

The Wesley Challenge Leader Guide Forward

I would like to thank you for accepting the call to lead a small group or mentor someone through The Wesley Challenge, based on the book “The Wesley Challenge” by Chris Folmsbee. As you lead people through this process you will need to show them the importance of answering these questions honestly. Going through this process will also be challenging and interesting at the same time. As they process through these questions, you will need to reinforce the process, which will help them grow their relationship with Jesus. You might hear statements such as, what does this have to do with my walk with Jesus or this is such a shallow question. But, you will need to encourage them to stay in the process, because the journey is worth pursuing. As I was organizing this process, by going through the bible to find some appropriate scriptures for each question, I found there were some best practices that helped me get the most out of the process. But, I want you to take these best practices as suggestions and a guide to help those you lead to go deeper into a relationship with Jesus. But more importantly you need to let the Holy Spirit be your guide as you go through this process.

First and foremost I encourage you as a leader to go through this process by yourself or with a trusted friend, before you lead others in this process. You will need to journal all your answers to these questions and be very honest in all your responses. You will also need to journal how the Holy Spirit is speaking to you as you read the scriptures, reflection questions and application ideas. Keeping a detailed journal will guide you into a deeper understanding of your walk with Jesus. Journaling will also help you to leave a legacy to those you love and who love you. By doing this you will be an example to those you are serving as a disciple of Jesus.

Here is the process I have found that works, and please reinforce the importance of completing the readings each week and journaling thoughts:

Day 1: Read the question for the week and write down your initial response to this question. Reflect on this question as you go about your day.

Day 2: Read the Chapter in the book The Wesley Challenge, by Chris Folmsbee. Go back to your initial response to the question to see if you have a different response.

Day 3: Journal your answers to the reflection questions and application ideas.

Day 4-6: Read all the scriptures and journal what they are revealing to you.

Day 7: How has reading the scriptures and the chapter in the book affected your initial response to this question. Journal the difference if any. At the end of your weekly session, have someone in the group read the scripture and prayer at the end of each chapter.

This guide is also in the accompanying introduction and journal, which can be printed out and given to each participant, in order for them to journal as well. This guide and journal is only meant to help you start a conversation, and should not be used as the only way to discuss each question. Thank you for stepping out in faith to lead and make a difference in the lives of those you lead. May God bless you richly for answering the call to help guide people into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

David Bean

The Wesley Challenge Leader Guide

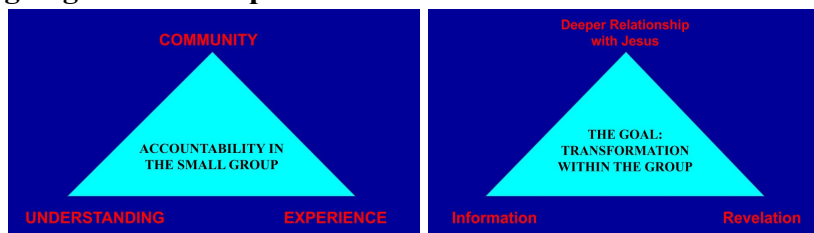
Section I: Relationship with God: An Upward Focus

Introduction: If we are to become authentic followers of Jesus we must become more like Him. We need to possess the virtues that Jesus lived out during His life on earth. We find those virtues in Ephesians 4:1-3. They are Humility, Meekness, Long-Suffering, Love and Peace. When we allow Jesus to increase these virtues or characteristics within us we will become more like Him. We need the virtue of Humility to increase in us, so we will no longer want to do our own wills in this world, but we will want God's will to be done within us. God is calling us to know Him in an intimate way, and the best way for this to happen is for Jesus to increase in our lives and for our own wills to decrease. Let's dive into the deep water and find out how much God wants an intimate relationship with us through His Son Jesus.

Chapter 1: Is Jesus real to me?

Read the following scripture: *John 3: 1-21; Luke 9: 23-27; Acts 8: 26-40*

Through these scriptures we see a process unfolding. In the reading from John we see how we must accept Jesus in order for us to become children of God, and we must be born again in spirit and truth. This is evangelism. Then in Luke we see how we are to become committed and mature disciples. This is a process that never ends. Then in Acts we see how we are to fulfill and live out our lives as disciples. We are to go where we are sent and needed in order for others to know Jesus. Through this process of becoming a disciple Jesus does become real to us. When we are Jesus' committed disciples we will begin to reproduce the next generation of disciples. We will want to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, just like Philip did. **Who was your Philip? Are you going to be a Philip to others?**



The first triangle reveals what should happen when each person joins a small group. As they bring their own *understanding* and *experience* into the *community* and start opening up and trusting each other, then everyone in the group will start holding each other accountable as they grow into maturity with Jesus. As each person starts sharing their own experience and understanding within the community each person learns from all of the experiences each person brings into the group.

The second triangle reveals what should be occurring within each individual as they are being held accountable within this small group as they become closer and barriers start to fall.

Information (Man-to-man): As each person shares their experiences and own understanding the other members are gaining insight they may have not heard or thought of before. As we discuss and ask each other questions about this information within the group, we will allow others to hold us accountable. This will lead and guide us into revelation. Where we start asking deeper questions of one another, which will lead to deeper relationships.

Revelation (God-to-man): As we learn from each other and are holding each other accountable God will start revealing to us what His good and perfect will He has for us. (*Romans 12:1-2*) When this occurs, we will start asking God questions that only he can answer. Then we will understand His truth and not what we think is truth. This will lead us to *sanctification*. This leads us to a deeper relationship with Jesus, and He/Jesus will transform us into His likeness, which is our goal.

