. When we must miss, we will let the other group members know in advance.
- 2. Confidentiality.** We agree that whatever personal information is shared in a Team Group stays in a Team Group. This includes what is shared through phone calls, emails, etc. We want this group to be a safe place to grow.
- 3. Participation.** The quality and depth of our times together are directly related to the level of engagement of those present. We agree to encourage, support, and stand behind one another.
- 4. Accessibility.** We agree to give one another the right to call in times of need—even in the middle of the night. We also agree that by joining a Team Group, we have given the other members permission to ask us hard questions and tell us hard things.
- 5. Openness.** We will seek to be open and honest with each other. Our small group will be a place to be ourselves, and be accepted for who we are.
- 6. Respect.** We agree to communicate in ways that are respectful, and to give advice only when it is either requested, or prayerfully thought out. We will strive to be available to one another and listen, encourage, support, and tell the truth in loving ways.

Scripture Memory

Scripture memory is a core discipline and commitment of our life together. We desire to be men who meditate on and delight in the Word of God. We simply cannot become these kind of men unless God's Word has a central place in our minds and hearts.

For those who say or think that they cannot memorize Scripture – the fact is, we can and do memorize all the time. We memorize people's names, television commercials, directions to places we frequent, credit card numbers, and phone numbers. How? We remember information that is important to us or that we frequently use or repeat. Scripture memorization is no different. It requires motivation and regular, systematic review.

But how are we to grow? Growth in the Lord is called "sanctification," the process by which we become more and more like Jesus Christ and more and more separated from the world. Jesus Christ says that happens by the Word of God: "Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth" (John 17:17). However, the Word of God must enter us through our MIND (Romans 12:2) – through our understanding – in order to change our hearts.

Thus we are to meditate deeply on Scripture in order to understand it better, so that our hearts may be changed. And we are to meditate on "every word that comes from the mouth of God." There is no more useful discipline to this careful process of verse by verse meditation than memorization.

Memorization is not the same as meditation, but it is almost impossible for someone to memorize a passage of Scripture without somewhat deepening his/her understanding of those verses.

Plus, once the passage is memorized, a lifetime of reflection is now available through ongoing review... while driving on long trips, while jogging or biking, while walking on beaches, while conversing with friends, memorized verses can flow from you and cause a deepening of understanding.

What is S.O.A.P?

It is a method of Bible journaling and is a great way to get more out of reading your Bible. It allows you to record your thoughts, emotions, and the revelation you receive from God's Word. Space is provided throughout this booklet and you are encouraged to implement this method. Here is an example for you to follow:

Scripture: Read meditatively and thoughtfully through a portion of scripture. Pick a verse or two that stood out to you and write it in the space provided.

Observation: Now write some observations about the passage. What stood out to you? What did you observe about the passage, nature of God or purposes of God? How is Christ revealed in this?

Application: How does this passage and observation apply to you life? What changes will you commit to? Ultimately ask, "How does this change me?" This is where the scripture and observation gain traction in your life.

Be doers of the word and not merely hearers. (James 1:22)

Prayer: Now write out a prayer to God in response to what you've learned and committed to as a result of the passage. This is a way to turn God's truth back to Him. Be honest and express your heart to Him. God always listens and He delights in your prayers.

*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry: Psalm 34:15*

*The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked,
but the prayer of the upright pleases him. Proverbs 15:8*

Sharing Our Stories ...

Stories are powerful. We all love stories, especially ones that give us an “inside look” into someone else’s life. Every believer possesses a powerfully important story in the narrative of his or her life. It’s the one that tells how His story became yours!

In our TEAM Groups, we are committed to telling our stories, and to knowing and sharing in each other’s stories.

Sharing your faith story is an integral component in living out your faith. Your individual story makes up the greater story—the story of God’s redeeming His people for Himself.

Our stories encourage other believers while God also uses them to convert unbelievers.

Your faith story is an important tool in the hand of a mighty God: it can help others understand how God is working in their story.

Your story may be the divining rod that leads another to Christ!

As you contemplate your experience, consider these points to help inspire your story:

- Would you describe your conversion to faith as a dramatic “from darkness to light” experience, a subtle, quiet, but persistent process/pursuit, or something in between?

Tell about the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit that began the journey you walk today.

- How and when did you come to receive Christ and give Him complete control of your life?
- How has your life changed after you came to know Christ?
- How would you describe your relationship with God today?

- Who has been particularly instrumental in your faith story?
- What passages and/or characters in Scripture has God used to bring you to belief and draw you closer to Him?
- What are the greatest struggles of your faith journey (in the past and today)?
- What are the greatest joys of your faith journey (in the past and today)?
- How is God present in the events of your everyday life?

