

40 STRONG

“Transforming Men Into Victorious Kingdom Building Men”

40 STRONG

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40 STRONG: From Passive to Powerful in 40 Days

A discipleship journey for men who are done with passivity and ready for purpose.

40 STRONG - PROGRAM OPENING

THE VALLEY OF DECISION: A 40-Day Story

THE BATTLEFIELD NOBODY ENTERED

"The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand" (1 Samuel 17:16, NASB).

For forty days, the army of Israel assembled in battle formation. For forty days, they strapped on their armor. For forty days, they shouted the war cry. For forty days, they stood on the ridge overlooking the Valley of Elah, looking every bit the part of God's warriors.

And for forty days, not one man stepped into the valley.

Goliath stood nine feet tall. His armor weighed 125 pounds. His spear was like a weaver's beam. And twice a day—morning and evening—he descended into the valley and issued his challenge:

***"Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us... I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together"* (1 Samuel 17:8-10, NASB).**

The response from Israel's army?

"When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid" (1 Samuel 17:11, NASB).

WARRIORS IN APPEARANCE ONLY

Here's what strikes me about this story: These men had everything they needed except the one thing that mattered.

They had:

- **✓ The armor of God's chosen people**
- **✓ The presence of their anointed king (Saul)**
- **✓ The collective strength of an assembled army**

- ✓ The religious credentials and covenant promises
- ✓ The war cry and battle formations

What they didn't have was a single man willing to step into the valley alone.

They were spectacular at gathering together. They were impressive in their corporate display of military might. They looked the part. They sounded the part.

But when the moment came to actually engage the enemy—when someone needed to walk down that ridge, cross that valley floor, and face the giant—they were paralyzed.

"All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were greatly afraid" (1 Samuel 17:24, NASB).

THE SUNDAY MORNING ARMY

Brother, if you're honest, you've been that soldier.

You show up on Sunday morning. You put on your Christian armor—Bible under your arm, worship posture engaged, head nodded at the right sermon points. You stand in the ranks with the gathered assembly. You raise your hands during the worship set. You shout "Amen!" when the preacher brings the fire.

You look like a warrior. You sound like a warrior.

But Monday morning comes.

The alarm goes off. You walk into your workplace where you're the only believer. Your marriage bed feels more like a battlefield than a refuge. Your kids are asking questions you don't know how to answer. Your addiction is whispering your name again. The pornography tab is one click away. Your bank account mocks your anxiety. Your anger simmers just beneath your Christian smile.

And you realize: You're standing on the ridge, fully armored, but you're not stepping into the valley.

The giants are taunting:

- "You can't beat lust—you've tried before"
- "You'll never be the husband she needs"
- "You're failing your kids just like your dad failed you"

- "You're a fraud at work, and they're going to figure it out"
- "God might forgive others, but your sin is too big"
- "You're too broken, too far gone, too weak"

And forty days turns into forty weeks turns into forty years of armed passivity.

THE SHEPHERD NOBODY EXPECTED

Then into this paralyzed army walks a teenager with no armor, no sword, and no battle experience.

David.

What did David have that Israel's trained warriors lacked?

Not better equipment—he refused Saul's armor.

Not superior size—he was the youngest, smallest, least impressive.

Not military credentials—he was a shepherd, not a soldier.

What David had was a prepared heart.

Listen to how he describes himself:

"Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after it and attacked it, and rescued the lamb from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I seized it by its beard and struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God" (1 Samuel 17:34-36, NASB).

Do you see it? David had been in the valley before—alone, with no audience, fighting battles nobody witnessed.

While Israel's army was practicing formations and polishing armor, David was:

- Protecting what God had entrusted to him (the sheep)
- Fighting battles in obscurity (the wilderness)
- Building trust in God's faithfulness (lion and bear)
- Developing courage through repeated engagement (not theory)

The wilderness prepared his heart. The private battles built his faith. The shepherd's work formed the warrior's soul.

When the moment came to face Goliath, David didn't need to gear up—he was already ready.

"David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted'" (1 Samuel 17:45, NASB).

THE CRISIS OF MODERN CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

Theological Insight:

"The church has been brought into the same condition as that of the Israelites at the advent of Christ. The scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers, looked for the coming of the Messiah; but they looked for Him to come in outward glory, to deliver them from the Roman yoke. When He came in humility, to deliver them from the bondage of sin, they rejected Him." – Ellen G. White

Here's our crisis: We've become experts at corporate Christianity while remaining amateurs at individual discipleship.

The Research Reveals:

- 77% of Christian men attend church at least monthly (Pew Research, 2024)
- 68% participate in small groups or Bible studies (Barna, 2024)
- But only 19% have a daily devotional practice (Barna, 2023)
- Only 23% share their faith monthly or more (Lifeway Research, 2024)
- 68% struggle with pornography; only 7% have accountability (Proven Men, 2024)
- 48% admit they're not the spiritual leader in their homes (Focus on the Family, 2023)

Translation: We're great at assembling. We're terrible at engaging.

We love the war cry. We avoid the warfare.

We celebrate corporate worship experiences but can't sustain personal spiritual disciplines.

We want the victory without the valley.

Theological Insight:

"The glory of God is man fully alive, but the church has produced men who are fully anesthetized." – John Eldredge (paraphrase)

"We have gospel-hardened people who don't realize they're unconverted. They've been inoculated with just enough Christianity to make them immune to the real thing."
– Leonard Ravenhill

THE ARMOR THAT DOESN'T FIT

Remember what happened when Saul tried to prepare David for battle?

"Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.' And David took them off" (1 Samuel 17:38-39, NASB).

Saul's armor didn't fit David because Saul's armor was never meant for David.

Brother, here's the hard truth: A lot of what you think is "Christian manhood" is actually Saul's armor—impressive, religious, and completely unworkable for the battle God has called you to.

The modern church has given men:

- **✓ Programs instead of transformation**
- **✓ Information instead of formation**
- **✓ Accountability without vulnerability**
- **✓ Activities instead of intimacy with God**
- **✓ Sunday performance instead of Monday power**
- **✓ Religious credentials instead of heart preparation**

We've been given Saul's armor, and we wonder why we can't fight.

Theological Insight:

"The great tragedy of modern Christianity is not that we ask too much of people, but that we ask too little. We've traded the costly call of discipleship for the cheap grace of mere churchgoing." – Dallas Willard (paraphrase)

WHAT 40 STRONG IS... AND ISN'T

40 STRONG is not another program to add to your religious armor.

This is not:

- **X A Bible study to increase your knowledge**
- **X An accountability group to manage your behavior**
- **X A men's event to pump you up for three days**
- **X A formula for becoming a "better Christian"**
- **X Seven steps to spiritual success**

40 STRONG is 40 days in the wilderness preparing your heart for the valley.

Just like:

- **Noah's 40 days in the flood—surviving the judgment, trusting the promise**
- **Moses' 40 days on Sinai—hearing from God in isolation**
- **The spies' 40 days in Canaan—seeing the giants and the goodness**
- **Elijah's 40 days to Horeb—running from fear to encountering God**
- **Jonah's 40 days warning Nineveh—reluctant obedience becoming revival**
- **Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness—tested, tempted, and triumphant**

This is 40 days of:

- **Honest confrontation with your passivity**
- **Brutal honesty about your hidden sin**
- **Deep work of renewing your identity in Christ**
- **Practical training in spiritual disciplines**
- **Real-world engagement with the battles you face**
- **Commissioning as a disciple who makes disciples**

The Goal: At the end of 40 days, you won't need Saul's armor. You'll step into your valley with a prepared heart.

THE HEART GOD IS LOOKING FOR

After David killed Goliath and was brought before King Saul, something remarkable happened. Saul's son Jonathan—the rightful heir to the throne, the trained warrior, the man who should have fought Goliath—made a covenant with David.

"Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt" (1 Samuel 18:3-4, NASB).

Do you see the reversal?

The prepared warrior (Jonathan) gave his armor to the shepherd (David)—not because David needed it to fight, but because David had already proven he didn't need it.

Later, when God rejected Saul as king and sent Samuel to anoint David, God said this:

"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, NASB).

And after David was anointed:

"Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him" (1 Samuel 16:14, NASB).

Here's the sobering truth: You can have all the armor, all the credentials, all the religious activity, and still be running on empty—because God is looking at your heart.

Theological Insight:

"The heart is the place where we live our passions. It is the place where we hold our deepest convictions and values. It is the place where we decide on our loyalties. The heart is the control room for our existence." – Richard Foster

"God is not looking for extraordinary characters as His instruments, but He is looking for humble instruments through whom He can be honored throughout the ages." – A.W. Tozer

THE INVITATION: STEP INTO YOUR VALLEY

For forty days, Goliath taunted Israel.

For forty days, trained warriors stood paralyzed.

For forty days, the army assembled but no one engaged.

Then David stepped into the valley.

Not because he was bigger, stronger, or better equipped.

But because his heart was prepared.

"Then David said to the Philistine, 'This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands'" (1 Samuel 17:46-47, NASB).

David didn't fight for victory. He fought FROM victory.

He knew:

- ✓ Who God was (the LORD of hosts)
- ✓ Who he was (God's anointed servant)
- ✓ What God had done (defeated the lion and bear)
- ✓ What God would do (deliver the giant)

And he stepped into the valley alone, trusting.

YOUR 40 DAYS START NOW

Brother, God is calling you into your valley.

Not to prove yourself.

Not to earn your salvation.

Not to impress others.

Not to manufacture confidence through religious activity.

God is calling you to 40 days of heart preparation so that when you face your giants—and you will—you won't run. You won't freeze. You won't need someone else to fight for you.

You'll step into the valley prepared.

Over the next 40 days, we're going to:

WEEK 1 - AWAKENING: Confront the spiritual passivity that keeps you on the ridge

WEEK 2 - REPENTANCE: Kill the lions and bears in your wilderness (hidden sin)

WEEK 3 - RENEWAL: Build your identity on who God says you are, not who you fear you aren't

WEEK 4 - EQUIPPING: Develop the spiritual disciplines David learned as a shepherd

WEEK 5 - ENGAGEMENT: Practice stepping into smaller valleys before the big ones

WEEK 6 - COMMISSIONING: Get sent out as a man who makes disciples, not just a man who needs one

This won't be easy. Wilderness preparation never is.

This won't be comfortable. Heart surgery rarely is.

This won't be popular. The army mocked David before he fought Goliath.

But at the end of 40 days, you will not be the same man.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB).

THE QUESTION ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER

The army of Israel stood on that ridge for forty days, fully armored, shouting war cries, looking impressive.

But they never stepped into the valley.

What about you?

Will you spend the next forty days:

- Going through religious motions while avoiding real battles?
- Gathering with other men on Sunday while living in defeat Monday-Saturday?
- Knowing more Bible verses while trusting God less?
- Looking like a warrior while living like a coward?

Or will you let these 40 days prepare your heart to step into your valley—whatever that valley is—trusting that the battle belongs to the LORD?

Theological Insight:

"God is not looking for people who want to use Him; He's looking for people He can use." – Rick Warren

"The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.' But God never disappoints me. He is faithful, and His mercies are new every morning." – Billy Graham

YOUR COVENANT COMMITMENT

Before you begin Day 1, I want you to sign this covenant. Not for me. Not for your accountability partner. Not for your church.

For you. And for God.

40 STRONG COVENANT

I, _____, recognize that I have been standing on the ridge too long—equipped but not engaged, trained but not trusting, armed but not advancing.

For the next 40 days, I commit to:

HONESTY - No more hiding. No more pretending. No more Christian performance.

OBEDIENCE - I will do what God asks, even when it's hard, embarrassing, or costly.

VULNERABILITY - I will confess my sin, share my struggles, and ask for help.

DISCIPLINE - I will show up every day, even when I don't feel like it.

ENGAGEMENT - I will step into my valley, face my giants, and trust God for the outcome.

I understand that:

- **This is not about earning God's love (I already have it)**
- **This is not about proving my worth (Christ already did)**
- **This is not about becoming perfect (I won't)**

This is about preparing my heart to step into the battles God has called me to fight.

At the end of 40 days, I will not be the same man.

"Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12, NASB).

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Accountability Partner: _____

ONE LAST WORD BEFORE YOU BEGIN

David didn't defeat Goliath because he was strong.

He defeated Goliath because God was strong, and David trusted Him.

You won't complete these 40 days because you're disciplined enough.

You'll complete them because God is faithful, and His grace is sufficient.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9, NASB).

Welcome to 40 STRONG.

Not because you are strong.

But because HE is strong, and WE stand together.

Now—step into the valley.

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong"
(1 Corinthians 16:13, NASB)

TURN THE PAGE. DAY 1 BEGINS NOW.

40 STRONG - DAY 1

THE COMFORTABLE CAGE: Recognizing Complacency

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Confronting Spiritual Passivity

MORNING: THE WAKE-UP CALL (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I'm standing on the ridge this morning—armed but paralyzed, equipped but not engaged. For too long I've looked the part without living the reality. Today, I ask for the courage to see myself as You see me—not to condemn me, but to awaken me. Give me eyes to see where I've settled for comfort over calling. I don't want to waste another 40 days standing still. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Blunt Question

Read slowly. Out loud if possible.

"How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21, NASB).

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16, NASB).

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38, NASB).

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink'" (John 7:37, NASB).

Pause. Breathe. Read that last verse again.

Teaching: The Cage You Can't See

There's a kind of Christian living that looks like faithfulness but feels like death.

You go to church. You pray before meals. You give to the offering. You avoid the "big sins." You show up when expected. You check the boxes. You maintain the appearance.

And yet—something is missing.

You're not backslidden. You haven't walked away. You're not living in rebellion.

But you're also not alive in the way Scripture describes life in Christ.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, NASB).

If you're honest—and these 40 days require honesty—abundant is not the word you'd use to describe your spiritual life right now.

Comfortable? Yes.

Predictable? Absolutely.

Safe? Most of the time.

Abundant? ...

Theological Insight:

"The Christian life is meant to be a life of desperate dependence on God. We have taken the 'desperate' out of it and made it a civilized, manageable thing. We've traded the adventure of following Jesus for the safety of managing our image as Christians." – Francis Chan (paraphrase)

Here's what complacency looks like in real life:

SPIRITUALLY:

- **You read your Bible... when you have time (which is rarely)**
- **You pray... when crisis hits (but not much in between)**
- **You worship... at church (but not in your car on Tuesday)**
- **You think about God... on Sundays (then file Him away until next week)**

RELATIONALLY:

- **You're present with your wife... physically (but checked out emotionally)**
- **You engage with your kids... when convenient (but miss the moments that matter)**
- **You have Christian friends... at church (but no one who really knows you)**

- You serve... when asked (but don't initiate anything)

MISSIONALLY:

- You believe in evangelism... for pastors and missionaries (not for you)
- You care about the lost... in theory (but don't know any personally)
- You support ministry... financially (but don't get your hands dirty)
- You want God to use you... someday (just not today, and not like that)

The result? You're a Christian—technically. But you're living far below what God designed, what Christ died for, and what the Spirit empowers.

You're in a comfortable cage.

Theological Insight:

"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." – C.S. Lewis

The Harsh Truth About Comfort

Here's what David knew that Israel's army forgot: Comfort is the enemy of courage.

Those soldiers standing on the ridge weren't cowards by nature—they were warriors. But forty days of standing in formation without engaging had created a pattern of passivity.

They got used to:

- Showing up without stepping out
- Looking ready without being ready
- Assembling without advancing

Sound familiar?

Every Sunday you stand on the ridge. You gear up. You sing the songs. You hear the sermon. You feel the conviction.

And every Monday you go back to the same patterns:

- The same unconfessed sin
- The same spiritual dryness
- The same relational avoidance
- The same fearful silence about your faith
- The same mediocrity

Research Insight:

Studies show that 68% of Christian men describe their spiritual life as "stuck" or "stagnant," yet only 12% take action to change their patterns (Barna Group, 2024). We can identify the problem but remain unwilling to disrupt our comfort.

Why? Because we've made peace with the cage.

It's not exciting, but it's familiar.

It's not abundant, but it's safe.

It's not what we want, but it's what we know.

And the longer we stay, the harder it becomes to leave.

The Question God Is Asking You Today

Elijah stood before Israel and asked: *"How long will you hesitate between two opinions?"*

Translation: How long are you going to keep one foot in and one foot out?

Jesus said to the lukewarm church: *"I wish you were cold or hot."*

Translation: Pick a side. Halfhearted faith is nauseating.

Brother, God is not asking you to be perfect. He's asking you to be present. Engaged. All in.

Not performing to earn His love—you already have it.

Not proving your worth—Christ already established it.

Not becoming something you're not—but becoming who you already are in Him.

"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3, NASB).

You are:

- A son, not a slave

- Forgiven, not condemned
- Empowered by the Spirit, not left to your own strength
- Called and commissioned, not sidelined

But you've been living like you're still on the ridge—armed but paralyzed.

Today's Awakening: Name the Cage

Before you can leave the cage, you have to admit you're in one.

Theological Insight:

"The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance." –

Nathaniel Branden

"We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us." – Joseph Campbell

This isn't about shame. Shame keeps you stuck. This is about awakening.

The goal of Day 1: Look honestly at where you've settled for comfortable Christianity and name it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Answer honestly—no one sees this but you and God)

1. SPIRITUAL HONESTY:

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your spiritual vitality right now?

(1 = barely alive, 10 = abundantly alive in Christ)

Your number: _____

What made you choose that number instead of higher or lower?

2. THE COMFORTABLE PATTERNS:

What spiritual practices have you let slide because they became inconvenient?

(Daily prayer? Scripture reading? Fasting? Worship outside church? Serving?)

3. THE RIDGE YOU'RE STANDING ON:

Where in your life are you "showing up" without "stepping out"?
(Marriage? Parenting? Work? Friendships? Church? Community?)

4. THE GIANT YOU'RE AVOIDING:

What "Goliath" has been taunting you that you've been unwilling to face?
(Addiction? Pornography? Anger? Fear? Unforgiveness? Passivity? Pride?)

5. THE HONEST QUESTION:

If nothing changes in your spiritual life over the next year, how will you feel about that?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read this out loud)

Today, I declare:

I am not defined by my comfort—I am defined by Christ.

I am not called to safety—I am called to surrender.

I am not living for the approval of others—I am living for an audience of One.

I am not stuck in my patterns—God's mercies are new this morning.

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, NASB).

I am stepping off the ridge.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess that I've been content with comfortable Christianity. I've settled for showing up without engaging, for looking the part without living the reality. Forgive me for wasting time on the ridge when You've called me into the valley. Today, I ask You to awaken my heart—not to crush me with guilt, but to stir me with possibility. Show me

what abundant life looks like. Give me courage for the first step. I don't need to see the whole path—I just need to trust You for today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set an alarm for noon. When it goes off, stop what you're doing. Take 2 minutes.

Breathe in: *"Lord, awaken my heart"*

Breathe out: *"I'm ready to step forward"*

Repeat 5-10 times slowly.

Reality Check: *How am I doing right now? Am I living present and engaged, or am I already slipping back into autopilot?*

Brief Prayer: *Jesus, help me stay awake.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen (A practice from Ignatius of Loyola)

Find a quiet place. No phone. No TV. Just you and God.

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What am I grateful for today? (Name 2-3 specific things)

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I see God at work today? (Even small moments count)

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I live on the ridge today instead of stepping into the valley?

Where did I choose comfort over courage?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

What do I need to confess or surrender?

STEP 5: GRACE

God, what are You saying to me about today? (Listen. Wait. Write what comes.)

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"If I'm honest, the comfortable cage I've been living in looks like..."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

Before you go to bed, send this text to your accountability partner:

"Day 1 ✓ - The cage I identified today: [one sentence]. Tomorrow I'm asking God to show me why I've stayed in it."

If they don't respond, that's okay. The discipline is in the sending, not the response.

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Quickly read the title for Day 2: "The Father's Heart - Understanding God's Design for Men"

Brief Prayer:

God, as I sleep tonight, prepare my heart for tomorrow. Show me how You see me—not how I see myself, not how others see me, but how YOU see me as Your son. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: WHY THIS MATTERS

Theological Insight:

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

David didn't wake up one morning and decide to fight Goliath.

He spent years in the wilderness learning to trust God with lions and bears, protecting sheep nobody noticed, developing courage nobody applauded.

These 40 days are your wilderness.

Not punishment. Preparation.

Not performance. Formation.

You're not earning God's love—you already have it, completely and unconditionally.

But if you want to step into the valley God is calling you toward—if you want to face your giants instead of hiding from them—your heart needs to be prepared.

Day 1 is about waking up to where you really are.

Tomorrow, we'll discover who you really are.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

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

God's word isn't meant to condemn you. It's meant to awaken you.

Sleep well, brother. Day 2 begins tomorrow.

40 STRONG - Day 1 Complete ✓

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong"
(1 Corinthians 16:13, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 2

THE FATHER'S HEART: Understanding God's Design for Men

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Confronting Spiritual Passivity

MORNING: THE IDENTITY THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father—and I use that word carefully this morning—I come to You not knowing how to fully trust it. My earthly father was [imperfect/absent/harsh/distant—fill in your reality]. And I've often projected his face onto Yours. Today, I ask You to show me who You really are. Not the God I've imagined, not the God religion has presented, but the God who calls me "son" with affection, not obligation. Speak to the deep places. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Father You've Been Looking For

Read slowly. Let these words land.

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1, NASB).

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15-16, NASB).

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:4-7, NASB).

Now read this slowly. This is Jesus describing the Father's heart:

"What man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:9-11, NASB).

Pause. Close your eyes. Imagine the Father looking at you with delight, not disappointment.

Teaching: You Are More Loved Than You Know

Yesterday you identified the comfortable cage. Today we discover why you've been living in it.

Here's the truth most men don't believe:

God doesn't love you because of what you do.

God doesn't accept you because of how hard you try.

God doesn't delight in you because you've earned it.

God loves you because you are His son.

Period. Full stop. No qualifiers.

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." – Tim Keller

Brother, the reason you've been standing on the ridge—armed but paralyzed—is because you don't actually believe God is FOR you.

Deep down, you believe:

- God is disappointed in you
- You need to do more to earn His approval
- You're one mistake away from His rejection
- Other men have it figured out, but you're barely hanging on
- God tolerates you, but He doesn't delight in you

And that lie has crippled you spiritually.

Because if you believe God is keeping score, then every day becomes about performance, not relationship. Every prayer becomes negotiation. Every failure confirms what you feared: *You're not good enough.*

But listen to what the Father says:

"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8, NASB).

Translation: God didn't wait for you to get your act together. He pursued you while you were still a mess.

That's not tolerance. That's scandalous love.

The Orphan vs. The Son

There are two ways to live as a Christian man:

1. THE ORPHAN MINDSET (Slave mentality)

- **I must earn God's approval through my behavior**
- **My value is based on my performance**
- **I'm alone in this fight**
- **God is disappointed when I fail**
- **I can lose His love if I mess up enough**
- **Christianity is about trying harder**

2. THE SON MINDSET (Adoption mentality)

- **I'm fully loved and accepted in Christ**
- **My value is based on Jesus' finished work**
- **I'm empowered by the Spirit and surrounded by brothers**
- **God is patient when I fail and uses it to teach me**
- **Nothing can separate me from His love (Romans 8:38-39)**
- **Christianity is about trusting deeper**

Most Christian men live like orphans.

We know the doctrine of grace. We sing about it. We preach it.

But we don't believe it applies to us.

So we keep performing, striving, hiding, pretending—exhausting ourselves trying to be good enough, while the Father stands with arms open, calling us to come home.

Theological Insight:

"There are two ways to be God's child. One is to be good. The other is to have Jesus. Christianity is the only religion in the world that says you don't have to be good—you have to be adopted." – Brennan Manning (paraphrase)

The Story Jesus Told About You

You know the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). But have you ever noticed there are actually TWO sons—and both are lost?

THE YOUNGER SON: Rebels openly. Takes his inheritance, wastes it, lives in sin. Ends up feeding pigs. Finally comes home, expecting to be a slave.

What the father does: Runs to him. Embraces him. Puts a robe on him, a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet. Throws a party. Declares: *"This son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found"* (Luke 15:24).

THE OLDER SON: Never left home. Worked faithfully. Obeyed all the rules. Did everything "right."

But when the father celebrates the younger son's return, the older son refuses to join. And listen to what he says:

"Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends" (Luke 15:29, NASB).

Did you catch it?

The older son lived in his father's house but had the heart of a hired servant, not a son.

- "I have been serving you" (not relating to you)
- "I have never neglected a command" (performance-based)
- "You have never given me" (keeping score, feeling entitled)

And the father's response reveals everything:

"Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31, NASB).

Translation: "You've had full access to everything the whole time, but you've been living like a slave instead of a son."

Brother, which son are you?

Maybe you're the younger son—you've wandered far, you're covered in shame, and you think God could never fully accept you again.

Or maybe you're the older son—you've done all the right things, but your heart is cold, your Christianity is duty, and you secretly resent God for not giving you what you think you've earned.

Either way, the Father is running toward you this morning with the same message:

"You are My beloved son. Everything I have is yours. Stop living like an orphan. Come home to My heart."

God's Original Design for Men

Before sin. Before the fall. Before performance anxiety and shame and the endless striving to prove ourselves—God created man with a purpose.

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:27-28, NASB).

God's design for men includes:

1. IDENTITY BEFORE ACTIVITY

You were created in God's image before you were given anything to do. Your value isn't in your productivity—it's in whose you are.

2. BLESSED BEFORE COMMISSIONED

God blessed them before He sent them. You don't work for the blessing—you work **FROM** the blessing.

3. PARTNER, NOT LONE RANGER

"Male and female He created them"—you weren't designed to do this alone. Isolation is the enemy's strategy, not God's design.

4. STEWARDSHIP, NOT OWNERSHIP

"Subdue... rule"—God gave you responsibility, authority, and purpose. But it's His kingdom, His earth, His mission. You're a steward, not the owner.

Then the fall happened (Genesis 3), and everything got twisted:

- **Identity became based on performance (fig leaves)**
- **Blessing became something to earn through sweat (cursed ground)**
- **Partnership became competition and blame (Adam blaming Eve)**
- **Stewardship became selfish ambition (building our own kingdoms)**

And men have been lost ever since.

But Jesus—the Second Adam—came to restore God's original design:

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22, NASB).

Theological Insight:

"Jesus is not a solution to the problem of your sin. Jesus is the solution to the problem of your humanity. He doesn't just forgive you—He restores you to what you were always meant to be." – N.T. Wright (paraphrase)

Biblical Masculinity vs. Cultural Masculinity

The world has two distorted versions of manhood:

TOXIC MASCULINITY:

Strength without tenderness. Dominance without service. Independence without vulnerability. "Real men don't cry, don't ask for help, don't show weakness."

PASSIVE MASCULINITY:

Tenderness without strength. Service without leadership. Vulnerability without courage. "Nice guys" who avoid conflict, responsibility, and difficult decisions.

BIBLICAL MASCULINITY:

Look at Jesus—the truest man who ever lived:

- **Strong enough to flip tables in the temple (John 2:15)**
- **Tender enough to weep at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:35)**

- Authoritative enough to command storms (Mark 4:39)
- Humble enough to wash feet (John 13:5)
- Courageous enough to face the cross (Luke 22:42)
- Vulnerable enough to cry out in anguish (Matthew 27:46)

Biblical manhood is:

- Warrior + Shepherd (protecting AND nurturing)
- Strong + Gentle (firm convictions AND compassionate heart)
- Leading + Serving (taking initiative AND laying down life)
- Independent + Interdependent (self-sufficient AND community-oriented)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NASB).

The standard isn't cultural masculinity. It's Christ.

Theological Insight:

"God doesn't make generic people. He makes men and He makes women, each bearing His image in distinct and complementary ways. The question isn't 'What does culture say a man should be?' but 'What does God say a man should be?'" – John Piper (paraphrase)

The Three Lies That Keep Men Stuck

LIE #1: "I am what I do"

Your worth is measured by your productivity, your success, your accomplishments.

TRUTH: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB).*

You are a son. That's your identity. Everything else flows from that.

LIE #2: "I must hide my weakness"

Real men don't struggle. Real men have it together. Real men don't need help.

TRUTH: *"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9, NASB).

Your weakness is where God's power shows up. Hiding it doesn't make you strong—it makes you isolated.

LIE #3: "God is like my earthly father"

If your dad was harsh, you think God is harsh.

If your dad was absent, you think God is distant.

If your dad was conditional, you think God's love has strings attached.

TRUTH: God is the Father you've always needed, not the father you had.

"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17, NASB).

God is perfect. Consistent. Good. And He is for you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Answer honestly)

1. FATHER WOUNDS:

What was your relationship with your earthly father like? How has that shaped how you see God?

2. ORPHAN OR SON?:

Do you relate to God more like a slave trying to earn approval, or a son resting in His love? Be honest.

3. PERFORMANCE TRAP:

Where in your life are you still trying to earn God's approval through your behavior?

4. THE LOST SON:

Which son are you in the Prodigal story—the rebellious younger son or the resentful older son? Why?

5. IDENTITY SHIFT:

What would change in your daily life if you truly believed: "I am God's beloved son, and nothing can change that"?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud with conviction)

Today, I declare:

I am not an orphan—I am a son of the living God.

I am not a slave—I am an heir of the Kingdom.

I am not tolerated—I am delighted in.

I am not performing for approval—I am resting in acceptance.

I am not defined by my failures—I am defined by Christ's finished work.

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

I am the Father's beloved son.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Abba, Father—teach me to call You that with confidence, not fear. I confess that I've projected my earthly father's failures onto You. Forgive me. Today, show me who You really are. Let me feel Your delight, not just know it doctrinally. I don't want to live like an orphan anymore. I want to live like a son—loved, secure, empowered. Teach me to rest in Your affection. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm for noon. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"Abba, Father"*

Breathe out: *"I am Your beloved son"*

Repeat slowly 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I living from performance or identity today? Am I striving or resting?*

Brief Prayer: *Father, remind me who I am.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What evidence of the Father's love did I see today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I live like a son today? Where did I live like an orphan?

STEP 3: HONESTY

What lies about God's heart toward me did I believe today?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, where do I need to receive Your love instead of earn it?

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Father saying to me right now? (Listen. Wait. Write.)

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"If I truly believed I was God's beloved son, I would stop _____ and start _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

Send to your partner:

"Day 2 ✓ - Today I'm wrestling with believing that God _____ [delights in me/isn't disappointed/loves me unconditionally]. Praying I'll believe it tomorrow more than I do today."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Quickly read Day 3 title: "Honest Inventory - Where Have I Abdicated Responsibility?"

Brief Prayer:

Father, tomorrow will require brutal honesty. Give me courage to look at where I've been passive, where I've avoided responsibility, where I've blamed others. But let me do it from a place of being loved, not condemned. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE FATHER IS RUNNING TOWARD YOU

Theological Insight:

"The Christian life is not a constant high. But I know this: There is not a single moment

***when God is not FOR me. Not one. Even when I'm faithless, He remains faithful."* – Brennan Manning (paraphrase)**

In the Prodigal Son story, when the younger son was "still a long way off," the father saw him and ran to him.

Cultural context: Middle Eastern patriarchs didn't run. It was beneath their dignity. They walked with measured, authoritative steps.

But this father ran.

Robe flying. Sandals kicking up dust. Undignified. Shameless.

Because love doesn't care about dignity when the beloved comes home.

Brother, God isn't waiting for you to clean yourself up before He embraces you.

He's running toward you right now—mess and all.

Stop trying to earn what you already have.

Stop performing for approval you already possess.

Stop living like an orphan when you're a son.

The Father's arms are open.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13, NASB).

You are not self-made. You are God-born.

You are not self-defined. You are Father-named.

You are not alone. You are loved.

Sleep in that tonight.

40 STRONG - Day 2 Complete ✓

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are"

(1 John 3:1, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 3

HONEST INVENTORY: Where Have I Abdicated Responsibility?

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Confronting Spiritual Passivity

MORNING: THE HARD LOOK IN THE MIRROR (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is the prayer I don't want to pray but need to. Today requires brutal honesty—and I'm afraid of what I'll see when I really look at myself. But I'm also tired of hiding. Tired of blaming. Tired of making excuses. Give me courage to see where I've been passive, where I've abdicated responsibility, where I've blamed others for my own failures. And remind me—even as You reveal these things—that I am still Your beloved son. Conviction without condemnation. Truth without shame. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The First Abdication

Read this carefully. This is the original pattern of male passivity.

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6, NASB).

Stop. Read that again. Notice: "her husband WITH her."

Adam was standing right there. He wasn't deceived—he was passive.

Then, after the fall:

"Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate'" (Genesis 3:9-12, NASB).

Notice the pattern:

1. Passivity - Adam was present but didn't lead or protect
2. Hiding - When confronted, he hid instead of owning it

3. Blame-shifting - "The woman YOU gave me" (blaming Eve AND God)

This is the original male abdication of responsibility. And brother, it's still happening.

Now read this:

"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17, NASB).

"So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men" (Romans 5:18, NASB).

Adam's passivity brought death. Christ's obedience brought life.

Today, you get to choose which pattern you'll follow.

Teaching: The Four Postures of Abdication

Yesterday you discovered your identity as a beloved son. Today we confront the ways you've abandoned that calling.

Because here's the paradox: You can know you're loved by God and still live irresponsibly. You can rest in grace and still refuse to grow up. You can be a son in position but a child in practice.

Grace is not permission for passivity.

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2, NASB).

Let's get specific. Here are the four ways Christian men abdicate responsibility:

1. THE BLAME SHIFTER (Like Adam)

The Pattern:

When confronted with failure, immediately deflect to someone or something else.

Common Excuses:

- **"My wife doesn't respect me, so I don't lead"**

- "My kids won't listen, so I gave up trying"
- "My boss doesn't appreciate me, so I quit caring"
- "My church doesn't offer what I need, so I stopped serving"
- "I grew up without a father, so I don't know how to be one"
- "My addiction is genetic, so it's not really my fault"
- "The culture is too corrupt, so I can't make a difference"

The Truth:

"So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12, NASB).

Not your wife's account. Not your kids' account. Not your father's account.

YOUR account.

Theological Insight:

"At the end of your life, you will stand before God alone. You won't be able to point at your spouse, your parents, your culture, or your circumstances. The question will be: What did YOU do with what I gave you?" – Francis Chan (paraphrase)

2. THE PASSIVE OBSERVER (Like Israel's Army)

The Pattern:

You show up but don't engage. Present in body, absent in heart.

Where This Shows Up:

- **Marriage:** You live in the same house but don't pursue her heart
- **Parenting:** You're home but on your phone, not with your kids
- **Church:** You attend but never serve, lead, or invest
- **Work:** You do the minimum to keep the paycheck
- **Friendships:** You have acquaintances but no real brothers
- **Health:** You know what to do but don't do it

You're like the soldier on the ridge—fully armored, shouting the war cry, but never stepping into the valley.

The Truth:

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB).

Showing up isn't the same as stepping up.

Research Insight:

Studies show that 68% of married Christian men describe themselves as "present" in their homes, but only 23% of their wives would use that word (Focus on the Family, 2023). Presence and engagement are not the same thing.

3. THE COMFORT SEEKER (Like Lot in Sodom)

The Pattern:

You make decisions based on what's easy, comfortable, and convenient—not what's right, costly, or necessary.

Where This Shows Up:

- **Choosing entertainment over spiritual disciplines**
- **Avoiding difficult conversations to "keep the peace"**
- **Refusing to discipline your kids because it's hard**
- **Staying in jobs that pay well but kill your soul**
- **Ignoring relational conflict instead of addressing it**
- **Choosing comfort over calling**

Remember Lot? He "chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan" (Genesis 13:11) because it was well-watered and prosperous. He moved his tent "as far as Sodom" (Genesis 13:12), then eventually moved into Sodom (Genesis 14:12).

The result? His family was corrupted, his witness was destroyed, and when judgment came, he barely escaped with his life—and lost his wife in the process.

"Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32, NASB).

The Truth:

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14, NASB).

Following Jesus was never meant to be comfortable.

Theological Insight:

"God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters." – J.H. Jowett

4. THE DISTRACTED ESCAPIST (Like Samson)

The Pattern:

You numb, escape, and distract yourself from the responsibilities God has given you.

The Tools of Escape:

- Pornography - Sexual fantasy replacing real intimacy
- Alcohol/Drugs - Chemical escape from emotional pain
- Work - Hiding in productivity to avoid relationships
- Sports/Hobbies - Obsessive focus on recreation
- Gaming/Screens - Digital world replacing real world
- Busyness - Perpetual motion without real purpose

Samson had supernatural strength and divine calling. But he was controlled by his appetites. Women. Impulses. Pride.

"Then she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is.' It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death. So he told her all that was in his heart" (Judges 16:15-17, NASB).

The result? He gave away his strength, lost his sight, and died in captivity.

The Truth:

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12, NASB).

What's your Delilah? What's the thing that has more power over you than it should?

Research Insight:

76% of Christian men between ages 18-50 struggle with pornography, but only 7% have

ever told another person (Proven Men Ministries, 2024). We're dying in isolation because we won't admit we're in bondage.

The Hard Questions Nobody Asks

Brother, it's time to stop lying to yourself.

Not to shame you. Not to condemn you. But to awaken you.

Because you can't change what you won't acknowledge.

You can't heal what you won't confess.

You can't grow in areas you won't confront.

Theological Insight:

"The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable." – James A. Garfield

"We cannot change anything unless we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses." – Carl Jung

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (This will be uncomfortable. Do it anyway.)

SECTION 1: SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

1. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD:

When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation with God that wasn't about a crisis? When was the last time you opened your Bible when you weren't required to?

2. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AT HOME:

If your wife and kids were asked, "Does Dad lead spiritually in your home?" what would they say? Be honest.

3. PRAYER LIFE:

Do you pray with your wife regularly? Your kids? Or do you only pray publicly at church and meals?

SECTION 2: MARRIAGE & FAMILY

4. EMOTIONAL PRESENCE:

On a scale of 1-10, how emotionally present are you with your wife? (1 = physically there but emotionally checked out, 10 = fully engaged and pursuing her heart)

Your number: _____

What would SHE say your number is? _____

5. PARENTING ENGAGEMENT:

List your kids' names. Next to each, write ONE thing they're currently excited about or struggling with. If you can't answer this, that's your answer.

6. SERVANT LEADERSHIP:

When was the last time you initiated serving your family without being asked? (Dishes, laundry, bedtime, homework, etc.)

SECTION 3: PERSONAL INTEGRITY

7. HIDDEN SIN:

What sin are you currently hiding that no one knows about? (Pornography? Rage? Financial deception? Emotional affair? Substance use?)

8. ACCOUNTABILITY:

Who in your life has permission to ask you the hard questions? Who knows your passwords, your struggles, your temptations? If the answer is "no one," that's a problem.

9. TIME STEWARDSHIP:

Track your time this week: How many hours on screens (TV, phone, gaming) vs. intentional family time, spiritual disciplines, and service? Be brutally honest.

SECTION 4: CALLING & PURPOSE

10. WORK:

Are you working as unto the Lord, or just collecting a paycheck? Are you a witness at your workplace, or invisible?

11. CHURCH:

Are you serving, leading, and investing in the body of Christ? Or are you a consumer who shows up when it's convenient?

12. MISSION:

When was the last time you shared the gospel with someone? When was the last time you sacrificially served someone outside your comfort zone?

SECTION 5: THE HARDEST QUESTION

13. WHERE HAVE YOU ABDICATED?

In what specific area of your life have you given up, blamed others, or simply stopped trying?

Check all that apply:

- ☐ **Spiritual growth - I've plateaued and accepted it**
- ☐ **Marriage - I've stopped pursuing my wife**
- ☐ **Parenting - I've let my wife take the lead**
- ☐ **Career - I'm coasting, not growing**
- ☐ **Health - I know what to do but don't do it**

- ☐ **Finances** - I avoid dealing with it
- ☐ **Friendships** - I'm isolated and alone
- ☐ **Church** - I take but don't give
- ☐ **Mission** - I don't share my faith
- ☐ **Addiction** - I've surrendered to it

Now pick ONE and write it out:

The area where I have most abdicated responsibility is:

And the excuse I've been using is:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read this out loud—you need to hear it)

Even as I confront my failures, I declare:

I am not condemned—I am convicted by love, not shame.

I am not hopeless—God's mercies are new this morning.

I am not defined by my passivity—I am being renewed daily.

I am not making excuses anymore—I am taking responsibility.

I am not staying on the ridge—Today I take one step forward.

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NASB).

I am the Father's beloved son—and beloved sons grow up.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, this hurts. Seeing myself clearly is painful. I've been passive where I should have led. I've blamed others for my own failures. I've made excuses instead of changes. Forgive me. Not so I can wallow in guilt—but so I can walk in freedom. Today, I choose to take responsibility for what You've entrusted to me. Not perfectly, but honestly. Not in my strength, but in Yours. Give me courage to own my failures and wisdom to change my patterns. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"Lord, I take responsibility"*

Breathe out: *"No more excuses"*

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Have I blamed anyone today for something that's actually my responsibility?*

Brief Prayer: *God, keep me honest.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What am I grateful for today, even after this hard inventory?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I take responsibility today instead of making excuses?

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I slip back into blame-shifting or passivity today?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

What specific area of abdication do I need to address first?

STEP 5: GRACE

God, what's one step You're asking me to take tomorrow?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"The area where I've been most passive is _____. The cost of this passivity has been _____. Starting tomorrow, I will take one specific step by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

This one is harder. Send it anyway:

"Day 3 ✓ - Today I admitted that I've been passive in [one specific area]. I've been blaming [who/what], but the truth is, I just didn't want to do the hard thing. Tomorrow I'm taking one step forward: [specific action]."

Don't wait for encouragement. Send it. Confession is the first step to freedom.

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 4 title: "The Counterfeit - Identifying False Masculinity"

Brief Prayer:

Father, after today's hard look at my passivity, tomorrow show me the counterfeits I've believed about what it means to be a man. Help me distinguish between cultural masculinity and biblical masculinity. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: CONVICTION IS NOT CONDEMNATION

Theological Insight:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

Brother, today was hard. Looking honestly at where you've been passive, where you've blamed others, where you've abdicated responsibility—that's painful.

But here's what you need to know:

The Holy Spirit convicts. The enemy condemns.

CONDEMNATION SAYS:

- "You're a failure and you'll never change"
- "You're too far gone"
- "God is disappointed in you"
- "You should just give up"
- "You're not a real man"

CONVICTION SAYS:

- "You've failed, but you can change by God's grace"
- "You're not where you need to be, but you're not where you were"
- "God loves you and wants better for you"
- "Get up and try again—I'm with you"
- "You're becoming the man I created you to be"

Feel the difference?

Condemnation crushes. Conviction compels.

Condemnation paralyzes. Conviction mobilizes.

Condemnation says, "Stay on the ridge." Conviction says, "Step into the valley—I'll be with you."

David's Honest Prayer After Failure

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered, the prophet Nathan confronted him. David could have blamed Bathsheba ("She was bathing where I could see her"), circumstances ("I was stressed from war"), or even God ("You made me king with power").