Transformation (Man-to-God and God to Man): This is when we become a friend of God. This is the true relationship that God the Father wants with us. When we start talking with God about what He would love for us to do for Him, we will have been changed within our hearts and we will start to become like His Son Jesus. When this occurs, we start to understand that *I have a desire to be like Christ, more than to become aware of my sin*. Once we see God we will see ourselves for who we truly are sinners saved by the grace and truth of Jesus. This is what we call *glorification*, and we are now striving for *perfection*, which we may never reach, but we strive to obtain it everyday. As this plays out within the group we will reach the goal of holding each other accountable as we live out and walk this pathway of becoming a mature disciple of Jesus.

Chapter 2: Am I enjoying prayer?

Read the following scripture: *John 17; Matthew 6: 1-18; 1 Thessalonians 5: 12-25; John 11: 38-44; James 5: 13-18; Hebrews 4: 14-16*

I believe we need to experience prayer by giving glory to God in all our circumstances. No matter what we are feeling, we should take that emotion to God and be honest. If we are angry, sad, happy, or joyful, express that emotion to God honestly. He can handle anything we give to Him. But honesty in our prayer experience is the most important part of our prayer time. Using ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) as a guide we can have a process to pray through.

What can we learn from the prayers of Jesus? In John 17, we see the progression of Jesus' prayer as He begins with His focus on God as He prays for Himself. Then He prays for others, which includes you and me. If you notice, this is how the questions in the book are aligned in the three different sections, an upward focus, and inward focus, and an outward focus.

In Matthew 6 we see the progression, where Jesus teaches us to always start in our private closet. Then we should move onto others and then we should be in corporate prayer, with one another. We should be moving into a place where we are always praying, or as Paul says, without ceasing. Prayer should always be personal with your heavenly Daddy and we should always be in communication with Him. When we get into this place of praying without ceasing we will then receive purpose and guidance and the power to complete our mission in this world. This should lead us to ask in the will of God as found in Matthew 7: 7-12: *Ask and we will receive, seek and we will find, and knock and the door will be opened.*

In the book on pages 24-26, Folmsbee suggests we use 5 key practices (not rules or laws), that will help us enjoy prayer. Go over these before going over the application questions in the book.

Chapter 3: Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?

Read the following scriptures: *Romans 7: 1-25; Romans 8: 1-17; Romans 8: 18-38; 1 John 2: 15-17*

The scriptures' connection to this question is that we cannot do this in our own power. Paul wants us to know if we don't have that special connection to Jesus we will always go to the flesh and our own sinful desires. Jesus is the only way we can overcome these bad habits or evil desires. We must decrease and Jesus must increase in our lives. This way we will become more like Jesus everyday. Romans 7: 15-20 Paul wants us to see that when we do things in the flesh it will lead to evil thoughts and may lead to evil deeds. In Verses 21-25 Paul tells us that our escape from these fleshly desires and thoughts is Jesus and Jesus only. What we see in these scriptures is that we cannot live a good and just life in our own strength. But, with Jesus being placed first in our lives we can live the life that is holy and set apart from the world. If we are doing things as Christians, that makes us uneasy in our life, this is the Holy Spirit convicting us about that which we are doing. Jesus is the only answer to this predicament to the question that Wesley is asking.

What are my harmful habits? What Wesley's question is really asking us, is how do we view ourselves. Are we truly looking at who we are or are we looking at ourselves the way we want to be. In order to really see our true selves we must let Jesus be Lord of our lives and hearts and let Him guide us into His truth and life He has planned for us.

Let's get real and truly look at who we are. **Are we prideful and self righteous?** If the answer to this question is yes, then we will continue to do things against our conscience that makes us uneasy. If we will humble (Virtue: Humility) ourselves before the cross of Jesus and deny ourselves then we will start paying attention to the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit will convict us when we do something wrong or against what we know is right. Talk about the 5 areas of reflections that will help us to overcome an uneasy conscience:

1. Find your areas of weakness and admit them to a friend/group.
2. Recognize the origin of the temptation.
3. Imagine the consequences of such a decision. **Is this a fork in the road decision, which could be a life changing decision?** This decision should take more time and discussion with your small group or trusted close brothers and sisters.
4. Reorder your life accordingly.
5. Meditate on God's word and pray daily.

The goal is to increase the frequency or duration of the Holy moments in our lives!

Chapter 4: Did the Bible live in me today? Do I believe ALL the Bible is Truth?

Read the following scripture: *2 Timothy 3: 16-17; Psalm 51: 1-17; Psalm 91: 1-16; Isaiah 55: 6-9; James 3: 13-18; John 8: 31-47; John 14: 1-14; John 16: 5-15; John 17:17*

The 2 Timothy scripture sets the foundation that all of scripture is God breathed. Then readings in Psalms show us how the authors are trying to live out the scriptures in their lives. Isaiah shows us that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. So we need to let God be in control of our lives. The readings from John show us how Jesus knew the scriptures and lived them out. Lastly, in John 17, Jesus makes the case that God's word is truth.