Accountability

What is it, and does it really work?

It seems that most traditional men's accountability groups are really good at encouraging men to become better liars and pretenders.

The main problem with accountability groups is that they cause us to focus on our sin. And as any psychologist will tell you, the more you focus on something, even if it is focusing on trying not to do something, the harder it is to not do what you are focusing on.

When we walk around thinking, "Do not look; do not taste; do not touch", we will constantly struggle with urge to look, taste, and touch. This is essentially what Paul is saying in Romans 8:5-7 when he talks about the mind set on fleshly things.

If we set our mind on things of the flesh, even if we are setting our mind on *not doing things of the flesh*, we will face the constant struggle of falling into fleshly things, and will frequently stumble.

The point of life in Christ is not just to sin less, but to love God more! And the closer we get to God, the less likely it is that we will sin, not because we have developed some great inner resolve, but because we will learn that life with God is better than anything that sin and the world can offer.

When we allow God into our struggles with us, we are still growing in intimacy with God, even in the midst of our struggles!

For all of these reasons, the purpose and goal of a TEAM Group is not merely to help each other avoid sin, but to help each other grow in love for God and others! Our focus is on who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for us, and what His desire is for us ... not just on all of the things that we know we should stop doing.
So ... we hold ourselves, and each other, accountable to live as men who are in pursuit of Christ (Phil. 3:13-14).

When a brother confesses his sin to the group, our role is to do four things ...

1. Remind him of the forgiveness and acceptance he already has in Christ!
2. Encourage him for his honesty before God and others, and urge him to take whatever steps are necessary for full restoration.
3. Faithfully pray for him and follow up with him in the area he has just confessed.
4. Call and hold each other accountable to become godly men with Christ-like character. Encourage each other to pursue Christ, not just avoid sin!

Thoughts on Confession ...

If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

-1 John 1:6-10

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. - James 5:16

Some people become Christians and just go on their merry way, never thinking much of sin at all, while others fixate on their failings and suffer from despair. One person feels no conviction of sin; the other person feels no relief from sin.

Neither of these habits should mark the Christian. The Christian should often feel conviction, practice confession, and experience the cleansing of Christ's forgiveness.

In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer illustrates how the confession of our sins to one another can lead us from *isolation to community*:

"He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone... The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy... **In confession the break-through to community takes place.** Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community.

The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen even in the midst of a pious community. In confession the light of the Gospel breaks into the darkness and seclusion of the heart. The sin must be brought into the light. The unexpressed must be openly spoken and acknowledged. All that is secret and hidden is openly manifest. The expressed, acknowledged sin has lost all its power. It has been revealed and judged as sin. It can no longer tear the fellowship asunder. Now the fellowship bears the sin of the brother. He is no longer alone with his evil for he has cast off his sin in confession and handed it over to God. It has been taken away from him. Now he stands in the fellowship of sinners who live by the grace of God in the Cross of Jesus Christ."

"Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a brother? God is holy and sinless; He is a just judge of evil and the enemy of all disobedience. But a brother is sinful as we are. He knows from his own experience the dark night of secret sin. Why should we not find it easier to go to a brother than to a holy God? But if we do, we must ask ourselves whether we have not often been deceiving ourselves with our confession of sin to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution."

Who is qualified to hear confession?

"Only the brother under the Cross can hear a confession. It is not experience of life but experience of the Cross that makes one a worthy hearer of confessions. The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the Cross of Jesus." (D. Bonhoeffer)

What is a Man?

In Jeffrey Marx's book, *A Season of Life*, Former NFL lineman Joe Ehrman identifies three counterfeit definitions of manhood: physical prowess, sexual conquest, and financial success. It doesn't take long to observe in our culture that Ehrman is right. When we are kids, the "man" is the boy who can run the fastest and throw the farthest. When we become adolescents, the "man" is the one who gets the girls. When we become adults, the "man" is the one who makes the most money or has the most successful career. The truth is that we don't replace one definition for the next; we actually just layer them on top of each other.

This is a fool's scoreboard—tracking sports, money, and sex as measures of masculinity. Joe teaches his football players and the kids he works with that being a man, first and foremost, means the ability to enter into and maintain meaningful relationships. A man lives for a cause greater than himself and his needs. Authentic manhood means accepting responsibility, leading courageously, and enacting justice on behalf of others.

If these are the false definitions of manhood in our culture, then what would God have us replace them with?