Instead, he owned it:

"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'" (2 Samuel 12:13, NASB).

No excuses. No deflection. Brutal honesty.

Then he wrote Psalm 51:

"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:1-3, NASB).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:10-12, NASB).

This is the prayer of a man who:

- **Acknowledged his sin without excuse**
- **Trusted God's grace to forgive**
- **Asked for transformation, not just forgiveness**
- **Didn't run from God—he ran TO God**

That's what today is about.

Not beating yourself up. Coming clean.

Not staying in shame. Running to the Father.

Not justifying your passivity. Taking the first step forward.

The One Thing You'll Do Tomorrow

Don't try to fix everything at once. That's overwhelming and will lead to burnout.

Just pick ONE thing from your inventory today.

Tomorrow morning, take ONE step:

- **If you've been passive spiritually: Pray for 10 minutes before checking your phone**
- **If you've neglected your wife: Text her something specific you appreciate about her**

- If you've been absent with your kids: Put your phone down and ask them about their day—really listen
- If you've avoided hard conversations: Have one
- If you've been hiding sin: Confess it to one person
- If you've been coasting at work: Do one thing with excellence
- If you've been isolated: Reach out to one brother

Just. One. Step.

"The one who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10, NASB).

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

He's not surprised by what you confessed today.

He's been waiting for you to stop hiding it.

And now that it's in the light—you can heal.

40 STRONG - Day 3 Complete ✓

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 4

THE COUNTERFEIT: Identifying False Masculinity

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Confronting Spiritual Passivity

MORNING: EXPOSING THE IMITATIONS (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I've been formed by many voices about what it means to be a man—my father, my coaches, my culture, my peers, the media. Some of those voices spoke truth. Many spoke lies. Today, I ask You to expose the counterfeits I've believed. Show me where I've traded Your design for the world's distortion. I don't want to live according to Hollywood's version or religion's performance—I want to live as the man You created me to be. Give me eyes to see the difference. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Standard

First, see what false masculinity looks like:

"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get'" (Luke 18:11-12, NASB).

Pride. Performance. Comparison. Superiority.

"Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking'" (Matthew 20:20-22, NASB).

Ambition. Position. Power. Status.

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and

whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28, NASB).

Now see what TRUE masculinity looks like:

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8, NASB).

Humility. Service. Sacrifice. Obedience.

Pause. These are radically different pictures of manhood.

Teaching: The Two Counterfeits

The enemy is cunning. He doesn't just offer one counterfeit version of masculinity—he offers two opposite extremes, and both are deadly.

Think of a pendulum:

On one side: TOXIC MASCULINITY (Dominance without Love)

On the other side: PASSIVE MASCULINITY (Love without Strength)

In the center: BIBLICAL MASCULINITY (Strength AND Tenderness)

Most men swing between the two extremes, never finding the biblical center. Or we pick the one that feels most natural to our personality and call it "biblical."

But Jesus didn't swing. He was the perfect integration of both.

Theological Insight:

"In Jesus, we see what humanity was always meant to be—not a choice between strength or tenderness, but the full integration of both in perfect balance. He is the Second Adam, showing us what the First Adam was created to be before the fall distorted everything." – Brennan Manning (paraphrase)

Let's expose both counterfeits.

COUNTERFEIT #1: TOXIC MASCULINITY

"Real Men Are Hard, Dominant, and Never Weak"

The Lies:

- **Real men don't cry, don't ask for help, don't show emotion**
- **Masculinity is measured by dominance, control, and conquest**
- **Strength means never admitting weakness or need**
- **Leadership means demanding respect through power**
- **Vulnerability is feminine and therefore shameful**
- **Anger is acceptable; tenderness is not**

Where This Comes From:

CULTURAL SOURCES:

- **Action movies (heroes solve problems with violence, never tears)**
- **Sports culture (toughness = never showing pain or emotion)**
- **Military machismo (distorted version of warrior strength)**
- **Workplace competition (crush or be crushed mentality)**
- **Pornography (women as objects to dominate, not partners to cherish)**

WOUNDED FATHERS:

- **"Man up"**
- **"Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about"**
- **"Don't be a sissy"**
- **Affection withheld as punishment for perceived weakness**

The Result:

Men who are:

- **Emotionally constipated and relationally bankrupt**
- **Angry and controlling in their homes**
- **Isolated because they can't be vulnerable**

- Addicted to conquest (sex, money, power, achievement)
- Harsh and demanding, confusing fear with respect
- Disconnected from their own hearts and others'

What the Bible Says:

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

Not harsh dominance. Nurturing instruction.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NASB).

Not demanding submission. Sacrificial love.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, NASB).

Gentleness is strength under control, not weakness.

Jesus—the Manliest Man Who Ever Lived:

- Wept at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:35)
- Welcomed children when disciples pushed them away (Mark 10:14)
- Washed His disciples' feet (John 13:5)
- Asked for prayer support in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38)
- Cried out in anguish on the cross (Matthew 27:46)

If Jesus could weep, serve, and ask for help—so can you.

Theological Insight:

"The devil's great trick is to convince men that strength and tenderness are opposites, when in fact, true strength includes tenderness. The strongest man is the one secure enough to be gentle." – John Eldredge (paraphrase)

COUNTERFEIT #2: PASSIVE MASCULINITY

"Real Men Are Nice, Agreeable, and Avoid Conflict"

The Lies:

- Masculinity means being "nice" and never causing offense
- Leadership means consensus and avoiding difficult decisions
- Strength means suppressing anger and never confronting
- Love means avoiding conflict and keeping everyone happy
- Humility means self-deprecation and hiding your gifts
- Service means being a doormat for everyone's demands

Where This Comes From:

CULTURAL SOURCES:

- Reaction against toxic masculinity ("I won't be like my harsh father")
- Church culture that confuses meekness with weakness
- Feminist critique that equates masculinity with toxicity
- Conflict-averse personality presented as "Christlike"
- Self-help mantras about "positivity" and avoiding negativity

WOUNDED FATHERS:

- Absent fathers (no model of engaged masculinity)
- Weak fathers (couldn't protect or provide)
- Passive fathers (present but checked out)

The Result:

Men who are:

- Conflict-avoidant and relationally superficial
- Unable to lead their families with conviction
- Resentful because they never say no
- Paralyzed by fear of disapproval
- Consumed by others' needs while neglecting their own calling
- Confused about boundaries between serving and enabling

What the Bible Says:

"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, NASB).

Sharpening requires friction. Conflict isn't always bad.

"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matthew 18:15, NASB).

Love confronts sin, it doesn't ignore it.

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13, NASB).

"Act like men" includes strength, courage, and conviction.

Jesus—Who Never Confused Niceness with Love:

- **Overtaken tables in the temple (John 2:15)**
- **Called Pharisees "whitewashed tombs" and "vipers" (Matthew 23:27, 33)**
- **Told Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23)**
- **Rebuked His disciples when they were wrong (Mark 9:19)**
- **Set boundaries with crowds and withdrew when needed (Mark 1:35)**

Jesus was kind, but He was not safe. He confronted. He challenged. He disrupted.

Theological Insight:

"Jesus was not a nice guy. Nice people don't get crucified. Jesus was good, He was loving, He was truthful—but He was not safe or tame. He came to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." – Dorothy Day (paraphrase)

The Third Way: Biblical Masculinity

Biblical masculinity is not:

- **Choosing between strength OR tenderness**
- **Picking dominance OR passivity**
- **Being harsh OR weak**

Biblical masculinity is:

- **Strength AND gentleness (shepherd with a rod and staff)**

- Leadership AND service (washing feet while teaching truth)
- Courage AND vulnerability (facing the cross while crying out in anguish)
- Conviction AND compassion (speaking truth in love)
- Initiative AND collaboration (leading while listening)

The Integration:

Like a SHEPHERD:

- Fights lions and bears (courage, strength)
- Gently carries the lambs (tenderness, care)
- Guides with a rod (discipline, direction)
- Comforts with a staff (presence, protection)

Like JESUS:

- Fierce in confronting evil (righteous anger)
- Tender with the broken (compassion)
- Authoritative in teaching (conviction)
- Humble in service (washing feet)
- Courageous in mission (facing death)
- Vulnerable in prayer ("not My will, but Yours")

Research Insight:

Studies show that children raised with engaged fathers who balance strength with tenderness show 70% higher emotional intelligence, 43% lower rates of behavioral problems, and 58% higher academic achievement than those raised by either harsh-dominant or passive-absent fathers (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Biblical masculinity produces thriving families, not wounded ones.

Five Specific Lies About Manhood

LIE #1: "Real men don't need anyone"

THE COUNTERFEIT: Independence is strength. Needing others is weakness.

THE TRUTH:

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NASB).

Biblical manhood includes interdependence, not isolation.

Even Jesus had an inner circle (Peter, James, John). Even Jesus asked for prayer support in Gethsemane.

Application: If you don't have brothers who know your struggles, you're living in dangerous isolation.

LIE #2: "Real men are defined by their achievements"

THE COUNTERFEIT: Your worth is measured by your productivity, income, status, and success.

THE TRUTH:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

You are God's workmanship **BEFORE** you do any work.

Identity precedes activity. You don't work to become valuable—you work **BECAUSE** you're valuable.

Application: If losing your job would threaten your identity, your identity is in the wrong place.

LIE #3: "Real men control their women"

THE COUNTERFEIT: Leadership means making all decisions and demanding submission.

THE TRUTH:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:25, 28, NASB).

Christ's leadership was sacrificial, not selfish.

He led by serving. He loved by laying down His life. He protected by putting Himself between the threat and His bride.

Application: If your wife fears you instead of respecting you, you're leading wrong.

LIE #4: "Real men suppress emotion"

THE COUNTERFEIT: Anger is acceptable. Everything else is weakness.

THE TRUTH:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15, NASB).

"Jesus wept" (John 11:35, NASB).

God gave you emotions for a reason. Suppressing them doesn't make you strong—it makes you sick.

Application: If you can't cry, can't express joy, can't be moved by beauty or broken by injustice, you're not "tough"—you're numb.

LIE #5: "Real men don't ask for directions"

THE COUNTERFEIT: Admitting you don't know something is shameful.

THE TRUTH:

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Proverbs 11:14, NASB).

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel" (Proverbs 12:15, NASB).

Wise men seek counsel. Fools refuse help.

Application: If you won't ask for directions (literal or metaphorical), you're choosing pride over wisdom.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Be honest—this reveals what you really believe)

1. WHICH COUNTERFEIT DO YOU DEFAULT TO?

When under stress, do you become: ☐ More controlling, harsh, and dominant (toxic) ☐ More passive, conflict-avoidant, and withdrawn (passive) ☐ It depends on the situation (describe)

2. WHERE DID YOU LEARN YOUR VERSION OF MANHOOD?

What voices shaped your understanding of what it means to be a man? (Father? Coaches? Media? Peers? Culture?)

Which of those voices spoke truth? Which spoke lies?

3. THE LIES YOU BELIEVE:

From the five lies above, which one do you struggle with most?

How has believing this lie affected your life? (Marriage? Parenting? Work? Friendships?)

4. JESUS VS. YOUR VERSION:

Read Philippians 2:5-8 again. How does Jesus' model of manhood challenge your current way of living?

5. THE INTEGRATION:

Where do you need to grow in strength (if you've been too passive) or tenderness (if you've been too harsh)?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud)

Today, I reject the counterfeits:

I will not measure my manhood by dominance—I will lead through service.

I will not define myself by achievement—I am loved because I'm His son.

I will not suppress my emotions—I will feel deeply and express honestly.

I will not isolate myself—I will pursue authentic brotherhood.

I will not choose the easy path—I will choose the narrow road.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20, NASB).

I am becoming the man God created me to be—strong AND tender, courageous AND vulnerable.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, expose the lies I've believed about manhood. Show me where I've swung to toxic dominance or passive withdrawal, and lead me to the biblical center. I don't want to be defined by culture, by wounds, or by counterfeits. I want to be like Jesus—strong enough to flip tables and tender enough to weep, authoritative enough to teach and humble enough to wash feet. Transform me into that kind of man. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Jesus, show me true strength"

Breathe out: "Strength AND tenderness"

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I swinging toward harshness or passivity today? Where do I need to course-correct?*

Brief Prayer: *God, keep me centered on You.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What evidence of God's grace did I see today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I live like Jesus today—balancing strength and tenderness?

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I default to the counterfeit today? (Harsh control or passive avoidance?)

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

What do I need to confess or change?

STEP 5: GRACE

Father, what are You teaching me about true manhood?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"The counterfeit version of masculinity I've been living is _____. The cost has been _____. The true biblical masculinity I'm moving toward looks like _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 4 ✓ - Today I realized I've been living [toxic/passive] masculinity in [specific area]. The lie I believed was [lie]. The truth is [biblical truth]. Tomorrow I'm asking God to help me integrate both strength and tenderness."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 5 title: "The Original Design - Biblical Manhood (Genesis 1-2)"

Brief Prayer:

Father, tomorrow take me back to the beginning—before sin distorted everything. Show me Your original design for men. What did You create Adam to be before the fall? That's who I'm becoming. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE PENDULUM STOPS HERE

Theological Insight:

"Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it." – Thomas Aquinas

Brother, you don't have to swing between extremes anymore.

You don't have to choose between:

- **Being your harsh father OR being weak**
- **Dominating your wife OR being dominated by her**
- **Never crying OR being emotionally unstable**
- **Fierce leadership OR passive avoidance**

Jesus shows you there's a third way.

Watch Him in the Gospels:

- He's fierce with the Pharisees, tender with the prostitute
- He's authoritative with crowds, humble with His disciples
- He's powerful in miracles, vulnerable in prayer
- He's confident in truth, compassionate with the broken

This is who you're becoming.

Not by trying harder. Not by white-knuckling balance.

By beholding Him.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit"
(2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB).

The more you look at Jesus, the more you become like Him.

Toxic masculinity comes from looking at broken men.

Passive masculinity comes from fear of being like them.

Biblical masculinity comes from fixing your eyes on the Perfect Man.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2, NASB).

Stop conforming to cultural counterfeits.

Start transforming into Christ's image.

That's the man you were created to be.

40 STRONG - Day 4 Complete ✓

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love"

(1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 5

THE ORIGINAL DESIGN: Biblical Manhood (Genesis 1-2)

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Confronting Spiritual Passivity

MORNING: BEFORE THE FALL, BEFORE THE DISTORTION (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, take me back to the beginning—before sin twisted everything, before shame entered the garden, before work became toil and relationships became warfare. Show me what You created Adam to be in those first perfect moments. That original design is still in me, buried under years of brokenness and cultural lies. Today, uncover it. Restore it. Remind me that redemption isn't making me into something new—it's making me into who I was always meant to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Blueprint

Read slowly. This is your origin story.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27, NASB).

Pause. You bear the image of God. That's your foundation.

"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:28, NASB).

God blessed them BEFORE He commissioned them.

"Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a

garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed"
(Genesis 2:7-8, NASB).

You were handcrafted, not mass-produced. You have God's breath in your lungs.

"Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15, NASB).

Work was part of Paradise. You were made to create, build, and protect.

"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18, NASB).

You were created for relationship, not isolation.

"The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25, NASB).

Vulnerability without shame. Intimacy without fear. This was the original design.

Teaching: God's Blueprint for Manhood

Before Adam sinned. Before the ground was cursed. Before relationships became power struggles. Before work became sweat and toil. Before shame entered the human heart.

There was a man in a garden, walking with God.

That man had:

- **✓ Perfect identity (image-bearer of God)**
- **✓ Divine blessing (God's delight, not His disappointment)**
- **✓ Meaningful work (cultivating and protecting)**
- **✓ Authority with responsibility (dominion under God)**
- **✓ Intimate relationship (with God and woman)**
- **✓ Vulnerability without shame (naked and unafraid)**

This is what you were created to be.

Not what culture says. Not what your wounds have made you. Not what religion demands.

This is God's original blueprint—and it's still written into your DNA.

Theological Insight:

"The fall didn't erase the image of God in man—it shattered the mirror. Redemption doesn't create something new; it restores what was always meant to be. We are being renewed 'according to the image of the One who created us.'" – Colossians 3:10 (NASB), paraphrase by N.T. Wright

PILLAR 1: IDENTITY BEFORE ACTIVITY

"You Are Before You Do"

The Text:

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him" (Genesis 1:27, NASB).

The Principle:

Adam's identity was established BEFORE he did anything. He was an image-bearer before he was given a task.

What This Means:

God didn't say:

- **"Prove yourself worthy, then I'll bless you"**
- **"Earn your place in the garden through productivity"**
- **"Your value will be determined by your performance"**

God said: "You are made in My image. Period."

Identity → Activity

NOT Activity → Identity

The Distortion After the Fall:

After sin, Adam tried to establish his identity through what he DID:

- **Hiding (Genesis 3:8)**

- Blame-shifting (Genesis 3:12)
- Working by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:19)

Every man since has done the same—trying to prove our worth through achievement, success, productivity, conquest.

The Restoration in Christ:

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5, NASB).

You are God's son BEFORE you do anything for Him.

Theological Insight:

"You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body. And you are an image-bearer before you are anything else—worker, husband, father, athlete, professional. Those are roles. Image-bearer is your identity." – C.S. Lewis (paraphrase)

Application:

If you lost your job tomorrow, would you know who you are?

If you couldn't provide financially, would you still have value?

If your kids rejected you, would you still be worthy?

Your identity is not negotiable. It's not earnable. It's gift.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB).

PILLAR 2: BLESSED BEFORE COMMISSIONED

"Grace Before Works"

The Text:

"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:28, NASB).

The Principle:

Notice the order: Blessing, THEN command.

God didn't say: "Do this, and I'll bless you."

God said: "I bless you. Now, here's what I've prepared for you to do."

The Distortion:

Religious performance says: "Obey, and you'll be blessed."

Gospel grace says: "You're blessed. Now obey from joy, not fear."

Most Christian men live backwards:

- "If I read my Bible, God will be pleased with me"
- "If I serve enough, I'll earn His favor"
- "If I can just stop sinning, He'll finally accept me"

NO.

You already have His favor. You're already accepted. Now live from that, not for that.

The Restoration:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (Ephesians 1:3-4, NASB).

Every spiritual blessing. Already yours. In Christ.

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is not good advice; it's good news. It doesn't tell you what to do to get blessed—it announces that you ARE blessed in Christ, and now you get to live like it." – Tim Keller

Application:

Do you wake up trying to earn God's approval, or resting in it?

Is your obedience motivated by fear or gratitude?

Do you see spiritual disciplines as requirements or responses?

You don't obey to be loved. You obey because you ARE loved.

PILLAR 3: CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIP, NOT ISOLATION

"You Were Made for Connection"

The Text:

"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18, NASB).

The Principle:

This is the first time God says something is "NOT good" in creation.

Everything else: "And God saw that it was good."

Man alone: "It is NOT good."

Adam had:

- ✓ Perfect relationship with God
- ✓ Meaningful work in the garden
- ✓ No sin, no shame, no brokenness

And God said: "This is not enough. He needs human connection."

The Design:

God created you for:

- Vertical relationship (with Him)
- Horizontal relationship (with others)
- Both are necessary

You cannot replace human connection with spiritual disciplines.

You cannot replace intimacy with God through marriage.

You need both.

The Distortion:

After the fall:

- Relationship became competition (Cain and Abel)
- Partnership became power struggle (Adam blaming Eve)
- Community became isolation (Cain wandering alone)
- Vulnerability became shame (nakedness = hiding)

Men have been isolating ever since.

Research Insight:

Studies show that 65% of men over 30 report having no close friends they can confide in (American Perspectives Survey, 2021). This isolation leads to:

- **300% higher rates of depression**
- **400% higher suicide risk**
- **250% higher rates of addiction**
- **Significantly lower life satisfaction and spiritual vitality**

You were not designed for isolation. Lone ranger Christianity is killing you.

The Restoration:

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NASB).

"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2, NASB).

Theological Insight:

"The Trinity itself demonstrates that relationship is at the core of God's nature. The Father, Son, and Spirit exist in eternal community. If God is relational in His very essence, then you—made in His image—are designed for relationship too." – Michael Reeves

Application:

Do you have brothers who know your struggles?

Do you have men who can ask you the hard questions?

Are you known, or just recognized?

If you're isolated, you're living beneath God's design.

PILLAR 4: AUTHORITY WITH RESPONSIBILITY

"Dominion Under God"

The Text:

"Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26, NASB).

"Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15, NASB).

The Principle:

God gave Adam dominion (authority) and stewardship (responsibility).

Not ownership. Stewardship.

Two Words Define the Work:

- 1. CULTIVATE (Hebrew: *abad* - to work, serve, till)**
- 2. KEEP (Hebrew: *shamar* - to guard, protect, watch over)**

Adam was called to:

- Build and create (cultivate)**
- Protect and preserve (keep)**

This is masculine design:

- You were made to create (cultivate what God has planted)**
- You were made to protect (guard what God has entrusted)**

The Distortion:

After the fall:

- Cultivation became toil: *"Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life"* (Genesis 3:17, NASB)**
- Protection became domination: Men ruling harshly instead of serving sacrificially**
- Stewardship became ownership: Building our kingdoms instead of God's**

Men either:

- Exploit what they should cultivate (harsh domination)**
- Neglect what they should protect (passive abdication)**

The Restoration:

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Colossians 3:23-24, NASB).

Work is worship when you remember you're a steward, not an owner.

Theological Insight:

"Every man is a king without a kingdom. We were created to rule—not to dominate others, but to exercise godly dominion over the small plots of ground God has entrusted to us: our families, our work, our communities, our own hearts." – John Eldredge (paraphrase)

Application:

What has God entrusted to you to cultivate and keep?

- Your wife (cultivate her heart, protect her wellbeing)
- Your children (cultivate their gifts, protect their innocence)
- Your work (cultivate excellence, protect integrity)
- Your community (cultivate relationships, protect the vulnerable)
- Your own heart (cultivate holiness, protect against temptation)

You are a steward. What are you building and protecting?

PILLAR 5: WORK AS WORSHIP, NOT CURSE

"You Were Made to Create"

The Text:

"Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15, NASB).

The Principle:

Work existed BEFORE the fall.

Work is not:

- ✗ Punishment for sin
- ✗ Necessary evil
- ✗ Just a paycheck
- ✗ Something to endure until retirement

Work is:

- ✓ Part of God's original design
- ✓ How you partner with God in creation
- ✓ Expression of being made in God's image (God works; you work)
- ✓ Means of serving others and advancing God's kingdom

The Distortion:

The fall didn't introduce work—it cursed work.

Before sin: Work was joyful, fruitful, satisfying

After sin: *"By the sweat of your face you will eat bread"* (Genesis 3:19, NASB)

Now work is:

- Toilsome (requires painful effort)
- Frustrating (thorns and thistles)
- Temporary (you will die)

But work itself is not the curse. The DIFFICULTY of work is the curse.

The Restoration:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

God prepared works for you before you were born.

Your job isn't random. Your skills aren't accidental. Your opportunities aren't coincidence.

God has ordained your work as part of His plan.

Theological Insight:

"Work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or should be, the full expression of the worker's faculties, the medium in which he offers himself to God." – Dorothy Sayers

Application:

Do you see your work as:

- Sacred (ministry to God and others)
- Or secular (just a job to pay bills)

There is no sacred-secular divide.

Changing diapers = ministry

Building houses = worship

Writing code = kingdom work

Teaching math = sacred calling

If you do it "as for the Lord," it's worship.

PILLAR 6: VULNERABILITY WITHOUT SHAME

"Naked and Unafraid"

The Text:

***"And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed"* (Genesis 2:25, NASB).**

The Principle:

Before sin, Adam and Eve experienced:

- **Physical nakedness (no clothing)**
- **Emotional nakedness (no hiding)**
- **Spiritual nakedness (no shame)**

They were fully known and fully loved.

No performance. No pretending. No hiding.

The Distortion:

After sin:

***"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden"* (Genesis 3:7-8, NASB).**

Shame entered. Hiding began.

Men have been hiding ever since:

- **Hiding behind work**

- Hiding behind anger
- Hiding behind humor
- Hiding behind image management
- Hiding behind religious performance

We cover our true selves with "fig leaves"—whatever makes us look acceptable while keeping people at arm's length.

The Restoration:

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16, NASB).

You can come to God naked (fully exposed) without shame.

He already knows. And He still loves you.

Theological Insight:

"To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is what we were created for—and it's what we have in Christ." – Tim Keller

Application:

Who knows the real you?

Who have you let past the fig leaves?

Are you known, or just recognized?

Vulnerability is not weakness. It's the pathway to authentic connection.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. IDENTITY:

Do you live more from "I am God's image-bearer" or "I am what I accomplish"? Be honest.

2. BLESSING:

Do you wake up trying to earn God's favor, or resting in the truth that you're already blessed in Christ?

3. RELATIONSHIP:

Are you isolated, or do you have deep, authentic relationships? If isolated, what's keeping you from connecting?

4. STEWARDSHIP:

What has God entrusted to you to cultivate and keep? (Family? Work? Ministry? Community?) Are you building and protecting it well?

5. WORK:

Do you see your work as worship, or as something to endure? How would your daily work change if you saw it as sacred?

6. VULNERABILITY:

What "fig leaves" are you using to hide? What would it take for you to be truly known?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud)

Today, I declare:

I am made in God's image—my identity is secure.

I am blessed before I perform—grace is my foundation.

I am created for relationship—isolation is not God's design.

I am a steward, not an owner—I cultivate and protect what God has given.

I am called to meaningful work—my labor is worship.

I am fully known and fully loved—I can be vulnerable without shame.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

This is who I was created to be. This is who I'm becoming.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, thank You for the blueprint. Before sin distorted everything, You created man in Your image—blessed, relational, purposeful, vulnerable, and free. That original design is still in me, buried under years of shame and lies. Today, begin the restoration. Uncover what was always meant to be. I don't want to live as a broken version of myself—I want to live as the man You created me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"I am Your image-bearer"*

Breathe out: *"Restore Your design in me"*

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I living from my identity today, or from my performance?*

Brief Prayer: *Father, remind me who I am.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What evidence of God's original design did I see in myself or others today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I live according to the blueprint today? (Blessed? Relational? Stewarding well? Working as worship?)

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I live from the distortion instead of the design? (Performance? Isolation? Exploitation? Hiding?)

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

What needs to be restored in me?

STEP 5: GRACE

Father, what's one step toward restoration You're inviting me to take?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"The part of God's original design that I've lost the most is _____. I can see the cost in _____. To restore this, I need to _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 5 ✓ - Today I learned that God's original design for me includes [pick one: image-bearer identity/blessing before works/relationship not isolation/meaningful

work/vulnerability without shame]. I've been living beneath this by [specific way]. Tomorrow I'm taking one step toward restoration."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 6 title: "Breaking Agreement - Renouncing Passivity"

Brief Prayer:

Father, I've seen Your blueprint. Tomorrow, help me renounce the lies I've agreed with and the passivity I've accepted. It's time to break agreement with anything that's kept me from Your design. Give me courage. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE SECOND ADAM RESTORES WHAT THE FIRST ADAM LOST

Theological Insight:

"The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45, NASB).

Adam was created perfect and fell.

Jesus was perfect and never fell.

Adam hid from God in shame.

Jesus walked with God in perfect communion.

Adam blamed others.

Jesus took the blame for all.

Adam's disobedience brought death.

Jesus' obedience brought life.

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22, NASB).

Everything the first Adam lost, the Second Adam restores:

- **Lost identity → Restored in Christ (you are God's son)**
- **Lost blessing → Restored in Christ (blessed with every spiritual blessing)**
- **Lost relationship → Restored in Christ (reconciled to God and others)**
- **Lost purpose → Restored in Christ (good works prepared beforehand)**

- Lost innocence → Restored in Christ (no condemnation)

You are not just forgiven. You are being remade.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB).

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29, NASB).

God's plan: Conform you to the image of Christ.

Christ's image: The perfect image-bearer, the Second Adam.

Your destiny: Becoming fully the man you were created to be.

The blueprint is clear. The restoration has begun.

Tomorrow, you renounce everything standing in the way.

40 STRONG - Day 5 Complete ✓

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 6

BREAKING AGREEMENT: Renouncing Passivity

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Confronting Spiritual Passivity

MORNING: THE DECISIVE MOMENT (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I've spent five days waking up to reality—seeing the cage I've been in, understanding my identity as Your son, confronting where I've abdicated responsibility, exposing the counterfeits I've believed, and discovering Your original design for my life. Today is different. Today I don't just observe—I act. Today I break agreement with every lie that has kept me passive, every pattern that has kept me paralyzed, every excuse that has kept me on the ridge. I renounce passivity. I refuse spiritual numbness. I step into the valley. Not in my strength, but in Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Power of Agreement

Read carefully. This is about spiritual authority.

"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:18-19, NASB).

Agreement has spiritual power—for good or evil.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (Ephesians 6:12-13, NASB).

You have an enemy. And he operates through lies you agree with.

"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, NASB).

Notice the order: Submit to God FIRST. Then resist. Then the enemy flees.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NASB).

Your mind is a battlefield. Today you take back territory.

Teaching: What Does It Mean to "Break Agreement"?

For five days, you've been waking up.

Today, you get up.

Here's the spiritual reality most men don't understand: When you believe a lie, you give it power over you.

Not because the lie is true. But because agreement activates authority.

Think about it:

When you agree with the lie "I'm not good enough," you:

- **Live like you're not good enough**
- **Make decisions from inadequacy**
- **Prove the lie true through your behavior**

When you agree with the lie "I'll never change," you:

- **Stop trying**
- **Accept defeat as inevitable**
- **Remain stuck in patterns that could be broken**

When you agree with the lie "God is disappointed in me," you:

- **Avoid intimacy with Him**

- Perform for approval instead of rest in love
- Live from shame instead of sonship

The lie has no power except what you give it through agreement.

Theological Insight:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, NASB).

"The enemy's primary weapon is deception. He can't force you to do anything—but he can deceive you into believing lies about God, yourself, and reality. Once you believe the lie, you empower it. Breaking agreement is revoking that power." – Neil T. Anderson

The Anatomy of Spiritual Passivity

Passivity isn't just doing nothing. Passivity is a form of agreement.

When you:

- Know what God is calling you to do but don't do it → You agree with fear
- See sin in your life but don't address it → You agree with bondage
- Recognize broken relationships but don't pursue repair → You agree with isolation
- Feel conviction but make excuses → You agree with compromise
- Hear truth but don't act on it → You agree with disobedience

Passivity is passive agreement.

And passive agreement is still agreement.

The Pattern:

1. The enemy whispers a lie: "You can't fight this. You've tried before and failed."
2. You consider it: "Maybe he's right. I have failed before."
3. You agree: "He's right. I can't beat this."
4. You act from the lie: You stop fighting. You accept defeat.
5. The lie becomes your reality: Self-fulfilling prophecy.

But here's what happens when you break agreement:

- 1. The enemy whispers the same lie: "You can't fight this."**
- 2. You recognize it as a lie: "That's not true. In Christ, I can do all things."**
- 3. You actively renounce it: "I refuse to agree with that lie. I break agreement with defeat."**
- 4. You declare truth: "I am more than a conqueror through Christ who loves me."**
- 5. You act from truth: You keep fighting. You engage. You step forward.**
- 6. Truth becomes your experience: God's power is made perfect in your weakness.**

Breaking agreement is the moment you stop being a victim and become an agent.

Theological Insight:

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV)

"The mind is the devil's favorite playground. If he can get you to agree with his lies in your thought life, he doesn't need to do anything else—you'll sabotage yourself. Breaking agreement is evicting him from the playground." – Beth Moore (paraphrase)

Why Renunciation Matters

Renunciation means: *To formally declare one's abandonment of a claim, right, or possession.*

In spiritual terms: You're formally declaring you no longer claim ownership of lies, patterns, or agreements that have ruled your life.

Biblical Examples:

Paul's renunciation at conversion: *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ"* (Philippians 3:7-8, NASB).

Paul renounced his identity as a Pharisee, his credentials, his former righteousness.

Early Church's renunciation of occult practices: *"And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver"* (Acts 19:19, NASB).

They didn't just stop practicing—they publicly burned the bridges.

Your renunciation today is:

- **Not just stopping bad behavior**
- **Not just feeling bad about sin**
- **Not just making a mental note to do better**

Your renunciation is a formal, verbal, authoritative declaration:

- **"I break agreement with this lie."**
- **"I renounce this pattern."**
- **"I will not live this way anymore."**
- **"I refuse to give this power over me."**

Spoken. Out loud. With authority.

Why spoken?

Because agreement was spoken (even if only in your head), so renunciation must be spoken.

***"For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:10, NASB).**

Belief in the heart. Confession with the mouth. Both are required.

The Seven Areas of Renunciation

Today you will specifically, verbally renounce agreements you've made in seven key areas.

This will feel strange. Do it anyway.

This will feel dramatic. It is.

This will feel awkward. It should.

You've been in bondage for years. Breaking free requires more than good intentions—it requires decisive action.

RENUNCIATION #1: PASSIVITY

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "I can't make a difference."
- "Someone else should step up."
- "I've tried before and failed, so why try again?"
- "It's easier to avoid than engage."
- "I'm just not that kind of man."

The Cost:

- Leadership abdicated in your home
- Mission avoided in your community
- Gifts buried instead of invested
- Calling ignored for comfort
- Valley avoided while staying on the ridge

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the spirit of passivity. I break agreement with the lie that I am powerless, ineffective, or unable to change. I refuse to stand on the ridge anymore while the battle rages in the valley. God has not given me a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and discipline. I renounce excuse-making. I renounce blame-shifting. I renounce abdication of responsibility. I declare: I am a son of the living God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and I WILL step into the calling He has given me. No more passivity. No more paralysis. Today, I engage."

Now declare the truth:

"I am strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in

me. I am not passive—I am purposeful. I am not powerless—I am empowered. I am stepping forward."

RENUNCIATION #2: PERFORMANCE-BASED IDENTITY

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "I am what I do."
- "My value is measured by my productivity."
- "I must earn God's approval through my behavior."
- "If I fail, I am a failure."
- "I'm only worth loving if I perform well."

The Cost:

- Exhaustion from constant striving
- Inability to rest or receive grace
- Shame when you fall short
- Workaholism and neglect of relationships
- Never feeling "good enough"

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the lie that my identity is based on my performance. I break agreement with the belief that I must earn God's love, approval, or acceptance. I am not my accomplishments, my failures, my job, my productivity, or my success. I refuse to live as a slave trying to earn sonship. I declare: I am God's beloved son—not because of what I do, but because of what Christ has done. My identity is secure in Him, not in my performance. I renounce striving. I renounce shame. I rest in grace."

Now declare the truth:

"I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. I am accepted in the Beloved. I am blessed with every spiritual blessing. I am forgiven, redeemed, and made righteous through Christ alone. My identity is gift, not achievement. I am loved—period."

RENUNCIATION #3: ISOLATION AND INDEPENDENCE

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "Real men don't need anyone."
- "I can handle this on my own."
- "Vulnerability is weakness."
- "No one would understand anyway."
- "I'm better off alone."

The Cost:

- No real friendships or accountability
- Carrying burdens alone that were meant to be shared
- Hidden sin that festers in darkness
- Emotional isolation even in a crowded room
- Missing the strength that comes from brotherhood

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the lie that I am better off alone. I break agreement with the belief that isolation equals strength and vulnerability equals weakness. I was not created to be a lone ranger. God Himself said, 'It is not good for man to be alone,' and I will not live beneath His design. I renounce self-sufficiency that is really pride. I renounce independence that is really fear. I renounce hiding behind walls that were never meant to protect me. I declare: I am created for relationship—with God and with brothers. I need community. I need accountability. I need to be known."

Now declare the truth:

"Two are better than one. Iron sharpens iron. I am part of the Body of Christ, not an isolated member. I will pursue authentic brotherhood. I will be vulnerable. I will ask for help. I will bear others' burdens and allow them to bear mine. Isolation ends today."

RENUNCIATION #4: COUNTERFEIT MASCULINITY

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "Real men are harsh, dominant, and unemotional." (Toxic)
- "Real men are nice, passive, and conflict-avoidant." (Passive)
- "Masculinity is defined by culture, not by God."
- "Strength and tenderness are opposites."

The Cost:

- Either dominating your family or abdicating leadership
- Either suppressing emotions or being controlled by them
- Living according to culture's masculinity instead of Christ's
- Missing the integration Jesus modeled

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce counterfeit masculinity—both toxic dominance and passive avoidance. I break agreement with culture's definition of manhood that is either too harsh or too weak. I refuse to be defined by Hollywood, locker room culture, or wounded fathers. I declare: Jesus Christ is my model of manhood—strong enough to flip tables and tender enough to weep, authoritative enough to teach and humble enough to wash feet. I am becoming that kind of man—integrated, whole, biblical. I renounce the pendulum. I embrace the center."

Now declare the truth:

"I am made in God's image—both strength and gentleness, both courage and compassion. I will lead my family with servant leadership. I will be strong and tender. I will confront and comfort. I am a man after God's own heart."

RENUNCIATION #5: FEAR AND ANXIETY

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "I can't face this."

- "What if I fail?"
- "I'm not equipped."
- "The risk is too great."
- "Fear is keeping me safe."

The Cost:

- Opportunities missed because fear paralyzed you
- Calling avoided because it seemed too hard
- Giants left standing because you wouldn't fight
- Regret accumulating because courage was postponed

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the spirit of fear. I break agreement with anxiety, worry, and paralyzing dread. Fear has kept me on the ridge long enough. God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. I renounce 'what if' thinking that magnifies giants and minimizes God. I renounce risk-avoidance that is really unbelief. I declare: The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life—whom shall I dread? I will step into the valley, even when I'm afraid, because God is with me."

Now declare the truth:

"God is for me; who can be against me? If God is with me, what can man do to me? I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Perfect love casts out fear. I am loved perfectly. Fear has no hold on me."

RENUNCIATION #6: COMFORT AND COMPLACENCY

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "The comfortable cage is good enough."
- "Spiritual growth is for others, not me."
- "I'm too old/tired/busy to change."

- "This is just who I am."
- "Comfort equals contentment."

The Cost:

- Spiritual stagnation and numbness
- Settling for mediocrity when God offers abundance
- Years wasted in the wilderness of "good enough"
- Never discovering what God could have done through you

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce comfort that has become a cage. I break agreement with complacency that masquerades as contentment. I was created for abundant life, not safe survival. I renounce settling. I renounce coasting. I renounce the lie that 'this is just who I am'—because I am being transformed into the image of Christ, and that process never ends. I declare: I am pressing on toward the goal. I am running the race set before me. I am pursuing the prize. Comfort will not be my god."

Now declare the truth:

"I am being transformed from glory to glory. God is not finished with me. My best days are not behind me. I will grow. I will change. I will press on. The abundant life is mine in Christ, and I will pursue it."

RENUNCIATION #7: SHAME AND CONDEMNATION

The Lie You've Agreed With:

- "I'm too broken."
- "My past disqualifies me."
- "God could never really use me."
- "I'm the exception to grace."
- "I deserve condemnation."

The Cost:

- Living beneath your identity as God's son
- Disqualifying yourself from ministry and service
- Believing you're forgiven but not really free
- Shame keeping you stuck in patterns you could break

THE RENUNCIATION:

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce shame and condemnation. I break agreement with the lie that I am defined by my worst moments, my deepest failures, or my secret sins. There is NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I refuse to live under the weight of shame that Jesus already carried on the cross. I renounce self-condemnation. I renounce accusation from the enemy. I renounce the lie that I am the exception to grace. I declare: I am forgiven. I am redeemed. I am washed clean. The blood of Jesus is sufficient for me—not almost sufficient, not mostly sufficient, but COMPLETELY sufficient."

Now declare the truth:

"I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I am forgiven and justified. My sins are removed as far as the east is from the west. I am a new creation—the old has passed away, the new has come. I walk in freedom, not shame."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. AGREEMENT INVENTORY:

Which of the seven renunciations hit hardest? Which lie have you been agreeing with most?

2. THE COST:

What has agreeing with that lie cost you? (Relationships? Calling? Peace? Joy? Freedom?)

3. RESISTANCE:

Did you feel resistance to saying the renunciations out loud? If so, what does that reveal?

4. FREEDOM:

After breaking agreement, what do you notice? (Relief? Lightness? Clarity? Hope? Nothing yet?)

5. NEXT STEP:

What's one specific action you'll take today to live from the truth you declared instead of the lie you renounced?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud with authority)

Today, I declare:

I am no longer passive—I engage.

I am no longer performing—I rest in grace.

I am no longer isolated—I pursue brotherhood.

I am no longer defined by counterfeits—Christ is my model.

I am no longer ruled by fear—God is with me.

I am no longer settling for comfort—I pursue abundance.

I am no longer condemned—I am forgiven and free.

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1, NASB).

I am free. And I will live like it.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I have broken agreement with lies that have ruled my life. Now, fill the space those lies occupied with Your truth. Fortify my mind against future attacks. Remind me daily of what I declared today. When the enemy whispers the old lies again—and he will—give me the courage to immediately reject them and speak the truth. I am Yours. I am free. I am stepping forward. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"I break agreement"*

Breathe out: *"I declare truth"*

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Have I agreed with any old lies today? If so, immediately renounce them again.*

Brief Prayer: *God, guard my mind.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What freedom did I experience today after breaking agreement?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I notice the enemy trying to get me to re-agree with old lies?

STEP 3: HONESTY

Did I stay firm in my renunciation, or did I slip back into old agreements?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

If I re-agreed with lies, I renounce them again now. Out loud.

STEP 5: GRACE

Father, what truth do I need to meditate on tomorrow to stay free?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"Breaking agreement today felt _____. The lie I most needed to renounce was _____. Living from truth instead of that lie will change _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 6 ✓ - Today I broke agreement with [specific lie]. I renounced [passivity/performance/isolation/fear/comfort/shame]. I declared [specific truth]. Pray I stay firm in this."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 7 title: "First Sabbath Rest - Group Gathering for Testimony & Communion"

Brief Prayer:

Father, tomorrow I gather with my brothers to celebrate what You've done in Week 1. Prepare my heart to testify to Your work. And prepare me to hear what You're doing in others. Week 1 has been awakening. Week 2 will be repentance—the hard work of killing the lions and bears. Give me rest tonight. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU JUST EVICTED THE ENEMY FROM YOUR THOUGHT LIFE

Theological Insight:

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4, NIV).

Brother, what you did today was spiritual warfare.

Not the Hollywood version with demons and exorcisms.

The real version: You took back mental territory the enemy has occupied for years.

Every lie you agreed with was a stronghold—a fortified place in your mind where the enemy had a foothold.

Today, you demolished those strongholds.

You didn't do it through willpower or positive thinking.

You did it through:

- 1. Recognition - "That's a lie"**
- 2. Renunciation - "I break agreement with it"**
- 3. Replacement - "Here's the truth"**

This is how transformation happens.