The question Wesley asked was **did the Bible live in me today, not did I read my Bible today?** As Christians, the first and foremost belief must be the whole Bible is truth, even though we do not understand in our heads what it means or what the Bible is trying to get us to understand. Then we have to start living our lives in accordance with what the Bible is teaching us. Then we must let the truth of God's word mature in us as we live as a disciple of Jesus. This will lead to a closer walk with the one and only triune God. ***Are we content to be under God's authority?*** When we say this part of the Bible is not true, what we are saying is that God does not have the right to control this part of my life, and we are not giving this part of our lives over to Jesus. The next question to ask is, ***Does God, the Creator, have the right to tell His creation how to live?*** If the answer to this question is yes, and when we believe all the Bible is true, we will then allow God to control what we believe and how we should live. We will then allow God to be in control of our lives and we will allow God to define sin in our lives.

Read from the book on page 36 the 3rd paragraph to end of page 37

Chapter 5: Did I disobey God in anything?

In order to understand our disobedience to God we must define sin. **What is sin?** Webster's definition: *An immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law.* The bible tells us what sin is in **1 John 3:1-6: V 4: *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.*** Sin is what we are born into. We were conceived in sin and we were born with a sin nature. Sin is something we do. Sin is doing that which God tells us not to do. Sin can also be something we do not do. Inactivity doesn't always equal goodness. Just remember, "You shall" is just as important as "You shall not."

When we, as created beings in the likeness of God, start defining what is moral we put ourselves on the throne as King and we commit lawlessness. ***God has to be the only one who can define morality.*** If we as humans get to define morality, we will always define morality downward in order for us to feel better about how we are living our lives. This is not a good place for any of us to be. When we place ourselves above God in this manner, our only response should be repentance. This is humbling ourselves before God and asking forgiveness in the name of Jesus. This is a total surrender of self and letting Jesus be Lord and Savior of our lives. Now let us take a look at the first sin and how sin entered into this world.

Genesis 1 & 2 taken from the personal application ideas #4. As you read, make a list of the ideas or statements that point to God's goodness in the world and God's desire for humans to live them out.

1. *He made the universe and he made a place just for his creation to live. He made us in His image.*
2. *He gave us a paradise to live in and gave us everything we need to survive.*
3. *He gave us a way to be in a relationship with Him.*
4. *He gave us free will so we could choose to love Him or not.*

This is what life was like before sin came into the world. Chapter 3 of Genesis shows us when sin came into the world and the price the creation paid for this sin. The rest of the Bible is showing us what God did and is still doing to bring all of us into a proper relationship with Him.

Read the 3rd paragraph on page 42 through to the last paragraph on 43. After reading the last paragraph on page 43, talk about the difference between confession and repentance! Confession is the first step of repentance. But if you stop at only confession you are just turning away from sin and you will more likely to turn back to that sin or a worse sin.

Example: A college student away from home for the first time goes out and gets drunk. He came back to his dorm room and was bowing to the porcelain goddess sick as a dog. He starts praying and asking God to help him through this and he promises he will never do this again. But next weekend he is right back to drinking again.

This is an example of confession only. Repentance is turning to God and not away from sin. Repentance is turning in the opposite direction. Giving all you have done over to God so He can give you a new heart and new desires, so you do not have the desire to do that type of behavior/sin again. This is the first step to living a lifestyle of repentance as found in Romans 12: 1-2 then stop. Ask the following questions: **What makes life worth living? Does God the Creator have a right to tell us how to live? Does the Bible (God's Word) have the power and authority to guide us into the life God wants us to live?** Finish reading *Romans 12: 1-13*.

Read: *Ephesians 4: 1-32*: **What is Paul us into with this scripture?** In this reading Paul is trying to get us to see that if we live out the virtues of Jesus (V 1-3) we as individuals can become the church that Jesus needs on this earth. Then and only then can God's Kingdom be lived out on earth. Just like the Lord's prayer says, "on earth as it is in heaven."

Chapter 6: Do I pray about the money I spend?

What is the deeper meaning of this question? We need to stop thinking it is impossible to be rich and be a Christian. We must start believing God wants us to have as much wealth as we can obtain. However, we must obtain this wealth in the right way and without hurting anyone. Then we are to bless others with the wealth we have been given. All of this comes down to FAITH. This is what the bible calls being a good steward of all God has given us. Always, always put God first in our lives and we will never lack for anything that we need. What we have to learn is the difference between our wants and our needs. We need to ask ourselves, is this what I desire or is this something that God wants me to possess so I can bless my family and others.

Read the following scripture: *Psalm 1: 1-6; Matthew 6: 19-34; Proverbs 3: 5-10, Proverbs 21: 5, Proverbs 28: 20; Hebrews 11: 6, & 13: 5-6; 1 Timothy 6: 1-19*

The above scriptures help us understand why John Wesley said, "Gain all you can, save all you can and give all you can. Then go over the paragraphs in the book on page 46 that deal with this statement. Then read the last paragraph on page 46 to the end of the chapter. Make the suggestion for anyone who is struggling with debt or are struggling financially to take the Financial Peace University Course or some other debt eliminating course.

Chapter 7: Do I give time for the Bible to speak to me every day?

Read one of the Gospels of your choosing, take notes and write down questions that you have about the passages you would like more understanding. Don't read for total understanding of each verse. Read as if you are there as the author is writing the gospel in front of you.

Matthew, Mark and Luke were written about 25-30 years after the death of Jesus. These gospels were written in a historical context about the life of Jesus. John wrote his gospel near the end of his life, about 60 years after Jesus' death, in order to prove that Jesus was not only a Man but was the Son of God and to prove the deity of Jesus. Answer any questions the group has about the Gospel they read.