1. Physical Prowess - Humility
2. Sexual Conquest - Purity
3. Financial Success - Generosity

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." -1 Timothy 4:12

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" - Micah 6:8

*"How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you."* - Psalm 119:9-11

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." - 1 Timothy 4:8

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves," - Philippians 2:3

"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."
- James 1:19

"A fool is quick tempered, but a wise man stays calm when insulted." - Proverbs 12:16

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." - John 15:13

Manhood and masculinity are under attack in our culture today. People are confused about what a man really is, or if it is even a good thing to be a "man" or "masculine" at all.

Humility and service are acceptable, but we don't like it too much when men stand for truth, especially when that truth is not popular or politically correct

What is the Gospel?

Defining the gospel by what it is NOT...

- NOT the family legacy gospel
- NOT the insurance policy gospel
- NOT the self-help gospel
- NOT the social justice gospel
- NOT the political gospel
- NOT the therapy gospel
- NOT the prosperity gospel

Beware any gospel that requires too much of us, or too little of God!

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed.

- Romans 1:16-17

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Gospel – euangelion – the Gospel – literally, “good news”

Fundamentally, the gospel is NEWS!

What do you do with news? Announce it! Share it!

D.A. Carson writes, “The heart of the gospel is what God has done in Jesus Christ, supremely in his death and resurrection. Period. It is not our personal testimony; it is not our religious obedience; it is not our faith response. Repentance, faith, and obedience are of course essential, and must be rightly related in light of Scripture, but they are not the good news. The gospel is the good news about what God has done.”

The gospel is NOT what we must do, but what God has DONE!

The Question No One Asks: How Is It With Your Soul?

But what does it profit a person if they gain the whole world but lose their own soul? What is worth more than your soul?

-Matthew 16:26

When the Wesleyan bands of Christ-followers got together for their small group meetings, their first question to each other was "How is it with your soul?"

This is the best possible question for us. It is a much deeper question than, "How are you?" There is much more to this question than the typical evangelical questions of, "How is your quiet time going?" or, "Have you been to church recently?" When somebody asks you how things are going at work, you know what they are asking, and you know how to answer them. When someone asks you how your wife and kids are doing, you know how to answer them (even if you don't give them every detail).

But how do you answer a question about your soul? What is your soul?

We tend to think of ourselves in terms of our physical body, and our soul (whatever it is) is something outside of us. Most of us think of the soul, if we think about it at all, in terms of some vague spiritual "floaty" thing that is somehow connected to but yet still distinct from who we are. This could not be further from the Biblical concept of the soul. The Bible indicates that a soul is not something we have or possess, but it is something that we are - the essence or core of who we are.

Psalm 23:3 - *He restores my **soul**. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

Psalm 42:1 - *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my **soul** pants for You, O God.*

Hebrews 4:12 - *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing **soul** and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Hebrews 6:19 - *We have this hope as an anchor for the **soul**, firm and secure.*

Matthew 22:37 - Jesus replied: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your **soul** and with all your mind.”*

The following excerpt is from George MacDonald’s book *Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood...*

“And let me here interrupt the conversation to remark upon the great mistake of teaching children that they have souls. The consequence is that they think of their souls as of something which is not themselves. For what a man HAS cannot be himself. Hence, when they are told that their souls go to heaven, they think of their souls as of something which is not themselves. For what a man HAS cannot be himself. Hence, when they are told that their souls go to heaven, they think of their SELVES as lying in the grave. They ought to be taught that they have bodies; and that their bodies die; while they themselves live on ... It is making altogether too much of the body, and is indicative of an evil tendency toward materialism, that we talk as if we POSSESSED souls, instead of BEING souls.”

So, when someone asks you, “How is your soul?” they are asking about how you are doing at the very center of who you are. While the question itself may sound a little outdated, the intent behind the question is absolutely critical for genuine spiritual growth and community.

In order to help us get clarity on what we are saying when we talk about the state of our souls, we have developed a subset of questions to the broader question of ***“How is your soul?”***

1. What am I fearful or anxious about?
2. Where am I angry or frustrated in my life?
3. Where do I have unresolved conflict in my life?
4. What am I trying to control that I should be trusting to God?
5. How consistent and authentic is my prayer life?
6. How is my thought life (particularly regarding lust)?
7. How is my language (harsh, critical, coarse, vulgar, etc.)?
8. How is my marriage? (Am I making daily efforts to serve my wife?)
9. Am I making time each day to read and meditate on God’s Word?
10. What has God been teaching me over the past few weeks?
11. Am I generous with the resources God has given me?
12. Where in my life have I experienced joy lately?
13. Where have I experienced victory over sin?
14. Where have I been tempted by sin recently?
15. What part of my life am I hiding or keeping quiet about?