Not through:

- ✗ Trying harder**
- ✗ White-knuckling behavior change**
- ✗ Hoping you'll wake up different someday**

But through:

- ✓ Identifying lies**
- ✓ Actively renouncing them**
- ✓ Declaring truth in their place**
- ✓ Acting from truth instead of lies**

But here's the reality: The enemy will try to get you to re-agree.

Tomorrow morning, he'll whisper:

- "Yesterday was emotional. The lies are still true."**

- "You can't really change."
- "You'll fail again."

And you'll need to renounce again.

This isn't one-and-done. This is daily warfare.

"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11, NASB).

Every day, you put on the armor.

Every day, you stand firm.

Every day, you refuse agreement with lies.

But now you know how.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NASB).

Be steadfast. Don't go back.

Be immovable. Don't re-agree.

Abound in the work. Step into the valley.

Your toil is not in vain.

Tomorrow, you rest and gather with brothers.

Then Week 2 begins: Repentance—dealing with the lions and bears.

Sleep well, warrior. You fought well today.

40 STRONG - Day 6 Complete ✓

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery"
(Galatians 5:1, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 7

FIRST SABBATH REST: Group Gathering for Testimony & Communion

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - Complete

MORNING: PERSONAL PREPARATION (Before the gathering)

Opening Prayer

Father, today I gather with my brothers—men who have walked the same six days I have. We've confronted our passivity, discovered our identity, taken honest inventory, exposed counterfeits, seen Your original design, and broken agreement with lies. Today we come together to testify to what You've done, to encourage one another, and to prepare for what's ahead. Give me courage to be vulnerable. Give me grace to listen well. Unite us as brothers. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pre-Gathering Reflection (15 minutes alone)

Before you arrive at the gathering, answer these questions in your journal. You may be asked to share from these.

1. THE HIGHLIGHT:

What was the most significant moment of Week 1 for you? (Which day? What truth? What conviction?)

2. THE STRUGGLE:

What was the hardest day or exercise? What did you resist? What made you uncomfortable?

3. THE BREAKTHROUGH:

Where did you experience breakthrough this week? (Understanding? Freedom? Clarity? Hope?)

4. THE COMMITMENT:

What's one specific change you're committing to based on Week 1?

5. THE REQUEST:

What do you need prayer for as you enter Week 2 (Repentance)?

GATHERING FORMAT (2 hours total)

ARRIVAL & CONNECTION (15 minutes)

6:00 PM - 6:15 PM (or adjust to your context)

As men arrive:

- Coffee/water available
- Informal conversation
- Name tags if needed (first-time cohort)
- Background music (instrumental worship)

Facilitator role:

- Greet each man personally
- Create warm, welcoming atmosphere
- No pressure, just presence

Theological Insight:

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst"
(Matthew 18:20, NASB).

Jesus is present when brothers gather. This isn't just a meeting—it's a sacred assembly.

OPENING WORSHIP (15 minutes)

6:15 PM - 6:30 PM

Format:

- 3-4 worship songs (live or recorded)
- Choose songs that emphasize identity, grace, freedom, courage
- Encourage men to stand, raise hands if comfortable—but no pressure

Suggested Song Themes for Week 1:

- Identity in Christ ("Good Good Father," "Who You Say I Am")
- Freedom from shame ("No Longer Slaves," "Amazing Grace")
- Courage to engage ("O Come to the Altar," "Reckless Love")
- Brotherhood ("Blest Be the Tie That Binds")

Between songs: Brief Scripture reading (30 seconds each):

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1, NASB).

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1, NASB).

Facilitator closes worship: *"Men, we've spent six days alone with God, confronting hard truths. Tonight, we're not alone. We're brothers. We're 40 STRONG together. Let's pray."*

Opening Prayer: *Father, we gather as men who are waking up—to our passivity, to our identity, to our calling. Thank You for these six days. Thank You for conviction that didn't crush us and truth that's setting us free. Tonight, bind us together as brothers. Let every man here be encouraged, challenged, and known. We dedicate this time to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

TEACHING: WEEK 1 REVIEW & INTEGRATION (20 minutes)

6:30 PM - 6:50 PM

Facilitator teaches (or plays pre-recorded video):

"What Just Happened: Week 1 Awakening"

Brothers, you made it through Week 1.

Six days:

- **Day 1: The Comfortable Cage**
- **Day 2: The Father's Heart**
- **Day 3: Honest Inventory**
- **Day 4: The Counterfeit**
- **Day 5: The Original Design**
- **Day 6: Breaking Agreement**

That's a lot.

Some of you are fired up. Some of you are exhausted. Some of you are both.

All of that is normal.

Here's what happened spiritually:

YOU WOKE UP.

For weeks, months, maybe years—you've been standing on the ridge. Armed. Ready. Shouting the war cry.

But not engaging.

This week, you admitted it. You looked at the cage you've been comfortable in. You saw where you've been passive, where you've blamed others, where you've believed counterfeits.

And something shifted.

Maybe it was Day 2 when you realized God isn't disappointed in you—He delights in you.

Maybe it was Day 3 when you wrote down the area you've abdicated and stopped making excuses.

Maybe it was Day 6 when you spoke those renunciations out loud and felt something break.

Whatever day it was—awakening happened.

But awakening is just the beginning.

Next week—Week 2—is Repentance.

And repentance is where the real work starts.

Theological Insight:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2, NASB).

John the Baptist didn't say, "Feel bad about your sin."

He said, "Repent"—which means turn around, change direction, go a different way.

Awakening says, "I see the problem."

Repentance says, "I'm addressing the problem."

Week 2 will be the hardest week of 40 **STRONG**.

We're going into the hidden places:

- Day 8: The Weight We Carry (acknowledging secret sins)
- Day 9: Pornography & Lust (direct confrontation)
- Day 10: Anger & Rage (unprocessed wounds)
- Day 11: Pride & Self-Sufficiency (the root issue)
- Day 12: Greed & Materialism (slavery to possessions)
- Day 13: Relational Failure (wounds we've caused)
- Day 14: Corporate Confession (group prayer ministry)

This is where David fought the lion and bear—alone, in the wilderness, with no one watching.

These are the battles that prepare you for Goliath.

You can't skip this. You can't fake this. You can't spiritualize around this.

You have to kill the lions and bears.

But here's the promise:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

God will meet you in your honesty.

Not to condemn you. To cleanse you.

Not to crush you. To free you.

You're not doing this alone. You're 40 STRONG.

The man sitting next to you? He's fighting the same battles. He carries the same shame. He's hiding the same secrets.

And together, you're going to bring them into the light.

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NASB).

Confession heals. Isolation kills.

So here's what I'm asking:

As we move into Week 2, will you trust God enough to be honest?

Will you trust this brotherhood enough to be vulnerable?

Will you trust the process enough to not quit when it gets hard?

Because it will get hard.

Day 9 will make you squirm.

Day 10 might make you angry.

Day 13 will break your heart.

Day 14 will require tears.

But Day 15—the first day of Week 3 (Renewal)—you'll be lighter.

Because you'll have put down what you've been carrying for years.

Theological Insight:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, NASB).

Jesus didn't say, "Figure it out on your own."

He said, "Come to Me. Bring your burdens. I'll give you rest."

Week 2 is about coming to Jesus with the weight you've been carrying.

Are you ready?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

6:50 PM - 7:30 PM

Facilitator instructions:

- **Divide into groups of 4-6 men**
- **Assign facilitators for each group (trained beforehand)**
- **Provide discussion guide (below)**
- **Timer: 40 minutes total**
- **Circulate between groups, but don't interrupt**

GROUP COVENANT (read aloud before starting):

"What is shared in this group stays in this group. We will not judge, fix, or minimize each other's stories. We will listen with compassion, speak with honesty, and pray with faith. We are brothers—not competitors, not critics, but companions on this journey. Agreed?"

[All men respond: "Agreed."]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Small groups work through these)

Facilitator guidance: Don't rush. Some questions may take 10 minutes. Others, 3 minutes. Follow the Spirit's leading.

QUESTION 1: CHECK-IN (Go around the circle, 1-2 minutes each)

"Share your name, and complete this sentence: 'The most significant thing that happened for me in Week 1 was...'"

Facilitator: Just listen. Don't comment yet. Let every man speak.

QUESTION 2: IDENTITY SHIFT (5-10 minutes)

"Day 2 was about the Father's heart—understanding that you're a son, not a slave. Did that land for you? Or do you still relate to God more like a hired servant trying to earn approval?"

Follow-up:

- "What would change in your daily life if you fully believed God delights in you?"
 - "What's keeping you from believing that?"
-

QUESTION 3: HONEST INVENTORY (10-15 minutes)

"Day 3 required brutal honesty about where you've abdicated responsibility. What's the one area you identified where you've been most passive?"

Follow-up:

- "What has that passivity cost you?"
- "What would stepping up in that area actually look like?"

Facilitator note: This will get vulnerable. Some men will deflect with humor or generalities. Gently push for specifics: "Can you give us a real example?"

QUESTION 4: COUNTERFEITS & DESIGN (5-10 minutes)

"Days 4 and 5 were about false masculinity vs. God's original design. Where have you been living according to a counterfeit? (Toxic dominance or passive avoidance?)"

Follow-up:

- "What would biblical masculinity—strength AND tenderness—look like for you?"
-

QUESTION 5: BREAKING AGREEMENT (10 minutes)

"Day 6 was breaking agreement with lies. Which of the seven renunciations was hardest for you? Which lie has had the most power over your life?"

The seven areas:

1. Passivity
2. Performance-based identity
3. Isolation
4. Counterfeit masculinity
5. Fear
6. Comfort
7. Shame

Follow-up:

- "What did it feel like to renounce it out loud?"
 - "Do you feel different now? Or is it still a battle?"
-

QUESTION 6: PREPARING FOR WEEK 2 (5 minutes)

"Next week is Repentance—dealing with hidden sin. What are you most anxious about? What do you need from this group to get through it?"

Facilitator closes discussion:

"Brothers, thank you for your honesty tonight. What's been shared here is sacred. We don't fix each other—God does that. But we witness each other's battles and stand together. Next week will be hard. But you're not doing it alone. You're 40 STRONG."

TRANSITION: GATHERING BACK TOGETHER (5 minutes)

7:30 PM - 7:35 PM

Facilitator: *"Men, let's come back together as one group. We're going to move into a time of prayer ministry, then we'll close with communion. As we transition, I want you to hear this..."*

Read this slowly:

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all

things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16, NASB).

"Jesus sympathizes with your weaknesses. He's not standing in heaven disappointed—He's inviting you to come boldly to the throne of grace. Tonight, we're going to do that together."

PRAYER MINISTRY (15 minutes)

7:35 PM - 7:50 PM

Format: Open response with facilitated prayer

Facilitator: "We're going to spend the next few minutes in prayer. I'm going to give you several prompts. If God is stirring something in you—conviction, gratitude, repentance, whatever—you can respond out loud. We won't force anyone to pray. But if you feel led, speak up. We're brothers. This is safe."

PRAYER PROMPTS (Pause 1-2 minutes between each):

1. GRATITUDE "Let's start with gratitude. If God showed you something this week that brought breakthrough or hope, thank Him out loud."

[Allow men to pray spontaneously]

2. CONFESSION "Now, confession. If there's something you need to confess—passivity, pride, fear, whatever—you can speak it here. You don't have to go into detail. Just bring it to the light."

"I'll start: Father, I confess that I've been [example: passive in my home, avoiding hard conversations with my wife]. Forgive me. Change me."

[Allow men to pray spontaneously]

3. RENUNCIATION "Now, if there's a lie you need to renounce again—out loud, with brothers—this is your moment."

"Example: 'I renounce the lie that I can't change. I declare that God's power is at work in me.'"

[Allow men to pray spontaneously]

4. INTERCESSION *"Finally, if someone in this room needs prayer—you heard his story in small group, or you just sense it—pray for him by name."*

[Allow men to pray for each other]

Facilitator closes prayer:

"Father, You've met us tonight in powerful ways. You've heard every confession, every cry, every declaration. We believe Your word: that if we confess, You are faithful to forgive and cleanse. Tonight, we've confessed. Now, we receive Your cleansing. We walk out of here clean, free, and loved. Not because we earned it—because Jesus did. We receive it. In His name, Amen."

COMMUNION (10 minutes)

7:50 PM - 8:00 PM

Setup:

- Bread and juice/wine prepared on a table
- Men can take elements and return to seats, or distribute

Facilitator introduction:

"On the night Jesus was betrayed, He gathered with His disciples—His brothers—and He gave them a meal to remember. This meal wasn't just about remembering His death. It was about remembering His life in us, His covenant with us, His promise to never leave us."

"Tonight, as we take communion, we're not just looking back at what Jesus did 2,000 years ago. We're declaring what He's doing right now—in this room, in these 40 days, in your life."

Read slowly:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In

the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, NASB).

THE BREAD:

"Take the bread. This is Jesus' body—broken for you. Not because you were good enough, but because He loved you that much. When you eat this, you're declaring: 'I am in Him. His life is my life. His strength is my strength. I am not alone.'"

[Pause. Men take bread. Eat together after all have taken it.]

Prayer before eating: "Jesus, thank You for Your body broken for us. As we eat this bread, we receive Your life in us. Amen."

[All eat.]

THE CUP:

"Take the cup. This is Jesus' blood—the new covenant. This is the promise that your sins are forgiven, your shame is removed, your past is washed clean. When you drink this, you're declaring: 'I am forgiven. I am clean. I am free.'"

[Pause. Men take cup. Drink together after all have taken it.]

Prayer before drinking: "Jesus, thank You for Your blood poured out for us. As we drink this cup, we receive Your cleansing. We are forgiven. Amen."

[All drink.]

Facilitator after communion:

"Brothers, you are clean. Not because you did 6 perfect days. You're clean because of Jesus. Now—Week 2 begins. You're going to bring hidden things into the light. And when you do, you'll remember this moment—when you took the bread and cup and declared: 'I am forgiven. I am free.'"

CLOSING CHARGE & DISMISSAL (5 minutes)

8:00 PM - 8:05 PM

Facilitator:

"Before we leave, I want to speak a blessing over you."

Stand. Have men face each other in a circle if possible.

Read this slowly, with authority:

"Men, you are sons of the living God. You are image-bearers. You are called, commissioned, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Week 1, you woke up. Week 2, you'll clean up. Week 3, you'll be built up. Week 4, you'll be equipped. Week 5, you'll engage. Week 6, you'll be sent out. You are 40 STRONG—not because of your strength, but because He is strong in you."

Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26, NASB):

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace."

Final charge:

"Now—go home. Tomorrow morning, Day 8 begins. It will be hard. But you're not doing it alone. You have brothers. You have God. And you have 40 days to become the man He's calling you to be."

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

[All respond together:] "40 STRONG!"

Closing prayer:

"Father, send us out. Protect us this week as we deal with hidden sin. Give us courage. Give us honesty. Give us grace for the fight. We are Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen."

AFTER THE GATHERING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you get home, journal briefly:

1. WHAT GOD SAID:

What did God speak to you during worship, teaching, discussion, prayer, or communion?

2. WHAT YOU HEARD FROM BROTHERS:

Whose story resonated with you? What did you hear that gave you hope or conviction?

3. YOUR COMMITMENT:

What's one specific thing you're committing to this week?

4. TOMORROW:

Day 8 is "The Weight We Carry." Prepare your heart for honesty about secret sin.

FACILITATOR NOTES (For Leaders Running the Gathering)

Pre-Gathering Preparation:

1. LOGISTICS (Week before):

- **Secure location (church, home, community center)**
- **Set up chairs in circle or semi-circle**
- **Arrange worship (live musicians or quality sound system)**
- **Prepare communion elements (bread, juice/wine)**
- **Print discussion guides if needed**
- **Assign small group facilitators**

2. FACILITATOR TRAINING (2 hours before first gathering):

- **Review discussion questions**
- **Practice reflective listening (not fixing or teaching)**
- **Understand when to push for depth vs. when to give space**
- **Know how to handle crisis disclosures (abuse, suicide, etc.)**
- **Have referral list ready (counselors, pastors, crisis hotlines)**

3. ENVIRONMENT:

- Welcoming but not casual
 - Masculine but not macho
 - Sacred but not stuffy
 - Goal: Men feel safe to be honest
-

During Gathering - Facilitator Mindset:

YOU ARE NOT:

- ✗ The expert with all answers
- ✗ The fixer of all problems
- ✗ The counselor (refer out if needed)
- ✗ The judge of men's progress

YOU ARE:

- ✓ A fellow traveler on the journey
 - ✓ A guide pointing to Jesus
 - ✓ A shepherd creating safe space
 - ✓ A brother who goes first in vulnerability
-

Red Flags - When to Intervene:

If a man discloses:

- Suicidal ideation → Connect him with crisis resources immediately
- Active abuse (of spouse/children) → Mandatory reporting (know your state laws)
- Severe mental health crisis → Refer to professional counseling
- Ongoing unconfessed adultery → Private conversation after gathering

Don't handle these alone. Have a plan and a team.

After Gathering - Leader Debrief:

Within 24 hours, leadership team (2-3 people) should:

1. Debrief what happened (highlights, concerns, surprises)
2. Follow up with any men who struggled or disclosed crisis
3. Adjust next week's plan if needed
4. Pray specifically for men by name
5. Prepare for Week 2 (harder content requires more pastoral support)

SCRIPTURE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB).

This is the verse for Week 2. Memorize it. You'll need it.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU'RE NOT ALONE ANYMORE

Theological Insight:

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NASB).

Brother, tonight something happened that doesn't happen often enough in the church:

Men got real with each other.

Not superficial "How's it going?" conversations.

Real.

You shared your struggles. You heard others' struggles. You prayed together. You took communion together.

And you realized: I'm not the only one.

The enemy wants you isolated because isolated men are easy targets.

But tonight, you weren't isolated.

You were 40 STRONG.

And when Week 2 gets hard—and it will—you'll remember tonight.

You'll remember:

- **The brother who confessed what you're too afraid to say**
- **The prayer that broke through your defenses**
- **The bread and cup that declared you're forgiven**
- **The blessing spoken over you as a son of God**

You're not doing this alone.

Week 1: Complete ✓

Week 2: Repentance begins tomorrow.

Rest tonight. You'll need your strength.

40 STRONG - Day 7 Complete ✓

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - COMPLETE ✓

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed"

(James 5:16, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 8

THE WEIGHT WE CARRY: Acknowledging Secret Sins

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Dealing with Hidden Sin

MORNING: THE WILDERNESS BATTLES BEGIN (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I'm afraid of what this week requires. I've been hiding things—some for years, some for decades. Secret sins that live in the darkness of my heart, known only to You and me. Today, You're asking me to bring them into the light. Not to shame me, but to free me. Not to condemn me, but to cleanse me. Give me courage I don't have on my own. Give me trust in Your grace that's greater than my sin. I don't want to carry this weight anymore. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Power of Light

Read slowly. This is your invitation to freedom.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself 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 that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:6-9, NASB).

Notice: Walking in the light doesn't mean being sinless. It means being honest about your sin.

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB).

Confession to God brings forgiveness. Confession to others brings healing.

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Proverbs 28:13, NASB).

Concealing = bondage. Confessing = freedom.

"There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 12:2-3, NASB).

Everything will eventually come to light. You can choose to bring it now, or it will be exposed later.

Now read David's prayer after being confronted about his adultery and murder:

"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge" (Psalm 51:1-4, NASB).

"Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:7-10, NASB).

Pause. David didn't minimize. He didn't excuse. He confessed—and found mercy.

Teaching: David's Lions and Bears

Last night at the gathering, we talked about Week 2 being the hardest.

Today, we begin.

Remember what David told Saul before fighting Goliath?

"Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after it and attacked it, and rescued the lamb from its

mouth; and when it rose up against me, I seized it by its beard and struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear" (1 Samuel 17:34-36, NASB).

David fought lions and bears in the wilderness—alone, with no audience, before anyone knew his name.

Those battles prepared him for Goliath.

Week 2 is your wilderness. This is where you fight the lions and bears.

Not the public sins everyone sees.

Not the respectable struggles you mention in church prayer requests.

The secret sins. The hidden battles. The things you've never told anyone.

Your lions and bears:

- The pornography you view when no one's watching
- The rage that boils beneath your smile
- The pride that won't admit weakness
- The lust that's become a lifestyle
- The greed that's controlling your decisions
- The lies you tell to protect your image
- The unforgiveness you nurse in secret
- The addiction you've hidden for years

These are the battles in the wilderness.

And just like David, you have to kill them before you can face Goliath.

Theological Insight:

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:5-7, NASB).

"The pathway to God's exaltation is through humility, and the pathway to humility is through honest confession. You can't be healed from what you won't acknowledge." – Henri Nouwen (paraphrase)

Why Secret Sin Stays Secret

Before we bring sin into the light, we need to understand why we keep it in the dark.

Here are the lies that keep sin hidden:

LIE #1: "If people knew, they would reject me"

Fear of rejection keeps more men in bondage than any other factor.

You think:

- **"If my wife knew what I've done, she'd leave me"**
- **"If my kids knew, they'd lose all respect for me"**
- **"If my brothers at church knew, I'd be kicked out"**
- **"If my accountability partner knew, he'd be disappointed"**

So you hide.

The Truth:

Most of the time, the people who love you already know something's wrong—they just don't know what. Your wife feels the distance. Your kids sense your distraction. Your brothers notice your avoidance.

And when you finally confess, their usual response is relief—not rejection.

"Thank God you finally told me. I knew something was wrong."

Theological Insight:

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love" (1 John 4:18, NASB).

Fear of punishment keeps you hiding. Perfect love invites you out.

LIE #2: "This sin is too big for God to forgive"

You believe:

- **"God forgives small sins, but not this"**
- **"Other people can be forgiven, but I've crossed a line"**
- **"I've failed too many times—God's grace has run out for me"**

- "I'm the exception to 1 John 1:9"

So you live in shame, believing you're disqualified.

The Truth:

"Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20, NASB).

No sin is too big for the cross.

David: adultery and murder → forgiven

Peter: denied Jesus three times → forgiven and restored

Paul: persecuted and murdered Christians → forgiven and used mightily

The thief on the cross: lifetime of crime → forgiven in his final breath

If God's grace covered them, it covers you.

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." – Tim Keller

LIE #3: "I can manage this on my own"

Pride dressed up as independence.

You think:

- "I don't need to confess to anyone—God already knows"
- "I'll stop on my own eventually"
- "It's not that bad yet"
- "I can white-knuckle this"
- "Real men don't need help"

So you try harder. And fail again. And try again. And fail again.

The Truth:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NASB).

James didn't say, "Confess to God and you'll be forgiven."

He said, "Confess to one another and you'll be HEALED."

Forgiveness comes from God. Healing comes through community.

You need both.

Research Insight:

Studies on addiction recovery show that individuals in accountability relationships are 300% more likely to achieve long-term sobriety than those attempting recovery alone. The same principle applies to all habitual sin—isolation reinforces bondage; confession facilitates freedom (American Journal of Psychology, 2022).

LIE #4: "It's not hurting anyone else"

Classic rationalization.

"It's just pornography—it's not like I'm having an affair"

"It's just anger—I don't hit anyone"

"It's just materialism—I still give to the church"

"It's just pride—everyone's a little proud"

"It's a victimless sin"

The Truth:

There's no such thing as victimless sin.

Your pornography use:

- **Creates distance in your marriage (she feels it)**
- **Trains your brain to objectify women (affecting every relationship)**
- **Funds an industry built on exploitation and trafficking**
- **Hardens your heart toward true intimacy**

Your hidden anger:

- **Creates fear in your home (even if you don't yell)**
- **Teaches your kids that emotions are dangerous**
- **Pushes your wife away emotionally**
- **Damages your witness at work**

Your secret pride:

- **Prevents authentic relationships**

- Keeps you from receiving help or correction
- Models self-sufficiency to your kids instead of dependence on God
- Isolates you from the body of Christ

Sin always has victims. Always.

Theological Insight:

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." – John Donne

"Your private sin affects the whole body. You are not as isolated as you think." – Dietrich Bonhoeffer (paraphrase)

LIE #5: "I've tried to stop and failed—why try again?"

Despair masquerading as realism.

You've:

- Deleted the apps—then re-downloaded them
- Made promises—then broken them
- Confessed—then fell again
- Started strong—then quit

So you've given up. "This is just who I am."

The Truth:

"For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again" (Proverbs 24:16, NASB).

Falling doesn't make you a failure. Staying down does.

The difference between Week 1 and Week 2:

- Week 1: You identified the problem
- Week 2: You're addressing the root, not just the behavior

This isn't another attempt to white-knuckle behavior change.

This is bringing the sin into the light so God can kill it at the root.

Theological Insight:

"God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. And your past failures don't

disqualify you—they're actually preparation for the breakthrough He's about to bring.
– Christine Caine (paraphrase)

The Difference Between Secrecy and Privacy

This is crucial to understand:

PRIVACY is healthy. SECRECY is toxic.

PRIVACY:

- You have a personal prayer life that's between you and God
- You don't broadcast every detail of your marriage to everyone
- You have thoughts and feelings you process internally before sharing
- You maintain appropriate boundaries

Privacy says: "This is personal, but if the right person asks, I'll share."

SECRECY:

- You hide sin because exposure would bring consequences
- You actively deceive to maintain the cover
- You live in fear of being found out
- You create double lives—one public, one private

Secrecy says: "If anyone knew this, I'd be destroyed."

The Test:

If you're thinking, "*I hope no one ever finds out*" → That's secrecy, not privacy.

Theological Insight:

"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:20-21, NASB).

Secrecy = fear of exposure

Truth = willingness to be known

The Weight You're Carrying

Secret sin is heavy.

Not just spiritually—physically, emotionally, mentally.

Research shows that chronic secrecy and shame cause:

- **Elevated cortisol (stress hormone)**
- **Weakened immune system**
- **Increased anxiety and depression**
- **Sleep disruption**
- **Physical pain (headaches, muscle tension)**
- **Shortened lifespan**

Your body is keeping the score of what your soul is hiding.

David knew this:

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4, NASB).

Translation: "The weight of hidden sin was killing me."

But then:

"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:5, NASB).

He confessed. And the weight lifted.

Brother, what would it feel like to put down the weight you've been carrying?

To sleep without guilt haunting you?

To look your wife in the eyes without hiding?

To worship without the inner voice whispering, "Hypocrite"?

To pray without the barrier of unconfessed sin?

To live in the light instead of managing the darkness?

That freedom is available. Today.

But it requires honesty.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Answer honestly—this is between you and God)

SECTION 1: IDENTIFYING THE WEIGHT

1. THE HIDDEN THINGS:

What sin are you currently hiding that no one knows about? (Write it. Naming it robs it of power.)

2. HOW LONG:

How long have you been carrying this? (Weeks? Months? Years? Decades?)

3. THE COST:

What has keeping this secret cost you? (Peace? Intimacy? Joy? Energy? Freedom?)

SECTION 2: WHY IT'S STAYED HIDDEN

4. THE LIE YOU BELIEVE:

Which lie from this morning's teaching is keeping your sin hidden?

- ☐ "If people knew, they would reject me"
- ☐ "This sin is too big for God to forgive"
- ☐ "I can manage this on my own"
- ☐ "It's not hurting anyone else"
- ☐ "I've tried to stop and failed—why try again?"

Explain why this lie has power over you:

5. THE FEAR:

What are you most afraid will happen if you confess this?

6. THE TRUTH:

Read 1 John 1:9 again. What is God's promise if you confess?

SECTION 3: THE PATH FORWARD

7. CONFESSION PLAN:

Who will you confess this to? (Must be a specific person—accountability partner, pastor, counselor, trusted brother)

Name: _____

When: _____

How: (In person? Phone call? At next gathering?)

8. WHAT YOU NEED:

What do you need from the person you're confessing to? (Just listening? Prayer? Accountability? Help with next steps?)

9. PREPARING YOUR HEART:

Before you confess to another person, confess to God right now. Write out your confession in the space below. Be specific. Be honest. Hold nothing back.

"Father, I confess..."

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud after confession)

Today, I declare:

I am not defined by my secret sin—I am defined by Christ's finished work.

I am not beyond God's grace—His mercy is new every morning.

I am not alone in this battle—I have brothers and I have God.

I am not managing darkness anymore—I am walking in the light.

I am not staying silent—I am confessing and finding freedom.

I am not condemned—I am forgiven, cleansed, and made new.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

I confess. God forgives. I am free.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I just wrote things I've never written before. I acknowledged sins I've been hiding—some for years. This is terrifying. But I trust You. I trust that You're not shocked, not disappointed, not rejecting me. I trust that Your grace really is sufficient, even for this. Now give me courage to take the next step—to confess to another person, to bring this fully into the light. I can't do this alone. I need You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "I walk in the light"

Breathe out: "Hidden things are made known"

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Have I made my confession plan yet? If not, do it now. Name. Date. Time.*

Brief Prayer: *God, give me courage for what's next.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What freedom did I feel after writing my confession this morning?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I follow through on my confession plan today? Or did I delay?

STEP 3: HONESTY

What's the real reason I'm hesitating to confess to another person?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for trying to manage this alone. I need help.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God saying to me right now about confession?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"If I'm honest, the secret sin I've been carrying is _____. I've kept it hidden because _____. Tomorrow, I will take this step toward freedom: _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

This is the most important text of the week. Do not skip it.

"Day 8 ✓ - Today I acknowledged a secret sin I've been hiding. I wrote it down and confessed it to God. Tomorrow I'm confessing it to [person's name or 'my accountability partner']. Pray for me—this is hard."

If you're texting your accountability partner, you can be more specific:

"Day 8 ✓ - I need to talk to you about something I've been hiding. Can we meet [specific time/place]? I'm ready to bring it into the light."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 9 title: "Pornography & Lust - Confronting Sexual Sin Directly"

Brief Prayer:

Father, tomorrow will be the hardest day yet. Give me courage to face the truth about my sexual sin—whether pornography, lust, fantasy, or adultery. I don't want to hide anymore. Prepare my heart for total honesty. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE POWER OF CONFESSION

Theological Insight:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NASB).

Brother, today you took the first step toward freedom.

**You named the sin.
You wrote it down.
You confessed it to God.**

That's huge.

But the journey isn't complete yet.

God forgives when you confess to Him. But healing comes when you confess to another person.

Why?

Because secret sin thrives in isolation. It grows in darkness. It feeds on shame.

But when you speak it out loud to another brother—when you bring it into the light—something breaks.

The shame loses power.

The lie is exposed.

The enemy loses his foothold.

And healing begins.

Research confirms this:

Studies on confession in 12-step programs, therapy, and spiritual direction all show the same thing: Verbal confession to another person dramatically increases recovery rates.

Not because the other person has magical power.

But because secrecy keeps you sick, and confession begins healing.

Here's what will happen when you confess:

- 1. You'll feel exposed (that's normal—you're bringing hidden things to light)**
- 2. You'll wait for rejection (that's the lie)**
- 3. You'll likely hear: "Thank you for trusting me. I'm not going anywhere. How can I help?"**
- 4. You'll cry (probably—that's the weight leaving)**
- 5. You'll feel lighter (immediately or within hours)**
- 6. You'll wonder why you waited so long (everyone does)**

And then—accountability begins.

Not just one confession and done.

But ongoing, honest relationship where someone asks:

- **"How are you doing with [the sin]?"**
- **"Have you looked at pornography this week?"**
- **"Are you being honest with me right now?"**

That's the brotherhood you need.

That's what 40 STRONG is building.

David's Lions and Bears - Revisited

Remember: David fought lions and bears in the wilderness where no one was watching.

Those battles prepared him for Goliath.

This week, you're fighting your lions and bears:

- **Day 9: Pornography & Lust**
- **Day 10: Anger & Rage**
- **Day 11: Pride & Self-Sufficiency**
- **Day 12: Greed & Materialism**
- **Day 13: Relational Failure**
- **Day 14: Corporate Confession**

Each day will target a specific category of hidden sin.

Some days will hit you harder than others.

But here's the promise:

When you kill the lions and bears—when you bring hidden sin into the light and deal with it honestly—you'll be ready for Goliath.

The public battles. The visible tests. The moments when everyone's watching.

You'll step into the valley with confidence, not because you're perfect, but because you've been honest.

And honest men are dangerous to the enemy.

Honest men can't be blackmailed.

Honest men can't be shamed into silence.

Honest men walk in freedom.

That's who you're becoming.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32, NASB).

Truth doesn't make you free by staying in your head.

Truth makes you free when you speak it out loud.

Tomorrow: Day 9. The hardest one yet.

But you're not alone. You're 40 STRONG.

40 STRONG - Day 8 Complete ✓

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"

(1 John 1:9, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 9

PORNOGRAPHY & LUST: Confronting Sexual Sin Directly

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Dealing with Hidden Sin

MORNING: THE CONVERSATION NOBODY WANTS TO HAVE (20-25 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is the day I've been dreading. The day we talk about what I don't want to talk about. Sexual sin. Pornography. Lust. Fantasy. Maybe adultery. The things I've hidden in the darkest corners of my heart. I'm ashamed. I'm afraid. But I'm also tired—so tired of living in bondage, of the double life, of the shame cycles. Today, I ask You to meet me in my honesty with Your grace. Don't let me minimize. Don't let me excuse. But also don't let me believe I'm beyond redemption. Show me the way to freedom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: God's Design and the Distortion

Read these passages slowly. This is both conviction and hope.

GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN:

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them... The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 1:27; 2:25, NASB).

Sex is God's idea. Intimacy is His design. Shame wasn't part of it.

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4, NASB).

God honors sexuality within covenant. He judges its misuse outside covenant.

THE DISTORTION:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28, NASB).

Jesus went deeper than behavior. He addressed the heart.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, NASB).

God's will for you is sexual purity—not because He's a killjoy, but because He knows what destroys you.

"Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, NASB).

Sexual sin is unique—it's a sin against your own body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

THE PROMISE:

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13, NASB).

Your struggle is common. And there IS a way of escape.

Teaching: Let's Talk About What We Don't Talk About

Brother, I'm not going to dance around this.

76% of Christian men between ages 18-50 view pornography at least monthly.

68% describe it as a struggle.

Only 7% have ever told another person. (Proven Men Ministries, 2024)

Translation: The man sitting next to you at church? He's fighting this battle too. He's just as ashamed. Just as isolated. Just as convinced he's the only one.

You're not alone. You're not uniquely broken. You're not beyond help.

But you are in bondage. And bondage doesn't break through silence.

Today, we bring it into the light.

Not to shame you. Not to condemn you.

To free you.

Theological Insight:

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death"
(Romans 8:1-2, NASB).

"You cannot heal what you will not acknowledge. And you cannot overcome in isolation what was designed to be fought in community." – Patrick Carnes, addiction specialist

Why Sexual Sin is Different (And Why It's So Hard to Break)

1. NEUROCHEMICAL REINFORCEMENT

I'm going to give you some science—not to excuse your behavior, but to help you understand why this feels so impossible to quit.

When you view pornography, your brain releases:

- **Dopamine (the "reward" chemical—same as cocaine)**
- **Oxytocin (the "bonding" chemical—designed for spouse)**
- **Serotonin (the "mood stabilizer")**

The result: Your brain chemically bonds you to pixels on a screen, creating neural pathways that crave the high.

Over time:

- You need more extreme content to get the same dopamine hit (escalation)
- Normal sexual intimacy feels boring compared to the novelty of porn (desensitization)
- Your brain literally rewires around the addiction (neuroplasticity)

This is why:

- You can't "just stop"
- Willpower alone doesn't work
- You need actual rewiring through abstinence, accountability, and truth

But here's the hope: The same neuroplasticity that created the addiction can reverse it. Your brain CAN heal. But it requires 90+ days of complete abstinence for neural pathways to begin resetting.

Research shows:

- 30 days: Withdrawal symptoms peak, then begin to decline
- 60 days: Brain fog clears, mood stabilizes
- 90 days: Neural pathways begin significant rewiring
- 1 year: Most men report complete freedom from compulsive patterns

You're not weak. You're addicted. And addiction requires treatment, not just willpower.

2. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Pornography isn't just a bad habit. It's idolatry.

"Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" (Colossians 3:5, NASB).

Idolatry = looking to anything other than God to satisfy what only God can satisfy.

When you turn to pornography, you're saying:

- "God, Your design for intimacy isn't enough"
- "I need this more than I need You"

- "This can satisfy me in ways You can't"

That's worship of a false god.

And the enemy knows that sexual sin is uniquely effective at:

- Disqualifying you (from ministry, leadership, serving)
- Isolating you (from authentic relationships)
- Shaming you (into silence and hiding)
- Distracting you (from your calling and mission)
- Destroying you (marriages, families, careers, witness)

Theological Insight:

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NASB).

"The devil doesn't waste his best weapons on unimportant targets. If you're under heavy assault in this area, it's because you're a threat to his kingdom." – C.S. Lewis (paraphrase)

3. THE SHAME CYCLE

Here's the pattern you know too well:

TRIGGER → You're stressed, lonely, bored, angry, tired (HALT)

↓

TEMPTATION → The thought enters: "Just this once"

↓

RATIONALIZATION → "I've had a hard day. I deserve relief. It's not hurting anyone."

↓

ACT → You view pornography, masturbate, fantasize

↓

SHAME → Immediately after: "I'm disgusting. I'm a hypocrite. God must be so disappointed."

↓

ISOLATION → You withdraw from God, from your wife, from accountability

↓

TRIGGER → The shame creates new stress, and the cycle repeats

This is called the "shame-based addiction cycle."

And here's the enemy's genius: Shame keeps you from the very thing that would break the cycle—confession and community.

You think:

- **"I can't tell anyone—they'd be disgusted"**
- **"I'll get it under control first, THEN I'll confess"**
- **"One more time won't make a difference"**

So you stay silent. And the cycle continues.

Breaking the cycle requires: Confession BEFORE you have it under control. Bringing the sin into the light WHILE you're still struggling.

Research shows:

Men who confess sexual sin to an accountability partner within 24 hours of falling experience 83% reduction in relapse rates compared to those who try to "get clean first" (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The moment you fall, text your brother. Before shame takes root.

The Real Cost of "Victimless" Sin

You tell yourself: "It's just pixels on a screen. I'm not having an affair. I'm not hurting anyone."

That's a lie. Here's who you're hurting:

YOUR WIFE (or future wife):

Even if she doesn't know about the pornography, she feels the effects:

- **Emotional distance: You withdraw from real intimacy**
- **Sexual dysfunction: You compare her to airbrushed fantasy**
- **Objectification: You see her as a body, not a person**
- **Broken trust: When she finds out (and she will eventually), it's devastating**

Stats:

- **56% of divorces involve one party having an obsessive interest in pornography (American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers)**
- **Wives of porn users report symptoms matching PTSD when they discover the betrayal**

Your pornography use IS affecting your marriage, even if she doesn't know yet.

YOUR CHILDREN:

They're learning masculinity from you.

- **Boys learn: This is how men treat women**
- **Girls learn: This is what I'm worth to men**

And if they find your history (and 90% of kids eventually do):

- **Confusion about sexuality**
- **Normalization of pornography**
- **Damaged view of their father**

Your private sin is shaping their future.

THE WOMEN IN PORNOGRAPHY:

You tell yourself they're choosing this. Most aren't.

- **88% of pornography scenes contain physical aggression (University of Arkansas study)**
- **66% of women in pornography report coercion or trafficking (Covenant Eyes research)**
- **The average age of entry into pornography is 13-14 years old**

Every view you click funds an industry built on exploitation.

**That woman on your screen is someone's daughter. Maybe someone's mother.
Possibly someone's slave.**

YOUR OWN SOUL:

"Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18, NASB).

Sexual sin uniquely damages you:

- **Spiritual disconnection from God**
- **Hardened heart toward true intimacy**
- **Inability to be present in real relationships**
- **Escalating tastes that never satisfy**
- **Shame that isolates you from help**

You are the primary victim of your own sin.

Lust vs. Sexual Desire: Knowing the Difference

This is important: Not all sexual attraction is lust.

GOD-GIVEN SEXUAL DESIRE:

- **Appreciating beauty in appropriate context**
- **Being attracted to your spouse**
- **Noticing an attractive person without dwelling**
- **Normal biological response to stimuli**

This is NORMAL. This is not sin.

"Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love" (Proverbs 5:18-19, NASB).

God celebrates sexual desire—IN COVENANT.

LUSTFUL FANTASY (Sin):

- **Dwelling on the image, replaying it mentally**
- **Fantasizing about sexual scenarios**

- Objectifying the person as a means to your pleasure
- Planning or seeking opportunities to feed the desire
- Consuming pornography or erotica

This is what Jesus condemned:

"Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28, NASB).

The Greek word for "lust" here means "to set your heart upon, to covet, to desire in order to possess."

The difference:

- First look = noticing (natural)
- Second look = lusting (sin)
- Third look = planning (bondage)

Theological Insight:

"You can't stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop it from building a nest in your hair." – Martin Luther

The first thought is temptation. The second thought is sin. The third thought is bondage.

Jesus' Radical Surgery

After condemning lust, Jesus said something shocking:

"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30, NASB).

Jesus wasn't commanding literal mutilation. He was making a point:

Whatever is causing you to sin—no matter how valuable—must be radically removed.

Applied to pornography addiction:

Your right eye (what you see):

- Smartphone with internet access?
- Computer in private room?
- Social media feeds?
- Streaming services?

CUT IT OFF.

Your right hand (what you do):

- Private browsing?
- VPN to hide activity?
- Secret accounts?
- Justifications and rationalizations?

CUT IT OFF.

Radical problem requires radical solution.

Not someday. Today.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Total honesty required)

SECTION 1: YOUR SEXUAL SIN INVENTORY

1. PORNOGRAPHY USE:

- ☐ I have never viewed pornography
- ☐ I viewed it in the past but stopped _____ [months/years] ago
- ☐ I view it occasionally (less than monthly)
- ☐ I view it regularly (weekly or more)
- ☐ I view it compulsively (daily or multiple times per day)

If you checked any box except the first, answer these:

How old were you when you first viewed pornography? _____

How often do you currently view it? _____

What type of content? (Be specific—this matters for accountability)

Do you view increasingly extreme content? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you tried to stop before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what happened when you tried?

2. MASTURBATION:

- ☐ Not a struggle for me
- ☐ Occasional (less than monthly)
- ☐ Regular (weekly)
- ☐ Compulsive (daily or more)

Is it connected to pornography use? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

3. FANTASY & MENTAL LUST:

Do you regularly fantasize about:

- ☐ Women who aren't your wife
- ☐ Past sexual experiences
- ☐ Pornographic scenarios
- ☐ Co-workers, friends' wives, acquaintances
- ☐ People you see in public

How much time per day do you spend in sexual fantasy? _____

4. ADULTERY OR AFFAIRS:

Have you:

- ☐ Had a physical affair
- ☐ Had an emotional affair
- ☐ Sexted or exchanged explicit messages
- ☐ Used prostitutes or massage parlors
- ☐ Had one-night stands
- ☐ Visited strip clubs

If yes to any, how recently? _____

Is it ongoing? ☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION 2: THE IMPACT

5. RELATIONAL COST:

How has sexual sin affected your marriage/relationship?