Read the following scriptures: *1 Samuel 3:1-14; Psalm 43; John 16: 5-15*

The Old Testament scriptures give us an understanding of how God spoke to the Prophets. The New Testament scriptures show us how Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit, and He is the one who now speaks to all of us and guides us into God's truth for our lives. Read from the Wesley Challenge book the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs on page 49. Then go over the 3 elements that help us understand what it means for the Bible to speak to us.

Revelation; Illumination; Imagination/Inspiration. Then read the last paragraph on page 50, and talk about the 4 attributes we must possess to develop the consistent practice of Bible reading, which will allow the Bible to speak to us. ***Humility; Open-Mindedness; Obedience; Determination.*** Finish by reading the last paragraph on page 51.

Section II: Relationship with Self: An Inward Focus

Introduction: As we strive to become more authentic followers of Jesus, we have to be people who continuously place Jesus first in our lives. Authentic Christians will always be searching for ways to inspect their lives in order to grow their faith daily. We must always be honest with ourselves in order to see if we are becoming prideful, selfish and self absorbed. However, we must not beat ourselves up, because we all have weaknesses and shortcomings. When we connect to Jesus in our weakness he will help us to overcome, based on His strengths. When we know our self worth is in our relationship with Jesus, we can rest in His finished work and He will guide us into the perfect will He has for each of us. We need to continuously self reflect and make sure we are allowing God to be God in our lives. This is all hard work, and why we need each other to help us and hold us accountable to go deeper in our relationship with Jesus, so we can have a deeper relationship with others.

Chapter 8: Am I proud?

The focus of this question is making sure we have the proper perspective of who we really are. We cannot get puffed up with ourselves and think we are better than we really are and we need to make sure we are not prideful. We need to make sure we are asking ourselves am I secure in my identity. Our identity should always be found in our God the Creator and this identity comes through our relationship with His Son Jesus.

Read the following scripture: *Proverbs 13: 1-10 & 16: 18-19; Psalm 73 & 139; Mark 7: 14-23; John 3: 1-21; 1 John 2: 7-17; 3 John*

The connection between the question and the OT readings is that we need to stay humble. If we do not live in humility, pride will come and destruction will follow. What the NT readings are revealing to us are that we need to be more like Jesus everyday. If we do not let Jesus be

Lord of our lives we will become prideful and we will start worshiping either ourselves or something other than Jesus.

Tell the story about the man in the book who is prideful about his cheese making that he got all his self esteem from his cheese making. Ridiculous right. But so is pride. Read the last paragraph on page 58 through the first paragraph on page 59. Then read the last paragraph on page 59 and the last paragraph on page 60.

Chapter 9: Am I defeated in any part of my life? Tell the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. Joseph was the favored son of Jacob, with the coat of many colors, and he was despised by his brothers. He was sold into slavery, bought by Potiphar and placed in charge over all his household. He was placed back into prison by Potiphar for something he did not do. He was then placed in charge of the prison as well. Then Joseph interpreted dreams for the baker and butler who were imprisoned with him. The baker was killed and the butler was restored just as Joseph predicted. He told the butler to not forget what he did for him. Then Pharaoh had two dreams that he did not know what they meant. No one in Pharaoh's leaders could interpret the dreams. The butler then remembered Joseph and He was called by the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. Joseph was then placed second in charge of all of Egypt. If anyone had a reason to feel defeated about his life it was Joseph. But he never lost sight of who he was in God and trusted God with his life. If he had given up he never would have been able to save his family or the future Jewish nation. He said to his brothers, *what you did to me was meant for evil, God meant it for good.* Do not give up or give into the enemy and you will find that God is always working for our good.

How many times have you asked the question, **how are you doing?** The response, I am fine is usually what you receive. FINE is an acronym for **Feelings I'm Not Expressing.** In order to know people well enough to know something is wrong in their lives, or if they are going through a hard time in life, we need to be involved with them in a small group (Community). We need a place where we can be honest about what is going on in our lives. When we start to feel defeated, we can talk to the people in our community about what is going on in our lives. **Why is it so hard for us to be Honest about what is really going on with us and in our lives?** If you are going through a rough time in your life or are feeling defeated, read the Psalms until you find the Psalm that describes how you are feeling. Then give thanks to God for his answer. Read from the 3rd paragraph on page 64 to the end of page 65.

Read the following scripture: *Numbers 6: 22-27; John 14: 25-31; John 16: 25-33; Romans 5: 1-11; Galatians 5: 16-26; Ephesians 2: 11-18; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Philippians 4: 4-9.*

What are the scriptures selected trying to reveal to us? When we feel defeated, we need to be honest to the people in our community and understand we are not failures. When we are honest about what is going on in our lives we can find the peace that passes all understanding and that God has not abandoned us in our times of trials and tribulations. Re-read Philippians 4:8: Then have them write out Phil.4:8 and put it where you spend time so you can read this verse throughout the week.

Chapter 10: Do I go to bed on time and get up on time?

What do we need to do to be healthy and be at our best? This will set the stage for understanding the link between physical and spiritual rest.

Read the following scripture:

Genesis 2: 1-3: Everything that God does is spiritual, But, in this reading God The Father rested from His creative work only (Physical work), but He did not rest from interacting with His creation (Spiritual work).

Psalms 37: 1-11 & 55: 1-8: These scriptures show us how people had to rest in God before Jesus lived, died and was raised from the dead.

Matthew 11: 25-30: This passage Jesus is inviting us to come to Him for our spiritual rest. Because Jesus has completed all the spiritual work in this world, but he is still actively working with and in us by His Holy Spirit. The only thing we need to do is accept Jesus' finished work and allow Him to be our Lord and Savior.