How Is It With Your Soul?

The following questions are designed to help you assess the state of your soul. Take some time to reflect on each question quietly in God's presence, asking God to help you see yourself as you really are and your life as it really is. Then place yourself on each continuum as honestly as you can.

These questions are not meant to produce guilt, shame or a sense of failure. Rather, they are intended to help you be honest with yourself and with God about the state of your soul.

1. More and more often I notice that I am "going through the motions" of worship. I find myself worshiping out of a sense of duty rather than out of a love for God.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

2. I find myself rushing from one thing to the next without time to really pay attention to what's going on in me, and around me.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

3. I am growing in generosity and I look for ways to give and to serve others.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

4. I like my work, but I have no trouble "unplugging" or taking time off from it.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

5. I feel increasingly angry and I find myself overreacting, and blowing up at relatively minor issues.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

6. I find myself increasingly giving into escapist behaviors (eating, mindless television viewing, substance abuse, internet surfing shopping/spending, etc.) or escapist fantasies-dreaming about being somewhere else or having a different life.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

7. I make an effort in the little things to show my wife and family that I love them; kind words, hugs, acts of service, taking time to listen, etc.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

8. I find myself hoarding energy-avoiding people in the grocery store, holing up at home or in my office - for fear that routine social interactions will rob me of that last bit of energy.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

9. My spiritual practices have slipped. Even though I know that practices such as solitude, prayer, personal reflection on Scripture, etc. are life-giving, I find I don't have time or energy for them.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

10. I feel connected to God and I have a clear sense of where He is at work in my life.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

Prayer Habits

How satisfied are you with your prayer life? How satisfied do you believe God is with your communication with Him through prayer? You cannot change everything at once, but choose the most desired disciplines mentioned here and work on those, one at a time. There are no “perfect prayers” any more than there are perfect people. Here are some questions to help you evaluate your prayer life.

- Do you have a daily quiet time alone with God?
- Do you hunger for more of God when you pray?
- Do you always pray before your meals?
- Do you have a literal “prayer closet” (place for prayer) somewhere in your house?
- Do you use a specific prayer pattern as you pray?
- Do you have any kind of prayer plan or schedule?
- Do you ever fast as part of your prayer life?
- Do you have a prayer accountability partner?
- Do you attend a prayer group?
- Do you pray out loud in public?

- Do you pray out loud when you are alone?
- Do you ever praise and sing aloud to God privately?
- Do you have a prayer list, diary or prayer journal?
- Do you record your prayer requests and answers?
- Do you practice spiritual warfare when praying?
- Do you pray with people over the phone?
- Do you ever lay hands on people when you pray for them?
- Do you read and study books on prayer?
- Do you ever dedicate extended periods of time to prayer?
- Do you pray daily (or regularly) with your spouse?
- Do you pray daily (or regularly) with your children?
- Do people seek you out to pray for or with them?
- Do you ever experience - strong emotions or shed tears when you pray?

A good question to ask ourselves after each question is, "Why not?"

The point of these questions is not to make you feel guilty about all that you are not doing. No one should be able to check all of them. Yet, there are questions here that should make you hungry to know more of God and to experience more of His power in your prayer life. Make that your goal. Pick a few and list them below. Now begin daily to lay these before the Lord asking for His renewal and refreshing in your prayer life. God bless you! He will!

Lord, change my prayer life in these areas:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Keeping a Prayer Journal

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago. I will consider all Your works and meditate on all Your mighty deeds.” - Psalm 77:11-12

When Joshua and the Israelites came out from wandering the desert, God caused the Jordan River to part so they could pass over. He instructed twelve men from each tribe to pick up a stone in the middle of the river as a memorial of how God allowed them to walk across the riverbed during its flood stage.

Keeping a prayer journal is the same kind of memorial for you and your children of how God has been good to your family. There's so much that happens in a lifetime and sometimes we forget about the goodness and faithfulness of God. The prayer journal serves not only as a reminder but also as a way of strengthening your faith when you face more trials in this lifetime.

Follow these 7 tips to help you get started in this life-changing discipline:

Tip #1 - Begin with prayer for God's guidance

The prayer journal serves not only as a reminder but also as a way of strengthening your faith when you face more trials in this lifetime.

Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long.

- Psalm 25:5

Tip #2 - Find a quiet place for reflection and meditation

Finding the right place may be just as difficult as finding the right time to write in your journal. It may be early in the morning, late at night, or you may use a lunch break once a week to fast and write in your prayer journal. The awesome revelation is that the "place" where you meet God is wherever you are!

Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells. - Psalm 26:8

Tip #3 - Write out the Scripture(s) that you are reading and/or memorizing at the top of the page

As you read and reflect on the Word of God, record your questions, insights, ideas, connections to other passages of Scripture, etc. This is an easy way for you to quickly go back to the things God has taught you through His Word.

Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
- Psalm 119:105

Tip #4 - Think about what you can give thanks to God for in your prayer request

It's our nature to write out a laundry list of requests to God without giving the first thought to what we can thank Him for in our situation. Find those grace moments that you can give thanks to God for.

Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 5:20

Tip #5 - Write out your prayer requests with specificity

When we write our requests down with all the specifics, we know what we have asked and therefore we will know when our prayers have been answered. When God shows His glory through our answered prayers, we experience a greater faith in Him.

Jesus stopped and called them, "What do you want me to do for you?" He asked.- Matthew 20:32

Tip #6 - Praise God for hearing and answering your request in accordance with His will

Proclaim God for who He is - awesome, wonderful, faithful, generous, mighty, and holy. Use the book of Psalms as a starting guideline for praising God. Because you know that God will answer your prayer request. ... praise Him in advance!

I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! - Deuteronomy 32:3

Tip #7 - Remember to go back and write in your journal how God answered in His perfect timing

The most important step, but the one many of us forget, is to go back and write how God answered our prayers. By doing so, we give our families something to look back on and continue the legacy of faith.

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live.

Teach them to your children and to their children after them. - Deuteronomy 4:9

Proud People vs. Broken People

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. - 1 Peter 5:5

PROUD PEOPLE	BROKEN PEOPLE
Proud people are self-conscious.	Broken people are not concerned with self at all.
Proud people desire to promote themselves.	Broken people desire to promote others
Proud people look at everyone else's faults with a microscope but they see their own with a telescope.	Broken people think the best of others and consider them better than themselves.
Proud people feel superior in how much they know.	Broken people are humbled by how much they have to learn.
Proud people are defensive when criticized.	Broken people receive criticism with a humble and open spirit.
Proud people are concerned with the consequences of their sin	Broken people are grieved over the cause or root of their sin.
Proud people are concerned with looking respectable.	Broken people are concerned about being real.
Proud people have a hard time saying, "I was wrong, please forgive me."	Broken people are quick to admit their failures and quick to seek forgiveness.
Proud people are blind to their true heart condition	Broken people see clearly how much they have been forgiven.
Proud people talk more than they listen	Broken people are slow to speak and quick to listen.
Proud people are rarely content with what they have.	Broken people live with a genuine heart of gratitude.
Proud people don't think they need much from other people.	Broken people are deeply aware of how much they need others.

The Discipline of Gratitude

I Thessalonians 5:18 - *Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Psalms 103:2 - *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.*

Henri Nouwen, the Dutch theologian, used the term “the discipline of gratitude.” Gratitude, says Nouwen, goes beyond the “mine” and “thine” and claims the truth that all life is a pure gift. Gratitude as a discipline involves a conscious choice, almost like an athlete in training for competition.

Gratitude shows character because it is a temperament that comes from the spiritual growth we are called to emulate; it is also a discipline because it fuels our spiritual growth. But, it does not come to us naturally and we have to work at it. Just like the other disciplines, we need to do it consciously, constantly, and carefully.

Luke 17:11-19 - *Now on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When He saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him - and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Where not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then He said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”*

Did you notice that only one out of ten was grateful enough to return and thank the Lord for what He had done for him? Only one in ten! Which are you?

Are you a Christian who is overflowing with praise, or

Becoming Christlike Husbands

Ephesians 5:21-32 - *Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."** This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

When we read this passage in Ephesians, it is tempting to focus on what our spouse should be doing rather than what we are called and commanded to do. We are clearly called to love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her! Our model for leadership in our marriage is to be Christ.

Practically speaking, this means that husbands are not allowed to delay obeying God's commands until their spouses fulfill their own God-given roles perfectly. We must love our wives even when they do not submit themselves to us and even when they are not very loving in return. There is no pass for husbands on the days their wives are hard to love.

The Bible does teach male headship in the home, BUT, the only kind of leadership the Bible recognizes is servant

leadership, self-sacrificing leadership that places the other person's needs ahead of your own! **Brothers, this means we are given authority in our marriages in order that we might lay it down in self-sacrificing service and love for our wives!**

Godly husbands are aware that no matter how much they give up for their wives, Jesus has given up far more for His people. The early church father, John Chrysostom, exhorts husbands: "Even if you must offer your own life for her, you must not refuse. Even if you must undergo countless struggles on her behalf and have all kinds of things to endure and suffer, you must not refuse. Even if you suffer all this, you have still done not as much as Christ has for the church."