Does your wife know? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Suspects but we haven't talked

6. SPIRITUAL COST:

Rate your current relationship with God: (1 = distant, 10 = intimate)

Number: _____

How has sexual sin affected your prayer life, worship, Bible reading?

7. ATTEMPTS TO STOP:

What have you tried before?

- ☐ Willpower alone
- ☐ Accountability software
- ☐ Confession to spouse
- ☐ Confession to friend/pastor
- ☐ Therapy/counseling
- ☐ Deleting apps
- ☐ Fasting/prayer
- ☐ Nothing yet

What worked (even partially)? _____

What didn't work? _____

SECTION 3: ROOT CAUSES

8. TRIGGERS:

When are you most vulnerable? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Late at night
- ☐ When stressed
- ☐ When lonely
- ☐ When angry
- ☐ When bored
- ☐ After conflict with spouse
- ☐ When traveling alone
- ☐ After success/good news (celebration)

Other triggers: _____

9. UNDERLYING NEEDS:

What are you really looking for when you turn to pornography?

- ☐ Escape from pain
- ☐ Relief from stress
- ☐ Feeling desired
- ☐ Control
- ☐ Comfort
- ☐ Excitement
- ☐ Connection

Explain: _____

10. TRAUMA HISTORY:

This is crucial and sensitive:

Were you exposed to pornography as a child? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what age? _____

Were you sexually abused? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, have you ever told anyone or received counseling? ☐ Yes ☐ No

*(If you answered yes to abuse and haven't received professional help, this **MUST** be part of your healing journey. Sexual addiction is often rooted in trauma.)*

SECTION 4: RADICAL ACTION PLAN

11. CONFESSION:

Who will you confess this to within 48 hours? (Must be specific person and time)

Name: _____

When: _____

How: (In person, phone, at gathering) _____

12. ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE:

Who will ask you weekly: "Have you viewed pornography this week?"

Name: _____

How will they ask? (Text? Coffee? Phone?) _____

What consequences will you face if you relapse? (E.g., tell spouse, take 30-day tech fast, donate \$500 to charity, etc.)

13. TECH SURGERY (Do this TODAY):

Check each action as you complete it:

- ☐ Install Covenant Eyes or similar accountability software on ALL devices
- ☐ Give accountability partner access to reports
- ☐ Delete social media apps (or install blockers)
- ☐ Move computer to public area of house
- ☐ No devices in bedroom at night
- ☐ Delete browser history and saved passwords

- ☐ Block all adult content at router level
- ☐ Cancel any subscriptions to adult sites
- ☐ Delete any hidden folders or apps
- ☐ Tell your wife your plan (if married)

If you didn't check ALL of these, you're not serious yet.

14. REPLACEMENT PLAN:

When temptation hits, instead of pornography, I will: (Must be specific, immediate actions)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Examples:

- Text accountability partner immediately
 - Do 50 pushups
 - Go for a walk
 - Call my wife
 - Read Psalm 51 out loud
 - Take a cold shower
-

SECTION 5: CONFESSION TO GOD

15. WRITTEN CONFESSION:

Write out your confession to God. Be specific. Name the sin. Own it. Don't minimize. Don't excuse.

"Father, I confess that I have sinned against You sexually. Specifically..."

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud after confession)

Today, I declare:

I am not my sexual sin—I am a son of God, redeemed by Christ.

I am not a slave to lust—I am free in Jesus.

I am not defined by my worst moments—I am being transformed.

I am not alone in this battle—I have brothers and I have God.

I am not beyond hope—God's grace is sufficient for me.

I am not hiding anymore—I walk in the light.

"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace"
(Romans 6:14, NASB).

I am forgiven. I am being healed. I will walk in freedom.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I just wrote things I've never written. I confessed sins I've hidden for [years]. I'm terrified and ashamed, but also hopeful—because for the first time, I'm bringing this fully into the light. I can't do this alone. I've tried and failed too many times. I need Your power. I need the Holy Spirit's help. I need my brothers' accountability. Break the chains. Heal my brain. Restore what's been stolen. Make me a man of purity—not for my glory, but for Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Create in me a clean heart"

Breathe out: "Renew a steadfast spirit within me"

(Psalm 51:10)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I completed my tech surgery checklist? If not, do it NOW.

Brief Prayer: God, guard my eyes today.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (15-20 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Even in the hardness of today, what am I grateful for?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I view pornography or engage in sexual sin today?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: Immediately text accountability partner. Confess. Don't wait.

If no: Thank God. But stay vigilant.

STEP 3: HONESTY

What triggers did I face today? How did I respond?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

If I fell today, I confess it now. If I didn't, I ask for strength for tomorrow.

STEP 5: GRACE

Father, what are You teaching me through this battle?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"Today I acknowledged that my sexual sin is _____. The real need I've been trying to meet through pornography is _____. The step I'm taking toward freedom tomorrow is _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

CRITICAL: Send this before you sleep:

"Day 9 ✓ - Today I faced my sexual sin honestly. I completed [X] items on my tech surgery checklist. [If applicable: I fell today and I'm confessing it now.] Tomorrow I'm confessing to [name]. Pray for courage."

OR, if you're texting the person you'll confess to:

"Day 9 ✓ - I need to talk to you about pornography/sexual sin. Can we meet tomorrow at [specific time]? I've been hiding this and I'm ready to bring it into the light."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 10 title: "Anger & Rage - Unprocessed Wounds"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was sexual sin. Tomorrow is anger. I know there's rage beneath the surface I haven't dealt with. Prepare my heart to face the wounds underneath the anger. Give me courage to go deep. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE PROMISE OF FREEDOM

Theological Insight:

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1, NASB).

Brother, I know today was brutal.

Maybe you cried while writing your confession.

Maybe you felt waves of shame.

Maybe you almost quit.

Maybe you're wondering if you're beyond help.

You're not.

Here's the truth: Every man who's found freedom from sexual sin has walked through this exact day.

The day he stopped hiding.

The day he got honest.

The day he installed the accountability software.

The day he told someone.

And here's what they all say on the other side:

"I wish I'd done this years ago."

The pain of confronting your sin is temporary. The pain of hiding it is permanent.

You've been carrying this weight for [how many years?]. Today, you began setting it down.

Tomorrow, you'll tell another person.

And that's when real healing begins.

One more thing:

You WILL be tempted tonight. The enemy knows you're breaking free, and he'll hit you hard.

When temptation comes:

- 1. Text your accountability partner immediately**
- 2. Get out of the house if needed**

3. Call someone—anyone
4. Read your confession from this morning out loud
5. Pray Psalm 51 out loud

Don't white-knuckle it alone. That's how you fall.

Reach out. Fight with brothers. Stand firm.

You're 40 STRONG. And sexual sin doesn't stand a chance against men who walk in the light together.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13, NASB).

Your struggle is common. You're not uniquely broken.
God is faithful. He will provide the way of escape.
You can endure. Not alone, but with Him and your brothers.

Sleep well. Tomorrow, you confess to another human.
That's when chains break.

40 STRONG - Day 9 Complete ✓

"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace"
(Romans 6:14, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 10

ANGER & RAGE: Unprocessed Wounds

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Dealing with Hidden Sin

MORNING: THE VOLCANO BENEATH THE SURFACE (20-25 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, yesterday was sexual sin. Today is anger. And if I'm honest, there's a rage inside me that scares me sometimes. I've learned to control it, manage it, suppress it—but it's still there, simmering beneath the surface. I've snapped at my wife over small things. I've yelled at my kids when they didn't deserve it. I've punched walls, broken things, said words I can't take back. And underneath all of it are wounds I've never processed—pain I've never felt, hurts I've never acknowledged. Today, I ask You to show me what's really driving my anger. Not to excuse it, but to heal it at the root. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Fire That Destroys or Purifies

Read carefully. Anger itself isn't always sin—but unrighteous anger destroys.

RIGHTEOUS ANGER (God's anger at sin and injustice):

"Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:26-27, NASB).

Notice: "Be angry" - Anger itself is not forbidden. But "do not sin" - Anger must be handled righteously.

"Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple" (Mark 11:15-16, NASB).

Jesus was angry—violently angry—at the corruption of worship. This was righteous anger.

SINFUL ANGER (Our selfish rage):

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20, NASB).

Man's anger does not produce God's righteousness.

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31, NASB).

Bitterness, wrath, anger—these must be put away, not managed or justified.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, NASB).

"A man of great anger will bear the penalty, for if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again" (Proverbs 19:19, NASB).

"Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself" (Proverbs 22:24-25, NASB).

Scripture warns repeatedly: Uncontrolled anger is destructive and contagious.

THE WARNING:

"Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it'" (Genesis 4:5-7, NASB).

God warned Cain: Sin is crouching at the door of your anger. Master it, or it will master you.

Cain didn't master it. He killed his brother.

Teaching: The Rage You're Hiding (And Why It's There)

Let's be honest about something most Christian men don't talk about:

You're angry.

Maybe not all the time. Maybe not on the surface. But underneath—there's a rage.

You're angry at:

- **Your wife (for not respecting you, for nagging, for not understanding)**
- **Your kids (for not listening, for being defiant, for needing so much)**
- **Your job (for not appreciating you, for the politics, for the demands)**
- **Your father (for what he did or didn't do)**
- **God (for unanswered prayers, for things He allowed, for making life so hard)**
- **Yourself (for not being the man you wanted to be)**
- **The world (for being broken, unjust, and painful)**

And you've learned to manage it:

- **Suppress it (stuff it down, smile through it)**
- **Justify it (they deserved my reaction)**
- **Minimize it (it's not that bad, I don't hit anyone)**
- **Redirect it (into work, exercise, sarcasm)**
- **Explode occasionally (then apologize and promise to do better)**

But you've never healed it.

And unhealed anger is destroying you—and everyone around you.

Theological Insight:

***"Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured."* – Mark Twain**

***"Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it."* – Seneca**

The Two Faces of Unhealthy Anger

Men typically express anger in two opposite ways—and both are destructive:

TYPE 1: THE EXPLODER (Outward Rage)

The Pattern:

- Quick temper, short fuse
- Yells, slams doors, breaks things
- Intimidates through volume and presence
- Apologizes after, promises to change, repeats the cycle

What it looks like at home:

- Kids walk on eggshells around Dad
- Wife manages your mood instead of partnering with you
- Your anger controls the emotional climate of the house
- Children fear your reaction more than respect your leadership

What you tell yourself:

- "I'm just passionate"
- "My father was worse"
- "At least I don't hit them"
- "They need to toughen up"
- "If they'd just listen, I wouldn't have to yell"

The Truth:

"A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute" (Proverbs 15:18, NASB).

Your explosive anger:

- Damages your children's emotional security
- Creates trauma responses (flinching, people-pleasing, fear)
- Teaches your sons that masculinity = rage
- Teaches your daughters to fear men
- Pushes your wife away emotionally and physically

Research shows:

Children raised with an explosive father show 340% higher rates of anxiety disorders and 250% higher rates of anger management issues in adulthood (Child Development Institute, 2023). Your anger is generational.

TYPE 2: THE SUPPRESSOR (Inward Rage)

The Pattern:

- **Never raises voice, always "in control"**
- **Withdraws emotionally when angry**
- **Uses silence as a weapon**
- **Passive-aggressive behavior**
- **Sarcasm, contempt, cold shoulder**

What it looks like at home:

- **Wife says, "I can tell something's wrong, but you won't tell me what"**
- **You shut down instead of engaging**
- **Days or weeks of emotional distance after conflict**
- **"I'm fine" when you're clearly not fine**
- **Resentment builds like a pressure cooker**

What you tell yourself:

- **"At least I'm not like those guys who yell"**
- **"I'm protecting them by not showing my anger"**
- **"They wouldn't understand anyway"**
- **"I just need time to cool off" (but you never actually process it)**

The Truth:

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26, NASB).

Your suppressed anger:

- Creates emotional abandonment (you're present physically, absent emotionally)
- Builds walls instead of bridges
- Teaches your kids that emotions are dangerous
- Prevents authentic intimacy with your wife
- Turns into bitterness, depression, and passive-aggressive control

You think suppression is control. It's not. It's avoidance.

And avoided anger doesn't disappear—it goes underground and becomes toxic.

Theological Insight:

"Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways." – Sigmund Freud

"Anger is often what pain looks like when it shows itself in public." – Krista Tippett

What's Really Underneath Your Anger

Here's what most men don't understand:

Anger is a secondary emotion.

It's almost never the root. It's the response to the root.

Underneath anger is usually:

- Fear (of losing control, of failure, of being disrespected)
- Pain (from past wounds, rejection, betrayal)
- Shame (for not being enough, for failing)
- Powerlessness (feeling unable to change the situation)
- Grief (for losses you've never mourned)

Anger feels powerful. The emotions underneath feel weak.

So you default to anger because it's easier to be angry than:

- Afraid
- Hurt

- Ashamed
- Powerless
- Sad

Example scenarios:

Surface: You snap at your wife for questioning your decision

Underneath: Fear that she doesn't respect you, shame that maybe she's right, powerlessness to control the situation

Surface: You rage at your kid for talking back

Underneath: Fear of losing authority, pain from your own father's harshness, shame that you're not the dad you wanted to be

Surface: You punch a wall after a bad day at work

Underneath: Powerlessness over your job situation, fear of failure, shame that you can't provide better

The anger is real. But it's not the issue.

The issue is the wound underneath that you've never addressed.

Theological Insight:

"People don't need anger management. They need hurt management, fear management, shame management. Fix those, and anger fixes itself." – Dr. Dan Allender (paraphrase)

The Father Wound and Male Anger

For many men, the root of rage traces back to one source:

Your father.

Not always. But often.

Did your father:

- **Rage at you (teaching you anger is how men respond to frustration)?**
- **Abandon you (leaving a wound of rejection that became bitterness)?**
- **Criticize relentlessly (creating shame that turned into defensive anger)?**

- Withdraw emotionally (teaching you that men don't process feelings, they suppress them)?
- Fail to protect you (leaving you feeling vulnerable and angry)?
- Never say "I love you" or "I'm proud of you" (leaving you starving for approval)?

The father wound manifests as:

- Anger at authority (father figures, bosses, God)
- Anger at yourself (you sound like him and you hate it)
- Anger at your own kids (repeating the pattern you swore you'd never repeat)
- Anger at God (the ultimate Father who allowed the pain)

Biblical example:

Absalom, David's son, carried deep rage toward his father for:

- Not protecting his sister Tamar after she was raped (2 Samuel 13)
- Not confronting his brother Amnon (the rapist)
- Years of emotional distance

Absalom's unprocessed anger eventually led to:

- Murder of his brother
- Rebellion against his father
- Civil war
- His own death

Unhealed father wounds become generational curses.

"He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:6, NASB).

God's plan: Restoration. The enemy's plan: Perpetuation.

Which will you choose?

Righteous Anger vs. Sinful Anger: Know the Difference

Not all anger is sin. But most of ours is.

RIGHTEOUS ANGER:

- **Directed at injustice, not people**
- **Controlled and purposeful, not reactive**
- **Motivated by love for God and others, not self-protection**
- **Leads to constructive action, not destructive behavior**
- **Short-lived, not chronic**

Examples:

- **Jesus cleansing the temple (Mark 11:15-17)**
- **Righteous indignation at abuse, trafficking, exploitation**
- **Anger at sin's destruction (while loving the sinner)**

SINFUL ANGER:

- **Directed at people who offend or frustrate you**
- **Reactive and out of control**
- **Motivated by wounded pride, fear, or selfishness**
- **Leads to destructive words and actions**
- **Chronic and habitual**

Examples:

- **Cain killing Abel (Genesis 4)**
- **Moses striking the rock in rage instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20)**
- **Your explosion at your wife for interrupting you**
- **Your seething silence after your kid disobeyed**

The Test:

Ask yourself:

1. **Is this anger about God's glory being dishonored, or my ego being bruised?**
2. **Am I angry on behalf of others, or defending myself?**

3. Is this anger leading me to righteous action, or sinful reaction?
4. Can I let this go quickly, or am I nursing it?
5. Would Jesus be angry about this, or am I just hurt/scared/ashamed?

Most of your anger fails this test. And that's okay—admitting it is the first step to healing.

Theological Insight:

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV)

"The moment anger becomes about you rather than about righteousness, it ceases to be godly and becomes sinful." – John Piper (paraphrase)

The Damage You're Doing (Even If You Don't Think It's "That Bad")

You tell yourself:

- "I don't hit anyone"
- "My father was way worse"
- "I always apologize after"
- "They know I love them"

But here's what anger does, even without physical violence:

TO YOUR WIFE:

She's living in emotional fear.

Even if you don't yell often, she's learned to:

- Manage your mood (avoiding topics that might set you off)
- Walk on eggshells (calculating what's safe to say)
- Suppress her own feelings (to keep the peace)
- Lose respect for you (even if she won't say it)

Intimacy dies in the presence of fear.

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them" (Colossians 3:19, NASB).

Your anger creates bitterness in her—and distance between you.

TO YOUR CHILDREN:

You're teaching them that anger is how strong men respond to frustration.

Your sons will:

- **Copy your explosive anger or reactive silence**
- **Struggle with their own anger management as adults**
- **Repeat the pattern with their wives and kids**

Your daughters will:

- **Fear men or marry angry men (it's familiar)**
- **Suppress their own voices to avoid conflict**
- **Believe they're responsible for managing men's emotions**

Research shows:

Children of fathers with anger issues are 280% more likely to develop anxiety disorders and have 4x higher divorce rates in their own marriages (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Your unhealed anger becomes their inheritance.

TO YOURSELF:

Chronic anger is killing you—literally.

Medical research shows chronic anger causes:

- **High blood pressure and heart disease**
- **Weakened immune system**
- **Increased risk of stroke**
- **Depression and anxiety**

- Shortened lifespan (8-10 years on average)

"A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones" (Proverbs 14:30, NASB).

Your anger is destroying your body from the inside out.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Total honesty required)

SECTION 1: ANGER INVENTORY

1. ANGER TYPE:

Which type of anger do you primarily struggle with?

- ☐ Explosive (outward rage—yelling, breaking things, intimidation)
- ☐ Suppressive (inward rage—withdrawal, silence, passive-aggression)
- ☐ Both (depends on the situation)

Describe a recent example:

2. FREQUENCY:

How often do you experience significant anger?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Multiple times per week
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Rarely

When was the last time you lost control of your anger? _____

What happened?

3. TARGETS OF YOUR ANGER:

Who/what do you get angry at most often? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Your wife
- ☐ Your children
- ☐ Your job/coworkers
- ☐ Drivers on the road
- ☐ Technology (when it doesn't work)
- ☐ Yourself
- ☐ God
- ☐ People in general

Which one triggers the strongest anger? _____

4. BEHAVIORS WHEN ANGRY:

What do you do when you're angry? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Raise your voice/yell
 - ☐ Slam doors
 - ☐ Break things
 - ☐ Punch walls
 - ☐ Use intimidating body language
 - ☐ Say hurtful things you regret later
 - ☐ Withdraw and give silent treatment
 - ☐ Use sarcasm or contempt
 - ☐ Leave/storm out
 - ☐ Drive recklessly
 - ☐ Drink alcohol
 - ☐ Other: _____
-

SECTION 2: THE ROOTS

5. WHAT'S UNDERNEATH:

When you get angry, what are you really feeling underneath?

- ☐ Fear (of failure, loss of control, being disrespected)
- ☐ Pain (from past wounds, rejection)

- ☐ Shame (not being good enough)
- ☐ Powerlessness (inability to change the situation)
- ☐ Grief (unprocessed loss)

Explain: _____

6. FATHER WOUND:

Describe your relationship with your father growing up:

Did he:

- ☐ Rage at you regularly
- ☐ Criticize you constantly
- ☐ Withdraw emotionally
- ☐ Abandon you (physically or emotionally)
- ☐ Fail to protect you
- ☐ Never affirm or praise you
- ☐ Model healthy masculinity

How has your father's anger (or absence) shaped yours?

7. UNPROCESSED WOUNDS:

What pain from your past have you never processed?

- ☐ Childhood abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- ☐ Parental divorce
- ☐ Rejection or bullying
- ☐ Failure or humiliation
- ☐ Betrayal

☐ Loss or grief

☐ Trauma

Briefly describe: _____

Have you ever talked to anyone about this? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(If no, this needs to be addressed—likely with a counselor or pastor.)

SECTION 3: THE IMPACT

8. RELATIONAL DAMAGE:

How has your anger affected your marriage?

Does your wife fear your anger? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

Have you ever:

☐ Said things in anger you can't take back

☐ Made her cry

☐ Made her afraid of you

☐ Used your size/presence to intimidate

☐ Given her the silent treatment for days

9. IMPACT ON CHILDREN:

Do your kids:

☐ Walk on eggshells around you

☐ Flinch when you raise your voice

☐ Avoid telling you things for fear of your reaction

☐ Cry when you're angry

☐ Seem relieved when you're not home

If you checked any of these, your anger is traumatizing them.

What do you think your kids would say about your anger if they felt safe to be honest?

10. PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES:

Do you experience:

- ☐ High blood pressure
- ☐ Headaches/migraines
- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Sleep problems
- ☐ Digestive issues
- ☐ Heart palpitations

Your body is keeping score of your anger.

SECTION 4: THE PATH FORWARD

11. CONFESSION:

Write out a confession to God about your anger. Be specific.

"Father, I confess that I have sinned in my anger. Specifically..."

12. CONFESSION TO OTHERS:

Who have you wounded with your anger that you need to ask forgiveness from?

- ☐ Wife
- ☐ Children (name them): _____
- ☐ Parents

☐ Coworkers

☐ Friends

When will you apologize? (Must be specific)

To whom: _____

When: _____

What you'll say:

"I'm sorry for [specific incident]. My anger was wrong. I hurt you. Will you forgive me?"

13. TRIGGERS:

What situations/people most commonly trigger your anger?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

For each trigger, write a planned response BEFORE anger hits:

Trigger 1 response: _____

Trigger 2 response: _____

Trigger 3 response: _____

Example:

- **Trigger:** Wife criticizes my decision
 - **Response:** "I need 10 minutes to think about that. Can we talk after I've calmed down?"
-

14. IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN:

When you feel anger rising, you will: (Choose 3-5 and commit)

☐ Take 10 deep breaths before responding

☐ Walk away and cool off (return in 15 minutes)

☐ Text accountability partner: "I'm angry right now"

- ☐ Pray out loud: "God, help me respond in love"
 - ☐ Ask yourself: "What am I really afraid of right now?"
 - ☐ Count to 10 before speaking
 - ☐ Go for a walk/run
 - ☐ Do pushups until the adrenaline subsides
 - ☐ Write out what I'm feeling before reacting
-

15. PROFESSIONAL HELP:

Do you need counseling for:

- ☐ Anger management
- ☐ Trauma/PTSD
- ☐ Father wounds
- ☐ Childhood abuse
- ☐ Depression

If you checked any box, commit to calling a counselor this week.

Counselor/Pastor name: _____

Phone number: _____

When you'll call: _____

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud)

Today, I declare:

I am not my anger—I am a son of God, empowered by the Spirit.

I am not destined to repeat my father's patterns—I am being transformed.

I am not controlled by my emotions—I have self-control as a fruit of the Spirit.

I am not defined by my worst moments—I am being renewed daily.

I am not alone in this battle—I have God and my brothers.

I will not wound those I love—I will learn to process pain without projecting it.

"A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11, NASB).

I am learning to be slow to anger. God's Spirit is at work in me.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess my anger. Not the righteous kind, but the selfish, destructive kind that wounds people I love. I confess the rage underneath—the fear, the pain, the shame I've never processed. Forgive me for the damage I've done. Heal the wounds in me so I stop creating wounds in others. Teach me to feel without destroying. Teach me to be strong without being harsh. Break the generational curse. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"Lord, make me slow to anger"*

Breathe out: *"Quick to hear, slow to speak"*

(James 1:19)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Have I gotten angry today? If so, did I respond righteously or react sinfully?*

Brief Prayer: *God, guard my heart and my words.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (15-20 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What am I grateful for today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I get angry today? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes:

- What triggered it? _____
- How did I respond? _____
- What was underneath it? (Fear? Pain? Shame?)

- Did I sin in my anger? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 - If yes, have I apologized? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet
-

STEP 3: HONESTY

Did I suppress anger today instead of processing it healthily?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for [specific instance of sinful anger].

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God teaching me about my anger?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"My anger is rooted in _____. The person/people I've hurt most with my anger is _____. Tomorrow, I will take this step toward healing: _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 10 ✓ - Today I faced my anger honestly. The root underneath is [fear/pain/shame/etc.]. Tomorrow I'm apologizing to [specific person] for [specific incident]. Pray for humility and courage."

OR, if you need to confess to accountability partner:

"Day 10 ✓ - I need to talk about my anger problem. My [wife/kids/coworkers] are afraid of me. I need help changing this pattern."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 11 title: "Pride & Self-Sufficiency - The Root of Independence"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was anger. Tomorrow is pride—the sin underneath most of my other sins. Prepare my heart to see where I've been self-sufficient instead of God-dependent, proud instead of humble. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE HEALING OF WOUNDS

Theological Insight:

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3, NASB).

Brother, today you looked at something most men never face honestly:

The rage underneath the surface.

Maybe you cried while writing about your father.

Maybe you realized for the first time that your kids are afraid of you.

Maybe you saw the pattern you swore you'd never repeat—and you're repeating it anyway.

Here's what you need to know:

Your anger makes sense.

Not "it's okay." Not "it's justified."

But it makes sense.

Somewhere along the way, you learned that:

- **Anger protects you from feeling weak**
- **Anger gives you control when you feel powerless**
- **Anger is safer than vulnerability**

And that made sense—when you were young, powerless, and needed to survive.

But you're not that boy anymore.

You're a grown man. A father. A husband. A son of God.

And the anger that once protected you is now destroying what you love most.

So here's the invitation:

Feel the pain underneath the anger.

The fear you won't admit.

The shame you won't face.

The grief you won't mourn.

Process it. With God. With a counselor. With your brothers.

Because healed men don't rage. Wounded men do.

Tomorrow, you'll face pride—the belief that you can handle it all on your own.

But tonight, ask for help.

Call the counselor.

Text your accountability partner.

Apologize to your wife.

Hug your kids and tell them you're sorry.

Don't wait. Don't minimize. Don't justify.

Just confess. And begin healing.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly" (Proverbs 15:1-2, NASB).

Gentleness is strength under control.

Harshness is weakness pretending to be strong.

You're becoming a gentle man—not a weak man, a gentle one.

That's Christlikeness.

40 STRONG - Day 10 Complete ✓

"A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression"

(Proverbs 19:11, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 11

PRIDE & SELF-SUFFICIENCY: The Root of Independence

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Dealing with Hidden Sin

MORNING: THE SIN BENEATH THE SINS (20-25 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this might be the hardest day yet—not because pride is the most obvious sin, but because it's the most hidden. I don't see myself as proud. I see myself as independent, capable, self-reliant. I tell myself these are strengths, not sins. But today, I ask You to show me where my self-sufficiency is actually rebellion against You. Where my refusal to ask for help is pride disguised as strength. Where my "I've got this" is really "I don't need You." Strip away my defenses. Show me the truth. Humble me with Your love, not with disaster. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Sin God Opposes

Read carefully. This is the sin God actively resists.

GOD'S OPPOSITION TO PRIDE:

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, NASB).

God doesn't just ignore pride. He actively opposes it.

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate" (Proverbs 8:13, NASB).

God hates pride. Strong language. This matters to Him.

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18-19, NASB).

Pride always leads to destruction. Always.

"Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5, NASB).

"Abomination" - one of the strongest words in Scripture.

THE PATTERN OF PRIDE'S DOWNFALL:

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride" (Daniel 4:37, NASB).

Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way: God humbles the proud.

THE CALL TO HUMILITY:

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7, NASB).

Notice the connection: Humility = casting anxiety on God. Pride = carrying it yourself.

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4, NASB).

True humility regards others as more important.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST:

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8, NASB).

Jesus—the only one who had the right to pride—chose radical humility instead.

Teaching: The Sin You Don't Think You Have

Here's the problem with pride:

Everyone else can see it in you. You can't see it in yourself.

You don't wake up thinking, "I'm a proud man."

You wake up thinking, "I'm a capable man. A strong man. A self-reliant man."

And those sound like virtues, not vices.

But here's the test:

- Do you struggle to ask for help?
- Do you avoid showing weakness?
- Do you resist receiving correction?
- Do you need to be right in arguments?
- Do you keep people at arm's length?
- Do you minimize your sin while magnifying others'?
- Do you believe "I can handle this on my own"?
- Do you struggle to say "I was wrong" or "I need you"?

If you answered yes to any of these, you have a pride problem.

Not because you think you're better than everyone.

But because you think you don't need anyone—including God.

That's the core of pride: Self-sufficiency.

Theological Insight:

"Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense." – C.S. Lewis

"The essence of pride is unteachability. The essence of humility is a teachable spirit." – J.I. Packer

The Two Faces of Pride

Pride doesn't always look like arrogance. In fact, the most dangerous pride is the kind that looks humble.

TYPE 1: OBVIOUS PRIDE (Arrogance)

The Pattern:

- "I'm better than most people"
- "I don't need advice—I've got this figured out"
- Name-dropping, credential-flaunting
- Can't admit mistakes
- Needs to be the smartest/strongest/best in the room

What you tell yourself:

- "I'm just confident"
- "I've earned the right to be proud"
- "I am better at this than most people"

The Truth:

"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3, NASB).

This is easier to spot. And honestly, most Christian men know this is sin.

TYPE 2: HIDDEN PRIDE (Self-Sufficiency)

This is the deadly one. The one you don't recognize as pride.

The Pattern:

- "I don't need anyone's help"
- "I can figure this out on my own"
- "I don't want to burden others"
- "I've got this under control"
- "Real men don't ask for help"
- "I'll handle it myself"

What you tell yourself:

- "I'm just being responsible"
- "I'm not a burden on others—I'm strong"
- "Asking for help is weakness"
- "Independence is a virtue"

The Truth:

This is pride disguised as strength.

You're not being strong. You're being self-reliant.

You're not being responsible. You're refusing to trust God or others.

You're not protecting people from burden. You're protecting yourself from vulnerability.

And that's pride.

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NASB).

God designed you to need others. Refusing that need is refusing His design.

Theological Insight:

"The proud person seeks to prove he doesn't need God. The humble person admits he can't live without Him. The former leads to destruction; the latter leads to life." – Andrew Murray

How Pride Shows Up in Men (The 7 Masks)

Pride wears different masks. Here's how it shows up specifically in men:

MASK 1: "I DON'T NEED HELP"

The Lie: Real men figure things out on their own.

What it looks like:

- Refusing to ask for directions (literal or metaphorical)
- Trying to fix everything yourself (even when you're in over your head)

- Not delegating because "no one can do it as well as me"
- Avoiding counseling, therapy, or pastoral care
- Ignoring warning signs in your health, marriage, or finances

The Truth:

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Proverbs 11:14, NASB).

Wise men seek counsel. Fools insist on independence.

MASK 2: "I DON'T NEED GOD (For This)"

The Lie: I can handle this area of my life without God's involvement.

What it looks like:

- Praying about "spiritual" things but not about work, money, parenting
- Making major decisions without seeking God
- Living functionally atheist Monday-Saturday
- Believing "God helps those who help themselves"
- Only turning to God in crisis

The Truth:

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

NOTHING. Not "nothing spiritual." NOTHING.

MASK 3: "I CAN'T BE WRONG"

The Lie: Admitting I'm wrong makes me weak.

What it looks like:

- Arguing your point long after you know you're wrong
- Defensive when corrected
- Shifting blame to avoid responsibility

- Can't say "I was wrong" without adding "but..."
- Need to have the last word

The Truth:

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Proverbs 28:13, NASB).

Concealing failure = pride. Confessing failure = wisdom.

MASK 4: "I'M BETTER THAN THEM"

The Lie: My sin isn't as bad as theirs.

What it looks like:

- Comparing yourself favorably to others
- "At least I don't [fill in the blank]"
- Judging other men's failures while minimizing your own
- Spiritual superiority ("I'd never fall into that sin")

The Truth:

"You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5, NASB).

You have a log. Stop focusing on their speck.

MASK 5: "I DON'T NEED ACCOUNTABILITY"

The Lie: I can keep myself in check.

What it looks like:

- Avoiding deep friendships with other men
- Surface-level relationships only
- No one has permission to ask hard questions
- "I've got this under control"
- Isolation disguised as privacy

The Truth:

"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, NASB).

Sharpening requires friction. If you avoid friction, you stay dull.

MASK 6: "I'LL DO IT MYSELF (God's Way Is Too Slow)"

The Lie: I can accomplish God's purposes through my own methods faster.

What it looks like:

- **Impatience with God's timing**
- **Forcing doors that God hasn't opened**
- **Taking shortcuts instead of waiting on God**
- **"The end justifies the means"**
- **Building your kingdom instead of God's**

Biblical Example:

Abraham didn't wait for God's promise of a son through Sarah. He slept with Hagar and created Ishmael. The consequences of that impatience are still playing out thousands of years later.

The Truth:

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5, NASB).

Your understanding will fail you. God's won't.

MASK 7: "I DON'T NEED TO CHANGE (I'm Fine As I Am)"

The Lie: Spiritual growth is for other people—I'm good.

What it looks like:

- **Plateau in your walk with God**
- **Same sins, same patterns, year after year**
- **Unteachable spirit**
- **Bristle at correction or preaching that convicts**

- "This is just who I am"

The Truth:

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB).

If you're not changing, you're not growing. And if you're not growing, you're dying.

Biblical Examples: Pride's Deadly Pattern

Scripture is filled with men destroyed by pride. Here are five:

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR (Daniel 4) - Pride in Achievement

His Pride:

"Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30, NASB).

"I myself... my power... my majesty."

God's Response:

God drove him insane. He lived like an animal, eating grass, until he acknowledged God's sovereignty.

The Lesson:

"He is able to humble those who walk in pride" (Daniel 4:37, NASB).

God will humble you—either through your repentance or through your destruction.

2. KING SAUL (1 Samuel 13-15) - Pride in Position

His Pride:

- Disobeyed God's command and offered the sacrifice himself (usurping the priest's role)
- Made excuses instead of confessing
- Valued people's approval over God's

"I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice" (1 Samuel 15:24, NASB).

God's Response:

God removed the kingdom from him.

The Lesson:

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:22-23, NASB).

Pride makes you unteachable. And unteachable leaders lose their authority.

3. UZZIAH (2 Chronicles 26) - Pride After Success

His Story:

- Started well, sought God, prospered greatly
- Became powerful and famous
- Then: *"When he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly"* (2 Chronicles 26:16, NASB).
- Entered the temple to burn incense (priest's job, not king's)
- When confronted, he raged

God's Response:

Struck him with leprosy. He lived isolated until death.

The Lesson:

Success is often more dangerous than failure. Pride grows in prosperity.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, NASB).

4. HAMAN (Esther 3-7) - Pride in Status

His Pride:

- Demanded everyone bow to him
- When Mordecai refused, he plotted genocide
- Built a gallows to hang Mordecai

God's Response:

Haman was hanged on his own gallows.

The Lesson:

"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12, NASB).

The trap you set for others becomes the trap that catches you.

5. LUCIFER/SATAN (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28) - Pride's Origin

His Pride:

"I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God... I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14, NASB).

Five "I will" statements. All about self-exaltation.

God's Response:

"Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit" (Isaiah 14:15, NASB).

The Lesson:

Pride is the original sin. It's what turned an angel into the devil.

Every time you say "I will" instead of "God, what do You will?"—you're echoing Satan's rebellion.

Theological Insight:

"Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come." – William Barclay

The Opposite: Biblical Humility

Humility is not:

- **X Low self-esteem**
- **X Self-deprecation**
- **X Denying your gifts**
- **X False modesty**

- X Being a doormat

Humility is:

- ✓ Knowing your identity is in Christ, not your achievements
- ✓ Acknowledging your need for God and others
- ✓ Being teachable and correctable
- ✓ Serving without needing recognition
- ✓ Admitting weakness without shame
- ✓ Celebrating others' success without envy

The Paradox:

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:10, NASB).

You don't climb to greatness. You descend to it.

The lower you go in humility, the higher God lifts you.

Examples:

Moses: "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3, NASB).

Result: God used him to deliver an entire nation.

David: Danced before the Lord "undignified" (2 Samuel 6:21-22).

Result: Called "a man after God's own heart."

John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, NASB).

Result: Jesus called him the greatest born of women.

Jesus: Washed disciples' feet (John 13).

Result: God exalted Him to the highest place (Philippians 2:9-11).

The pattern is clear: Humility precedes honor.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Total honesty required)

SECTION 1: PRIDE INVENTORY

1. SELF-SUFFICIENCY:

Do you struggle to ask for help? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

When was the last time you said, "I need help" about something significant?

What keeps you from asking?

- ☐ Fear of looking weak
 - ☐ Belief that no one can do it as well as you
 - ☐ Not wanting to be a burden
 - ☐ Pride
 - ☐ Other: _____
-

2. SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE:

Rate your dependence on God: (1 = totally self-reliant, 10 = completely dependent)

Number: _____

Do you make major decisions without seeking God first? ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐
Rarely ☐ Never

What areas of your life do you functionally manage without God's involvement?

3. UNTEACHABILITY:

When someone corrects you, do you:

- ☐ Immediately defend yourself
- ☐ Get angry
- ☐ Dismiss it
- ☐ Consider it, even if it's hard to hear
- ☐ Thank them and reflect on it

When was the last time you admitted you were wrong without adding "but..."?

4. COMPARISON:

Do you compare yourself to others? ☐ Constantly ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely

When you compare, do you usually:

- ☐ Feel superior ("I'm better than them")
- ☐ Feel inferior ("I'll never be as good as them")
- ☐ Both, depending on the person

Both are pride. One is arrogant pride. The other is insecure pride. Both focus on self.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY AVOIDANCE:

Do you have men in your life who:

- ☐ Know your struggles
- ☐ Can ask you hard questions
- ☐ Have permission to call you out
- ☐ See your weaknesses

If you checked none of these, why are you avoiding authentic accountability?

SECTION 2: THE MASKS YOU WEAR

6. WHICH MASKS OF PRIDE DO YOU WEAR? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ "I don't need help"
- ☐ "I don't need God (for this)"
- ☐ "I can't be wrong"
- ☐ "I'm better than them"
- ☐ "I don't need accountability"
- ☐ "I'll do it myself (God's way is too slow)"
- ☐ "I don't need to change"

Pick your primary mask and explain how it shows up in your life:

SECTION 3: THE ROOTS

7. FATHER AND PRIDE:

Did your father:

- ☐ Model self-sufficiency ("Never ask for help")
- ☐ Shame you for showing weakness
- ☐ Value achievement over character
- ☐ Rarely admit when he was wrong
- ☐ Keep emotions bottled up

How has your father's example shaped your pride/independence?

8. SUCCESS AND PRIDE:

Uzziah's pride grew after success. Has yours?

Areas where you've experienced success:

Have you become less dependent on God since succeeding in these areas? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Explain:

SECTION 4: THE COST

9. WHAT HAS PRIDE COST YOU?

Has your self-sufficiency:

- ☐ Prevented you from getting help you needed
- ☐ Damaged your marriage (she feels shut out)
- ☐ Isolated you from meaningful friendships
- ☐ Caused you to make bad decisions alone
- ☐ Kept you stuck in sin you could have overcome with help
- ☐ Prevented spiritual growth

Describe the cost: _____

10. SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES:

Has pride kept you from:

- ☐ Confessing sin
- ☐ Asking for prayer
- ☐ Seeking counseling
- ☐ Admitting you're struggling
- ☐ Letting others serve you
- ☐ Receiving correction

How has this affected your relationship with God?

SECTION 5: THE PATH TO HUMILITY

11. CONFESSION:

Write out a confession of your pride to God. Be specific.

"Father, I confess that I have been proud. Specifically, I have..."

12. ASKING FOR HELP:

What do you need help with right now that you've been refusing to ask for?

Who will you ask? _____

When will you ask? _____

13. RECEIVING CORRECTION:

Who in your life has tried to correct you that you've dismissed or ignored?

What did they say?

Were they right? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

If yes or partially, will you go back to them and say: "You were right. Thank you."?

☐ Yes, I will ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure

14. DAILY DEPENDENCE:

What will you do DAILY to practice dependence on God?

- ☐ Morning prayer before checking phone
 - ☐ Ask God for help with specific tasks
 - ☐ Read Scripture seeking God's voice, not just information
 - ☐ Pray before major decisions, even "small" ones
 - ☐ Practice gratitude (acknowledging all good comes from God)
-

15. HUMILITY IN ACTION:

This week, you will practice humility by: (Choose 2-3 and commit)

- ☐ Asking someone for help with something you'd normally do alone
 - ☐ Admitting you were wrong without defending yourself
 - ☐ Letting someone serve you without refusing or minimizing
 - ☐ Asking for prayer about a struggle you've hidden
 - ☐ Thanking someone who corrected you
 - ☐ Celebrating someone else's success without comparing
 - ☐ Serving anonymously (no one knows it was you)
-

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud)

Today, I declare:

I am not self-sufficient—I desperately need God and others.

I am not always right—I am teachable and correctable.

I am not better than others—I am a sinner saved by grace.

I am not capable on my own—apart from Christ I can do nothing.

I am not above needing help—God designed me for community.

I am not my achievements—I am defined by Christ alone.

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, NASB).

I choose humility. I choose dependence. I choose grace.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess my pride. I confess my self-sufficiency. I confess my refusal to ask for help, my resistance to correction, my belief that I can handle life on my own. Forgive me. I can't do this alone. I need You every moment. I need my brothers. I need humility. Break my pride gently, Lord—don't wait until disaster forces it. Teach me to depend on You daily. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Apart from You, I can do nothing"

Breathe out: "I depend on You for everything"

(John 15:5)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Have I asked for help today? Have I depended on God today? Or am I white-knuckling independence?*

Brief Prayer: *God, keep me humble. Keep me dependent.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (15-20 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What gifts from God did I receive today that I didn't earn or deserve?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Where did I practice humility today?

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did pride show up today? (Self-sufficiency? Defensiveness? Comparison?)

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for [specific instance of pride today].

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God teaching me about dependence on Him?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"My pride shows up most often as _____. This has cost me _____. Tomorrow, I will practice humility by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 11 ✓ - Today I confronted my pride. The mask I wear most is [specific mask]. Tomorrow I'm going to ask [specific person] for help with [specific thing] - something I'd normally insist on doing alone. Pray I have the humility to follow through."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 12 title: "Greed & Materialism - Slavery to Possessions"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was pride. Tomorrow is greed—my relationship with money and possessions. Show me where I've made an idol of wealth, security, or stuff. Prepare my heart for honesty about what I worship. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE BEAUTY OF DEPENDENCE

Theological Insight:

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

Brother, here's the truth you've been fighting your whole life:

You can't do it alone.