Mark 1: 21-39 & Luke 8: 2-25: Jesus shows us that we need to take care of our physical rest as well. He worked all day long preaching, teaching and healing everyone he came in contact with. However, at the end of the day He needed to sleep and rest his body. But notice that he got up early and was in solitude, alone, with his Father, in order to get recharged spiritually. Jesus was always in a relationship with the Father. When we are in a relationship with Jesus we can rest in Him to receive all we need to accomplish our mission and finish our work in this world. Jesus knew how to rest in the Father while he was living out His human existence, showing us the Father. However, we need to do our part in this world and create good habits that will keep our physical bodies in good working condition. This way we can live out our physical lives in connection with the spiritual realm in order for us to complete what God wants us to fulfill.

Do you see the connection between Physical and Spiritual Rest?

Ruth 3: 10-18: Paying attention to verses 14-18 for additional information on Rest. The book of Ruth gives us this connection. Ruth is a Gentile living in the Jewish nation. Boaz is a type of Christ. When Ruth asked him to save her or redeem her, Boaz did not rest until the redemption was complete. Notice that Ruth was at Boaz's feet in a humble position. Boaz accepted the role of redeemer. He redeemed Ruth and her family and they became the parents of Obed and the great grandparents to King David.

Our inheritance from Jesus is coming to Him, kneeling at the foot of the cross, in order for us to be redeemed. Then we can rest in His finished work. Jesus needed sleep and rest and quiet time to live physically. However, His spiritual rest in His earthly body ended when He bowed His head on the cross and said it is finished. Now we must live out our lives in this same manner. Rest our physical bodies with good habits, and show up in the places Jesus needs us and He will perform miracles for us within the spiritual realm which will be manifested in this physical world.

Read the first sentence at the top of page 69 to the end of the paragraph.

Summary of physical and spiritual rest. **Are you rested and at your best in order for you to meet the challenges of the day and ultimately help make the world a better place?** This is the take away from this question.

Chapter 11: Do I grumble or complain constantly?

Start reading at the 2nd paragraph on page 71 through the first paragraph on page 72. Then read the following scripture:

Exodus Chapters 15, 16, 17: 7: The first 21 verses of chapter 15 the Israelites tell us all the goodness of God and what He had done for them. Beginning with being freed from slavery of Egypt, to saving them through the sea and providing for them along the way. The rest of these verses are the people complaining to and about Moses and his leadership. However, they weren't complaining or arguing with Moses, they were complaining about God and how He did not care about or for them. (After reading about each time they started complaining to Moses stop reading and have someone read verse 2 of Chapter 15. Continue like this until you finish chapter 17 verse 7.) **Do we complain the same way today? What would this complaining look like? How do we compare the difference between complaining and contentment?**

Philippians 1: 27-2: 18: We need to understand that when we are complaining we are not being humble before God. We are actually being prideful and saying to God we know better than Him what is important for us and others.

John 14: 27: This should be our response when we feel like or are complaining and grumbling. Jesus is our true **Peace**. (Finish with reading the last two paragraphs page 73.)

Chapter 12: Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?

We believe the reason Wesley asked this question was to get us thinking about what consumes our time or what controls our lives. When we are a slave to something or someone, we are now placing that thing or person above God in our lives. Allowing such things to control our lives gives us a sense of freedom, but in the end will only lead us to being a slave to these things or people. **Do we have a worldly view or Kingdom view, when answering this question?** Either read the example in the book about antique cars or come up with your own example of obsessing over worldly objects or a person.

Read the following scripture: *Exodus 20: 1-21; Romans 7: 1-25; James 4: 1-17; 1 Timothy 6: 6-10.* What these scriptures reveal to us is that we are going to be judged at some point. Do we want to go into this judgement on our own power and wisdom? (The Law) Whatever we place above God in our lives we are saying to God that we know better than He does what is good for us. Or do we want to put our trust in Jesus and place Him first and come under the law of grace? **Jesus first, Others second, and Yourself last - JOY.** This will put lasting joy into your life, that will never fade or be destroyed. This is a Kingdom View of our lives. All the other possessions and relationships will all fade away, your relationship with Jesus will never fade away. Go over the three ways to help each other understand God's will in our lives on page 77.

Chapter 13: How do I spend my spare time?

Do you have any spare time in your life? If you don't you need to make some time. If you do have spare time, **how do you spend this time?** We must determine where in our day we have spare time and protect that time. This will help us to be refreshed, renewed, and help us focus on what the priorities are in our lives. If we use this time wisely, it can help us relax and remain focused and stay mentally and physically strong during the day. It is a great idea for us to set aside a few minutes a day for prayer, and we should spread these times throughout the day. This will help us focus on what God is trying to reveal to us, and what the most important things we should be doing during the day. Read the last paragraph in the book on page 82.

Read the following scripture: *Psalm 1; Ecclesiastes 10:18; 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-15; 2 Corinthians 10: 1-6; 1 Peter 4: 1-11; 2 Timothy 2: 14-26; Ephesians 5: 1-21; Philippians 4: 4-9.* **What is the connection between these scriptures and the question?** If we don't spend some of our spare time in a quiet place and refocus on Jesus we will fall into the traps that we see mentioned in these scriptures. **The takeaway from this question is spare time is a gift and we should be using this time wisely.** Jesus used his spare time to make sure He was doing the will of His Father. This helped Him to stay focused on what was most important during that day.