What does it mean to "give myself up for her"? In order to make this tangible and practical for us (we all need that), here is one simple thing you can do to practice a self-sacrificing love in your marriage:

Praying With Our Wives

Notice it does not say pray for your wives. It is shocking how many Christian men simply do not pray with their wives. On the day you and your spouse were married, you became one in the eyes of God. From that moment on, however, there is still a process of becoming one in your everyday lives. The living out of this unity doesn't just happen; it takes time and effort. Just as physical intimacy reaffirms your oneness, so does praying together.

Set a Prayer Time and Place

It may sound silly, but the likelihood of you actually praying with your wife increases exponentially if you both agree that you are going to do it at a specific time and place.

Pray Silently Together

All too often, couples believe that they are praying together only if they are praying out loud. Remember that the key is to intentionally pray together. First, sit down

together and hold hands. Next, talk together about some of your mutual prayer requests and concerns as a couple. Then, as you finish the conversation, one of you should say to the other, "Let's pray about these things." Finally, spend some time in silent prayer together. Whoever finishes first should squeeze his or her partner's hand as a way of saying, "I've finished." When the other person finishes, he or she squeezes back. Congratulations! You've just prayed together.

Pray Out Loud, Together - Consistently

This simply means that you say out loud what you have been praying silently in your heart. When you pray as a couple, you are not only communicating with God, but also with each other. You can learn so much about one another by sharing prayer requests and listening to each other pray.

Practice "Vulnerable" Prayer

This type of praying together is what most husbands (and some wives) fear is what we have in mind when we talk about ourselves in the presence of our spouse. Along with praying, "Lord, help us," or "Lord, help them," we pray, "Lord, help me." When we pray this way, we are comfortable enough with each other that we can bring forward - with candor and honesty - our weaknesses, our failures, and our struggles, and talk openly with God in the presence of our spouse.

Fruit of the Spirit

And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears let him hear." - Matthew 13:3-9

As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. - Luke 8:15

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." - Matthew 13:23

At the close of the Parable of the Sower, Jesus describes what he calls "good soil". Jesus gives us only one distinguishing characteristic of "good soil". There is only one thing that separates good soil from the other three kinds; hard, rocky, and thorny.

Do you see what it is? It is Fruit!

Notice that good soil is not the only soil that receives the seed, both the shallow and thorny soil receive the seed. Neither is the good soil the only soil in which things grow, there is growth in both the thorny and shallow soil too, although it is short-lived.

But, it is only the good soil that yields any fruit when harvest time comes. It is interesting, and a little discouraging, to discover that only about one quarter of the seed that is sown with end up producing any fruit!

This idea of fruitfulness is a very important theme throughout the Bible. Fruitfulness is the primary image used to describe the lives of those who obey and trust the living God. The Apostle Paul describes just exactly what this fruit is in the lives of “good soil” believers.

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

Jesus Himself says that fruitfulness is the mark of the true believer; *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.* - John 15:8

How do you recognize a genuine Christ-follower, someone who is good soil? You look for the evidence of spiritual fruit in their lives. This does NOT mean that fruitfulness is what saves you or what makes you a Christian, not at all!

Christ is the one who saves through His death and resurrection and becoming a Christian means simply trusting in Him. However, the Bible is very clear that genuine spiritual fruit is the evidence that a person has placed his/her trust in Jesus.

So fruit doesn't make you a Christian, but it does prove that you are one! Fruitfulness is the distinguishing characteristic of the genuine believer. Notice that Jesus does not say that the good soil is perfect, He never says it has no weeds or rocks, or problems, He simply says that it bears fruit.

So, if Jesus clearly wants us to be “good soil” as His followers, and if fruitfulness is the distinguishing mark of good soil, then let's ask the question - what can we do to produce more fruit in our lives?

The answer is - Nothing!

You cannot do anything to produce more fruit in your own life, that is God's job!

Jesus makes this abundantly clear in John's gospel, where He says; *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
- John 15:4-5

This is one of the things that can really trip us up in the Christian life, we think we are responsible for producing spiritual fruit in our lives, but we are not - God is! This is not to say that we have no role to play at all in our own spiritual growth and fruitfulness, we do. However, we must always remember that we are not the source or the power behind it - Jesus is!

Simply put, we are not in the production or manufacturing business, we are in the distribution business! God works in us to produce the fruit of His Spirit, our job is to let his work be seen and to share it with others.