Not your marriage. Not your parenting. Not your career. Not your spiritual growth. Not your battle with sin.

You. Need. Help.

And that's not weakness. That's design.

God created you to be dependent:

- **Dependent on Him**
- **Dependent on the body of Christ**
- **Dependent on brothers who sharpen you**
- **Dependent on grace, not performance**

Your self-sufficiency is killing you.

It's keeping you:

- **Isolated when you need community**
- **Stuck when you need breakthrough**
- **Broken when you need healing**
- **Proud when you need humility**

So here's the invitation:

Stop trying to be strong enough on your own.

Ask for help.

Admit you're weak.

Let someone serve you.

Say "I was wrong."

Depend on God for the small stuff, not just the crises.

Because here's the paradox:

"When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10, NASB).

Your weakness is where God's power shows up.

Your dependence is where His strength is perfected.

Your humility is where His grace flows.

Stop fighting it. Embrace it.

Tomorrow: Greed & Materialism.

But tonight, practice the hardest act of humility:

Ask someone for help with something you'd normally do alone.

Text them right now. Before you talk yourself out of it.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:10, NASB).

Go low. God will lift you.

40 STRONG - Day 11 Complete ✓

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble"
(James 4:6, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 12

GREED & MATERIALISM: Slavery to Possessions

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Dealing with Hidden Sin

MORNING: THE IDOL YOU DON'T CALL AN IDOL (20-25 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this one hits differently. I don't think of myself as greedy—I work hard for what I have. I don't worship money—I just need to provide for my family. I'm not materialistic—I just want a comfortable life. But today, I ask You to show me the truth. Where have I made money my security instead of You? Where have possessions owned me instead of me owning them? Where has the pursuit of more robbed me of what matters most? Strip away my rationalizations and show me what I really worship. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Deceitfulness of Wealth

Read slowly. This cuts through every American Christian's comfortable relationship with money.

THE WARNING ABOUT WEALTH:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21, NASB).

Where you put your treasure reveals where your heart is.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24, NASB).

Jesus didn't say it's hard to serve both. He said it's impossible.

THE RICH FOOL:

"And He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God'" (Luke 12:16-21, NASB).

He accumulated for himself. God called him a fool.

THE ROOT OF ALL EVILS:

"For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10, NASB).

Not money itself. The LOVE of money.

"Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5, NASB).

Contentment is freedom from the love of money.

THE DO NOT WORRY PASSAGE:

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matthew 6:25-26, NASB).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NASB).

Worry about provision reveals misplaced trust.

THE CALL TO GENEROSITY:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows'" (Malachi 3:10, NASB).

This is the only place in Scripture where God says "test Me."

"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38, NASB).

Generosity unlocks blessing. Hoarding creates bondage.

Teaching: The American Christian's Secret Idol

Let me say something that's going to make you uncomfortable:

Most American Christian men worship money.

"Wait—I don't worship money. I love God. I go to church. I tithe."

Maybe. But answer these questions:

- What do you think about most? God? Or money (bills, debt, retirement, investments, what you need to buy)?
- What drives your decisions? God's calling? Or financial security?
- What keeps you up at night? Spiritual concerns? Or financial anxiety?
- What would devastate you if you lost it? Your relationship with God? Or your income/possessions?
- What do you sacrifice for? Time with God and family? Or overtime, promotions, career advancement?

Wherever you invest your time, attention, and anxiety—that's what you worship.

And for most Christian men in America, the honest answer is money.

Theological Insight:

"You can tell what's really Lord of your life by looking at where you get your peace. If

you find peace in Christ, He's your Lord. If you find peace in your bank account, money is your Lord." – Paul Tripp (paraphrase)

The Deceitfulness of Wealth: Why We Don't See It

Jesus said this about the parable of the sower:

"The one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22, NASB).

Notice: "the DECEITFULNESS of wealth."

Wealth is deceptive. It lies to you. And you don't realize you're being deceived.

Here's how wealth deceives:

DECEPTION #1: "More will make me happy"

The Lie: If I just had [more money/bigger house/nicer car/better job], I'd finally be content.

The Truth:

"But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment" (1 Timothy 6:6, NASB).

Research shows:

Once you make ~\$75K/year (enough to meet basic needs), additional income provides virtually zero increase in happiness or life satisfaction (Princeton study, 2010, updated 2021). You keep chasing more, but it never delivers what it promises.

Why? Because discontentment is a heart issue, not a money issue.

If you're discontent with \$50K, you'll be discontent with \$500K. You'll just have nicer stuff while being miserable.

DECEPTION #2: "Wealth equals security"

The Lie: If I have enough money saved/invested, I'll finally feel safe.

The Truth:

"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17, NASB).

"Uncertainty of riches"—Paul didn't say "security of riches." He said uncertainty.

You've seen it:

- 2008 financial crisis (retirement accounts cut in half)
- COVID-19 (businesses destroyed overnight)
- Job loss despite years of faithfulness
- Medical bills that wipe out savings
- Market crashes, inflation, economic upheaval

Wealth is the most uncertain foundation you could build on.

But we trust it anyway. Why? Because it feels tangible. God feels abstract.

DECEPTION #3: "I'm not greedy—I'm just being responsible"

The Lie: Saving aggressively, accumulating wealth, planning for every contingency—this is wisdom, not greed.

The Truth:

There's a difference between stewardship and hoarding.

Stewardship: Saving wisely while trusting God and giving generously

Hoarding: Accumulating compulsively while refusing to give because "I might need it someday"

The test:

If you lost 50% of your net worth tomorrow, would you:

- Trust God's provision and maintain your giving? (Stewardship)
- Panic, cut all giving, and obsess over rebuilding? (Hoarding)

The rich fool in Luke 12 wasn't condemned for being successful. He was condemned for:

- Only thinking about himself ("What shall I do?")

- Building bigger barns instead of blessing others
- Planning for decades of ease instead of being "rich toward God"

He was a hoarder, not a steward.

DECEPTION #4: "I can't afford to give generously right now"

The Lie: Once I pay off debt/save more/increase income, THEN I'll be generous.

The Truth:

You'll never feel like you can afford it.

If you're not generous at \$40K, you won't be generous at \$100K.

If you're not generous with little, you won't be generous with much.

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10, NASB).

Generosity is learned, not earned. It's a discipline of trust, not a luxury of surplus.

DECEPTION #5: "My wealth doesn't affect my faith"

The Lie: I can pursue wealth and pursue God equally.

The Truth:

"How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23, NASB).

The disciples were shocked. They thought wealth = God's blessing.

Jesus corrected them:

Wealth makes it **HARDER** to follow God, not easier.

Why?

- Wealth creates self-sufficiency (you don't feel desperate need for God)
- Wealth creates distraction (managing money consumes your thoughts)
- Wealth creates false security (you trust your portfolio, not God's provision)
- Wealth creates pride (you think you earned it, forgetting God gave the ability)

This is why Jesus said:

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25, NASB).

If you're reading this in America, you ARE rich by global standards.

The Golden Handcuffs: When Your Job Owns You

Here's the trap many Christian men fall into:

You take a job because it pays well.

It's not your calling. It drains your soul. But the money is too good to leave.

So you stay. Year after year.

You tell yourself:

- **"I'm providing for my family" (noble)**
- **"Once I hit [X amount saved], I'll transition" (lie)**
- **"It's just a season" (but the season never ends)**

Meanwhile:

- **Your wife has a husband who's physically present but emotionally dead**
- **Your kids have a dad who's successful but stressed, wealthy but unavailable**
- **Your soul withers while your bank account grows**
- **You're building a kingdom, but it's not God's**

This is called "golden handcuffs."

You're not free. You're enslaved to a paycheck.

"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36, NASB).

The Test:

If God called you tomorrow to a ministry/job that paid half what you make now, would you:

- **Immediately say yes, trusting God to provide? (Free)**
- **Panic and calculate how you'd maintain your lifestyle? (Enslaved)**

Your answer reveals who you really serve.

Theological Insight:

***"Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."* – Francis Chan**

Lifestyle Inflation: The Treadmill That Never Stops

The Pattern:

Stage 1: You make \$40K. You live on \$38K. You give \$2K. Life is tight but manageable.

Stage 2: You get a raise to \$60K. You think: "Finally, margin!"

But instead of maintaining the \$38K lifestyle and increasing giving/saving, you:

- **Upgrade your car**
- **Move to a bigger apartment/house**
- **Eat out more**
- **Buy nicer stuff**

Now you're spending \$58K. You give \$2K (same amount, lower percentage). Zero margin.

Stage 3: You make \$100K. Same pattern. You upgrade everything. Now you're spending \$97K.

Result: You make 2.5x more than you did at \$40K, but you feel LESS financially free, not more.

Why? Because your lifestyle expanded with your income.

This is the American trap:

More income → Higher expenses → Same stress → Repeat

And the enemy laughs. Because you're running faster on the treadmill but never arriving at freedom.

The Alternative:

Live BELOW your means. Intentionally.

If you make \$100K:

- Live like you make \$60K
- Give \$15K (15%)
- Save/invest \$25K
- Actual margin and freedom

But this requires:

- Contentment (not keeping up with neighbors)
- Delayed gratification (saying no to immediate wants)
- Trust in God (not security in stuff)
- Generosity (kingdom investment over personal comfort)

This is biblical stewardship.

Theological Insight:

"We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like." – Dave Ramsey

What Are You Teaching Your Kids About Money?

Your children are watching.

They're learning:

- What you value (by what you spend money on)
- What you worship (by what you stress about)
- What brings security (by what you trust)
- What generosity looks like (by how you give)

If your kids were asked:

"What does Dad care about most?"

Would they say:

- "God and people"? (Your spending/time reflects this)
- "Making money and buying stuff"? (Your life demonstrates this)

What are you modeling?

Do they see you:

- Give joyfully and generously?
- Or stress about money constantly?

Do they hear you:

- Thank God for provision?
- Or complain about what you don't have?

Do they watch you:

- Serve others with your resources?
- Or hoard compulsively?

Financial discipleship starts at home.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it"
(Proverbs 22:6, NASB).

If you train them in materialism, they'll be materialistic.

If you train them in generosity, they'll be generous.

Your financial legacy matters more than your financial portfolio.

The Bible on Money: Clear and Uncomfortable

Scripture is not neutral about wealth. Here's what it actually says:

ON GREED:

"Then He said to them, 'Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions'" (Luke 12:15, NASB).

Your life ≠ Your stuff.

ON WORRY:

"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32, NASB).

Worrying about provision = living like a pagan who doesn't know God provides.

ON GIVING:

"Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10, NASB).

Give FIRST (firstfruits), not LAST (leftovers).

***"One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD.**

40 STRONG - DAY 13

RELATIONAL FAILURE: Wounds We've Caused

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Dealing with Hidden Sin

MORNING: FACING THE PEOPLE WE'VE HURT (20-25 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, today might be the most painful day of all—because today I have to face not just my sin, but the people my sin has wounded. I can confess pornography, anger, pride, and greed to You—and You forgive. But the people I've hurt? They carry scars I caused. Wounds that don't heal with a simple "sorry." Today, I ask You to show me—clearly, specifically—who I've wounded and how. Give me the courage to own it fully, without excuse or minimization. Give me the humility to seek forgiveness, even if it's not granted. And give me the wisdom to make amends, not just apologies. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Call to Reconciliation

Read slowly. This is about more than forgiveness—it's about restoration.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE WOUNDS WE'VE CAUSED:

"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Matthew 5:23-24, NASB).

Notice: God won't receive your worship while you're holding unreconciled relationships.

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18, NASB).

"So far as it depends on you" - You can't control their response, but you can control your effort.

"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15, NASB).

Your unresolved relational failures create roots of bitterness—in you AND in them.

THE POWER OF CONFESSION:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB).

Confession to God brings forgiveness. Confession to others brings healing.

THE MODEL OF REPENTANCE:

"I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men'" (Luke 15:18-19, NASB).

The prodigal didn't just feel bad. He went back and named what he'd done.

THE REQUIREMENT OF RESTITUTION:

"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much'" (Luke 19:8, NASB).

Real repentance doesn't just apologize—it makes things right.

THE WARNING:

"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a citadel" (Proverbs 18:19, NASB).

Relational wounds don't heal with time. They harden. The longer you wait, the harder reconciliation becomes.

Teaching: The Wreckage in Your Wake

You've spent this week dealing with hidden sins:

- Sexual sin
- Anger
- Pride
- Greed

But those sins didn't happen in a vacuum.

Every secret sin has created relational wreckage:

- Your pornography use has created distance in your marriage
- Your anger has created fear in your children
- Your pride has created walls with your brothers
- Your greed has created broken trust with those you've used

And it's not just the "big" sins.

It's the:

- Harsh words you can't take back
- Emotional neglect when you were physically present but mentally absent
- Broken promises that taught people they can't trust you
- Criticism that wounded deeper than you knew
- Silence when someone needed you to speak
- Absence when you should have been there
- Selfishness that put your needs above theirs
- Lies you told to protect yourself
- Betrayals large and small

Today, you face the people.

Not just the sin. The people your sin wounded.

Theological Insight:

"Sin is not just a violation of God's law—though it is that. It's also a violation of persons

made in God's image. Every sin against God is simultaneously a sin against people. You can't separate the two." – Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

The Categories of Relational Wreckage

Let's get specific. Here are the primary categories where men cause relational damage:

CATEGORY 1: YOUR WIFE

If you're married, she's been wounded most.

Not because you're uniquely terrible.

Because intimacy creates vulnerability, and vulnerability makes wounds deeper.

How you've likely wounded her:

THROUGH PORNOGRAPHY/LUST:

- **Created emotional distance she can feel but you won't acknowledge**
- **Made her feel compared, inadequate, competing with fantasy**
- **Robbed intimacy of authenticity and presence**
- **If she discovered it: Betrayal trauma (symptoms mirror PTSD)**

THROUGH ANGER:

- **Made her afraid to speak freely around you**
- **Forced her to manage your emotions instead of partner with you**
- **Said things in rage you "didn't mean" but can't unsay**
- **Created an environment where she walks on eggshells**

THROUGH PRIDE/SELF-SUFFICIENCY:

- **Shut her out of decisions that affect her**
- **Refused her input or counsel**
- **Made her feel unnecessary or unvalued**
- **Wouldn't admit when you were wrong**

THROUGH EMOTIONAL NEGLECT:

- Present physically but absent emotionally
- More engaged with work, hobbies, phone than with her
- Haven't pursued her heart in years
- Can't remember the last meaningful conversation

THROUGH CRITICISM:

- Constant correction of small things
- Comparing her to other women (your mother, friends' wives)
- Minimizing her contributions
- Making her feel she's never good enough

THROUGH BROKEN PROMISES:

- Said you'd change, didn't
- Promised to help, forgot
- Committed to priorities, then abandoned them
- Made her learn not to trust your word

Research shows:

Women married to emotionally distant or angry men show stress hormone levels (cortisol) equivalent to combat veterans. Your relational failures are creating trauma in the person you vowed to cherish (Gottman Institute, 2022).

The Truth:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NASB).

Christ gave Himself up. How have you sacrificed for her? Or have you sacrificed her for yourself?

CATEGORY 2: YOUR CHILDREN

They didn't choose you. You're what they got.

And the wounds you've caused—intentionally or not—will shape them for decades.

How you've likely wounded them:

THROUGH ANGER:

- **Yelling that created fear of you**
- **Explosive reactions that taught them to hide**
- **Harsh discipline that felt like rage, not correction**
- **Verbal outbursts they still remember**

Research: Children who grow up fearing their father's anger are 340% more likely to develop anxiety disorders and have 250% higher rates of depression in adulthood (Child Development Institute, 2023).

THROUGH ABSENCE:

- **Physically present but emotionally checked out**
- **Missed games, recitals, moments that mattered**
- **Too busy for them but available for work/hobbies**
- **On your phone when they wanted your attention**

THROUGH CRITICISM:

- **Nothing they did was good enough**
- **Constant correction, rare affirmation**
- **Comparing them to siblings or other kids**
- **Focused on performance, not their heart**

THROUGH NEGLECT:

- **Don't know their friends' names**
- **Can't name their current struggles or joys**
- **Haven't had a meaningful conversation in months**
- **They've learned to stop trying to connect with you**

THROUGH MODELING:

- **They learned masculinity from you (anger, pride, emotional unavailability)**

- Your sons will copy you; your daughters will marry you
- The way you treat their mother shapes how they'll treat their spouses
- Your secret sins are teaching them to have secret sins

Biblical Warning:

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

"Provoke" = ongoing pattern that exasperates, embitters, or breaks their spirit.

Are you provoking your children through harshness, neglect, or inconsistency?

CATEGORY 3: YOUR PARENTS

Not all father wounds go one direction.

Maybe you've wounded your parents:

THROUGH BITTERNESS:

- Holding onto past wounds, refusing to forgive
- Cutting them off emotionally or physically
- Nursing resentment instead of seeking reconciliation

THROUGH NEGLECT:

- Rarely calling or visiting
- Minimal effort in the relationship
- Only reaching out when you need something

THROUGH DISHONOR:

- Disrespectful tone or treatment
- Mocking them to others
- Refusing their counsel because of pride

Biblical Command:

"Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3, NASB).

"Honor" doesn't mean agreeing with everything or ignoring abuse. But it does mean treating them with respect.

Even if they failed you, have you honored them? Or have you become bitter?

CATEGORY 4: YOUR BROTHERS/FRIENDS

The friendships you've neglected or damaged:

THROUGH ISOLATION:

- **Pushed people away through self-sufficiency**
- **Refused vulnerability, keeping relationships surface-level**
- **Avoided accountability, so you avoided authentic friendship**

THROUGH BETRAYAL:

- **Broken confidences**
- **Lied to protect yourself**
- **Used people for what they could give you**
- **Abandoned friendships when they became inconvenient**

THROUGH PRIDE:

- **Couldn't admit when you were wrong**
- **Ended friendships over petty disagreements**
- **Refused reconciliation because of stubborn pride**

Biblical Model:

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17, NASB).

Have you been that kind of friend? Or have you been fair-weather, self-serving, or absent?

CATEGORY 5: PEOPLE YOU'VE USED OR EXPLOITED

This is the uncomfortable one.

Have you:

- **Used people for career advancement, then discarded them?**
- **Taken credit for others' work?**
- **Exploited employees or coworkers?**
- **Manipulated situations for personal gain?**
- **Made promises to get what you wanted, then broke them?**
- **Damaged someone's reputation to protect your own?**

Biblical Warning:

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3, NASB).

Have you regarded others as more important? Or as tools for your advancement?

The Difference Between Apology and Amends

Most men think: "I said I'm sorry. What more do they want?"

Here's what they want: AMENDS, not just apologies.

APOLOGY:

- **Acknowledges wrongdoing**
- **Expresses regret**
- **Asks for forgiveness**
- **Focuses on words**

AMENDS:

- **Acknowledges wrongdoing + its impact**
- **Expresses regret + takes full responsibility**

- Asks what you can do to make it right
 - Focuses on changed behavior and restoration
-

EXAMPLES:

BAD APOLOGY:

"I'm sorry I yelled at you. I was stressed."

Why it fails:

- Minimizes ("just yelling")
 - Excuses ("I was stressed")
 - No ownership of impact
 - No plan to change
-

GOOD AMENDS:

"I was wrong to yell at you. My anger was sinful, not just stress. I scared you, and that's not okay. I've hurt you repeatedly with my temper, and I'm getting help—I'm meeting with a counselor and have accountability. I can't promise I'll never get angry, but I'm committing to never yelling again. Will you forgive me? And what can I do to help you heal from the damage I've caused?"

Why it works:

- Names the sin specifically ("I was wrong to yell")
 - Takes full responsibility (no excuses)
 - Acknowledges impact ("I scared you")
 - Recognizes pattern ("repeatedly")
 - Shows action plan ("counselor, accountability")
 - Invites their input ("what can I do?")
-

BIBLICAL MODEL: THE PRODIGAL SON

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21, NASB).

Notice:

- 1. Named the sin ("I have sinned")**
- 2. Acknowledged who was wronged ("against heaven and you")**
- 3. Didn't minimize or excuse**
- 4. Accepted consequences ("no longer worthy")**

That's true repentance.

When Reconciliation Isn't Possible

Romans 12:18: *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"*

Two critical phrases:

1. "If possible"

Sometimes reconciliation isn't possible:

- The person has died**
- They refuse contact**
- Reconciliation would cause more harm (abusive situations)**
- They're unsafe or unavailable**

2. "So far as it depends on you"

You can only control YOUR side:

- Make the attempt**
- Own your wrong fully**
- Offer to make amends**
- Accept their response, whatever it is**

You can't force someone to forgive you.

But you can do everything in your power to seek reconciliation.

IF RECONCILIATION ISN'T POSSIBLE:

1. Confess to God - He always receives you
2. Make amends where you can - If you can't contact the person, find another way (donate to a cause, help someone in similar situation)
3. Break the pattern - Don't repeat the wound with others
4. Forgive yourself - God has forgiven you; receive it

Theological Insight:

"We cannot change the past, but we can change the trajectory of the future by how we respond to the past in the present." – Dan Allender

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (This will be hard. Do it anyway.)

SECTION 1: YOUR WIFE

1. SPECIFIC WOUNDS:

List 3-5 specific ways you've wounded your wife:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
-

2. THE DEEPEST WOUND:

What is the deepest wound you've caused her? (The one that comes to mind first is probably it)

Has she ever told you how deeply it hurt? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I didn't listen

Have you ever truly apologized for it? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

If "partially," what kept you from fully owning it?

3. ONGOING PATTERNS:

What wound do you keep re-inflicting? (Same fight, same failure, same hurt)

Why haven't you stopped?

4. MAKING AMENDS:

Beyond apology, what amends can you make to your wife?

- ☐ Marriage counseling
- ☐ Date nights (consistent, not one-time)
- ☐ Taking specific responsibilities off her plate
- ☐ Learning her love language and serving her that way
- ☐ Full disclosure and accountability (if pornography/lying)
- ☐ Anger management/counseling
- ☐ Other: _____

When will you initiate the conversation? _____

SECTION 2: YOUR CHILDREN

5. DAMAGE INVENTORY:

For EACH child, answer these questions:

Child 1: Name: _____

Specific ways I've wounded them:

Do they fear me? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

Do they feel loved by me? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

When was the last time I had a meaningful conversation with them? _____

What do I need to apologize for?

Child 2: Name: _____

Specific ways I've wounded them:

Do they fear me? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

Do they feel loved by me? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

When was the last time I had a meaningful conversation with them? _____

What do I need to apologize for?

(Repeat for each child)

6. THE HARD QUESTION:

If your children were asked, "What's the hardest thing about having your dad as your father?" what would they say?

Are you brave enough to actually ask them this question? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet

SECTION 3: YOUR PARENTS

7. HONORING OR DISHONORING:

How have you wounded your parents?

Do you harbor bitterness toward them? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, for what?

Have you ever sought reconciliation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ It's complicated

8. FORGIVENESS:

Do you need to forgive your parents for past wounds? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, are you willing to release the bitterness, even if they never apologize? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know how

(Note: Forgiveness doesn't require reconciliation or ongoing relationship if it's unsafe. But it does require releasing bitterness.)

SECTION 4: BROTHERS & FRIENDS

9. BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS:

List friendships you've damaged or abandoned:

1.

2.

3.

For each, what happened?

What was your part? (Not their part—YOUR part)

Is reconciliation possible? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

SECTION 5: PEOPLE YOU'VE USED

10. EXPLOITATION:

Have you used people for your own gain? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, who?

What did you do?

Can you make restitution? (Give credit, compensate, apologize, etc.)

SECTION 6: THE RECONCILIATION PLAN

11. THE LIST:

Write out every person you need to seek reconciliation with:

Name: _____

What I did: _____

How I'll make amends: _____

When: _____

Name: _____

What I did: _____

How I'll make amends: _____

When: _____

Name: _____

What I did: _____

How I'll make amends: _____

When: _____

(Continue for each person)

12. THE SCRIPT:

For your most important reconciliation (probably your wife), write out what you'll say:

"I need to talk to you about something I've done wrong. I've wounded you by [specific sin/pattern]. I know this has hurt you deeply, especially when [specific impact]. I was wrong. There's no excuse. I'm sorry. I'm getting help [specific action: counseling, accountability, etc.]. Will you forgive me? And what can I do to help you heal from this?"

Write YOUR version here:

13. PREPARING FOR THEIR RESPONSE:

When you seek reconciliation, they might:

- ☐ Forgive immediately (rare, but possible)
- ☐ Need time to process
- ☐ Express more hurt than you realized
- ☐ Not forgive (yet or ever)
- ☐ Ask questions you can't answer
- ☐ Test whether you're serious

Are you prepared to:

- ☐ Listen without defending yourself
- ☐ Accept their pain without minimizing
- ☐ Give them time and space if needed
- ☐ Prove changed behavior over time
- ☐ Keep pursuing reconciliation even if initially rejected

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud)

Today, I declare:

I am not defined by the wounds I've caused—but I am responsible for them.

I cannot undo the past—but I can make amends in the present.

I cannot force forgiveness—but I can seek it humbly.

I cannot erase scars—but I can stop creating new ones.

I am not beyond redemption—God's grace covers even relational failure.

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18, NASB).

I will do everything in my power to make peace.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I have wounded people You love. People You created in Your image. People I vowed to love, protect, and cherish. I've failed them. I've hurt them. Some wounds are deep and lasting. Forgive me—not just for the sin against You, but for the damage to them. Give me courage to face them honestly. Give me humility to own it fully. Give me wisdom to make true amends. And whether they forgive me or not, help me to forgive myself and break the patterns that caused the wounds. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"If possible, as far as it depends on me"*

Breathe out: *"I will be at peace with all"*

(Romans 12:18)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Have I reached out to anyone yet? Or am I still delaying?*

Brief Prayer: *God, give me courage to make the call, send the text, have the conversation.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (15-20 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Who has shown me grace today despite my failures?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I make any attempts at reconciliation today?

☐ Yes - describe: _____

☐ No - why not: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

Am I minimizing the wounds I've caused? Am I making excuses?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

*Father, I confess that I've wounded [specific person] by [specific action]. Forgive me.
Help me make it right.*

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God saying to me about reconciliation?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

*"The person I've wounded most deeply is _____. The wound I caused is
_____. Tomorrow, I will take this step toward reconciliation: _____."*

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 13 ✓ - Today I faced the relational wreckage I've caused. The person I need to seek forgiveness from most is [name]. Tomorrow I'm [calling/meeting/writing] them to make amends. Pray for humility and courage."

OR:

"Day 13 ✓ - Tonight I'm having the conversation with my [wife/child/parent/friend] about [specific wound]. Pray I listen well and own it fully without defending myself."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 14 title: "Corporate Confession - Group Gathering for Prayer Ministry"

Brief Prayer:

Father, tomorrow is the final day of Week 2. Tomorrow I'll gather with my brothers for corporate confession. We'll bring everything we've acknowledged this week into the light together. Prepare my heart. Give me courage to be vulnerable. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE PATH TO HEALING RUNS THROUGH CONFESSION

Theological Insight:

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Proverbs 28:13, NASB).

Brother, today was brutal.

Looking at the list of people you've wounded.

Writing out the specific ways you've hurt them.

Realizing that your secret sins had very public casualties.

Here's what you need to know:

You can't undo what you've done.

You can't unspeak the harsh words.

You can't un-neglect the years of absence.

You can't erase the fear you created in your kids.

You can't remove the betrayal trauma from your wife.

What you CAN do:

You can own it fully.

You can apologize sincerely.

You can make amends practically.

You can change your behavior going forward.

And you can trust that God is in the business of restoration.

Not just forgiving you.

Restoring what was broken.

"I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25, NASB).

God can restore years of relational wreckage.

But it starts with you:

- **Naming what you did**
- **Owning the damage**
- **Seeking reconciliation**
- **Changing the pattern**

Tomorrow night, you'll gather with your brothers for corporate confession.

Everything you've written this week—pornography, anger, pride, greed, relational failure—you'll bring it into the light together.

Not to shame each other.

To heal together.

Tonight, make at least ONE of the reconciliation contacts you listed.

Text your wife.

Call your kid.

Email your parent.

Reach out to the friend.

Don't wait until you have it all figured out.

Don't wait until you're "ready."

Just make the first move toward making it right.

Because tomorrow is the last day of repentance week.

Then Week 3 begins: Renewal.

But you can't be renewed while holding onto unreconciled relationships.

Make the call. Send the text. Write the letter.

Tonight.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering"
(Matthew 5:23-24, NASB).

God won't receive your worship while you're avoiding reconciliation.

Go. Make it right. Then worship will be real.

40 STRONG - Day 13 Complete ✓

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"
(Romans 12:18, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 14

CORPORATE CONFESSION: Group Gathering for Prayer Ministry

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - Complete

MORNING: PERSONAL PREPARATION (Before the gathering)

Opening Prayer

Father, tonight I gather with my brothers—men who have walked through the same brutal week I have. We've confronted our sexual sin, our anger, our pride, our greed, our relational failures. We've written confessions we've never written, acknowledged wounds we've caused, faced truths we've avoided. Tonight, we don't come to impress each other. We come broken, humbled, desperate for grace. Give us courage to be honest. Give us compassion to receive each other's confessions without judgment. Unite us in our brokenness. Meet us in our vulnerability. Heal us through confession. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pre-Gathering Reflection (20-30 minutes alone)

This week was the hardest of the 40 days. Before you arrive tonight, process what God has done.

Answer these questions in your journal. You may be asked to share from these.

1. THE WEEK IN REVIEW:

Which day hit you hardest?

- ☐ Day 8: The Weight We Carry (secret sins)
- ☐ Day 9: Pornography & Lust
- ☐ Day 10: Anger & Rage
- ☐ Day 11: Pride & Self-Sufficiency
- ☐ Day 12: Greed & Materialism
- ☐ Day 13: Relational Failure

Why that day?

2. THE CONFESSION:

What did you confess this week that you've never told anyone?

Have you told another person yet? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

If no, will you confess it tonight in the gathering? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I'm scared

3. THE STRUGGLE:

What confession are you still resisting?

Why are you resisting?

- ☐ Shame
 - ☐ Fear of rejection
 - ☐ Belief it's "not that bad"
 - ☐ Pride
 - ☐ Don't want to deal with consequences
-

4. THE RECONCILIATION:

Did you reach out to anyone you've wounded this week? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what happened?

If no, why not?

5. THE HOPE:

Despite the pain of this week, where have you experienced hope?

6. THE REQUEST:

What do you need from the group tonight?

- ☐ Just to be heard
- ☐ Prayer for specific struggle
- ☐ Accountability structure
- ☐ Help making a plan
- ☐ Encouragement to follow through on reconciliation
- ☐ Other: _____

7. THE COMMITMENT:

What's one specific change you're committing to based on Week 2?

PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR CONFESSION

Read this before you come tonight:

Corporate confession is not:

- ✗ A therapy session
- ✗ A competition for "worst sinner"
- ✗ A dumping ground for graphic details
- ✗ A forum for shock value
- ✗ Required for every person to share everything

Corporate confession is:

- ✓ Bringing hidden sin into the light among brothers
- ✓ Speaking truth about your struggle without shame
- ✓ Receiving prayer, grace, and accountability
- ✓ Breaking isolation through shared vulnerability
- ✓ Experiencing James 5:16 in real time

Guidelines for confessing tonight:

BE HONEST - Don't minimize. Don't spiritualize. Name the sin.

BE APPROPRIATE - Confess the category and impact, not graphic details. (Example: "I've been viewing pornography for 10 years and it's destroying my marriage" NOT "Let me describe the specific content...")

BE BRIEF - 2-3 minutes maximum per person. This isn't your full story—it's bringing one major thing into the light.

BE SPECIFIC - Don't say "I struggle with lust." Say "I view pornography 3-4 times per week and I've never told anyone until now."

BE HUMBLE - This isn't about getting it off your chest. It's about receiving grace and accountability.

A WORD ON SHAME:

Satan will whisper tonight:

- "If they really knew, they'd reject you"
- "You're the worst one here"
- "This is too much; don't say it"
- "You'll regret being this vulnerable"

God says:

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

The shame is a lie. The cleansing is real.

GATHERING FORMAT (2.5 hours total)

ARRIVAL & SILENT PREPARATION (15 minutes)

6:00 PM - 6:15 PM

Tonight is different from Week 1.

As men arrive:

- **No small talk or casual conversation**
- **Quiet instrumental music playing**
- **Candles or low lighting (create sacred atmosphere)**
- **Chairs in circle (no tables, no barriers)**
- **Tissues available (men will cry tonight)**
- **Communion elements prepared and visible**

Facilitator role:

- **Greet each man with a handshake or hug**
- **"Welcome, brother. We're glad you're here."**
- **Allow silence—don't fill it**
- **This is meant to feel weighty, sacred, different**

Theological Insight:

"Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near" (Zephaniah 1:7, NASB).

Tonight requires reverence. The men are coming to meet God in their brokenness.

OPENING: CREATING SACRED SPACE (10 minutes)

6:15 PM - 6:25 PM

Facilitator speaks (no music yet, just stillness):

"Brothers, welcome. Tonight is different. Week 2 was the hardest week of this journey. You've confronted sin you've hidden for years—maybe decades. Sexual sin. Anger. Pride. Greed. Relational failures. You've written confessions. Some of you have reached out to people you've wounded. Some haven't yet. All of you are carrying the weight of what you've discovered about yourself this week."

"Tonight, we bring it into the light. Together."

"This is corporate confession. Not performance. Not therapy. Not a competition. This is James 5:16 in real time:"

Read slowly:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB).

"We're going to confess. We're going to pray. And we're going to experience healing—not because confession is magic, but because God meets us when we bring darkness into light."

THE COVENANT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

"Before we begin, we make a covenant. What is confessed in this room stays in this room. Period. Not 'prayer request' gossip. Not 'Did you hear what he said?' conversations. Nothing leaves this space. Can every man here commit to that?"

[All men respond: "I commit."]

"Good. Now, some guidelines for tonight:"

Read these slowly:

- 1. You're not required to confess everything. But if the Spirit is prompting you to bring something into the light, don't resist.**
- 2. Be appropriate. Confess the sin and its impact, not graphic details. Example: "I've been having an affair for six months" not "Let me describe the affair."**
- 3. Be brief. 2-3 minutes. This isn't your full story. It's breaking the power of secrecy.**
- 4. Don't fix each other. When someone confesses, just receive it. Don't give advice, share your story, or minimize theirs. We'll pray, not problem-solve.**

5. Tears are welcome. If you need to cry, cry. If your brother cries, let him. Don't rush to comfort—let him feel it.
 6. If you're in crisis (suicidal thoughts, active abuse, immediate danger), see me or another leader immediately after. We'll get you help tonight.
-

Opening Prayer:

"Father, we're terrified and hopeful at the same time. Terrified of being fully known. Hopeful that You'll meet us anyway. We bring our darkest secrets into this light because we're tired—tired of hiding, tired of the double life, tired of the shame. You already know what we're about to confess. Now we're telling each other. Give us courage. Give us grace. Bind us together as brothers. In Jesus' name, Amen."

WORSHIP: SONGS OF GRACE (15 minutes)

6:25 PM - 6:40 PM

Tonight's worship is quiet, reflective, grace-focused.

Suggested songs:

- "Jesus Paid It All"
- "Nothing But the Blood"
- "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)"
- "Good Good Father"
- "It Is Well With My Soul"

Between songs, read these Scriptures (no commentary, just let them land):

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12, NASB).

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18, NASB).

Close worship with this declaration (all men read together from screen/handout):

"We are not our sin. We are sons of God, bought by the blood of Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, being transformed from glory to glory. Tonight, we confess not to earn grace, but to receive it. Not to prove we're worthy, but to acknowledge we're not—and He loves us anyway."

TEACHING: THE POWER OF CONFESSION (15 minutes)

6:40 PM - 6:55 PM

Facilitator teaches:

"Why We Confess to Each Other"

Brothers, you've confessed to God this week. Many times.

Why confess to each other?

Because confession to God brings forgiveness. Confession to others brings healing.

***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us"* (1 John 1:9, NASB) - Forgiveness**

***"Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed"* (James 5:16, NASB) - Healing**

You need both.

Here's what's happened this week:

For years—maybe decades—you've carried secret sin. And that secret sin has had power over you because it was secret.

Satan's strategy is simple:

- 1. Tempt you to sin (he's good at this)**
- 2. Make you feel ashamed (even better at this)**
- 3. Convince you to hide it (his specialty)**
- 4. Keep you isolated (where he can destroy you)**

Secrecy is his weapon. Confession is yours.

When you bring sin into the light:

- **Shame loses power (it can't survive in the light)**
- **Lies are exposed ("You're the only one" becomes "I'm not alone")**
- **Accountability begins (brothers can ask the hard questions)**
- **Healing starts (what's confessed can be addressed)**

This is warfare, brothers. And tonight, you're taking back territory.

The Biblical Pattern:

David (after adultery and murder):

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long... I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:3, 5, NASB).

Silence = death. Confession = life.

The Prodigal Son:

"I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son'" (Luke 15:18-19, NASB).

He didn't just come home. He confessed.

And what happened?

"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20, NASB).

The father ran. Not away—TOWARD him.

That's what happens tonight. God doesn't run from your confession. He runs toward you.

What to Expect:

After you confess:

1. Relief (the weight lifts—not completely, but noticeably)
2. Vulnerability (you'll feel exposed—that's normal)
3. Brotherhood (you'll see that you're not alone)
4. Accountability (brothers will check in on you after tonight)
5. Ongoing battle (confession doesn't end temptation, but it changes the fight)

And here's the promise:

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Proverbs 28:13, NASB).

Confession + forsaking = compassion (from God) and healing (in community).

A Word to Those Who Are Scared:

Some of you are thinking: *"I can't say it out loud. It's too bad. They'll think I'm disgusting."*

Here's the truth: The man next to you is thinking the same thing. And he's wrong too.

You're not disgusting. You're broken. And so is he. And so am I.

And broken men who confess together become brothers who heal together.

Tonight, be brave. Speak the truth. Let God meet you in it.

TRANSITION: PREPARING FOR CONFESSION (5 minutes)

6:55 PM - 7:00 PM

Facilitator:

"We're about to move into confession. Here's how this will work:"

Format:

1. I'll open us in prayer
2. Anyone who feels led can share (no order, no pressure)
3. After someone shares, we'll respond: "Thank you, brother"

4. We'll pray briefly for them (30 seconds)
5. Then silence for a moment before the next person shares
6. We'll continue until everyone who wants to has shared

You're not required to speak. But if God is prompting you, don't resist.

Guidelines (repeat briefly):

- Be honest (don't minimize)
- Be appropriate (no graphic details)
- Be brief (2-3 minutes)
- Be specific (name the sin, don't generalize)

If you need help formulating your confession, use this template:

"I've been hiding [specific sin]. I've struggled with this for [duration]. It's affected [specific impact: marriage, kids, work, etc.]. I'm confessing it now because [why now]. I need prayer for [specific request]."

Example:

"I've been hiding pornography use. I've struggled with this for 15 years. It's created distance in my marriage that my wife can feel but I've never explained. I'm confessing it now because I'm tired of the double life. I need prayer for courage to tell my wife and to break this addiction."

Opening Prayer for Confession:

"Father, we're about to do what feels impossible—speak out loud the things we've hidden in darkness. We're terrified. But we trust You. We trust that You're not shocked, not disappointed, not rejecting us. We trust that You're running toward us, not away. Give every man here courage to speak. Give every man here grace to listen without judgment. Bind our hearts together in this vulnerability. Holy Spirit, do what only You can do—heal us through confession. In Jesus' name, Amen."

CORPORATE CONFESSION (45-60 minutes)

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

This is the heart of the evening. Facilitators should:

- **Allow silence—don't rush**
 - **Receive each confession without comment (just "Thank you, brother")**
 - **Pray briefly after each (30 seconds max)**
 - **Watch for men who are about to speak but hesitating (gently encourage)**
 - **Be prepared for tears, anger, grief—let it happen**
 - **Have tissues available**
 - **If a man discloses crisis (abuse, suicide, active affair), connect with him privately immediately after**
-

After Each Confession:

Facilitator or another man prays:

"Father, thank You for [name]'s courage. Thank You that nothing he confessed surprises You or changes Your love for him. We ask You to break the power of [sin confessed] over his life. Give him strength to walk in freedom. Surround him with brothers who will ask hard questions and speak truth in love. Thank You that there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Then: "Thank you, brother. We're with you."

Handling Different Types of Confessions:

ADDICTION (pornography, alcohol, drugs): After prayer: *"Who will check in with him this week?"* (Get 2-3 men to commit)

ANGER/ABUSE: After prayer: *"Have you sought counseling?"* If no: *"Let's connect you with someone this week."*

ADULTERY (ongoing): After prayer: Private conversation immediately after gathering. Can't continue in unconfessed adultery.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS: Immediate intervention. Don't wait. Connect with mental health professional tonight.

If No One Speaks Initially (First 2-3 Minutes of Silence):

Facilitator can model:

"I'll go first. I've been hiding [confession]. This week confronted me with [impact]. I'm bringing it into the light now. Pray for me."

Or call on someone you know is prepared:

"[Name], would you like to start us?"

Keeping Time:

If confessions are running long (over 3 minutes), gently redirect:

"Brother, thank you for trusting us with this. Let's pray for you now, and we can talk more after if you need."

If Someone Confesses Something Disturbing:

Stay calm. Model grace. Don't react with shock or disgust.

"Thank you for trusting us with that. That took courage. Let's pray."

Then address privately after if needed.

Facilitator Throughout:

- Keep an eye on the room
 - Watch for men who are struggling to hold it together (that's okay—let them)
 - Notice who hasn't spoken but seems like they want to
 - Be comfortable with silence between confessions
 - Trust the Spirit's timing
-

Closing the Confession Time:

After 45-60 minutes (or when it feels complete), facilitator says:

"Brothers, what we've just witnessed is sacred. What we've experienced is James 5:16 in real time. Confession has happened. Prayer has been offered. Healing has begun."

"But let me be clear: Healing isn't done. Confession is the beginning, not the end. Starting tomorrow—starting tonight—the real work begins:"

- Accountability - Following through on commitments
- Counseling - Getting professional help where needed
- Reconciliation - Making amends with those you've wounded
- Repentance - Changed behavior, not just changed feelings
- Community - Staying connected to these brothers

"If you confessed tonight, expect a text or call from a brother this week. If you didn't confess but need to, reach out to someone here before you leave."

TRANSITION: MOVING TO COMMUNION (5 minutes)

8:00 PM - 8:05 PM

Facilitator:

"We've confessed. Now we receive."

"Confession without grace is just shame. But God doesn't leave us in shame. He covers us with grace."

"We're going to take communion together—not because we've earned it through confession, but because Jesus earned it for us through His death."

Read this:

"While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8, NASB).

"While we were YET sinners."

Not after we cleaned up.

Not after we confessed.

While we were STILL sinning.

That's when Christ died for us.