Chapter 14: Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

If the answer to this question is yes, then we need to confront our human preference to be so concerned with ourselves, that we lose sight of the needs of others in our lives. When we are caught doing something we should not have done, our first reaction is to blame others for our shortcomings. This is what Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden. Read the 2nd, 3rd and 4th paragraphs on page 86. Then go over the seven ways to help us stop this temptation for self-absorption: 1) Volunteer; 2) Random acts of kindness; 3) Practice empathy; 4) Compete knowing you will lose; 5) Get out of your comfort zone; 6) Let others lead; 7) Begin to know someone you find hard to like.

Read the following scripture: *Genesis 2:15-25 & 3:1-13; Ephesians 4: 25-32; Galatians 5:13-15; Psalm 32: 3-5 (true repentance and humility); Matthew 7: 1-5; Jude 1-25*

The connection of these scriptures to question 13. The Genesis 2 reading shows us what it was like in the Garden of Eden before sin. In Chapter 3 we see God talking with Adam and Eve. IN verse 3 we see Eve talking with satan that they were not to eat or TOUCH the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of good and evil. Notice that Eve added TOUCH. Go back to Genesis 2:17 and read what God actually said. He did not say TOUCH. When we add to scripture we are adding our own understanding and desires in order for us to feel better about ourselves and to get what we want. We need to know, really know, scripture. The rest of the scriptures, especially the epistles from Paul and Psalm 32, show us how we are to act with one another and how we are to have true repentance before God and one another. Jude helps us with our discernment of God's truth and how we are to determine what is true or false. Then in verses 20-23, helps us to stay in the Love of God, which helps others see the truth and will help others struggling to see why we all need to repent from our sinful ways.

Section III: Relationship with Others: An Outward Focus

Introduction: This section is where our upward focus on God and our inward focus on our relationship with God meets the world. This section will help us put our relationship with God and others into action in a proper and healthy way. We not only need to be in a relationship with one another as Christians, but also with the people who are not followers of Jesus. In other words, we should be on a mission with our actions, but we also need to use our words and tell our stories of How Jesus saved us from our lives of sin and destruction. (*1 Peter 3:15*) Tell everyone of how Jesus gave us a new heart and desire to be the person He created us to be. This will deepen our relationships with everyone we meet inside and outside the temple. Read the last two paragraphs on page 94.

Chapter 15: Do I thank God that I am not like others?

We should never compare ourselves to any other person, whether it is comparing ourselves from a point of pride, looking down on others, or from a point of self loathing, I wish I had their life. Read the last paragraph on page 95, and continue reading the first 2 paragraphs and the last sentence on page 96. The more we get to know Jesus on an intimate level and the more we put Him first in our lives we will come to realize that God the Father and Jesus the Son loves us for who we are not what we do or how much we have accumulated in the world. Now read the last paragraph on page 97. Watch out for SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Read the following scripture: *Luke 18: 9-14; Matthew 23: 1-12; Luke 14: 7-11; 1 Peter 5: 5-11; James 4: 1-12; Revelation 3: 14-22*

The connection of these scriptures to this question is clear. We MUST always be humble (*virtue humility*) before God and be a servant to others while we live on this earth. If we do not live as humble servants, just as Jesus lived, then PRIDE will come into our hearts and we will think more of ourselves than we should. We should never look down on anyone, because God will use anyone who is available to Him. Everyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior is an adopted child of God. This is our true identity and based on this relationship with God and Jesus through the Holy Spirit we can live our lives without comparing ourselves to others.

Chapter 16: Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? Or am I a hypocrite?

We should always be our true self in all situations. We should never put on any false persona. We need to always be the person God wants us to be. We should always be real and authentic, the way God created us. Remember it is not what we do or do wrong that defines us. It is who we are, a child of the living God that makes us who we are. Jesus is our example. He is the Son of God, but he emptied Himself and became like us in order to make a way for all of us to become like Him.

Read the first 2 paragraphs on page 99, then read the last 3 paragraphs on page 100. (*Read Philippians 2:5-8 here*). Then read the last 2 paragraphs on page 102 to the end of the chapter. As you read these scriptures try to listen to what Jesus and Paul were trying to get people to understand about being false or hypocrites.

Read the following scripture: *Matthew 23:13-39; Luke 11: 37-52; Mark 12: 38-44; Matthew 9: 10-13; Galatians 2:11-21; 1 Timothy 2: 1-7*

The teachings of Jesus in the Gospels tell us that He was concerned about the Scribes and Pharisees and their hypocrisy. They were living life in their own self-righteousness. Because of this Jesus gave them truth and a lot of it. Hoping they would repent after hearing His truth. If they had repented Jesus would have given them grace to cover all their sin. You see we cannot receive His grace without saying yes to His truth. Look at how Jesus dealt with the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery. He gave them His grace because they were repentant, but he also told them the truth. Go and sin no more.

In Galatians Paul has to call out Peter for being a hypocrite. He was living and eating with the Gentile Christians when the Jewish leaders were not there, but when they came Peter withdrew from them to eat with the Jews. We are all one in Jesus there is neither Jew or Gentile. We are just followers of Jesus, we are all His disciples. The scriptures in 1 Timothy makes this very clear.

Chapter 17: Do I confidentially pass on to others what was told to me in confidence?

When we reveal secrets or confidential information to others we are breaking confidence with the person who trusted us with this information. Without trust we cannot have a close and positive relationship with anyone. When this trust is broken the person who trusted us will have a hard time ever trusting us again. This will lead to others not trusting us as well. When this occurs, a wedge will be driven between those involved.