Notice in John 15 that Jesus says we are the branches, and the job of the branch is to "bear" fruit. Bearing is not the same thing as producing. The Vine (Jesus) is the fruit producer, we are simply the fruit bearers. What does it mean to bear fruit? Well, just as fruit hangs on the branch for all to see, so too we let the work of Christ in us show through for all to see.

This distinction between fruit bearing and fruit producing is absolutely crucial to the Christian life. If we get this wrong, if we start to think that it is entirely up to us to make ourselves into spiritually fruitful people, then the Christian life can become a very heavy burden.

Think about this for just a moment... have you ever tried, by sheer force of your own will and effort, to make yourself be more patient? It doesn't work does it? You may be able to hold back from acting impatient or from saying impatient things, but does that mean that you have truly become a patient person in your heart? No, it doesn't.

This is the difference between behavior modification, and genuine spiritual transformation (fruit). God's agenda is not simply to modify your behavior, but to transform you completely into the likeness of His Son!

When you accept the fact that you are not a fruit producer, but only a fruit bearer and a fruit distributor, then you will discover that a whole new kind of freedom and joy open up to you as you allow god to do His transforming work in you!

So, what is the job of the branch? It is to remain/abide in the vine. We do this by cultivating a close relationship with Christ, remaining in community, remaining in His Word, remaining in prayer, remaining in corporate worship, and remaining in service.

It's NOT intending to do something. It is staying/remaining in those practices which keep us connected to the vine, applying specific spiritual disciplines to areas of our lives where we need it. It is addressing the sin behind the issue--the root issue--such as fear and pride. And it comes through confession and prayer.

The Call to A Life of Generosity

God invented generosity!

(John 3:16, Matthew 5:44-45, James 1:17)

We are most like God when we are truly generous!

Nothing great is ever accomplished without generosity and sacrifice! The Gospel itself is an expression of the radical generosity of God - for God so loved the world that He gave...His one and only Son!

As men in our culture, we are conditioned to measure the our sense of self-worth and significance by our accomplishments and status; and this is most often measured by wealth and material possessions. This is a false identity built on a false god, and it inevitably leads to greater & greater insecurity, anxiety, fear, and depression.

God's solution to help rid us of this idol in our hearts is really quite simple - Give! Be generous, radically generous with what you have.

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and **whoever sows generously will also reap generously.** Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. **You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.** This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience*

*that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for **your generosity** in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

“Jesus warns people far more often about greed & money than about sex, yet almost no one thinks they’re guilty of it. Therefore, we should all begin with the working hypothesis that this could easily be a problem for me. If greed hides itself so deeply, no one should be confident that it’s not a problem for them.” - Tim Keller (Counterfeit Gods)

The Generous Life...

The generous life is a life worth living!

The generous life is an attractive life

People are drawn to generous living

The Results of Generosity...

Generosity leads to greater dependence on God

Generosity teaches us about the character of God

Generosity is the pathway to freedom (Luke 12:13-21)

Generosity produces greater trust in God

Generosity delight God and blesses others

Generosity opens doors to share the Gospel

Generosity is the antidote to selfishness & materialism

Raising Godly Children

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?’”

- Deuteronomy 6:20

- What is my goal in raising my children?
- Do my children understand my goal for them as their father?
- How do I know if I am succeeding in reaching this goal?
- Am I consistently praying for my children toward this goal?
- What do my children most need from me?
- What is the best thing I can do for my children?

Child _____

Specific Goals & Prayers _____

Child _____

Specific Goals & Prayers _____

Child _____

Specific Goals & Prayers _____

Child _____

Specific Goals & Prayers _____

Child _____

Specific Goals & Prayers _____

Child _____

Specific Goals & Prayers _____

The Disease of Hurry

Pastor and author John Ortberg writes about a conversation he had with the late Dallas Willard. During this conversation, Ortberg was sharing about how busy his life had become and he asked Willard what he should do. Willard's now famous reply was, "you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

For most of us, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them.

One of the great illusions of our day is that hurrying will buy us more time. A local service station has an advertising slogan that reads, "We help you move faster." But what if my primary need is not moving faster?

Jesus was aware of this problem, and He constantly withdrew from crowds and activities (Luke 5:16). He taught the same to His followers. In one instance, when they returned from a busy time of ministry, filled with adrenaline, He told them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." If you want to follow someone, you can't go faster than the one who is leading; following Jesus cannot be done at a sprint.

Living an unhurried life does not mean that you have nothing to do. It is possible to have a full schedule and still live an unhurried life. Jesus was often busy, but he was never hurried. Being busy is an outer condition; being hurried is a sickness of the soul.