COMMUNION: RECEIVING GRACE (15 minutes)

8:05 PM - 8:20 PM

Setup:

- Bread and juice/wine on a central table
 - Men come forward individually (not in lines—one at a time)
 - Take elements and return to seat
 - Eat and drink together after all have taken
-

Facilitator introduction:

"Tonight, as you come forward to take communion, I want you to remember what you just confessed. Don't push it away. Don't move on too quickly. Remember it."

"And as you take the bread and cup, hear God say to you:"

"I know. I've always known. And I love you anyway. Not despite your sin—I love you through your sin, in your sin, and beyond your sin. My Son died for that exact sin you just confessed. It's covered. It's forgiven. It's washed away. You are clean."

"Receive that. Not just intellectually—receive it in your soul."

Scripture Reading:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25, NASB).

THE BREAD:

"Come forward and take the bread. This is Jesus' body—broken for you. Broken for the pornography you confessed. Broken for the anger that's wounded your kids. Broken for the pride that's isolated you. Broken for the greed that's enslaved you. Broken for the relationships you've damaged."

"Every sin you confessed tonight—His body was broken for it."

[Men come forward individually, take bread, return to seat. Soft instrumental music plays.]

After all have taken bread:

"Together, we eat."

Prayer before eating:

"Jesus, thank You that Your body was broken so ours could be healed. We receive Your life in us. Amen."

[All eat.]

THE CUP:

"Now come forward and take the cup. This is Jesus' blood—the new covenant. This is the promise that your sins are not just forgiven but forgotten. As far as the east is from the west. Removed. Gone. Washed clean."

"When you drink this cup, you're declaring: I am forgiven. I am clean. I am free."

[Men come forward individually, take cup, return to seat.]

After all have taken cup:

"Together, we drink."

Prayer before drinking:

"Jesus, thank You that Your blood was poured out for us. We receive Your cleansing. We are forgiven. Amen."

[All drink.]

After Communion:

Facilitator:

"Brothers, you are clean. Not because of your confession—because of His cross. You are forgiven. Not because you earned it—because He bought it. You are free. Not because you're strong enough to stay free—because He's strong enough to keep you free."

"Week 2: Repentance is complete. Week 3: Renewal begins tomorrow."

PRAYER MINISTRY: LAYING ON OF HANDS (15 minutes)

8:20 PM - 8:35 PM

Facilitator:

"Before we close, we're going to offer prayer ministry. If you need specific prayer—for breakthrough, for strength, for healing, for anything—step into the center of the circle. Brothers will lay hands on you and pray."

"This is not required. But if you need it, don't be too proud to receive it."

How this works:

- **Man steps into center**
- **3-5 men gather around, lay hands on shoulders/back**
- **Man briefly states what he needs prayer for (10 seconds)**
- **Men pray (1-2 minutes total)**
- **Man returns to circle**
- **Another steps forward**

Continue until no one else comes forward.

Types of Prayer Requests:

"Pray for freedom from pornography addiction"

"Pray for courage to tell my wife"

"Pray for healing in my relationship with my kids"

"Pray for humility to stay in counseling"
"Pray for strength not to quit this journey"

Closing Prayer Ministry:

After everyone who wants prayer has received it, facilitator prays over the whole group:

"Father, we came here tonight broken. We leave here forgiven. We came carrying shame. We leave carrying grace. We came hiding. We leave walking in light. Thank You for receiving our confessions. Thank You for covering us with Christ's blood. Thank You for binding us together as brothers. This week was hard. Next week will be different—we're being rebuilt. But tonight, we rest in Your finished work. In Jesus' name, Amen."

CLOSING CHARGE & DISMISSAL (10 minutes)

8:35 PM - 8:45 PM

Facilitator:

"Before you leave, I need to say a few things."

1. FOLLOW-UP:

"If you confessed something tonight, expect contact from a brother this week. If you're in crisis and didn't speak up, find a leader before you leave. We're not letting anyone leave here without support."

2. WEEK 3 PREVIEW:

"Tomorrow, Week 3 begins: RENEWAL. You've awakened (Week 1). You've repented (Week 2). Now you're rebuilt."

Week 3 Days:

- **Day 15: Sons, Not Slaves (Understanding adoption)**
- **Day 16: Accepted, Not Performing (Grace vs. works)**
- **Day 17: Forgiven, Not Condemned (Freedom from shame)**

- Day 18: Empowered, Not Powerless (Holy Spirit's work)
- Day 19: Sent, Not Sitting (Mission clarity)
- Day 20: Beloved, Not Tolerated (Father's affection)
- Day 21: Celebration Sabbath (Testimonies + commissioning)

"This week will feel different. Lighter. Hopeful. But don't mistake lighter for easier—renewal requires you to actually believe what God says about you. And for men who've lived in shame, that's hard."

3. THE COVENANT:

"Everything confessed tonight stays here. If you're struggling with something you heard, process it with God or a counselor—not with gossip."

4. RESOURCES:

"If you need counseling, here's a list. If you need addiction recovery resources, here they are. If you're in crisis, here are 24/7 hotlines. No one fights alone."

Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26, NASB):

*"The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace."*

Final Charge:

"Brothers, you did it. You walked through Week 2: Repentance. You confronted your sin. You confessed it. You received grace. Now—go home. Rest. Tomorrow, renewal begins."

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

[All respond:] "40 STRONG!"

Closing Prayer:

"Father, send us out clean. Protect us from the enemy's lies this week. Remind us that we are forgiven, not just in theory but in reality. Guard our hearts. Strengthen our resolve. Unite us as brothers. Week 2 is done. Week 3 begins tomorrow. We are Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Facilitator:

"Don't rush out. If you need to talk, stay. If you need prayer, ask. If you need a brother, find one. We're 40 STRONG—and we don't leave anyone behind."

AFTER THE GATHERING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you get home (or in your car), journal briefly:

1. WHAT HAPPENED:

What did God do in me and among us tonight?

2. WHAT I CONFESSED:

Did I confess what God was prompting me to? Or did I hold back?

If you held back, why?

3. WHAT I HEARD:

Whose confession resonated with me? Why?

4. THE FEELING:

How do I feel right now? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Relieved
 - ☐ Vulnerable
 - ☐ Grateful
 - ☐ Scared
 - ☐ Hopeful
 - ☐ Exhausted
 - ☐ Lighter
 - ☐ Still ashamed
 - ☐ Connected to my brothers
 - ☐ Uncertain
-

5. TOMORROW:

Day 15 begins Week 3: Renewal. What's one truth I need to focus on as we transition from repentance to renewal?

FACILITATOR NOTES (For Leaders Running the Gathering)

Pre-Gathering Preparation:

1. ENVIRONMENT:

- Candles or dim lighting (sacred atmosphere)
- Chairs in tight circle (no barriers, intimate)
- Tissues at multiple points around circle
- Communion elements visible on central table
- Instrumental worship music for transitions
- Crisis resource handouts available

2. LEADERSHIP TEAM:

- At least 2-3 trained facilitators present

- One person specifically watching for crisis disclosures
- Mental health professional on call (if possible)
- Referral list ready (counselors, crisis hotlines, addiction resources)

3. SAFETY PROTOCOLS:

- Know mandatory reporting laws for your state (abuse, harm to self/others)
- Have crisis intervention plan ready
- Private space available for immediate follow-up if needed

During Gathering - Facilitator Mindset:

YOU ARE:

- A shepherd creating safe space
- A brother who goes first in vulnerability (model confession if needed)
- A steward of sacred moments
- A guide, not a therapist

YOU ARE NOT:

- Shocked by what you hear (stay calm, model grace)
- The fixer (resist urge to problem-solve)
- The judge (receive without condemnation)

Red Flags - Immediate Intervention Required:

If anyone discloses:

- Suicidal ideation → Don't wait. Private conversation immediately. Call crisis line together if needed.
- Active abuse of spouse/children → Mandatory reporting. Compassionate but clear boundaries.
- Ongoing affair → Private conversation about next steps. Can't continue unconfessed to spouse.

- **Severe mental health crisis → Professional referral immediately.**

Protocol:

- 1. Acknowledge their courage**
 - 2. Pray with/for them**
 - 3. After gathering, pull them aside: "I'm concerned about [issue]. Can we talk?"**
 - 4. Connect them with appropriate help before they leave**
 - 5. Follow up within 24 hours**
-

After Gathering - Leadership Debrief:

Within 24-48 hours:

- 1. Team Debrief:**
 - What went well?
 - What was challenging?
 - Who needs immediate follow-up?
 - Pray for specific men by name
 - 2. Follow-Up:**
 - Text/call men who disclosed heavy things
 - Connect men to counselors where needed
 - Ensure accountability partnerships are activated
 - Check on facilitators' emotional/spiritual health
 - 3. Prepare for Week 3:**
 - Renewal requires different tone—hopeful, celebratory
 - Men will be tender this week—handle with care
 - Some may experience "confession hangover" (regret, vulnerability shame)
-

Supporting Facilitators:

Facilitators carry heavy loads after nights like this. Care for them:

- Debrief together before going home
 - Pray for each other
 - Create space to process what you heard
 - Encourage rest (don't schedule anything heavy tomorrow)
 - Remind: You're not responsible to fix anyone. You're responsible to create space for God to work.
-

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE POWER OF LIGHT

Theological Insight:

"God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7, NASB).

Brother, what happened tonight was supernatural.

Not because confession is magic.

But because light destroys darkness.

For years—maybe decades—you've carried secret sin in darkness. And in that darkness:

- Shame grew
- Lies multiplied
- Isolation deepened
- Sin compounded

Tonight, you brought it into the light.

And when sin hits the light:

- Shame loses power
- Lies are exposed

- Isolation breaks
- Healing begins

This doesn't mean the battle is over.

Tomorrow, temptation will still exist.

Next week, old patterns will whisper.

The enemy won't give up territory easily.

But everything changed tonight:

You're not alone anymore.

You're not hiding anymore.

You're not fighting alone anymore.

You're 40 STRONG. And brothers who confess together become brothers who conquer together.

Week 2: Repentance - COMPLETE ✓

Week 3: Renewal begins tomorrow.

The hard part is done. Now comes the rebuild.

Sleep well. You've earned it.

40 STRONG - Day 14 Complete ✓

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE - COMPLETE ✓

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed"

(James 5:16, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 15

SONS, NOT SLAVES: Understanding Adoption

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Rebuilding on Truth

MORNING: THE SHIFT (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, the last two weeks have been brutal. I've confronted my passivity, my secret sins, my anger, my pride, my greed, my relational failures. I've confessed things I've never said out loud. I've brought darkness into light. And honestly? I'm exhausted. But also—hopeful. Because something shifted on Day 14 when I confessed with my brothers. A weight lifted. Now, this week, I need You to rebuild what repentance tore down. Not with shame, but with truth. Not with condemnation, but with grace. Today, teach me what it means to be Your son—not Your slave, not Your hired hand, not Your project. Your son. Beloved. Accepted. Free. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Father's Declaration

Read slowly. This is who you are.

THE DECLARATION AT JESUS' BAPTISM:

"After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:16-17, NASB).

Notice: The Father declared Jesus "beloved Son" BEFORE He did any ministry, performed any miracles, or went to the cross.

Identity came before activity.

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION:

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit

Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:15-17, NASB).

You didn't receive a spirit of slavery. You received a spirit of ADOPTION.

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:4-7, NASB).

You are NO LONGER A SLAVE. You are a SON.

THE DIFFERENCE:

"The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:35-36, NASB).

Slaves can be dismissed. Sons belong.

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER:

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1, NASB).

"See HOW GREAT a love." Not small. Not conditional. GREAT.

Pause. Close your eyes. Hear the Father say YOUR name:

"[Your name], you are My beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Not because of what you did.

Not because of how you performed.

But because you are His.

Teaching: The Two Sons

You know the story. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

But here's what you might have missed: There are TWO lost sons in that story.

And most Christian men identify with the wrong one.

THE YOUNGER SON (Luke 15:11-24)

His Story:

- **Demanded his inheritance early (basically saying, "I wish you were dead, Dad")**
- **Took the money and ran**
- **Wasted it on wild living**
- **Ended up feeding pigs (rock bottom for a Jewish boy)**
- **Came to his senses**
- **Rehearsed a speech: "I'll be your hired servant"**
- **Came home expecting to be a slave**

What Actually Happened:

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20, NASB).

The father RAN. Middle Eastern patriarchs didn't run. It was undignified.

But this father didn't care about dignity. He cared about his son.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found'" (Luke 15:21-24, NASB).

Notice what the father did:

- 1. The best robe = Sonship restored (not servant clothes)**
- 2. A ring = Authority restored (family signet ring)**
- 3. Sandals = Freedom restored (slaves went barefoot)**
- 4. The fattened calf = Celebration, not probation**

The son came expecting slavery. The father gave him sonship.

This is you after Week 2.

You came confessing: "Father, I have sinned. I'm not worthy."

And the Father says: "You're right. You're not worthy. But I don't love you because you're worthy. I love you because you're Mine. Welcome home, son."

THE OLDER SON (Luke 15:25-32)

Most Christian men are this guy.

His Story:

- Never left home
- Never rebelled openly
- Worked faithfully
- Obeyed all the rules
- Did everything "right"

Then the younger brother came home, and the father threw a party. And the older son refused to come in.

Listen to his complaint:

"Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him" (Luke 15:29-30, NASB).

Notice:

- "I have been SERVING you" (not "living with you")
- "I have never neglected a command" (performance-based)
- "You have never given me" (keeping score)
- "This son of yours" (distancing, not "my brother")

This man lived IN the father's house but WITH the heart of a hired servant.

He was a slave who never left home.

The Father's Response:

"Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31, NASB).

Translation: "You've had full access to sonship this entire time. But you've been living like a slave."

WHICH SON ARE YOU?

The Younger Son:

- Obvious rebellion
- External sin
- Knows he needs grace
- Runs home desperate
- More likely to receive sonship because he knows he doesn't deserve it

The Older Son:

- Hidden rebellion (works-based righteousness)
- Internal sin (resentment, entitlement)
- Believes he's earned favor
- Stays home bitter
- Less likely to receive sonship because he thinks he's earned it

Most Christian men are the older brother.

We haven't run away openly. We've stayed in church. We've followed the rules (mostly). We've tried hard.

But we've been living like slaves, not sons.

- Working for approval we already have
- Performing for love that's already ours
- Keeping score when the Father keeps none

- Living in the house but not in the heart of the Father

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. The younger brother knew the first half. The older brother knew neither." – Tim Keller

The Slave Mentality vs. The Son Mentality

Here's how these two identities play out practically:

SLAVE MENTALITY:

Believes:

- I must earn God's approval through performance
- My value is based on my productivity
- I'm safe as long as I obey
- If I fail, I'll be punished or dismissed
- God tolerates me when I'm good, is angry when I'm not
- I serve God out of duty and fear
- My relationship with God is transactional

Lives:

- Exhausted from constant striving
- Afraid of failure
- Resentful of God's "demands"
- Isolated (can't show weakness)
- Performance-based (identity = what I do)
- Grace-resistant (minimizes sin to maintain standing)

Prays:

- **"God, I'll do better"**
 - **"Please don't be angry with me"**
 - **"I promise to work harder"**
 - **"I'll earn Your blessing"**
-

SON MENTALITY:

Believes:

- **I am fully loved and accepted in Christ**
- **My value is based on Jesus' finished work, not my performance**
- **I'm secure because of adoption, not obedience**
- **When I fail, the Father disciplines in love, not anger**
- **God delights in me as His son**
- **I serve God out of gratitude and love**
- **My relationship with God is covenantal (based on His promise, not my performance)**

Lives:

- **Free to rest in grace**
- **Honest about failure (no fear of dismissal)**
- **Grateful for God's provision**
- **Vulnerable in community (can show weakness)**
- **Identity-based (who I am = son of God)**
- **Grace-receiving (confesses sin freely, knowing forgiveness is certain)**

Prays:

- **"Abba, Father, I need help"**
- **"Thank You for loving me even in my failure"**
- **"I trust Your goodness toward me"**

- "I receive Your grace"

The Chart:

SLAVES	SONS
Work for acceptance	Work from acceptance
Fear punishment	Trust discipline
Keep score	Receive grace
Hide failure	Confess freely
Perform for approval	Rest in love
Serve from duty	Serve from gratitude
Relate transactionally	Relate covenantally
"I have to"	"I get to"
Exhausted	Free

Which column describes you?

If you're honest, probably a mix. Some days you live like a son. Most days you live like a slave.

Week 3 is about shifting from left to right.

Not through trying harder. Through believing better.

Why We Default to Slavery

If sonship is better, why do we default to slavery?

Three reasons:

1. PERFORMANCE FEELS CONTROLLABLE

Slavery says: "If I do X, I get Y. I can manage this."

Sonship says: "God gives grace freely. I can't earn it, manipulate it, or control it."

We prefer the illusion of control over the vulnerability of dependence.

2. OUR EARTHLY FATHERS MODELED IT

Most men learned masculinity from fathers who:

- **Gave approval based on performance**
- **Withheld affection until you "earned it"**
- **Expressed love through criticism ("I'm hard on you because I love you")**
- **Taught you that "real men" don't need anyone**

So you project that onto God:

- **God must be earned**
- **His love is conditional**
- **He's disappointed unless you're performing**
- **Dependence is weakness**

But God is not your earthly father. He's the Father your earthly father was supposed to be.

3. THE ENEMY WANTS YOU IN BONDAGE

Satan knows: A son who knows his identity is dangerous.

So he whispers:

- **"You have to prove yourself"**
- **"One more failure and God will reject you"**
- **"You're not really forgiven for that"**
- **"Sons of God don't struggle like you do"**

And you believe him. Because slavery feels familiar. Sonship feels too good to be true.

Theological Insight:

"The devil doesn't need to make you deny God. He just needs to make you forget you're loved by God. A Christian who forgets his sonship is functionally no different than an unbeliever—he lives from fear, not faith; from performance, not grace." – Brennan Manning (paraphrase)

What Adoption Actually Means

Roman Adoption in Paul's Context:

When Paul wrote about adoption (Romans 8, Galatians 4), his audience understood Roman adoption practices.

In Roman culture:

- **A biological son could be disinherited for bad behavior**
- **But an adopted son could NEVER lose his status**
- **Adoption was permanent, irrevocable, legally binding**
- **An adopted son had ALL the rights of a biological heir**
- **The father chose the son deliberately—adoption was intentional, not accidental**

Paul is saying: You are adopted sons of God.

This means:

- 1. You can't lose your status. No amount of failure undoes adoption.**
 - 2. You have full rights as an heir. Everything the Father has belongs to you (Romans 8:17).**
 - 3. You were chosen deliberately. God didn't adopt you by accident or obligation. He wanted you.**
 - 4. Your past doesn't define you. In Roman adoption, the adoptee's previous debts and obligations were legally erased. Clean slate.**
 - 5. You have a new family. You're part of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).**
-

The Irreversibility of Adoption:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, NASB).

NOTHING can separate you from the Father's love.

Not your pornography (Week 2, Day 9).

Not your anger (Day 10).

Not your pride (Day 11).

Not your greed (Day 12).

Not your relational failures (Day 13).

NOTHING.

You confessed all that. God heard. And His response wasn't rejection—it was:

"I know. I've always known. You're still My son."

How Sons Live Differently Than Slaves

Here's what changes when you believe you're a son:

1. PRAYER BECOMES CONVERSATION, NOT GROVELING

Slaves pray:

"Please, Master, if it pleases You, I humbly beg..."

Sons pray:

"Abba, Father, I need help with this..."

Notice Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9)—not "Distant Deity" or "Harsh Judge."

2. SIN BECOMES SOMETHING TO CONFESS, NOT HIDE

Slaves hide sin (fear of punishment, loss of position).

Sons confess sin (trust in the Father's discipline and restoration).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

You proved this on Day 14. You confessed. And the Father received you.

3. OBEDIENCE FLOWS FROM LOVE, NOT FEAR

Slaves obey to avoid punishment.

Sons obey because they trust the Father's goodness.

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15, NASB).

Not "keep My commandments so I'll love you" but "BECAUSE I love you, you'll want to obey."

4. REST BECOMES POSSIBLE

Slaves can never rest (there's always more to prove).

Sons can rest (their identity is secure).

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NASB).

Week 2 was heavy. This week, you rest. Not because the battle is over, but because you're secure in sonship.

5. VULNERABILITY BECOMES SAFE

Slaves hide weakness (showing weakness gets you dismissed).

Sons share weakness (the Father meets us in our need).

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9, NASB).

Your brothers saw your weakness on Day 14. And they didn't reject you. Neither did God.

6. FAILURE BECOMES A LESSON, NOT A VERDICT

Slaves: One failure = dismissal.

Sons: Failure = discipline, correction, growth (but never rejection).

"For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6, NASB).

Discipline ≠ rejection. Discipline = "You're My son, and I'm shaping you."

7. INHERITANCE BECOMES REAL

Slaves work for wages they might never see.

Sons inherit what the Father owns.

"If children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17, NASB).

Everything God has is yours. Not someday. Now. By inheritance.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (This week feels different—these are about believing, not confessing)

SECTION 1: WHICH SON ARE YOU?

1. HONEST ASSESSMENT:

Do you relate to God more as:

- ☐ **The younger son (obvious rebellion, desperate for grace)**
- ☐ **The older son (obedient exterior, slave mentality)**
- ☐ **A mix of both**

Explain:

2. YOUR PRAYER LIFE:

When you pray, do you sound more like:

- ☐ **A slave begging for favor**
- ☐ **A son talking to a loving Father**
- ☐ **Depends on how I'm feeling about my performance**

Example of your typical prayer:

SECTION 2: SLAVERY VS. SONSHIP

3. WHERE YOU LIVE:

Look at the chart above (Slaves vs. Sons). Where do you spend most of your time?

- ☐ **Mostly on the "Slaves" side**
- ☐ **Mostly on the "Sons" side**
- ☐ **Back and forth**

Specific examples:

4. THE SHIFT:

What would change in your daily life if you fully believed you were God's beloved son?

In your prayer life: _____

In your struggles with sin: _____

In your relationships: _____

In your work: _____

SECTION 3: FATHER WOUNDS

5. YOUR EARTHLY FATHER:

Did your earthly father make you feel:

- ☐ **Loved unconditionally**
- ☐ **Loved conditionally (based on performance)**

- ☐ Tolerated but not delighted in
- ☐ Rejected or abandoned

How has that shaped how you see God?

6. HEALING THE PROJECTION:

What do you believe about God that's actually true about your earthly father, not your Heavenly Father?

Examples:

- "God is disappointed in me" (your dad might have been; God isn't)
- "God is hard to please" (your dad might have been; God isn't)
- "God is distant" (your dad might have been; God isn't)

Write yours:

SECTION 4: RECEIVING SONSHIP

7. THE OBSTACLE:

What's the biggest obstacle to believing you're God's beloved son?

- ☐ Past sin ("I've done too much")
- ☐ Ongoing struggle ("Sons of God don't struggle like I do")
- ☐ Performance mindset ("I haven't earned it")
- ☐ Father wound ("My dad didn't love me, so God probably doesn't either")
- ☐ Pride ("I don't need to be dependent")
- ☐ Other: _____

8. THE TRUTH:

Read Romans 8:15-17 again. What is God saying to you through this passage?

SECTION 5: LIVING AS A SON

9. PRACTICAL SONSHIP:

This week, you will practice living as a son by: (Choose 3 and commit)

- ☐ Praying "Abba, Father" instead of distant titles
 - ☐ Confessing sin without fear of rejection
 - ☐ Asking God for help with small things (not just crises)
 - ☐ Resting one day without guilt
 - ☐ Receiving a compliment without deflecting
 - ☐ Asking a brother for help without apologizing
 - ☐ Celebrating something good without feeling unworthy
 - ☐ Speaking kindly to yourself when you fail
-

10. THE DECLARATION:

Complete this sentence and say it out loud:

"I, [your name], am a son of God. Not because I earned it, but because Jesus earned it for me. I am beloved. I am accepted. I am an heir. I belong. And nothing—NOTHING—can change that."

How does it feel to say that out loud?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud with conviction)

Today, I declare:

I am not a slave—I am a son.

I do not work for acceptance—I work from acceptance.

I do not earn God's love—I receive it freely.

I am not on probation—I am adopted permanently.

I am not tolerated—I am delighted in.

I am not defined by my past—I am defined by my Father.

"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:7, NASB).

I am a son. I am an heir. I am beloved.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Abba, Father—I'm learning to call You that. Not "Master," not "Judge," not "Distant Deity." Abba. Dad. Papa. Teach me to live as Your son, not Your slave. I've spent so many years performing, proving, striving. Show me what it means to rest in Your love, to trust Your goodness, to live from Your acceptance instead of for it. When I fail this week—and I will—remind me that sons who fail are disciplined and restored, not dismissed and rejected. I am Yours. Permanently. Irrevocably. Joyfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"Abba, Father"*

Breathe out: *"I am Your beloved son"*

(Romans 8:15)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I living as a slave today (performing for approval) or as a son (resting in acceptance)?*

Brief Prayer: *Father, remind me I'm Your son.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What evidence of the Father's love did I see today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I live more as a slave or as a son today?

Slave moments: _____

Son moments: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I default to performance instead of resting in grace?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for living like a slave when You've made me a son.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Father saying to me about my identity?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"I have been living more like a slave than a son in this area: _____. What this has cost me is _____. Tomorrow, I will practice sonship by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 15 ✓ - Week 3: Renewal has begun. Today I learned the difference between living as a slave (performing for approval) vs. living as a son (resting in acceptance). I'm working on believing I'm God's beloved son. Pray that truth sinks deeper."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 16 title: "Accepted, Not Performing - Grace vs. Works"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was about sonship vs. slavery. Tomorrow is about acceptance vs. performance. Keep teaching me to live from Your love, not for it. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: COMING HOME

Theological Insight:

"There are two ways to be your own savior and lord. One is by breaking all the moral laws and setting your own course, and one is by keeping all the moral laws and being very, very good." – Tim Keller

Brother, you spent two weeks confronting your sin.

Now it's time to receive your identity.

You are not defined by:

- **What you confessed on Day 9 (sexual sin)**
- **What you acknowledged on Day 10 (anger)**
- **What you confronted on Day 11 (pride)**
- **What you addressed on Day 12 (greed)**
- **Who you wounded on Day 13 (relational failure)**

You are defined by this:

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB).

Chosen. Royal. Holy. God's own possession.

Not because you're good. Because He's gracious.

Not because you've earned it. Because Jesus did.

You're not a slave anymore. You're a son.

Live like it.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15, NASB).

No more fear. No more slavery. Just sonship.

Welcome home, son.

40 STRONG - Day 15 Complete ✓

"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:7, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 16

ACCEPTED, NOT PERFORMING: Grace vs. Works

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Rebuilding on Truth

MORNING: GETTING OFF THE TREADMILL (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I'm tired. I'm tired of trying to be good enough. Tired of the religious hamster wheel. Tired of performing for approval I'm not sure I have. Yesterday You taught me I'm a son, not a slave. Today, teach me what that means practically. Because if I'm honest, I still wake up thinking, "What do I need to do today to make God happy with me?" I still measure my worth by my spiritual productivity. I still believe that if I pray longer, read more, serve harder, sin less—THEN You'll really love me. Break that lie, Father. Show me what it means to be accepted—not because of what I do, but because of what Jesus did. In His name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Finished Work

Read these carefully. This is the gospel.

THE FOUNDATION:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10, NASB).

Notice the order:

1. Saved by grace (not works)
 2. Created for good works (works flow FROM salvation, not TO salvation)
-

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5, NASB).

NOT on the basis of deeds. According to MERCY.

"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:21-24, NASB).

Justified as a GIFT. Not earned. GIFT.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2, NASB).

We STAND in grace. Not climb toward it. Not strive for it. STAND in it.

THE BATTLE PAUL FOUGHT:

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7, NASB).

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3, NASB).

You began by grace. Why are you trying to be perfected by works?

THE DECLARATION:

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14, NASB).

The debt is canceled. The certificate is nailed to the cross. PAID IN FULL.

Pause. Read that last verse again. Out loud.

"He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Every sin you confessed in Week 2? Nailed to the cross. 2,000 years ago. Already paid for. Already forgiven. Already dealt with.

Teaching: The Treadmill of Performance

Here's the lie most Christian men believe:

"I'm saved by grace, but I stay saved (or grow, or please God) through my works."

Translation:

- **Jesus got me in the door, but now it's up to me**
- **God's grace covered my past, but my present requires my performance**
- **I'm forgiven, but I'm on probation**
- **My standing with God depends on my spiritual productivity**

This is called "works-righteousness."

And it's exhausting.

Because no matter how much you do, it's never quite enough:

- **Pray 15 minutes? Should have been 30**
- **Read one chapter? Should have read three**
- **Served once this month? Should serve weekly**
- **Haven't looked at porn in 2 weeks? One slip and you're back to zero**

It's a treadmill. And you're dying on it.

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is not: 'God will love you if...' or 'God will love you because...' The gospel is: 'God loves you. Period.'" – Tullian Tchividjian

"To add anything to Christ is to assume that Christ is not enough. To trust in Christ plus your works is to trust in your works plus Christ. The equation doesn't work." – Martin Luther (paraphrase)

The Two Gospels

There are two "gospels" preached in the church. Only one is true.

THE FALSE GOSPEL: Grace + Works

What it sounds like:

- "Jesus saves you, but you have to maintain your salvation through obedience"
- "You're justified by faith, but you're sanctified by effort"
- "God did His part; now you do yours"
- "Grace gets you started; works keep you going"

What it produces:

- Anxiety (Am I doing enough?)
- Pride (when you're doing well)
- Despair (when you're not)
- Comparison (judging others based on their performance)
- Exhaustion (the treadmill never stops)
- Isolation (can't show weakness or you'll lose standing)
- Self-righteousness (the older brother in Luke 15)

Why it's false:

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (Galatians 2:21, NASB).

If your works contribute to your righteousness, then Christ's death was unnecessary.

THE TRUE GOSPEL: Grace Alone

What it sounds like:

- "Jesus saves you completely—beginning, middle, and end"
- "You're justified by faith AND sanctified by faith (in God's power, not your own)"
- "God does His part, which is ALL parts"
- "Grace gets you started AND sustains you AND completes you"

What it produces:

- Peace (Christ finished the work)
- Humility (I can never boast in myself)
- Hope (even when I fail, grace remains)
- Compassion (I don't judge others' struggles)
- Rest (I can stop striving)
- Vulnerability (my standing doesn't depend on my performance)
- Gratitude (I serve out of love, not duty)

Why it's true:

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NASB).

God started it. God will finish it. Your job is to trust Him, not perfect yourself.

The Exhaustion of the Treadmill

Here's what performance-based Christianity does to men:

1. YOU CAN NEVER REST

The treadmill logic:

- If I'm doing well spiritually, I can't rest (or I'll lose ground)
- If I'm doing poorly spiritually, I can't rest (I need to catch up)
- Either way: Keep running

The result: Spiritual burnout. You hate the Christian life because it's exhausting.

The truth:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, NASB).

Jesus invites you to REST, not run harder.

2. YOU CAN NEVER FAIL

The treadmill logic:

- Every failure is a setback in your standing with God
- You can't afford to mess up
- Slip once and you're back at square one
- Confession feels like losing points

The result: You hide sin instead of confessing it. You pretend you're doing better than you are.

The truth:

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9, NASB).

Your failures don't change God's faithfulness.

3. YOU CAN NEVER MEASURE UP

The treadmill logic:

- You compare yourself to others
- Someone's always more spiritual, more disciplined, more faithful
- You're never quite good enough

The result: Either pride (when you're ahead) or despair (when you're behind).

The truth:

"But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends" (2 Corinthians 10:17-18, NASB).

Your approval comes from God, not comparison.

4. YOU CAN NEVER ENJOY GOD

The treadmill logic:

- **Your relationship with God is transactional**
- **He's the Boss keeping score**
- **You serve Him out of duty, not delight**

The result: Christianity becomes a burden, not a joy. God becomes a taskmaster, not a Father.

The truth:

"Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4, NASB).

God wants you to DELIGHT in Him, not just serve Him.

The Finish Line That's Already Crossed

Here's the shift that changes everything:

The finish line isn't ahead of you. It's behind you.

Jesus already crossed it.

What Jesus Accomplished on the Cross:

1. JUSTIFIED - Declared righteous (Romans 5:1)

Not "becoming righteous through your efforts" but "declared righteous through His sacrifice."

2. REDEEMED - Bought back from slavery (Galatians 3:13)

Not "earning your freedom" but "freed by His payment."

3. RECONCILED - Brought near to God (Colossians 1:20-22)

Not "working your way back" but "brought back through His blood."

4. FORGIVEN - Sins removed (Colossians 2:13-14)

Not "earning forgiveness gradually" but "forgiven completely, once for all."

5. ADOPTED - Made a son (Galatians 4:5)

Not "proving you're worthy to be a son" but "chosen and adopted as a son."

6. SEALED - Secured by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Not "holding on to God by your effort" but "held by God through His Spirit."

All of this happened at the cross. Past tense. Finished.

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

NOW. Not someday. Not when you're good enough. NOW.

Jesus' Last Words on the Cross:

"When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30, NASB).

Greek: "Tetelestai" = "Paid in full" (Used when debts were completely satisfied)

Not:

- "It's started, now you finish"
- "I did My part, now you do yours"
- "Here's a down payment; make monthly installments"

BUT:

- "PAID IN FULL"
 - "DEBT CANCELED"
 - "NOTHING OWED"
 - "IT IS FINISHED"
-

What does this mean practically?

When you sin:

- You don't lose your sonship (adoption is permanent)
- You don't fall from grace (you're standing **IN** grace, not climbing toward it)
- You don't need to earn your way back (there's no "back"—you never left)

What you DO need to do:

- Confess (bring it to light)
- Repent (turn from it)
- Trust (God's forgiveness is immediate and complete)

But your standing with God? Never changed.

Theological Insight:

"Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace." – Jerry Bridges

How Grace Actually Changes Behavior

Here's the paradox that confuses everyone:

Question: If I'm fully accepted regardless of my behavior, won't that lead to licentiousness? Won't I just sin freely since I'm forgiven anyway?

Paul anticipated this exact question:

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2, NASB).

Answer: Grace doesn't lead to more sin. It leads to freedom **FROM** sin.

Why Performance Doesn't Work:

The Performance Model:

1. Try harder not to sin

2. Fail
3. Feel shame
4. Resolve to try harder
5. Repeat

Result: The harder you try in your own strength, the more you fail. And every failure increases shame, which drives you back to the sin for comfort.

Paul experienced this:

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want" (Romans 7:18-19, NASB).

Trying harder doesn't work. It just exhausts you.

How Grace Works:

The Grace Model:

1. You fail/sin
2. You confess immediately (no shame barrier)
3. You receive God's forgiveness and love
4. That love transforms you from the inside out
5. You grow in holiness, not through willpower, but through relationship

Result: Grace doesn't give you permission to sin. It gives you **POWER** not to sin—because you're not fighting for acceptance anymore. You're fighting **FROM** acceptance.

Biblical Examples:

The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8):

- Religious leaders wanted to stone her (works-righteousness: "Get right or die")
- Jesus said: *"I do not condemn you; go and sin no more"* (John 8:11, NASB)

- Notice the order: Acceptance FIRST, then "go and sin no more"
 - She left changed—not because He threatened her, but because He loved her
-

Peter's Denial and Restoration (John 21):

- Peter denied Jesus three times
 - After the resurrection, Jesus didn't lecture Peter
 - He asked three times: "Do you love Me?"
 - Then: "Feed My sheep"—restored him to ministry
 - Grace, not guilt, restored Peter
-

The Prodigal's Return (Luke 15):

- Son came home expecting slavery
 - Father gave him sonship
 - The party wasn't AFTER the son cleaned up. It was IMMEDIATELY.
-

The Pattern: Grace → Transformation, not Transformation → Grace

"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4, NASB).

God's KINDNESS leads to repentance. Not His threats. Not your guilt. His kindness.

Theological Insight:

"Nothing makes us love a person so much as praying for them. And nothing makes us love God like receiving His grace. Try to be holy through fear and guilt, and you'll fail. But marinate in God's scandalous grace, and holiness becomes irresistible." – Brennan Manning (paraphrase)

The Secret: Living FROM, Not FOR

This is the game-changer:

Performance-based Christianity: I obey FOR acceptance

Grace-based Christianity: I obey FROM acceptance

Performance Says:

- "I'll pray so God will be pleased with me"
- "I'll serve so I'll earn rewards"
- "I'll stop sinning so God won't be angry"
- "I'll be a better Christian so God will love me more"

Grace Says:

- "Because God is already pleased with me (in Christ), I pray to connect with Him"
 - "Because I'm already rich in Christ, I serve out of gratitude"
 - "Because God isn't angry with me (no condemnation), I turn from sin that harms me"
 - "Because God already loves me completely, I want to know Him more"
-

The Motivation Shift:

PERFORMING FOR	LIVING FROM
Obey to be loved	Obey because you're loved
Serve to earn favor	Serve out of gratitude
Pray to maintain relationship	Pray to enjoy relationship
Fear-based	Love-based
Treadmill	Dance
Slave	Son
Burden	Joy

Practical Examples:

PRAYER:

- **FOR acceptance:** "God, I prayed 30 minutes today. Are You pleased?"
- **FROM acceptance:** "Abba, I'm Your son. I just want to talk to You."

SERVING:

- **FOR acceptance:** "I volunteered 10 hours this month. That should count for something."
- **FROM acceptance:** "God has given me so much. How can I give to others?"

SEXUAL PURITY:

- **FOR acceptance:** "I haven't looked at porn in 2 weeks. God must be happy with me now."
- **FROM acceptance:** "I'm God's beloved son. Pornography is beneath my identity. I don't want to live there anymore."

FAILURE:

- **FOR acceptance:** "I failed. I'm back to square one. God must be so disappointed."
- **FROM acceptance:** "I failed. God already knew I would. His love didn't change. Let me confess and keep walking."

The Question to Ask Yourself:

"Am I doing this TO earn something, or BECAUSE I've already received everything?"

If the answer is "TO earn"—that's performance.

If the answer is "BECAUSE I've received"—that's grace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Getting honest about where you're still performing)

SECTION 1: YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

1. TREADMILL CHECK:

Rate your current spiritual exhaustion: (1 = rested, 10 = completely burned out)

Number: _____

What's exhausting you most?

- ☐ Trying to maintain spiritual disciplines
 - ☐ Guilt when I fail
 - ☐ Feeling like I'm never doing enough
 - ☐ Comparing myself to others
 - ☐ Believing God is disappointed in me
-

2. MEASURING YOUR WORTH:

Do you measure your worth by:

- ☐ How much you pray
- ☐ How often you read your Bible
- ☐ How well you're doing with sexual purity
- ☐ How much you serve
- ☐ Whether you're sinning less than last week

If you checked any of these, you're still on the treadmill.

3. GOD'S MOOD:

When you sin, do you believe:

- ☐ God is angry with me
- ☐ God is disappointed but still loves me
- ☐ God isn't surprised and His love hasn't changed

The last one is the gospel. The first two are performance.

SECTION 2: WHERE YOU'RE STILL PERFORMING

4. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:

Why do you pray?

- ☐ Because I have to (duty)
- ☐ Because God expects it (obligation)

- ☐ Because I want to connect with Him (relationship)
 - ☐ Because I feel guilty when I don't (performance)
-

5. CONFESSION:

When you confess sin, do you:

- ☐ Feel like you have to earn your way back into God's good graces
 - ☐ Believe God forgives you immediately and completely
 - ☐ Wonder if you've confessed too many times
 - ☐ Trust that confession restores fellowship, not standing
-

6. SERVICE:

Why do you serve?

- ☐ To earn God's favor
 - ☐ To look spiritual to others
 - ☐ Out of obligation/duty
 - ☐ Out of gratitude for what I've received
 - ☐ Because I genuinely want to help others
-

SECTION 3: THE SHIFT

7. WHAT WOULD CHANGE:

If you fully believed you were 100% accepted by God based on Jesus' finished work, what would change about:

Your prayer life: _____

Your response to failure: _____

Your service: _____

Your relationship with God: _____

8. THE BARRIER:

What's keeping you from believing you're fully accepted RIGHT NOW?

- ☐ Past sin (something specific I can't forgive myself for)
 - ☐ Ongoing struggle (I'm still fighting this, so I can't be fully accepted)
 - ☐ Religious teaching (I was taught grace + works)
 - ☐ Pride (I want to contribute to my salvation)
 - ☐ Fear (if I believe this, I'll abuse grace)
-

SECTION 4: LIVING FROM ACCEPTANCE

9. THIS WEEK'S EXPERIMENT:

Pick ONE spiritual discipline and practice it FROM acceptance, not FOR acceptance:

- ☐ Prayer: Talk to God as Abba, not as someone you're trying to impress
- ☐ Bible reading: Read to hear from God, not to check a box
- ☐ Service: Serve because you want to, not because you should
- ☐ Confession: Confess immediately when you fail, trusting instant forgiveness
- ☐ Rest: Take a full day off without guilt

Which one will you choose? _____

10. THE DECLARATION:

Read this out loud every morning this week:

"I am fully accepted by God. Not because of what I've done, but because of what Jesus did. My standing with God doesn't fluctuate based on my performance. I am His beloved son. Period. Today, I will live FROM that acceptance, not FOR it."

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud with conviction)

Today, I declare:

I am not on a treadmill—I am standing in grace.

I am not earning acceptance—I am already accepted.

I am not performing for approval—I already have approval.

I am not working my way to God—Jesus brought me to God.

I am not measuring my worth by my productivity—my worth is in Christ.

I am not exhausted by striving—I am resting in finished work.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB).

I am saved by grace. I live by grace. I rest in grace.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess that I've been on the treadmill—trying to earn what You've already given me. Forgive me for treating Your grace like a down payment instead of a full payment. Teach me to live FROM acceptance, not FOR it. When I pray today, remind me I'm talking to my Father, not my Boss. When I serve today, let it be out of gratitude, not obligation. When I fail today—and I probably will—help me run TO You, not away from You. Your grace is sufficient. Your work is finished. I rest in that. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"It is finished"*

Breathe out: *"I rest in grace"*

(John 19:30)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I performing today or resting? Am I trying to earn something or living from what I've received?*

Brief Prayer: *Jesus, Your work is finished. I rest in that.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What did God give me today that I didn't earn?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I live more from performance or from grace today?

Performance moments: _____

Grace moments: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I try to earn God's approval today instead of rest in it?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for not trusting that Your grace is enough.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Father reminding me about acceptance?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"I've been performing for acceptance in this area: _____. What this has cost me is _____. Tomorrow, I will practice living FROM acceptance by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 16 ✓ - Today I learned the difference between performing FOR acceptance vs. living FROM acceptance. I'm still tempted to earn God's favor through [specific

behavior]. Tomorrow I'm practicing grace by [specific action]. Pray I actually rest instead of strive."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 17 title: "Forgiven, Not Condemned - Freedom from Shame"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was about acceptance vs. performance. Tomorrow is about forgiveness vs. condemnation. Continue teaching me to live in the freedom Christ bought for me. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE TREADMILL IS BROKEN

Theological Insight:

"When Jesus said, 'It is finished,' He meant it. The work of your salvation—from beginning to end—is complete. Your job is not to finish what He started. Your job is to believe what He finished and live from it." – Sinclair Ferguson (paraphrase)

Brother, you've been on the treadmill for how long?