The main reason we reveal private information to others is we want other people to know we have this power of private information that no one else has. Doing this shows a character flaw in ourselves, which is not Christ Like at all. If we are trying to become Jesus' disciples then we need to be people that can be trusted. If others do not trust us then they will not follow us into a deeper relationship with Jesus and with each other. **Is there ever a time to reveal confidential information?** Read the last two paragraphs on page 107.

Read the following scripture: *2 Peter 1:2-9; Proverbs 11: 13 & 15: 1-4, 7 & 20: 27; 1 John 1: 5-10; Mark 7: 1-8; Matthew 15: 1-11; 2 Corinthians 5: 15-21.*

The connection of these scriptures to this question is clear. Make sure you honor God with the words that come forth from your mouth. We honor God when we honor the confidence other people tell us. In 2 Peter we see how we are to build and strengthen our faith. If we break the trust of others we are revealing a flaw in our character and God cannot and will not honor the promises within this scripture, until we confess and repent of this sin. In Proverbs the scripture is clear. God will honor us and give us a faithful spirit as we keep the confidence of others. In Mark and Matthew Jesus is telling us it is not tradition that makes us clean or unclean, it is what comes out of our mouths. We need to make sure we are honoring God with our words and we do this by keeping the trust of others in confidence. 1 John reassures us what Jesus will do and has already done for us if we believe in Him. Make sure you bring up the fact that if we are revealing information that was given in confidence, without approval from that person we are sinning. Why? Because we are lying and betraying the person who gave us the information. If we do not keep the information in confidence, we said we would, then we are liars and condemn ourselves with our words. **(Read 2 Corinthians 5: 12-21 here).** Talk about the difference in **Reconciliation and forgiveness.** We are commanded by Jesus to forgive, and based on the

Corinthians reading we must be ready to reconcile with anyone who desires to reconcile with us. Therefore, if we develope any confidential information, we must go to that person and ask for forgiveness and try to reconcile with them as well. Ask them to respond to this statement: **Reconciliation is God's mechanism for change/transformation.** I believe we have to live a life of reconciliation, in order for God to use us for transformation within ourselves and then in others.

Chapter 18: Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?

When we answer yes to this question, we are putting ourselves above everything else. Yes, even Jesus. When we answer yes to this question, God is trying to show us something about ourselves we need to change or work on. But, if we will humble ourselves and repent at these times, God will help us to change. Then the person/group we are with can hold us accountable for this change. Then when these urges to be jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful will occur less and less. If we allow the Holy Spirit to convict us and then allow the Holy Spirit to change us, we can grow into the likeness of Jesus and become more like Him. This is a process and we may never make it to the perfection we seek, but we can get closer everyday. But, only if we allow the Holy Spirit to keep changing us daily. If we will allow the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out, and become a part of a small group, just like this one, we can develop the discipline and attitude to change these types of behaviors. Read the 2nd & 3rd paragraphs on page 109, & 3rd paragraph page 110.

Read the following scripture: *Deuteronomy 4: 23-24 & 5:1-22 Proverbs 14:30: Galatians 5:16-26: James 4:1-10: Matthew 7:7-12; Luke 9:23*

The connection between our answer to this question and the scriptures is all about self. In Deuteronomy we see that God is perfect and He is a Jealous God. But His jealousy is perfect before us. Our Jealousy is not and we sin in our jealousy. I stopped our reading in chapter 5 at verse 15, because this is the first tablet of the law given to the Jewish people. This is how we are to respond to God and our relationship with Him. The next rest of the law is on the second tablet and is how we are to relate with one another. In Galatians, Paul is telling us when we walk in the flesh we are under the law, and the fruit we produce is evil. But, if we put on Christ and live in the Spirit we will produce fruits of the spirit. The reading in James confirms what Paul wrote in Galatians, the flesh is at war with the spirit. Therefore, we need to live in the spirit. The only way to live in the spirit is to humble ourselves and repent. Then we will no longer be at war with God. In Matthew, Jesus is showing us that if we ask for the right things, such as to help us change these behaviors that are in our questions, God is faithful and will change us from the inside out. In Luke, Jesus is calling us to a deeper relationship with Him and the only way this is possible is for us to deny ourselves and let Jesus be the King of our lives then we will follow Him as committed mature disciples. **The takeaway:** When we are exhibiting the characteristics that are listed in this question, we are living in the flesh, and we need to humble ourselves before Jesus and repent. Then we need to come into our small group and discuss why we are acting this way and allow them to hold us accountable as we continue our walk with Jesus.

Read the last paragraph on page 110 to the end of the chapter. Go over the four disciplines the author gives us to think about and how these disciplines can help change our attitudes. **Can you come up with more disciplines to add to this list?**

Chapter 19: Am I honest in all my actions and words or do I exaggerate?

Three reasons for asking this question: (Found in the last paragraph on page 113 through the 2nd paragraph on page 114):

1. Contentment: This question helps us evaluate how content we are with ourselves and our life. If we are always wishing we were someone else or if we only had a life like another person, we can never be content with who and how God made us. Some people think that if they had more money they would be more content. This is a false contentment and without changing ourselves we will become less and less content as time goes by. The best example of this is buying a new car. We get all excited and content with our new purchase, then as time goes by and the new car smell fades so does our contentment with this purchase.

2. Our true identity: If we are always trying to find our identity in possessions or other people, we will never find who we were created to be. We always need to find our identity in Jesus, letting Him change us from the inside out. Then we can become the person He created us to be.