- How would you rate the level of hurriedness in your life?
- How preoccupied and distracted are you lately?
- How rushed and anxious do you feel in the course of your day?
- How much time do you have (or do you make) for deep conversation and reflection?
- What practical things can you do to "ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life?"

Fasting Challenge

First, let fasting be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

-John Wesley

Fasting is part of the faith life of religions old and new all over the world. In a fast, the believer chooses, for a set time, to do without something that is hard to do without. This is done so it does not become a barrier between the believer and God.

What Fasting Is Not: Fasting is not a commandment or a requirement; it should be engaged in voluntarily by the believer. Fasting is not a diet or weight loss method. We are not fasting to improve our physical appearance. Contrary to some religious beliefs, from the biblical perspective, fasting is not done as a form of self-punishment. Fasting is also not to be done as a way to impress God or others with our spiritual devotion.

What Fasting Is: Usually, fasting means to go without food. Food is one of the great blessings of God in our lives, a true pleasure and a true necessity. But humans tend to be gluttons; we want to eat more. Our hunger can compel and control us. When we have anything in our lives that we don't or can't say no to, then it is lording over us. But as believers, God is to be in control of our lives. If something else takes up God's place in our lives, it is an idol, and we are living in something akin to idolatry. Fasting helps us to gain perspective and to bring it back under control enough for us to surrender it to God so it can be returned to its rightful place in life.

How Should You Fast?

You can fast from some foods, and not others. You can fast from watching television or YouTube. You can fast from your phone. You can fast from making certain purchases that are not "necessary". You can fast from hobbies you crave, places you are unhealthily drawn to, music, books,

news, and movies. You might even find it necessary to be fasting from use of the internet. If you can be described as obsessed about something or a 'junkie', 'freak', or 'fanatic' about something, that's a good thing to fast from. For most people in North America, and the upper classes all over the earth, the most important fasting may be to fast from being a consumer of goods, for our role as a consumer consumes us spiritually.

Fasting Challenge:

Before you begin, take a few moments to write down your answers to these questions:

1. Why are you fasting (besides the fact that it is this week's challenge)?
2. What do you hope to accomplish through your fast?
3. What are you fasting from? Why did you make this choice?
4. How long will you fast - a half day, one day, a few days, a week, several weeks?
(Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)

Ask God to prepare you for your fast and to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14, 15.

Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11 :6).

Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16, 17).

During your fast:

1. Set aside time each day to pray, read Scripture, and reflect during your fast.
2. If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
3. Take note of the moments when your mind is drawn to things you are fasting from (write these down if possible) pray and ask God to remind you that He is what your heart truly desires.
4. Ask God to help you resist any temptations during your fast.
5. Thank God that He is “everything you need” and ask Him to help you truly believe this during your fast.

A note of caution: If you are considering fasting from food, make sure you are medically able to fast before attempting it. God knows and understands your medical condition and does not expect you to harm yourself in order to be “spiritual”. There are no rigid standards about fasting in the Bible that say you must do this or that.

Reasons for Fasting:

1. Mourning - 2 Samuel 1:12, Job 2:12, Nehemiah 1:4
2. Commissioning - Acts 14:23, Matthew 4:1-2
3. Calling on the Lord - Nehemiah 1:4
4. Worshipping - Acts 13:2
5. Regular Discipline - Matthew 6:16-18
6. Preparation - Esther 4:16

TEAM Groups Questionnaire

Having the courage to seek feedback from those who know you best

Purpose:

In TEAM Groups, we are committed to helping each other become more godly men. Nowhere is this more critical than in the relationships that are the most significant in our lives: our wives and our children. For this reason we need to have the courage to seek feedback from our families - feedback on how we're doing as husband and fathers.

Ask your wife and kids to take the time to think through and answer some of the questions listed below.

After you get your family's collective input, pick one or two areas to focus on with the intent of becoming a better husband/father.

Questions to ask your kids:

- Think about a time when you felt most connected to me (e.g. could be just the two of us or a family situation) OR describe our relationship on our best day. What does it look like? (Jot your thoughts down below.)
- What are the top 5 (or so) things about our relationship that you most value, most appreciate? What are the things you most value that I need to keep doing?
- What can I do to make you feel amazing about our relationship? What is the one thing I can do to improve our relationship?
- If you could change one thing about our family's priorities, what would it be?

Questions to ask your wife:

- How can I be a better spiritual leader in our home?
- What can I do to make you feel amazing about our relationship? What is the one thing I can do to improve our relationship?
- Do you feel that there is anything keeping either one or both of us from God's desires/God's best in our lives? What should be my part in freeing us from those restraints?



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