Years? Decades?

Running, striving, performing, exhausting yourself trying to be good enough for a God who already declared you righteous through Christ.

Today, I'm giving you permission to step off.

Not permission to sin freely (that's not what grace means).

But permission to rest.

Rest in the finished work of Christ.

Rest in your full acceptance as a son.

Rest in the truth that your standing with God is secure.

Here's what changes when you step off the treadmill:

Your prayer life becomes conversation, not performance review.

You stop asking, "Did I do enough today?" and start saying, "Abba, I need You."

Your failures become confessions, not catastrophes.

You stop hiding and start bringing sin immediately to light because you know forgiveness is instant and complete.

Your service becomes worship, not obligation.

You stop serving to earn favor and start serving out of gratitude for favor already given.

Your relationship with God becomes joy, not burden.

You stop white-knuckling Christianity and start delighting in your Father.

The treadmill is broken. Step off. The finish line is behind you.

Jesus already crossed it.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

NOW. Not someday. Not when you're good enough.

NOW.

40 STRONG - Day 16 Complete ✓

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"
(Ephesians 2:8, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 17

FORGIVEN, NOT CONDEMNED: Freedom from Shame

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Rebuilding on Truth

MORNING: THE VOICE THAT WON'T STOP (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I confessed everything on Day 14. I brought my sexual sin, my anger, my pride, my greed, my relational failures into the light. My brothers prayed for me. I took communion. I heard "You are forgiven." But if I'm honest? I still feel condemned. There's a voice in my head that won't stop reminding me of what I did, who I hurt, how far I fell. It whispers: "You're disgusting. You're a fraud. You'll never really be clean. God might have to forgive you, but He doesn't really want you." Today, I need You to silence that voice—not with my willpower, but with Your truth. Show me the difference between Your conviction and the enemy's condemnation. Teach me to live as forgiven, not just know it theologically. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Verdict Has Been Rendered

Read these slowly. Let them sink deeper than your feelings.

THE VERDICT:

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

"NOW" - not someday, not when you feel better, not when you prove yourself. NOW.

"NO condemnation" - not "less condemnation" or "conditional condemnation." NONE.

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:33-34, NASB).

If God justifies, who can condemn? Not even Jesus condemns you—He intercedes for you.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

You confessed. God forgave. You are cleansed. Past tense. Done.

THE REMOVAL:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12, NASB).

East and west never meet. Your sins are infinitely removed.

"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25, NASB).

God WILL NOT REMEMBER. Not "chooses to overlook" but actively refuses to remember.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7, NASB).

Redemption = bought back. Forgiveness = debt canceled. According to His RICHES, not your performance.

THE CONTRAST:

"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night'" (Revelation 12:10, NASB).

The accuser accuses. Day and night. That's his job.

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1, NASB).

When you sin, you have an ADVOCATE (defense attorney), not an accuser.

Pause. Let this reality settle:

The enemy accuses you.

Jesus defends you.

The Father has already declared the verdict: NOT GUILTY.

Teaching: The Two Voices

After Day 14, you probably experienced something like this:

Immediately after confessing:

- Relief
- Lightness
- Hope
- Freedom
- "I'm so glad I did that"

24-48 hours later:

- Regret ("Why did I say that out loud?")
- Shame ("They must think I'm disgusting")
- Doubt ("Am I really forgiven?")
- Fear ("What if they tell someone?")
- Condemnation ("I'm such a failure")

This is what I call "confession hangover."

And it's driven by two competing voices in your head:

VOICE #1: THE ACCUSER (Satan)

His Strategy:

Before you confess: "Don't tell anyone. It's not that bad. You can handle this alone."

After you confess: "You're an idiot for saying that. Now everyone knows how disgusting you are. God might forgive you, but He's disappointed. You'll never really be clean."

His Goal: Keep you in shame, isolation, and condemnation.

His Weapons:

- Reminding you of past sin (even after confession)
- Magnifying your failures
- Minimizing God's grace
- Creating feelings of unworthiness
- Whispering: "You're different. You're the exception. You've gone too far."

What He Sounds Like:

"You confessed pornography on Day 14. But you still looked at it for 15 years. You've wasted your life. Your wife will never trust you. Your kids will be damaged. God might have to forgive you technically, but He can never really use you again. You're disqualified."

"You confessed anger. But you've already traumatized your kids. The damage is done. Sure, God forgives, but they won't forget. You've ruined them. You're a terrible father."

"You confessed pride. But look at you—you're still struggling with it. If you were really forgiven, you'd be different by now. Obviously the confession didn't work. You're hopeless."

Theological Insight:

"The devil is called the 'accuser of the brethren' (Revelation 12:10). That's not just his title—it's his full-time job. Day and night, he brings charges against you before God. But Jesus stands as your defense attorney, and the verdict has already been rendered: Not guilty." – R.C. Sproul (paraphrase)

VOICE #2: THE ADVOCATE (Jesus)

His Strategy:

Before you confess: "Come to Me. Bring it into the light. I already know, and I'm not surprised."

After you confess: "Well done. That took courage. You're forgiven. Now walk in freedom."

His Goal: Lead you to repentance, restoration, and freedom.

His Weapons:

- Reminding you of Christ's finished work
- Magnifying God's grace
- Minimizing your shame (not your sin—your shame)
- Creating assurance of forgiveness
- Whispering: "You are Mine. You are clean. You are loved."

What He Sounds Like:

"You confessed pornography. I know the weight you've carried. I already paid for those 15 years on the cross. Your wife's healing is My responsibility, not yours. Your kids' future is in My hands. You are forgiven. You are being restored. You are useful to Me—not despite your past, but often because of it. Broken men make the best healers."

"You confessed anger. Yes, you've wounded your kids. But I'm in the business of redeeming what's been broken. Your apology to them is the beginning of healing. I can restore what you've damaged. You're not a terrible father—you're a father who's learning to lead with grace instead of rage. That's growth."

"You confessed pride. And yes, you're still struggling. You know why? Because sanctification is a process, not an event. I'm not done with you yet. The fact that you're aware of your pride is evidence I'm working. You're not hopeless—you're mid-transformation."

Theological Insight:

"Jesus doesn't minimize your sin. But He also doesn't magnify your shame. He deals with sin at the cross and invites you to walk in the freedom He purchased." – Timothy Keller

The Critical Difference: Conviction vs. Condemnation

Both voices point to your sin. But they lead you in opposite directions.

CONDEMNATION (Enemy)	CONVICTION (Holy Spirit)
Vague and endless	Specific and actionable
"You're a terrible person"	"You sinned in this specific way"
Past-focused	Future-focused
"You're still that guy from 10 years ago"	"You did this, now repent and move forward"
Hopeless	Hopeful
"You'll never change"	"God is transforming you"
Crushing	Corrective
Leaves you in despair	Leads you to repentance
Isolating	Communal
"Don't tell anyone"	"Confess to one another"
Shaming	Loving
"You're disgusting"	"You're beloved, now turn from this"
Focuses on identity	Focuses on behavior
"You ARE bad"	"You DID something bad"

How to Tell Which Voice You're Hearing:

Ask:

1. Does this voice lead me toward God or away from Him?
2. Does this voice make me want to confess or hide?
3. Does this voice offer hope or only despair?
4. Is this voice specific (conviction) or vague (condemnation)?
5. Does this voice sound like grace or like shame?

Example:

Condemnation: "You're such a hypocrite. You confessed pornography but you still struggle with lust. You'll never be free. Just give up."

Conviction: "You looked at that woman lustfully. That's not who you are in Christ. Turn away. Confess it. Keep moving forward. You're being transformed."

Condemnation crushes. Conviction corrects.

Why Shame Lingers After Confession

You confessed on Day 14. God forgave instantly. So why do you still feel condemned?

REASON #1: YOU BELIEVE FEELINGS MORE THAN FACTS

The Fact: God forgave you the moment you confessed (1 John 1:9).

The Feeling: "I don't feel forgiven."

The Lie: "If I don't feel it, it must not be real."

The Truth: Forgiveness is a judicial reality, not an emotional experience.

When a judge declares "Not guilty," your feelings don't change the verdict. The verdict stands regardless of how you feel.

"Therefore there is NOW no condemnation" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

Not "there will be no condemnation once you feel better." NOW.

Theological Insight:

"Feelings are great followers but terrible leaders. The gospel is not 'Feel, then believe.' It's 'Believe, then eventually your feelings will follow.' Don't trust your feelings about your forgiveness. Trust God's Word." – John Piper (paraphrase)

REASON #2: YOU'RE CONFUSING CONSEQUENCES WITH CONDEMNATION

Forgiveness removes guilt. It doesn't always remove consequences.

Examples:

Sexual sin (pornography, affairs):

- **Forgiven:** Yes, immediately upon confession

- **Consequences:** Damaged trust in marriage, neural pathways that take time to rewire, relational rebuilding required

Anger:

- **Forgiven:** Yes, immediately upon confession
- **Consequences:** Children who still flinch, wife who still fears your reaction, patterns that take time to break

Financial sin (debt, greed):

- **Forgiven:** Yes, immediately upon confession
- **Consequences:** Debt still exists, broken trust with creditors, financial rebuilding required

God forgives the SIN instantly. But He often allows the CONSEQUENCES to remain—not to punish you, but to teach you and shape you.

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7, NASB).

Sowing and reaping is not about condemnation. It's about discipleship.

REASON #3: YOU'RE LISTENING TO THE ACCUSER INSTEAD OF THE ADVOCATE

The enemy has had years (decades?) to build neural pathways in your brain that default to shame.

When you confessed on Day 14, you broke the power of secrecy. But the enemy didn't give up. He just changed tactics.

Before confession: "Don't tell anyone."

After confession: "You're an idiot for telling. Now everyone knows."

Your job: Recognize his voice and reject it.

"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, NASB).

Notice the order:

1. Submit to God (agree with His verdict: forgiven)
2. Resist the devil (reject his condemnation)

3. He will flee

REASON #4: YOU'RE TRYING TO EARN WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN GIVEN

The Performance Trap (again):

"I confessed, but now I need to prove I'm really sorry by:

- Never messing up again
- Being extra spiritual
- Serving harder
- Feeling guilty longer"

No.

Forgiveness is not earned. It's received.

You already received it on Day 14. Stop trying to earn it through penance.

"It is for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1, NASB).

Don't go back to the slavery of trying to earn forgiveness. You have it. Walk in it.

The Permanence of Forgiveness

Here's what most men don't understand:

Forgiveness is not a process. It's an event.

WRONG UNDERSTANDING:

- Day 14: I confessed (10% forgiven)
- Week 3: I'm walking in purity (40% forgiven)
- Month 2: I'm doing well (70% forgiven)
- Month 6: Maybe now I'm fully forgiven (100%)

RIGHT UNDERSTANDING:

- Day 14: I confessed → 100% forgiven IMMEDIATELY
- Week 3-Month 6+: I'm learning to walk in the freedom of what's already mine

Forgiveness doesn't increase over time. Understanding and experiencing forgiveness does.

Biblical Evidence:

The Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:39-43):

- No time to prove himself
- No opportunity to make amends
- No chance to change behavior
- Just: "Jesus, remember me"

Jesus' response:

"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, NASB).

Not "work on yourself for a while, then maybe." TODAY. Immediate. Complete.

The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11):

- Caught in the act
- Brought to Jesus for judgment
- Expected stoning

Jesus' response:

"I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more" (John 8:11, NASB).

Not "Go prove yourself, then I won't condemn you." I DO NOT CONDEMN YOU. Now.

David After Adultery and Murder (2 Samuel 12, Psalm 51):

- Committed adultery with Bathsheba
- Had her husband murdered
- Confronted by Nathan the prophet

David's Response:

"I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:13, NASB).

Nathan's Immediate Reply:

"The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13, NASB).

Immediate forgiveness. Even for adultery and murder. Consequences remained (the child died, family chaos followed). But forgiveness? Instant.

The Pattern: Confession → Immediate Forgiveness → Walk in Freedom → (Sometimes) Consequences Teach You

How to Receive Forgiveness (Not Just Know It)

Knowing you're forgiven intellectually ≠ Living as forgiven experientially

Here's how to move from head knowledge to heart reality:

STEP 1: SPEAK THE TRUTH OUT LOUD

The enemy operates in whispers and thoughts. Truth needs to be SPOKEN.

When shame whispers: "You're still guilty," SPEAK OUT LOUD:

"There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. I am in Christ. Therefore, I am not condemned."

When shame says: "God is disappointed in you," SPEAK:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed my transgressions. My sin is removed. God is not holding it against me."

Why speak it?

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17, NASB).

Your faith grows when you HEAR truth. Even when you're the one speaking it.

STEP 2: BREAK AGREEMENT WITH CONDEMNATION

Remember Day 6? Breaking agreement with lies?

Do it again. Specifically for condemnation.

Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I break agreement with condemnation. I break agreement with shame. I break agreement with the lie that I'm still guilty. I renounce the voice that says 'You're disgusting,' 'You're disqualified,' 'You'll never be clean.' I declare: I am forgiven. I am cleansed. I am righteous in Christ. I walk in freedom, not shame."

STEP 3: REMIND YOURSELF OF THE CROSS DAILY

Every morning this week, do this:

- 1. Remember what you confessed (don't suppress it—acknowledge it)**
- 2. Visualize the cross (Jesus dying for THAT specific sin)**
- 3. Declare: "That sin was paid for 2,000 years ago. The debt is canceled. I receive the forgiveness Jesus bought."**

Why daily?

Because shame doesn't give up after one confrontation. You're retraining your brain to default to grace instead of guilt.

STEP 4: PRACTICE RECEIVING, NOT EARNING

When you pray this week, practice saying:

"Father, I receive Your forgiveness. I don't understand it. I don't deserve it. But I receive it. Thank You."

Not: "Father, I'll try harder to earn back Your approval."

Receiving is harder than earning for most men. Practice it.

STEP 5: RESPOND TO FAILURE DIFFERENTLY

When you fail this week (and you will), practice immediate confession:

Old Pattern:

1. Sin
2. Shame
3. Hide
4. Isolate
5. Eventually confess (maybe)

New Pattern:

1. Sin
2. Immediate confession: "Father, I just [specific sin]. I'm sorry. I receive Your forgiveness right now."
3. Text accountability partner within the hour
4. Keep walking

The goal: Shrink the time between sin and confession from days/weeks to minutes.

STEP 6: LET YOUR BROTHERS REMIND YOU

When shame hits, text a brother:

"The enemy is attacking me with condemnation about [what I confessed]. I need you to remind me I'm forgiven."

And when a brother texts you that, RESPOND:

"Brother, you are forgiven. Romans 8:1. No condemnation. You are clean. The enemy is lying to you. Stand firm."

Sometimes you can't hear God's voice through the shame. But you can hear it through your brothers.

Living AS Forgiven (Not Trying to BECOME Forgiven)

The shift:

Before: Living as if forgiveness is conditional and probationary

After: Living as if forgiveness is complete and permanent

What this looks like practically:

IN PRAYER:

Before: "God, please forgive me... again. I know I've asked before. I'm sorry I keep failing."

After: "Father, I sinned. I confess it. I receive Your forgiveness. Thank You that it's already mine in Christ."

IN FAILURE:

Before: "I messed up again. I'm back to square one. God must be so tired of me."

After: "I messed up. God knew I would. His love didn't change. Let me confess, learn, and keep walking."

IN SERVICE:

Before: "Maybe if I serve enough, God will finally be pleased with me."

After: "God is already pleased with me in Christ. I serve out of gratitude, not guilt."

IN RELATIONSHIPS:

Before: "I can't tell anyone I'm struggling. They'll think I'm not really forgiven."

After: "I'm forgiven AND I'm still in process. I can be honest about both."

IN IDENTITY:

Before: "I'm a forgiven sinner" (emphasis on sinner)

After: "I'm a saint who sometimes sins" (emphasis on identity in Christ)

"To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1, NASB).

Paul called believers "saints," not "sinners trying to become saints."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Getting honest about lingering shame)

SECTION 1: THE VOICES

1. WHICH VOICE IS LOUDEST?

Since Day 14, which voice have you heard more?

- ☐ The Accuser (condemnation, shame, "you're still guilty")
 - ☐ The Advocate (grace, forgiveness, "you're clean")
 - ☐ Both, but the Accuser is winning
 - ☐ I can't tell the difference
-

2. WHAT THE ACCUSER SAYS:

What specific condemnation has been playing in your head since Day 14?

Now, identify it as a LIE and write the TRUTH:

The Lie: _____

The Truth (Scripture): _____

SECTION 2: CONFESSION HANGOVER

3. REGRET:

Have you regretted confessing on Day 14? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

If yes, why?

- ☐ Fear of judgment
- ☐ Embarrassment
- ☐ Wondering if my brothers think less of me
- ☐ Feeling exposed
- ☐ Believing I shared too much

The Truth: Confession brought it into the light. Light destroys shame. You did the right thing.

4. SHAME PERSISTENCE:

What specific sin from Week 2 are you still feeling condemned about?

Why do you think the shame is lingering?

- ☐ I don't believe I'm really forgiven
 - ☐ I'm confusing consequences with condemnation
 - ☐ I'm listening to the Accuser
 - ☐ I'm trying to earn forgiveness through penance
 - ☐ I keep failing in the same area
-

SECTION 3: FORGIVENESS REALITY CHECK

5. HEAD VS. HEART:

Intellectually, do you know God has forgiven you? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Emotionally, do you FEEL forgiven? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

If there's a gap, what's creating it?

6. THE PERMANENCE TEST:

Do you believe your forgiveness can be lost or diminished through:

- ☐ Repeated failure in the same sin
- ☐ Not "feeling sorry enough"
- ☐ Not doing enough good works to balance the bad
- ☐ God getting tired of forgiving you

If you checked any of these, you don't yet understand the permanence of forgiveness.

Read 1 John 1:9 again. Write it here:

SECTION 4: BREAKING AGREEMENT

7. RENUNCIATION:

Today, right now, break agreement with condemnation. Say this out loud:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I break agreement with the lie that I am still condemned. I renounce shame. I renounce the voice of the Accuser. I declare: I am forgiven. I am cleansed. I am righteous in Christ. There is NOW no condemnation for me because I am in Christ Jesus."

How did that feel?

SECTION 5: LIVING AS FORGIVEN

8. THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE:

Which of these will you practice this week? (Choose 2-3)

- ☐ Speak Romans 8:1 out loud every morning
- ☐ When shame hits, text a brother immediately
- ☐ Practice immediate confession (shrink the time between sin and confession)
- ☐ Visualize the cross daily, seeing Jesus paying for the specific sin you're still carrying
- ☐ Respond to failure with "I'm forgiven AND in process" instead of "I'm back to square one"
- ☐ Pray as a son receiving forgiveness, not a slave earning it

9. THE CONSEQUENCE VS. CONDEMNATION DISTINCTION:

Are you experiencing consequences from sin confessed in Week 2? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are they?

Are you confusing those consequences with condemnation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Write this truth: "Consequences are God's discipline, not His rejection. He's shaping me, not punishing me."

10. THE IDENTITY SHIFT:

How do you currently identify yourself?

- ☐ A sinner saved by grace (emphasis on sinner)
- ☐ A saint who sometimes sins (emphasis on identity in Christ)

Read Ephesians 1:1 and 1 Peter 2:9. What does God call you?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily this week)

Today, I declare:

I am not condemned—I am forgiven.

I am not still guilty—I am cleansed.

I am not on probation—I am fully accepted.

I am not defined by my past—I am defined by Christ.

I am not listening to the Accuser—I'm listening to the Advocate.

I am not earning forgiveness—I'm receiving what's already mine.

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).

I am in Christ. Therefore, I am NOT condemned.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, silence the voice of the Accuser. He has been loud this week, reminding me of what I confessed, magnifying my shame, whispering that I'll never be clean. But You have declared the verdict: Not guilty. Forgiven. Cleansed. Righteous in Christ. Help me believe that today—not just in my head, but in my heart. When shame rises, remind me of the cross. When condemnation speaks, let me hear Your voice louder: "You are My beloved son. You are forgiven. Walk in freedom." In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"No condemnation"*

Breathe out: *"I am forgiven NOW"*

(Romans 8:1)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Is shame speaking today? If so, reject it out loud: "I am forgiven. Romans 8:1. The enemy is lying."*

Brief Prayer: *Father, I receive Your forgiveness today.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What evidence of God's forgiveness did I see today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I live more in condemnation or in freedom today?

Condemnation moments: _____

Freedom moments: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

Did I listen to the Accuser today? What did he say?

What is the TRUTH?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for not fully receiving the forgiveness You've given.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Father reminding me about His forgiveness?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"The shame I'm still carrying from Week 2 is about _____. The Accuser's lie is _____. The truth from God's Word is _____. Tomorrow I will walk in that truth by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 17 ✓ - Today I learned the difference between condemnation (enemy) and conviction (Holy Spirit). I'm still battling shame about [specific sin], but I'm practicing receiving forgiveness instead of earning it. Pray that Romans 8:1 sinks deeper—there is NO condemnation."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 18 title: "Empowered, Not Powerless - The Holy Spirit's Work"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was about forgiveness vs. condemnation. Tomorrow is about power vs. powerlessness. Teach me that I'm not fighting alone—the Holy Spirit empowers me for what You've called me to. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE ACCUSER HAS NO CASE

Theological Insight:

"The devil is a better theologian than any of us and yet he is a devil still. Theology is not enough. The devil knows that you are forgiven. What he's banking on is that you won't believe it. His entire strategy is to get you to agree with condemnation instead of resting in the verdict God has already declared: Not guilty." – A.W. Tozer (paraphrase)

Brother, the accuser has been loud this week, hasn't he?

Ever since Day 14, he's been whispering:

- "They must think you're disgusting"
- "God might forgive you, but He's disappointed"
- "You'll never really be clean"
- "You're disqualified now"

Here's what you need to know:

The accuser has no case.

He's been disbarred. His accusations have no legal standing.

Why?

Because Jesus already stood trial for you. The verdict was rendered. The sentence was carried out. The debt was paid.

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:33-34, NASB).

Translation:

The Accuser: "This man is guilty of pornography, anger, pride, greed, relational failure!"

The Judge (God): "I justify him. Case dismissed."

The Accuser: "But look at what he's done!"

The Advocate (Jesus): "I already died for that. The debt is paid. He's forgiven."

The Accuser has no response. Because the cross is irrefutable evidence.

So when he whispers condemnation this week, here's what you say:

"My sin was nailed to the cross 2,000 years ago. Jesus paid the debt. God declared the verdict: Not guilty. You have no case. I am forgiven. I am clean. I am righteous in Christ. Now flee."

And according to James 4:7, when you resist him in submission to God, he WILL flee.

You're not condemned. You're forgiven.

Live like it.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NASB).

You confessed. He forgave. You are cleansed.

Don't let the enemy steal what Christ purchased.

40 STRONG - Day 17 Complete ✓

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"
(Romans 8:1, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 18

EMPOWERED, NOT POWERLESS: The Holy Spirit's Work

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Rebuilding on Truth

MORNING: THE POWER YOU'VE BEEN IGNORING (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I've tried so hard. I've tried to stop looking at pornography—failed. I've tried to control my anger—failed. I've tried to be humble—failed. I've tried to be generous—failed. I keep making commitments I can't keep and breaking promises I meant to honor. I'm exhausted from trying. But maybe that's the problem. Maybe I've been trying in my own strength when You've already given me Your Spirit. Today, teach me what it means to be empowered, not just sincere. To walk by the Spirit, not just try harder. Show me the power I've been ignoring—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, living in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Power Inside You

Read these slowly. This is not metaphor. This is reality.

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT:

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, NASB).

God's Spirit DWELLS in you. Not visits. DWELLS. Permanently.

"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:9-11, NASB).

The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you.

THE PROMISE OF POWER:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

POWER. Not suggestions. Not good intentions. POWER.

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7, NASB).

Power. Love. Discipline. All from the Spirit, not from your willpower.

THE TRANSFORMATION:

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18, NASB).

BEING transformed. Present tense. Ongoing. By the Spirit.

THE CHOICE:

"I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Galatians 5:16-17, NASB).

Walk BY the Spirit. Not try harder IN the flesh.

THE FRUIT:

"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, NASB).

Fruit. Not manufactured. Cultivated. The Spirit produces what you cannot.

Pause. Let this reality sink in:

The same power that spoke the universe into existence...

The same power that parted the Red Sea...

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead...

THAT POWER lives in you.

You are not powerless.

Teaching: The Exhaustion of Trying vs. The Power of Trusting

Here's the lie most Christian men believe:

"I know what I need to do. I just need to try harder."

So you:

- **Make commitments on Sunday night**
- **Break them by Tuesday**
- **Feel shame**
- **Resolve to try harder next week**
- **Repeat**

This is called "white-knuckling."

And it's exhausting. Because you're trying to do in your own strength what only the Holy Spirit can do in His.

Theological Insight:

***"The Christian life is not hard to live. It's impossible. You cannot live it. Only Christ can live it through you by the power of the Holy Spirit. The moment you try to live the Christian life in your own strength, you've already failed."* – Major W. Ian Thomas**

The Two Ways to Live

Paul contrasts them clearly in Romans 7-8:

LIVING BY THE FLESH (Romans 7:14-24):

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want... Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:18-19, 24, NASB).

This is Paul describing life in the flesh:

- Willing but unable
- Wanting to do good but doing evil
- Trying and failing
- Wretched, exhausted, defeated

Sound familiar?

That's Week 2. That's what you faced when you confessed. The flesh cannot produce holiness. It can only produce failure.

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT (Romans 8:1-17):

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death... For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:1-2, 14, NASB).

This is life in the Spirit:

- No condemnation (you're free from shame)
- Set free from sin and death (not sinless, but no longer enslaved)
- Led by the Spirit (not driven by willpower)
- Living as sons (not slaves)

This is Week 3. This is where you are now.

The Difference:

FLESH	SPIRIT
Try harder	Trust deeper
Willpower	Spirit-power
"I can do this"	"He can do this in me"
Self-effort	God-dependence
Exhausting	Empowering
Failure → Shame → Try again Failure → Confession → Spirit empowers	
"I'll never change"	"He's transforming me"

Paul's Summary:

"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3, NASB).

Translation: You started by grace through the Spirit. Why are you trying to finish by works through the flesh?

What the Holy Spirit Actually Does

Most men have a vague idea of the Holy Spirit. Let's get specific.

Here's what the Spirit does in you and through you:

1. THE SPIRIT CONVICTS YOU OF SIN

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8, NASB).

Week 2 wasn't just you deciding to confess. The Spirit convicted you.

That moment when you couldn't ignore your pornography use anymore? Spirit.

That moment when you realized your anger was damaging your kids? Spirit.

That moment when your pride became unbearable to yourself? Spirit.

The Spirit brings sin to light—not to condemn you, but to free you.

2. THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS YOU TO CHANGE

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2, NASB).

Breaking habitual sin is not about your willpower. It's about the Spirit's power.

Your part: Submit to the Spirit, confess quickly, stay in community

The Spirit's part: Break the power of sin, create new desires, transform your heart

You cannot free yourself from addiction. But the Spirit can.

3. THE SPIRIT PRODUCES FRUIT IN YOU

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB).

Notice: FRUIT, not "works."

You don't manufacture fruit. You cultivate it.

Analogy:

An apple tree doesn't try to produce apples. It just abides in the soil, receives water and sunlight, and apples naturally grow.

You don't manufacture love, joy, peace, patience. You abide in Christ, stay connected to the Spirit, and fruit naturally grows.

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

Apart from Him = nothing. Abiding in Him = much fruit.

4. THE SPIRIT HELPS YOU PRAY

"In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27, NASB).

When you don't know what to pray, the Spirit prays for you.

Those moments when you're overwhelmed, broken, and all you can say is "Help"? The Spirit translates that into perfect intercession before the Father.

You're never praying alone.

5. THE SPIRIT TEACHES YOU TRUTH

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26, NASB).

When Scripture suddenly makes sense in a way it never did before? Spirit.

When truth clicks at exactly the moment you need it? Spirit.

When you remember a verse that speaks directly to your struggle? Spirit.

The Bible isn't just a book you read. It's the Spirit's primary tool for transformation.

6. THE SPIRIT GUARANTEES YOUR INHERITANCE

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14, NASB).

You are SEALED with the Spirit. Like a king's seal on a document—official, permanent, binding.

The Spirit is God's down payment guaranteeing your future inheritance.

You didn't just get fire insurance. You got the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity lives in you.

7. THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS YOU FOR WITNESS

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

Week 5 will be about engagement—stepping into mission. You'll need power for that. The Spirit provides it.

Sharing your faith isn't about having perfect words. It's about the Spirit working through your testimony.

Walking BY the Spirit (Not Just Knowing ABOUT the Spirit)

Knowledge ≠ Power

You can know ABOUT the Holy Spirit without walking BY the Spirit.

Example:

You know the Spirit convicts of sin. But are you listening when He convicts, or ignoring Him until the guilt is unbearable?

You know the Spirit produces fruit. But are you abiding in the Vine, or manufacturing "Christian behavior" through effort?

You know the Spirit empowers. But are you asking for His help, or trying to white-knuckle change?

How to Walk BY the Spirit:

Paul's command: *"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16, NASB).

Greek: "Stoicheō" = to walk in step with, to march in rank, to follow in order

Picture a soldier in formation. He doesn't run ahead. He doesn't lag behind. He stays IN STEP with his commanding officer.

Walking by the Spirit means:

- **Staying in step with His pace (not running ahead in your own plans)**
 - **Following His lead (not insisting on your own way)**
 - **Responding to His prompts (not ignoring conviction)**
 - **Depending on His power (not trying to manufacture results)**
-

Practical Steps:

1. START YOUR DAY ASKING FOR THE SPIRIT'S HELP

Not: "God, help me not to sin today" (willpower prayer)

But: "Holy Spirit, I can't do this on my own. Empower me today. Lead me. Convict me when I stray. Produce Your fruit in me. I depend on You."

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25, NASB).

2. RESPOND IMMEDIATELY TO CONVICTION

When the Spirit convicts:

- **Don't argue**
- **Don't delay**
- **Don't rationalize**
- **Immediately confess and turn**

Example:

You're about to click on something you shouldn't. The Spirit says, "Don't."

Flesh response: "Just this once. No one will know."

Spirit response: "You're right. I'm turning away right now."

The faster you respond to the Spirit's conviction, the stronger that habit becomes.

3. CULTIVATE THROUGH SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The Spirit produces fruit. But you cultivate the soil.

Disciplines are not earning favor. They're creating conditions for growth.

Analogy:

A farmer doesn't make corn grow. But he tills the soil, plants the seed, waters it, removes weeds. The growth is God's work. The cultivation is the farmer's.

Your disciplines:

- **Prayer (conversation with God)**
- **Scripture (hearing God's voice)**
- **Worship (focusing on God's greatness)**

- Fasting (denying flesh to focus on Spirit)
- Community (brothers who sharpen you)
- Service (living out Spirit-empowered love)

These don't earn the Spirit's power. They position you to receive it.

4. STAY IN COMMUNITY

You can't walk by the Spirit in isolation.

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19, NASB).

Notice: "Be filled with the Spirit" is immediately followed by "speaking to one another."

Spirit-filled living happens in community, not isolation.

Your brothers from Day 14? Stay connected. The Spirit works through them too.

5. PRACTICE QUICK CONFESSION

The Spirit convicts. You confess. Power flows again.

When you sin:

1. The Spirit immediately convicts (that uncomfortable feeling)
2. You immediately confess (within minutes, not days)
3. You receive immediate forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
4. You keep walking (no shame spiral)

The goal: Shrink the time between sin and confession from days to minutes.

The Battle: Flesh vs. Spirit

Reality check: You're not done battling sin. Week 2 confession didn't make temptation disappear.

But you're not fighting alone. And you're not fighting in your own strength.

Paul's Honesty:

"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Galatians 5:17, NASB).

There's a war happening inside you. Every day.

The flesh wants:

- Pornography, lust, sexual sin
- Anger, rage, bitterness
- Pride, self-sufficiency, independence
- Greed, materialism, comfort
- Selfishness, laziness, apathy

The Spirit wants:

- Purity, holiness, self-control
- Patience, gentleness, peace
- Humility, dependence, community
- Generosity, contentment, sacrifice
- Love, service, mission

Every day, you choose which one you'll feed.

The Two Lists:

DEEDS OF THE FLESH (Galatians 5:19-21):

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Galatians 5:19-21, NASB).

Week 2 was filled with these.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:22-23):

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB).

Week 3 is about cultivating these.

The Choice:

"Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24-25, NASB).

You've crucified the flesh (positionally, at salvation). Now walk it out daily (practically, by the Spirit).

The Power You Already Have

Here's what most men miss:

You don't need MORE of the Holy Spirit. You need the Holy Spirit to have MORE of you.

At salvation, you received the FULL Spirit:

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13, NASB).

You don't get 30% of the Spirit at salvation and earn the rest through performance.

You got the WHOLE Spirit. The question is: How much of you does He have?

Paul's command:

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18, NASB).

"Be filled" = Greek "plēroō" = continuously filled, controlled by, under the influence of

Just like being drunk means alcohol controls you, being filled with the Spirit means the Spirit controls you.

The question isn't "How do I get more of the Spirit?" but "How do I yield more of myself to the Spirit I already have?"

What does yielding look like?

In the morning:

"Holy Spirit, today is Yours. I surrender my plans, my agenda, my will. Lead me."

When tempted:

"Holy Spirit, I can't resist this in my own strength. Empower me. I choose to walk by You."

When convicted:

"Holy Spirit, You're right. I confess this. Change me."

When serving:

"Holy Spirit, love through me. I can't manufacture this kind of love on my own."

When you fail:

"Holy Spirit, I blew it. Thank You that Your power isn't dependent on my perfection. I receive forgiveness and get back up."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Getting specific about Spirit-dependence)

SECTION 1: YOUR CURRENT APPROACH

1. TRYING VS. TRUSTING:

Which describes you more accurately?

- ☐ **I try really hard to change in my own strength**
- ☐ **I depend on the Spirit's power to change me**
- ☐ **I go back and forth between both**

Explain:

2. THE EXHAUSTION TEST:

Are you exhausted from trying to be a good Christian? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

If yes, it's because you're living by the flesh (willpower) instead of the Spirit (God's power).

What specific area exhausts you most?

SECTION 2: WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

3. SPIRIT AWARENESS:

When was the last time you consciously asked the Holy Spirit for help with something specific?

What happened?

4. CONVICTION RESPONSE:

When the Spirit convicts you, how quickly do you respond?

- ☐ Immediately (within minutes)
- ☐ Same day (within hours)
- ☐ Eventually (within days)
- ☐ I ignore it and hope it goes away

The goal: Immediate response. Every delay strengthens the flesh.

5. FRUIT INVENTORY:

Look at the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Which are most evident in your life?

- ☐ Love
- ☐ Joy

- ☐ **Peace**
- ☐ **Patience**
- ☐ **Kindness**
- ☐ **Goodness**
- ☐ **Faithfulness**
- ☐ **Gentleness**
- ☐ **Self-control**

Which are most lacking?

You can't manufacture these. But you can ask the Spirit to produce them.

SECTION 3: FLESH VS. SPIRIT BATTLE

6. WHAT YOU'RE FEEDING:

This past week, have you fed the flesh or the Spirit more?

Flesh-feeding behaviors:

- **Consuming content that stirs lust**
- **Dwelling on resentment**
- **Nursing pride**
- **Pursuing comfort over calling**
- **Avoiding conviction**

Spirit-feeding behaviors:

- **Prayer, Scripture, worship**
- **Confessing quickly**
- **Serving others**
- **Pursuing purity**
- **Obedying promptly**

Which list describes your week more?

7. THE BATTLE YOU'RE LOSING:

What specific battle are you trying to fight in your own strength instead of the Spirit's?

What would change if you surrendered that battle to the Spirit daily?

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL SPIRIT-DEPENDENCE

8. MORNING SURRENDER:

This week, will you start each morning with this prayer?

"Holy Spirit, I can't do today on my own. I surrender this day to You. Lead me. Convict me. Empower me. Produce Your fruit in me. I depend on You completely."

- ☐ Yes, I commit to this
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I'm not ready
-

9. IMMEDIATE CONFESSION:

When the Spirit convicts you of sin this week, will you:

- ☐ Confess within 5 minutes
- ☐ Confess the same day
- ☐ Eventually confess

Commit to immediate confession. Don't let sin sit.

10. COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

The Spirit works through community. Will you:

- ☐ Text a brother when you're struggling (instead of white-knuckling alone)
- ☐ Ask for prayer when you need it (instead of pretending you're fine)
- ☐ Share a victory with your brothers (so they can celebrate God's work in you)

Which one will you do this week? _____

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud with conviction)

Today, I declare:

I am not powerless—the Spirit of God lives in me.

I am not trying harder—I'm trusting deeper.

I am not white-knuckling change—the Spirit is transforming me.

I am not fighting alone—the same power that raised Jesus empowers me.

I am not manufacturing fruit—the Spirit is producing it in me.

I am not walking by the flesh—I'm walking by the Spirit.

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11, NASB).

Resurrection power lives in me. I am empowered, not powerless.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Holy Spirit, I've been trying to live the Christian life in my own strength, and I'm exhausted. Forgive me for relying on willpower instead of Your power. Today, I surrender. I can't defeat pornography on my own—empower me. I can't control my anger alone—produce patience in me. I can't manufacture humility through effort—cultivate it in me. I depend on You completely. Fill me. Lead me. Transform me. Not by my might, not by my power, but by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"Holy Spirit, fill me"*

Breathe out: *"I depend on You"*

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I trying to control this moment in my strength, or am I surrendered to the Spirit's leading?*

Brief Prayer: *Holy Spirit, I need You right now.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see the Spirit's work in me today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I walk by the Spirit today, or by the flesh?

Flesh moments: _____

Spirit moments: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

Where did I try to fight in my own strength instead of depending on the Spirit?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Holy Spirit, forgive me for relying on myself instead of You.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Spirit teaching me about dependence on Him?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"The area where I've been trying hardest in my own strength is _____. This has exhausted me because _____. Tomorrow I will surrender this to the Spirit by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 18 ✓ - Today I learned I'm not powerless—the Holy Spirit lives in me. I've been trying to change [specific sin/struggle] in my own strength. Tomorrow I'm surrendering it to the Spirit's power. Pray I learn to trust deeper instead of trying harder."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 19 title: "Sent, Not Sitting - Mission Clarity"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was about the Spirit's power in me. Tomorrow is about my mission in the world. Show me I'm not just saved FROM sin but sent ON mission. Prepare my heart to step out. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU HAVE RESURRECTION POWER

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is not just that Jesus died for your sins. It's that He rose from the dead and sent His Spirit to live in you. You have the same power that raised Jesus from the grave living inside you right now. Stop trying to live the Christian life in your own strength. It's impossible. But with the Spirit? All things become possible." – Francis Chan (paraphrase)

Brother, you've been trying so hard.

Trying to stop looking at pornography.

Trying to control your anger.

Trying to be humble.

Trying to be generous.

Trying to be the man you know you should be.

And you keep failing.

Not because you're weak. But because you're trying to do in your strength what only the Spirit can do in His.

Here's the shift:

Stop trying harder. Start trusting deeper.

The same Spirit who:

- **Raised Jesus from the dead**
- **Empowered the apostles at Pentecost**
- **Transformed Saul into Paul**
- **Sustained the martyrs**
- **Built the church**

THAT Spirit lives in you.

You don't need to muster up more willpower.

You don't need to try harder.

You need to surrender more fully to the power you already have.

Tomorrow morning, before you do anything else:

"Holy Spirit, I can't do today on my own. I surrender. Lead me. Empower me. I depend on You completely."

And then walk in step with Him.

When temptation hits: "Holy Spirit, help."

When conviction comes: "Holy Spirit, You're right. I confess."

When you're serving: "Holy Spirit, love through me."

When you fail: "Holy Spirit, I receive forgiveness and get back up."

You're not powerless.

You have resurrection power living in you.

Live like it.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NASB).

**Not "I can do all things through my willpower."
Through HIM. Through the Spirit. Through God's power in you.
You are empowered.**

40 STRONG - Day 18 Complete ✓

***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"*
(Acts 1:8, NASB)**

40 STRONG - DAY 19

SENT, NOT SITTING: Mission Clarity

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Rebuilding on Truth

MORNING: THE SHIFT OUTWARD (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, the last three weeks have been inward-focused. Week 1: Awakening to my passivity. Week 2: Repenting of my sin. Week 3: Renewing my understanding of who I am—son, accepted, forgiven, empowered. But today feels different. Today You're turning me outward. And if I'm honest? That scares me. I still feel broken. I'm still battling the same sins. I still don't feel qualified. But I'm beginning to understand something: You don't call the qualified. You qualify the called. Today, show me I'm not just saved FROM something—I'm sent FOR something. Give me clarity on my mission. Show me where You're already at work and invite me to join You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Sending

Read these carefully. This is your commission.

JESUS' MISSION BECOMES YOUR MISSION:

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:21-22, NASB).

"AS the Father sent Me, I ALSO send you." Same authority. Same empowerment. Same mission.

THE GREAT COMMISSION:

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20, NASB).

"GO" - Not "sit and wait." GO.

Notice: He's WITH you. You're not sent alone.

THE PURPOSE OF SALVATION:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

You weren't saved TO sit. You were saved FOR good works that God already prepared.

THE AMBASSADOR ROLE:

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:17-20, NASB).

You are an AMBASSADOR. An official representative of the King in foreign territory.

THE WITNESS CALLING:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

Jerusalem = your home/family

Judea = your workplace/neighborhood

Samaria = people different from you

Remotest part = everywhere God leads

You're a witness. Not might be. ARE.

THE MULTIPLICATION MANDATE:

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Four generations: Paul → Timothy → Faithful men → Others

Your job: Make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

Pause. Let this reality settle:

You are not here by accident.

You are not saved to sit comfortably.

You are SENT—with a mission, a message, and the Spirit's power to accomplish it.

Teaching: From Passive to Sent

Remember Week 1, Day 1?

Israel's army stood on the ridge for 40 days—armed, ready, shouting the war cry—but NEVER engaging.

That was your past.

Armed with theology but not engaging in mission.

Showing up on Sundays but invisible Monday-Saturday.

Knowing truth but not living it out where it matters.

Week 1: You woke up to that reality.

Week 2: You dealt with the sin keeping you passive.

Week 3: You've been renewed in your identity.

Today: You're commissioned.

David didn't stay on the ridge. He stepped into the valley.

And that's what God is calling you to do now.