3. Reflect our true self/character: If we are wrapped up in ourselves and being self absorbed, we cannot reflect our true character that was created in the image of God. We have been created to reflect the love of God to everyone we come in contact with. This is our true self, not some fantasy we created in our minds to help us think we are fitting in and hoping more people will love and accept us in that false image we are creating. In order for us to find our true self and possess the characteristics of Jesus, we must live honest and trustworthy lives. We have to live out what John the Baptist said in **John 3:30: *I must decrease and He (Jesus) must increase.*** Read the last 3 paragraphs on page 115

Read the following scripture: ***The Foundation: Exodus 20:16 & 23:1-3; Proverbs 14:5, 25 & 19:5; Jacob the Deceiver: Genesis 25:29-34 & 27:1-29; Jesus' Teachings: Matthew 5:33-37 & 26: 57-67; Disciples Reinforce Jesus: James 5:7-12 & Colossians 3:1-17***

Chapter 20: Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard?

This question gets to the heart of Christianity. Am I living a Christlike life? Am **I living out the virtues of Jesus on a daily basis?** To be wholly Christian means to be like Christ. Not just when it is convenient, or easy, but when you encounter a person or people that are hard to love or even like. In order to live like Jesus we must totally surrender ourselves over to Jesus and love God with all our hearts everyday.

When we look at this question the answers for each person will be different and everyone will have to come to their own conclusions and answers. The three reasons we may fear, dislike, disown, criticize, or hold grudges toward people are as follows:

1. We assume we are better than this person or people. In order for us to get over this we must begin to look at this person or people and see them as God sees them. This is the only way we can keep from elevating ourselves above them and not look down on them. We need to remember everyone is of great worth in the eyes of God. We must stop comparing ourselves to other people so we will not create separation from each other. God will bring us together if we will only place ourselves at the foot of Jesus' cross. The place where we are all equal.

2. *We don't like their personality or they just rub us the wrong way or they irritate us.*

As Christians we are not called to be compatible we are called to be compassionate. We are called to be Christ with each other. We are to love one another. Jesus lived this out in His daily life, no matter where he went he showed compassion. I would even say when He was talking to the Scribes and Pharisees, He was showing compassion in telling them the truth. When he was talking to the woman at the well, he was compassionate when he told her the truth about her relationships. We need to show compassion or grace, but we must always do this with the truth of Jesus.

3. *We believe that this person or people has wronged us in some way.* This has to do with forgiveness. If we are holding onto unforgiveness due to a past wrong, we need to go to this person or people and we must forgive them and ask for forgiveness. We are commanded to forgive, just as God forgave us our sins when we repented. Forgiving someone does not depend on them, it depends on us. The feelings of resentment for being wronged is a natural human defense mechanism. But as a human being living as a Christian we must overcome this natural trait, and live out the commandment of Jesus, forgive those who have wronged you just as God the Father has forgiven you. This is not easy, nor is it simple. It could take years to mend your broken heart and your broken relationships. When we asked Jesus to forgive us and asked Him into our hearts, we were automatically reconciled with God. When we forgive others who have wronged us we are now living a lifestyle of reconciliation waiting on the other person to come and meet us in the act of forgiveness. Then we can be reconciled to one another. This is living a Christian life and being like Jesus in the world.

Read the following scripture: *Matthew 5:13-30 & 43-48; Mark 11:20-26; Luke 17:1-4; Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-17; Galatians 6:1-6; 1 Peter 3:8-12; 1 John 1:5-10*

Chapter 21: When did I last speak to someone about my faith?

Read the following scripture: *Matthew 28: 18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24: 46-49; John 20: 19-23; Acts 1: 4-8*

There is a common theme in all of the passages. We are to Go, to Obey, and to Discern from the Holy Spirit. The great commission given to us by Jesus in Matthew outlines the pathway for the church to follow. Jesus spent three years developing and maturing His disciples. Then Jesus gave them the great commission and sent them into the world (Evangelism). Then He told them to baptize those who repent into the Church, and teach them His commandments. (Discipleship, guiding them into full mature Disciples). Now let's look at each of these common themes in these passages.

1. Go: In order for us to go anywhere in the name of Jesus, means we must let Jesus be in control of all aspects of our lives. We must be mature disciples living our lives fully for God.

2. Obey: This means we live our lives the way Jesus lived and modeled His life while he was on this earth. Jesus, through His life, modeled for us what it means to live a full life as a created being. Since we are created in God's Image and are His image bearers, how we live out our lives is very important. As we live our lives in obedience and love for Jesus everyone will see how much we love Jesus our Lord and savior.

3. Discern from the Holy Spirit: As we Go and live out our lives in obedience to Jesus we need to take our direction from the Holy Spirit in order to know the perfect will of God. The Holy Spirit will guide us, give us strength, courage and help us make decisions as we obey and go where He has called us. It is a constant battle to turn our lives over to God's will and purpose. We have to fight everyday to do His will and not our own will. However, we find our strength and guidance in scripture.

Romans 12:1-2: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

In order for us to truly understand what Jesus is calling us into we need to understand two things.

1. When we share our faith with anyone we must proclaim the good news of Jesus as our Savior and let people know that Jesus changes lives. We do this by using the most powerful tool we all have: Our own personal stories. Your story of how Jesus changed your life is the most powerful and compelling story we can tell to anyone. Your story of how Jesus changed your life will draw people to this story of redemption, but this will only happen, if we live authentic humble lives for Jesus.

2. We must always live out the gospel, showing others we have been changed. We do this by going into the world and living out our redemption story.

Read the following scripture to close: *1 Peter 1: 13-25 & 3: 13-17.*