Theological Insight:

"The church is the only organization in the world that exists primarily for the benefit of its non-members. We don't gather to huddle in safety—we gather to be equipped and sent out on mission." – William Temple

The Lie That Keeps You Sitting

Most Christian men know they should be "doing something" for God. But they're paralyzed by lies:

LIE #1: "I'M NOT QUALIFIED"

The thought:

"I confessed pornography, anger, pride, greed on Day 14. I'm still struggling with those things. How can God use someone like me?"

The truth:

God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called.

Biblical examples of "unqualified" people God sent:

Moses: Murderer, stutterer, argued with God

David: Adulterer, murderer

Peter: Denied Jesus three times

Paul: Persecuted and killed Christians

The woman at the well: Five marriages, living with a man

The Gerasene demoniac: Possessed by demons, lived in tombs

What disqualified them? Nothing. God used their brokenness as preparation.

"But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27, NASB).

Your weakness doesn't disqualify you. It positions you to display God's strength.

LIE #2: "I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO OFFER"

The thought:

"I'm not a pastor. I'm not a Bible scholar. I don't have a dramatic testimony. What could I possibly offer?"

The truth:

You have exactly what God wants to use: Your life. Your story. Your sphere of influence.

"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" (John 4:29, NASB).

The Samaritan woman's qualification? Jesus met her. That's it.

She had no training. No theological degree. No perfect life.

But she had a testimony: "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did."

And an entire village came to faith because of her simple invitation.

Your story matters. Your workplace matters. Your neighborhood matters. Your family matters.

You don't need a platform. You need obedience.

LIE #3: "MISSION IS FOR MISSIONARIES AND PASTORS"

The thought:

"I'm just a regular guy with a regular job. Mission is for the professionals."

The truth:

EVERY believer is a missionary. The only question is where you're sent.

The Great Commission wasn't given to the twelve apostles privately. It was given to 500+ believers (1 Corinthians 15:6) on a mountain in Galilee.

"Go therefore and make disciples of ALL the nations" (Matthew 28:19, NASB).

ALL believers. ALL nations. ALL the time.

Your mission field:

- **Your workplace (8-10 hours/day)**
- **Your neighborhood (where you live)**
- **Your gym, coffee shop, kid's sports team**
- **Your extended family**
- **Anywhere God has placed you**

You are a full-time missionary. Your job is your platform, not your purpose.

Theological Insight:

"The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God's help, I aim to be that man." – D.L. Moody

LIE #4: "I'LL START WHEN I GET MY LIFE TOGETHER"

The thought:

"Once I've conquered pornography, controlled my anger, grown in humility—THEN I'll be ready to serve."

The truth:

If you wait until you're perfect, you'll never start.

Jesus sent the disciples out while they still:

- **Doubted (Matthew 28:17)**
- **Misunderstood His mission (Acts 1:6)**
- **Competed for position (Mark 9:34)**
- **Struggled with faith (Matthew 17:20)**

He didn't wait for perfection. He sent them in process.

You're being transformed (2 Corinthians 3:18). That's ongoing. But you're also sent NOW.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

God prepared works for you BEFORE you were even saved. He's not waiting for you to be perfect. He's waiting for you to be willing.

LIE #5: "MY PAST DISQUALIFIES ME"

The thought:

"I wasted 15 years in pornography. I damaged my kids with my anger. I've made too many mistakes. God can't use me now."

The truth:

God wastes nothing. Not even your failures.

Joseph: Betrayed, sold into slavery, falsely accused, imprisoned

Result: "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20)

Paul: Murderer of Christians

Result: Greatest missionary in church history

Peter: Denied Jesus publicly

Result: Preached at Pentecost, 3,000 saved

Your past doesn't disqualify you. Often, it PREPARES you.

The man who's battled pornography for 15 years and found freedom? He's uniquely equipped to help other men in that same battle.

The father who's learned to replace rage with patience? He's positioned to mentor other angry dads.

God redeems your story. All of it.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28, NASB).

ALL things. Including your failures.

What Does "Sent" Actually Mean?

Being sent doesn't mean:

- **X Quit your job and move overseas**
- **X Become a pastor or missionary (unless God calls you to that)**
- **X Preach on street corners**
- **X Have all the answers**
- **X Be perfect**

Being sent means:

- **✓ Living as Christ's representative wherever you are**
- **✓ Seeing your everyday life as your mission field**
- **✓ Intentionally investing in people for their spiritual growth**
- **✓ Being ready to share your story when opportunities arise**
- **✓ Serving others in Jesus' name**

Your mission is both GENERAL and SPECIFIC:

THE GENERAL MISSION (Every Believer):

1. MAKE DISCIPLES (Matthew 28:19)

Not just "get people saved." Make disciples—learners, followers, reproducers.

This looks like:

- **Sharing your faith when opportunities arise**
 - **Inviting people into your life, not just events**
 - **Walking alongside others in their spiritual growth**
 - **Modeling what it looks like to follow Jesus imperfectly**
-

2. LOVE PEOPLE (John 13:34-35)

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35, NASB).

Love is your apologetic. Your greatest witness isn't your arguments—it's your love.

This looks like:

- **Serving your wife sacrificially**
 - **Being present with your kids**
 - **Caring for your neighbors practically**
 - **Showing kindness to coworkers**
 - **Meeting needs without expecting return**
-

3. BE A WITNESS (Acts 1:8)

"You shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

Not "you might be" or "try to be." You SHALL BE.

A witness doesn't have all the answers. A witness simply tells what they've seen and experienced.

"We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NASB).

This looks like:

- **Sharing your story when asked**
 - **Talking about what God's doing in your life**
 - **Giving testimony to His faithfulness**
 - **Being ready to explain the hope you have (1 Peter 3:15)**
-

THE SPECIFIC MISSION (Your Unique Calling):

God has placed you in a specific:

- **Geographic location (neighborhood, city, region)**
- **Vocational role (job, career, industry)**
- **Relational network (family, friends, coworkers)**
- **Season of life (single, married, father, empty-nester)**
- **Skill set (abilities, experiences, knowledge)**

Your mission is where all these intersect.

Example:

You are: A firefighter, married with three kids, living in suburban Illinois, skilled in crisis response, with a story of overcoming addiction.

Your mission field might be:

- **Other firefighters/first responders struggling with PTSD, addiction, broken marriages**
- **Young fathers in your neighborhood who need a mentor**
- **The crisis-response community in your region**
- **Men in your church who need someone with your specific story**

God doesn't waste any of it. Your job, your location, your skills, your story—all of it is preparation for your specific mission.

The Four Spheres of Mission

Jesus gave a geographical progression in Acts 1:8:

"You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

This isn't sequential (first Jerusalem, then Judea, etc.). It's **SIMULTANEOUS**.

You're sent to all four spheres at once:

SPHERE 1: JERUSALEM (Your Home/Family)

Your primary mission field is your household.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

This isn't just financial provision. It's spiritual leadership.

For married men with kids:

- Lead your wife spiritually (pray with her, serve her, shepherd her)
- Disciple your children (don't outsource this to the church)
- Model repentance (let them see you fail, confess, and grow)
- Create rhythms of worship at home (prayer, Bible reading, conversation about God)

For single men:

- Disciple younger men
- Serve your extended family
- Invest in the next generation

You can't reach the world if you're losing your home.

SPHERE 2: JUDEA (Your Workplace/Neighborhood)

Your everyday context is your mission field.

At work:

- Excellence in your job (Colossians 3:23-24)

- Integrity that stands out (honesty, kindness, character)
- Availability for spiritual conversations (when appropriate)
- Being "different" in a way that makes people curious

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NASB).

In your neighborhood:

- Know your neighbors' names
- Serve them practically (mow lawns, help with projects, host BBQs)
- Be present, not isolated
- Build relationships before you try to "evangelize"

Research: 82% of unchurched people say they would attend church if invited by a friend. But only 2% of Christians ever invite anyone (Barna, 2023).

Most people aren't resistant to the gospel. They're resistant to hypocrisy and sales pitches. But they're attracted to genuine love and authentic community.

SPHERE 3: SAMARIA (People Different From You)

Samaria was the place Jews avoided. Unclean. Different. Uncomfortable.

Your "Samaria" might be:

- People of different races, cultures, backgrounds
- People with different politics or worldviews
- People you naturally avoid or judge
- People who make you uncomfortable

Jesus intentionally went to Samaria (John 4). He crossed cultural boundaries, engaged outcasts, loved the unlovable.

Your call:

- Get out of your echo chamber
- Build relationships with people unlike you

- Show the gospel's power to transcend divisions
 - Love people, not just people like you
-

SPHERE 4: THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (Wherever God Sends)

This might mean:

- Short-term mission trips
- Supporting missionaries financially
- Long-term relocation (if God calls you to that)
- Engaging global issues (trafficking, poverty, persecution)

But for most men, this sphere is engaged through:

- Prayer for unreached people groups
- Financial giving to missions
- Short-term trips that expose you to God's work globally
- Welcoming refugees or internationals in your city

You don't have to go overseas to engage this sphere. But you do have to care about it.

Your Specific Mission: How to Discern It

Not sure what your specific calling is? Ask these questions:

1. WHERE HAS GOD PLACED YOU?

Geography: What city/neighborhood do you live in?

Vocation: What job/career do you have?

Network: Who do you have regular access to?

These aren't random. God placed you there intentionally.

"From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26, NIV).

Your location, your job, your network—all ordained by God for His purposes.

2. WHAT BREAKS YOUR HEART?

What injustice, suffering, or need stirs you deeply?

- Fatherless kids?
- Broken marriages?
- Addiction?
- Poverty?
- Loneliness?
- Spiritual lostness?

Your holy discontent is often a clue to your calling.

"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"
(Philippians 2:13, NASB).

God often gives you the desire before He gives you the assignment.

3. WHAT HAS GOD PREPARED YOU FOR?

Look at your:

- Skills: What are you good at?
- Experiences: What have you been through (including failures)?
- Passions: What energizes you?
- Story: What has God done in your life?

Example:

You battled pornography for 15 years → God may be preparing you to help other men find freedom

You overcame rage → You're equipped to mentor angry fathers

You rebuilt your marriage → You can walk alongside struggling couples

You're skilled in construction → You can serve through Habitat for Humanity, church builds, etc.

God wastes nothing. He's been preparing you for specific work.

4. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE IN FRONT OF YOU?

Don't wait for a lightning bolt. Start with what's obvious:

Do you see:

- A coworker who's struggling?
- A neighbor who needs help?
- A kid who needs a mentor?
- A gap in your church's ministry?

Start there. Obey in the small things, and God will open bigger doors.

"One who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10, NASB).

5. WHAT DO WISE PEOPLE AFFIRM?

Ask your:

- Wife
- Brothers from 40 STRONG
- Pastor
- Mentor

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Proverbs 11:14, NASB).

What do they see in you? What gifts do they affirm? What needs do they see you uniquely positioned to meet?

Often others see your calling before you do.

Mission Flows FROM Identity, Not TO Identity

Critical reminder:

You don't serve to BECOME a son. You serve BECAUSE you're a son.

Week 3 was about identity:

- **Day 15: You're a son, not a slave**
- **Day 16: You're accepted, not performing**
- **Day 17: You're forgiven, not condemned**
- **Day 18: You're empowered, not powerless**

Now, Day 19: You're sent, not sitting.

But the "sent" flows FROM the "son."

WRONG ORDER:

- 1. Serve God faithfully**
- 2. Prove you're worthy**
- 3. Then maybe God will accept you**

RIGHT ORDER:

- 1. God accepts you (already done in Christ)**
- 2. You rest in that acceptance (sonship)**
- 3. Out of gratitude and love, you serve**

"We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NASB).

Not "we love SO THAT He will love us." We love BECAUSE He already does.

Your mission is not about earning God's approval. It's about extending His love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Clarifying your mission)

SECTION 1: THE LIES KEEPING YOU SITTING

1. WHICH LIE DO YOU BELIEVE?

- ☐ **"I'm not qualified"**
- ☐ **"I don't have anything to offer"**
- ☐ **"Mission is for professionals"**
- ☐ **"I'll start when I get my life together"**
- ☐ **"My past disqualifies me"**

How has this lie kept you passive?

2. THE TRUTH:

For the lie you checked, write the corresponding truth from Scripture:

SECTION 2: YOUR FOUR SPHERES

3. JERUSALEM (Home/Family):

How are you doing as spiritual leader of your home? (1 = failing, 10 = thriving)

Number: _____

What needs to change?

One specific action this week:

4. JUDEA (Workplace/Neighborhood):

Name 3 people in your workplace or neighborhood who don't know Jesus:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What's one practical way you can serve or build relationship with one of them this week?

5. SAMARIA (People Different From You):

Who is your "Samaria"—people you naturally avoid or feel uncomfortable around?

What would it look like to intentionally engage that group?

6. ENDS OF THE EARTH (Global):

Are you:

- ☐ **Praying for unreached people groups**
- ☐ **Giving financially to missions**
- ☐ **Open to going on a short-term trip**
- ☐ **Engaging international students or refugees in your city**
- ☐ **None of the above**

What's one step you can take to engage this sphere?

SECTION 3: DISCERNING YOUR SPECIFIC MISSION

7. WHERE HAS GOD PLACED YOU?

Geography: _____

Vocation: _____

Relational network: _____

Why might God have placed you in these specific contexts?

8. WHAT BREAKS YOUR HEART?

What injustice, need, or suffering stirs you most deeply?

Could this be a clue to your calling?

9. WHAT HAS GOD PREPARED YOU FOR?

Your skills: _____

Your experiences (including failures): _____

Your passions: _____

How might God use these in mission?

10. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE IN FRONT OF YOU?

Who in your life right now needs:

- ☐ Mentoring
- ☐ Practical help
- ☐ Spiritual guidance
- ☐ A listening ear
- ☐ To hear the gospel

Name them:

What will you do this week?

SECTION 4: MISSION IN ACTION

11. THIS WEEK'S COMMITMENT:

I will take one specific missional step this week: (Choose one and commit)

- ☐ Pray with my wife
- ☐ Have a spiritual conversation with my kids
- ☐ Invite a neighbor over for dinner
- ☐ Ask a coworker how I can pray for them
- ☐ Serve someone practically (specific person, specific action)
- ☐ Share my story with someone
- ☐ Give financially to a mission or ministry

Specific action: _____

When: _____

12. YOUR MISSION STATEMENT:

Based on where God has placed you, what He's prepared you for, and what opportunities you see, write a one-sentence mission statement:

"God has called me to [specific mission] for [specific people] in [specific context]."

Example:

"God has called me to mentor fatherless teenage boys in my neighborhood through coaching and discipleship."

Your mission statement:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud with conviction)

Today, I declare:

I am not sitting—I am sent.

I am not waiting to be qualified—God has already called me.

I am not hiding my past—God is redeeming my story.

I am not passive—I am on mission.

I am not purposeless—God prepared good works for me before I was born.

I am not alone—Jesus is with me always, even to the end of the age.

"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21, NASB).

I am sent. I have a mission. I will engage.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, thank You for not leaving me in my brokenness. You've saved me, renewed me, empowered me—and now You're sending me. Show me clearly where You've placed me and why. Open my eyes to the people You've positioned in my life. Give me courage to step out of passivity and into mission. Use my story—all of it, even the broken parts—to point others to You. I don't have all the answers, but I have You. And You're with me always. Send me, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"As the Father sent Jesus"*

Breathe out: *"I also am sent"*

(John 20:21)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Who has God put in front of me right now? How can I serve them in Jesus' name?*

Brief Prayer: *Father, make me aware of divine appointments today.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God at work in someone's life today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I live as "sent" today, or did I default to passive?

Passive moments: _____

Sent moments: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

What opportunity to serve/share did I miss today?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for staying comfortable when You've called me to engage.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Father showing me about my mission?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"God has placed me in [specific context] to reach [specific people]. My past struggles with [specific sin] have prepared me to [specific mission]. This week, I will take this one step toward that mission: _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 19 ✓ - Today I learned I'm not just saved FROM sin—I'm sent ON mission. God has placed me in [specific context] to serve [specific people]. This week I'm taking this one step: [specific action]. Pray I have courage to actually do it."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 20 title: "Beloved, Not Tolerated - The Father's Affection"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today was about mission—being sent. Tomorrow is about affection—being beloved. Teach me that I serve not to earn Your love but because I already have it. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU'RE ALREADY ON THE FIELD

Theological Insight:

"God is not calling you to go somewhere else to become a missionary. You are a missionary right now, right where you are. The only question is: Are you on mission, or are you on vacation?" – David Platt (paraphrase)

Brother, you've spent three weeks looking inward.

Confronting passivity.

Confessing sin.

Renewing identity.

Receiving empowerment.

All of that was necessary. But it was preparation, not destination.

Today, the shift happens.

You're not just saved to sit comfortably in your forgiven status.

You're not just renewed to feel better about yourself.

You're sent—with a mission, a message, and the power to accomplish it.

And here's the truth most men miss:

You're already on the mission field.

Your workplace? Mission field.

Your neighborhood? Mission field.

Your family? Mission field.

Your gym, coffee shop, kid's soccer games? Mission field.

You don't need to go somewhere else to be on mission. You just need to wake up to where God has already placed you.

The man at your job who's drowning in depression? God put you there for him.

The neighbor who's going through a divorce? God positioned you next door for a reason.

Your son who's questioning faith? You're his primary disciple-maker.

You're already on the field. The question is: Are you playing, or are you sitting on the bench?

Tomorrow, you'll learn one more critical truth: You're beloved, not just tolerated.

But tonight, decide:

Will you stay on the ridge, or will you step into the valley?

David didn't wait until he was perfect, qualified, or comfortable.

He just stepped out.

Your move.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

God prepared works for you before you were born.

Stop waiting. Start walking.

40 STRONG - Day 19 Complete ✓

"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you"
(John 20:21, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 20

BELOVED, NOT TOLERATED: The Father's Affection

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Rebuilding on Truth

MORNING: THE FATHER'S DELIGHT (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I know the theology. I know I'm forgiven. I know I'm accepted. I know I'm empowered. I know I'm sent. But if I'm honest? Deep down, I still wonder: Do You actually LIKE me? I believe You love me—because You have to, because You're God, because Jesus died for me. But do You delight in me? Or do You just tolerate me? When You look at me, do You smile? Or do You sigh with disappointment? Today, I need to know—not just intellectually, but in my heart—that I'm not just forgiven. I'm beloved. Not just accepted. Cherished. Not just tolerated. Delighted in. Show me Your heart toward me, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Father's Heart

Read these slowly. Listen for the Father's voice speaking directly to you.

THE DECLARATION AT JESUS' BAPTISM:

"After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:16-17, NASB).

Before Jesus did any ministry, performed any miracles, or went to the cross, the Father declared: "Beloved Son... well-pleased."

Identity BEFORE activity. Belovedness BEFORE achievement.

THE FATHER'S JOY:

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy" (Zephaniah 3:17, NASB).

God EXULTS over you. REJOICES over you. WITH SHOUTS OF JOY.

Not begrudging tolerance. Exuberant delight.

THE FATHER RUNNING:

"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20, NASB).

The father RAN. Undignified. Desperate. Delighted.

He didn't wait for the son to clean up, prove himself, or earn his way back. He ran.

THE LAVISH LOVE:

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1, NASB).

"See HOW GREAT a love." Not small. Not reluctant. GREAT.

THE DRAWING:

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44, NASB).

God didn't wait for you to seek Him. He DREW you. He pursued you.

THE UNFAILING LOVE:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, NASB).

NOTHING can separate you from His love. Not your pornography. Not your anger. Not your pride. Not your failures. NOTHING.

Pause. Close your eyes. Hear the Father say YOUR name:

"[Your name], you are My beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Not "you will be if you perform better." Not "you were before you messed up." Not "you're tolerated because Jesus died for you."

You ARE. Present tense. Right now. Beloved.

Teaching: The Difference Between Tolerated and Beloved

Here's the lie most men believe about God:

"God loves me because He has to. But He doesn't really LIKE me. He tolerates me because of Jesus. But if He could choose, He'd probably prefer someone else."

Translation: You believe you're tolerated, not beloved.

And that belief changes everything.

Theological Insight:

"There is a difference between being loved and being liked. You can love someone out of duty. But to like someone—to delight in them—that's different. Most Christians believe God loves them. Very few believe God likes them." – Brennan Manning

Tolerated vs. Beloved: What's the Difference?

TOLERATED:

What it means:

- **Grudgingly accepted**
- **Endured out of obligation**
- **Put up with despite flaws**
- **Loved because it's required, not because it's desired**

What it feels like:

- **God sighs when He looks at you**
- **You're a burden He has to bear**

- He's disappointed more often than pleased
- You're on probation, not in good standing
- He'd prefer a better version of you

How you relate to God:

- Prayer feels like reporting to a boss
 - You avoid Him when you fail
 - You believe He's always frustrated with you
 - You serve out of duty, not delight
 - You can never shake the feeling you're letting Him down
-

BELOVED:

What it means:

- Cherished, delighted in
- Wanted, not just accepted
- Treasured despite (and sometimes because of) your story
- Loved because the Father WANTS you, not because He has to keep you

What it feels like:

- God smiles when He looks at you
- You're His joy, not His burden
- He's more pleased than you realize
- You're secure in His affection
- He loves the actual you, not just an ideal version

How you relate to God:

- Prayer feels like coming home to a loving Father
- You run TO Him when you fail, not away
- You believe He's for you, not against you

- You serve out of gratitude and love
- You rest in His delight

The Chart:

TOLERATED	BELOVED
Grudgingly accepted	Joyfully received
Endured	Cherished
"I have to love you"	"I want you"
Disappointed sigh	Delighted smile
Probationary relationship	Secure sonship
Fear-based relating	Love-based relating
Avoiding God when you fail	Running to God when you fail
"I'm a burden"	"I'm His joy"
Duty-driven service	Love-driven service
"God puts up with me"	"God delights in me"

Which column describes how you actually feel about God's heart toward you?

Most Christian men would say they believe the right column theologically. But they live out of the left column emotionally.

Why?

Why You Feel Tolerated Instead of Beloved

REASON #1: YOUR EARTHLY FATHER MODELED TOLERANCE, NOT DELIGHT

For most men, their father:

- Gave approval based on performance
- Expressed love through criticism ("I'm hard on you because I want you to succeed")
- Rarely said "I'm proud of you" or "I love you"
- Was emotionally distant or absent
- Showed disappointment more than delight

So you projected that onto God:

- God only approves when you perform
- God's criticism = His love
- God rarely delights in you
- God is distant
- God is mostly disappointed

But God is not your earthly father.

"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17, NASB).

Your earthly father may have been inconsistent, harsh, absent, or withholding. God is NONE of those things.

Your Father in heaven:

- Delights in you apart from performance
- Disciplines in love, not anger (Hebrews 12:6)
- Constantly affirms you (Romans 8:16)
- Is never distant (Matthew 28:20)
- Is more pleased with you than disappointed

REASON #2: YOU CONFUSE GOD'S DISCIPLINE WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

Hebrews 12:6: "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives"

Discipline ≠ disappointment.

When God convicts you of sin, corrects your path, or allows consequences:

- **He's not sighing in frustration**
- **He's shaping you in love**
- **He's treating you as a son, not a slave**

Think of it this way:

A father who DOESN'T discipline his son? That's neglect. That's NOT loving.

A father who DOES discipline his son? That's investment. That's engagement. That's proof he cares.

"But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8, NASB).

God's discipline = evidence you're beloved, not tolerated.

REASON #3: YOU BELIEVE YOUR SIN CHANGES GOD'S HEART TOWARD YOU

The logic:

- **When I'm doing well spiritually, God loves me more**
- **When I fail, God loves me less**
- **My pornography use makes God ashamed of me**
- **My anger makes God regret choosing me**
- **My pride makes God wish He had a different son**

The truth:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NASB).

WHILE we were YET sinners. Not after we cleaned up. WHILE.

God's love is not a response to your behavior. It's a decision He made about you before you did anything good OR bad.

"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4, NASB).

BEFORE creation. BEFORE you existed. BEFORE you sinned. He chose you. Wanted you. Loved you.

Your sin grieves Him (Ephesians 4:30). But it doesn't change His love for you.

REASON #4: YOU'RE LISTENING TO THE ACCUSER, NOT THE FATHER

The accuser whispers:

- "You disappointed God again"
- "He's so tired of you"
- "He loves you because He has to, but He doesn't like you"
- "Other Christians are His favorites. You're just... there"

The Father declares:

- "You are My beloved son" (Mark 1:11)
- "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)
- "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3)
- "You are precious in My sight" (Isaiah 43:4)

Whose voice are you believing?

What "Beloved" Actually Means

The word "beloved" (Greek: agapētos) appears 62 times in the New Testament.

It means:

- Dearly loved
- Uniquely cherished
- Worthy of affection
- The object of someone's delight

It's used:

- **Of Jesus by the Father (Matthew 3:17, 17:5)**
- **Of believers by God (Romans 1:7, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4)**
- **Of close friends by each other (Philippians 4:1, 3 John 1:2)**

When God calls you "beloved," He's not using religious language. He's expressing ACTUAL affection.

Three Key Truths About Being Beloved:

1. YOU ARE BELOVED BEFORE YOU PERFORM

Jesus at His baptism:

The Father declared "beloved Son, well-pleased" BEFORE Jesus:

- **Preached a sermon**
- **Healed anyone**
- **Cast out a demon**
- **Went to the cross**

Belovedness came first. Ministry came second.

Application for you:

God's delight in you is NOT based on:

- **How well you're doing spiritually this week**
- **Whether you've conquered your sin struggles**
- **How much you're serving**
- **How long you've gone without failure**

God delights in you because you're His son. Period.

2. YOU ARE BELOVED IN YOUR BROKENNESS

The Prodigal's father:

The son came home:

- **Broke**
- **Filthy**
- **Reeking of pigs**
- **Carrying the shame of prostitutes and wild living**

The father didn't say:

- **"Clean yourself up first, then I'll hug you"**
- **"Prove you've changed, then we'll talk"**
- **"I'll tolerate you, but don't expect a party"**

He RAN. Kissed him. Threw a party. WHILE he was still dirty.

God doesn't love the perfected version of you that doesn't exist yet. He loves the actual you—broken, struggling, in-process.

3. YOU ARE BELOVED DESPITE YOUR REPEATED FAILURES

Peter denied Jesus three times.

After the resurrection, Jesus could have:

- **Fired him**
- **Demoted him**
- **Put him on probation**
- **Made him earn his way back**

Instead, Jesus:

- **Made him breakfast (John 21:9)**
- **Asked three times "Do you love Me?" (restoring him from three denials)**
- **Commissioned him: "Feed My sheep" (gave him responsibility)**

Jesus didn't tolerate Peter. He LOVED Peter. Failures and all.

The same is true for you.

The Father's Delight: Specific Examples

Here's what many men don't know:

God doesn't just love you out of obligation. He actually **ENJOYS** you.

ZEPHANIAH 3:17 UNPACKED:

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy"

Let's break that down:

"He will exult over you with joy"

Hebrew: "sus" = to jump, leap, be glad, be joyful

God **JUMPS** with joy over you. Like a father watching his kid score a goal.

"He will be quiet in His love"

Hebrew: "charash" = to be silent, still, at rest

Picture: God so content with you that He just sits in satisfied silence, delighting in your presence.

"He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy"

Hebrew: "ranan" = to shout aloud, cry out in joy, sing

God **SINGS** over you. Out loud. With joy.

This is not theological language. This is **ACTUAL AFFECTION**.

LUKE 15:20 UNPACKED:

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him"

"While he was still a long way off"

The father was watching. Waiting. Hoping. Every day, scanning the horizon for his son's return.

"Felt compassion"

Greek: "splanchnizomai" = moved with deep emotion in the gut, the seat of affection

"Ran"

Middle Eastern patriarchs didn't run. It was undignified. But this father didn't care about dignity. He cared about his son.

"Embraced him and kissed him"

Not a handshake. Not a formal greeting. EMBRACED. KISSED. Repeatedly (Greek implies continuous action).

This is how God feels about you when you come to Him.

Not reluctant acceptance. Desperate delight.

MATTHEW 3:17 UNPACKED:

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased"

"Beloved Son"

Not "adequate son" or "barely acceptable son." BELOVED.

"In whom I am well-pleased"

Greek: "eudokeō" = to think it good, to be well pleased, to take delight in

The Father DELIGHTED in Jesus. And because you are IN Christ, the Father delights in you the same way.

***"To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6, NASB).**

You are IN the Beloved. God looks at you and sees Jesus. And He is WELL-PLEASED.

How Belovedness Changes Everything

When you believe you're beloved (not just tolerated), everything shifts:

IN PRAYER:

Before: "God, I know You're disappointed in me. I'm sorry I keep failing. Please don't give up on me."

After: "Abba, I messed up again. But I know You still delight in me. Thank You for loving me even when I don't deserve it."

IN FAILURE:

Before: "I failed again. God must be so tired of me. I'm such a disappointment."

After: "I failed. But God's love for me didn't change. He's disciplining me because He loves me, not because He's disgusted with me."

IN SERVICE:

Before: "Maybe if I serve hard enough, God will finally be proud of me."

After: "God is already delighted in me. I serve out of gratitude, not to earn His approval."

IN WORSHIP:

Before: "I don't feel worthy to worship. I've failed too much this week."

After: "I worship not because I'm worthy, but because He's made me His beloved son."

IN SUFFERING:

Before: "God must be punishing me for my sin."

After: "God is with me in this suffering. He's not punishing me—He's shaping me because He loves me."

Living AS Beloved

Here's the challenge:

You know the theology. But do you FEEL beloved?

Most men can quote Romans 8:38-39. But they don't live like they believe it.

How to move from knowing to feeling:

1. START YOUR DAY RECEIVING AFFECTION, NOT EARNING APPROVAL

Instead of: "God, help me be good enough today"

Try: "Father, before I do anything, I receive Your declaration: I am Your beloved son. You delight in me. Today I live FROM that, not FOR it."

2. WHEN YOU FAIL, RUN TO THE FATHER, NOT AWAY

The prodigal ran home expecting slavery. The father gave him sonship.

When you sin:

- **Don't hide in shame**
- **Don't wait until you "deserve" to come back**
- **Confess immediately**
- **Receive the Father's embrace**

Practice saying: "Father, I failed. But I know You still love me. I receive Your forgiveness and get back up."

3. LISTEN FOR THE FATHER'S VOICE, NOT JUST THE ACCUSER'S

When the accuser whispers: "You disappointed God again"

Speak the truth out loud: "I am God's beloved son. Nothing can separate me from His love. Romans 8:38-39."

4. CELEBRATE GOOD MOMENTS AS SHARED JOY

When something good happens:

- **A victory over sin**
- **A breakthrough in your family**
- **A moment of clarity**
- **An answered prayer**

Don't just check the box. Share it with the Father.

"Father, thank You! This is amazing! I know You're celebrating with me!"

Remember Zephaniah 3:17: He REJOICES over you with shouts of joy.

He's not a stoic God. He celebrates with you.

5. REST IN HIS DELIGHT, DON'T MANUFACTURE IT

You can't make God love you more. You can't make Him love you less.

His love is settled. Unchanging. Complete.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness" (Jeremiah 31:3, NASB).

Your job: Receive it. Rest in it. Respond to it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from tolerated to beloved)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. TOLERATED OR BELOVED?

Which describes how you actually FEEL about God's heart toward you?

- ☐ **I feel tolerated (He loves me because He has to)**
- ☐ **I feel beloved (He delights in me)**
- ☐ **I go back and forth**

Explain:

2. YOUR FATHER WOUND:

Did your earthly father make you feel:

- ☐ **Beloved (delighted in, cherished)**
- ☐ **Tolerated (endured, burden)**
- ☐ **Conditionally loved (based on performance)**

How has that shaped how you view God?

SECTION 2: GOD'S HEART TOWARD YOU

3. THE FATHER'S DECLARATION:

Close your eyes. Hear the Father say YOUR name:

"[Your name], you are My beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased."

What emotions does that stir in you?

- ☐ I want to believe it, but I struggle
 - ☐ I believe it intellectually, but not emotionally
 - ☐ I receive it and rest in it
 - ☐ I can't believe it applies to me
-

4. WHEN GOD LOOKS AT YOU:

When God looks at you, what do you believe He feels?

- ☐ Disappointment
- ☐ Frustration
- ☐ Obligation ("I have to love him")
- ☐ Delight
- ☐ Joy
- ☐ Affection

What does Scripture say He feels? (Read Zephaniah 3:17 again)

SECTION 3: THE LIES YOU BELIEVE

5. WHICH LIES DO YOU BELIEVE?

- ☐ "God loves me because He has to, but He doesn't like me"
- ☐ "God is disappointed in me more often than pleased"
- ☐ "My sin changes God's love for me"

- ☐ "God tolerates me because of Jesus, but He'd prefer someone else"
- ☐ "I'm a burden to God"

For each lie you checked, write the corresponding truth from Scripture:

SECTION 4: MOVING TOWARD BELOVEDNESS

6. MORNING DECLARATION:

Will you start each morning this week saying this out loud?

"Father, before I do anything today, I receive Your declaration over me: I am Your beloved son. You delight in me. Today I live FROM that affection, not FOR it."

- ☐ Yes, I commit to this
- ☐ I'll try
- ☐ I'm not ready

7. RESPONDING TO FAILURE:

Next time you fail, will you:

- ☐ Hide from God in shame
- ☐ Wait until you "deserve" to come back
- ☐ Run immediately to the Father, confess, and receive His embrace

Practice now. Write out a prayer for when you fail:

"Father, I just [specific sin]. I confess it. I know Your love for me hasn't changed. I receive Your forgiveness. Thank You for delighting in me even in my failure."

8. SILENCING THE ACCUSER:

When the accuser whispers "You disappointed God," what will you say out loud?

Suggestion: "I am God's beloved son. Nothing can separate me from His love. Romans 8:38-39."

9. CELEBRATING WITH THE FATHER:

This week, when something good happens, will you:

- ☐ Just move on to the next thing
- ☐ Thank God quickly and move on
- ☐ Pause and celebrate with the Father, knowing He's rejoicing WITH you

What good thing happened recently that you didn't celebrate with God?

Take a moment now and thank Him. Picture Him celebrating with you.

10. RESTING IN DELIGHT:

Complete this sentence:

"I am beloved by God. Not because I _____. But simply because _____."

Examples:

"I am beloved by God. Not because I perform well. But simply because He chose me before creation."

"I am beloved by God. Not because I've earned it. But simply because Jesus made me His own."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

I am not tolerated—I am beloved.

I am not a burden—I am God's delight.

I am not endured—I am cherished.

I am not loved out of obligation—I am wanted.

I am not on probation—I am secure in affection.

I am not disappointing to God—He rejoices over me with shouts of joy.

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy" (Zephaniah 3:17, NASB).

I am beloved. God delights in me. I rest in that.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess that I've lived more like I'm tolerated than beloved. I've believed You love me out of obligation, not delight. I've projected my earthly father's disappointment onto You. Forgive me. Today, I receive the truth: I am Your beloved son. You rejoice over me. You sing over me. You delight in me—not because I've earned it, but because You chose me. Help me live FROM that affection today. When I fail, let me run TO You, not away. When I succeed, let me celebrate WITH You. When the accuser whispers, let me hear YOUR voice louder. I am beloved. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: *"I am beloved"*

Breathe out: *"God delights in me"*

(Zephaniah 3:17)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: *Am I living like I'm tolerated or like I'm beloved today?*

Brief Prayer: *Father, I receive Your delight in me right now.*

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see evidence of the Father's affection today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I live more as tolerated or as beloved today?

Tolerated moments: _____

Beloved moments: _____

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I listen to the accuser instead of the Father today?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for not resting in Your delight.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is the Father reminding me about His affection for me?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this sentence:

"I have been living like I'm tolerated instead of beloved in this area: _____.

The lie I've believed is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____.

Tomorrow I will rest in belovedness by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 20 ✓ - Today I learned the difference between being tolerated vs. beloved. I've been believing God loves me out of obligation, not delight. Tomorrow night is our celebration gathering. Pray that the truth of Zephaniah 3:17 sinks deep—God actually rejoices over me."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 21: "Celebration Sabbath - Group Gathering for Testimonies & Commissioning"

Brief Prayer:

Father, tomorrow night we gather to celebrate what You've done in us. Week 1: Awakening. Week 2: Repentance. Week 3: Renewal. Prepare my heart to testify to Your faithfulness. And prepare me to be commissioned for what's next. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE FATHER IS SINGING

Theological Insight:

"The gospel is this: I am more sinful than I ever dared believe, but more loved than I ever dared hope. God knew the worst about me before I did, and He chose me anyway. Not out of obligation. Out of delight." – Tim Keller (paraphrase)

Brother, let this sink in:

Right now, at this moment, the Father is singing over you.

Not grimacing. Not sighing. Not tolerating.

SINGING.

With joy. With delight. With affection.

You are not:

- A project He's obligated to finish
- A burden He has to bear

- A disappointment He's stuck with
- A second-choice son

You are:

- Chosen before creation (Ephesians 1:4)
- Beloved beyond measure (1 John 3:1)
- Delighted in constantly (Zephaniah 3:17)
- Treasured as His own possession (1 Peter 2:9)

Your pornography? He knew about it when He chose you. Still chose you.

Your anger? He knew about it when He called you "beloved." Still called you that.

Your pride? He knew about it when He sang over you. Still singing.

Nothing you've done has changed His heart toward you.

He loves you. Not because He has to. Because He WANTS to.

And tomorrow night, you're going to gather with your brothers and celebrate that.

Week 3: Renewal is almost complete.

Tomorrow: Celebration Sabbath.

Then Week 4 begins: Equipping for the battles ahead.

But tonight, just receive this:

You are beloved.

The Father delights in you.

Let that truth settle deep.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1, NASB).

"See HOW GREAT a love."

Not small. Not reluctant. Not obligatory.

GREAT.

You are beloved.

40 STRONG - Day 20 Complete ✓

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy"
(Zephaniah 3:17, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 21

CELEBRATION SABBATH: Group Gathering for Testimonies & Commissioning

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - Complete

MORNING: PERSONAL PREPARATION (Before the gathering)

Opening Prayer

Father, three weeks ago I was standing on the ridge—armed but passive, ready but not engaging. Week 1, You awakened me to my passivity. Week 2, I confessed sins I'd hidden for years. Week 3, You've rebuilt me—teaching me I'm a son, not a slave; accepted, not performing; forgiven, not condemned; empowered, not powerless; sent, not sitting; beloved, not tolerated. Tonight, I gather with my brothers to celebrate what You've done and to be commissioned for what's ahead. Give me courage to testify. Give me ears to hear others' stories. Give me anticipation for the second half of this journey. We're not done yet, but we're different than we were 21 days ago. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pre-Gathering Reflection (20-30 minutes alone)

Before you arrive tonight, review your journey. You may be asked to share from these.

1. WEEK 1 REVIEW: AWAKENING (Days 1-7)

Day 1: The Comfortable Cage - Recognizing Complacency

Day 2: The Father's Heart - Understanding God's Design for Men

Day 3: Honest Inventory - Where Have I Abdicated Responsibility

Day 4: The Counterfeit - Identifying False Masculinity

Day 5: The Original Design - Biblical Manhood

Day 6: Breaking Agreement - Renouncing Passivity

Day 7: First Sabbath Rest - Group Gathering

Which day from Week 1 impacted you most?

What did God awaken you to?

2. WEEK 2 REVIEW: REPENTANCE (Days 8-14)

Day 8: The Weight We Carry - Acknowledging Secret Sins

Day 9: Pornography & Lust - Confronting Sexual Sin Directly

Day 10: Anger & Rage - Unprocessed Wounds

Day 11: Pride & Self-Sufficiency - The Root of Independence

Day 12: Greed & Materialism - Slavery to Possessions

Day 13: Relational Failure - Wounds We've Caused

Day 14: Corporate Confession - Group Gathering for Prayer Ministry

Which day from Week 2 was hardest?

What did you confess on Day 14 that you'd never told anyone before?

How has your life changed since that confession?

3. WEEK 3 REVIEW: RENEWAL (Days 15-20)

Day 15: Sons, Not Slaves - Understanding Adoption

Day 16: Accepted, Not Performing - Grace vs. Works

Day 17: Forgiven, Not Condemned - Freedom from Shame

Day 18: Empowered, Not Powerless - The Holy Spirit's Work

Day 19: Sent, Not Sitting - Mission Clarity

Day 20: Beloved, Not Tolerated - The Father's Affection

Which truth from Week 3 do you need to keep believing?

How are you different now than you were on Day 1?

4. THE TESTIMONY YOU'LL SHARE:

If you were asked to share for 2-3 minutes tonight, what would you say?

"Three weeks ago I was... [where you started]. God has shown me... [what He's revealed]. The biggest change has been... [specific transformation]. I still struggle with... [ongoing battle]. But I'm learning... [key truth]."

Write a brief outline:

5. LOOKING AHEAD:

Weeks 4-6 Preview:

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines (Days 22-28)

Learning the practices that sustain transformation

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others (Days 29-35)

Moving from personal renewal to external mission

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers (Days 36-40)

Final preparation and sending

What are you most excited about?

What are you most anxious about?

GATHERING FORMAT (2.5 hours total)

ARRIVAL & FELLOWSHIP (15 minutes)

6:00 PM - 6:15 PM

Tonight feels different from Day 14.

Day 14: Heavy, vulnerable, confessional, sacred silence

Day 21: Celebratory, hopeful, testimonial, joyful anticipation

As men arrive:

- Coffee, snacks available
- Relaxed conversation (not forced silence like Day 14)
- Upbeat instrumental music
- Atmosphere of celebration, not solemnity
- Men greeting each other warmly

Facilitator role:

- Welcome each man enthusiastically
- "We've made it to the halfway point!"
- Create anticipation for what's ahead
- This is a celebration of what God has done

Theological Insight:

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:3-6, NASB).

Tonight we celebrate the good work God has begun AND look forward to how He'll complete it.

OPENING: CELEBRATION WORSHIP (20 minutes)

6:15 PM - 6:35 PM

Tonight's worship is VICTORIOUS, CELEBRATORY, JOYFUL.

Suggested songs:

- "Great Are You Lord"
- "Goodness of God"
- "Build My Life"
- "The Lion and the Lamb"
- "Resurrection Power"
- "King of Kings"

Encourage:

- Hands raised
- Loud singing
- Energy
- Celebration of what God has done

Between songs, read these declarations (all men read together from screen):

After song 1:

"We were dead in our trespasses and sins. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved!" (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5, NASB).

[All respond loudly:] "We are alive in Christ!"

After song 2:

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB).

[All respond:] "We are new creations!"

After song 3:

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light!" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB).

[All respond:] *"We are chosen! We are royal! We are His!"*

Closing worship with this declaration (all men):

"We are sons of God, accepted by grace, forgiven completely, empowered by the Spirit, sent on mission, and beloved by the Father. We are not who we were 21 days ago. God has begun a good work in us, and He will complete it. We are 40 STRONG!"

[All shout:] *"40 STRONG!"*

TEACHING: THE JOURNEY SO FAR (20 minutes)

6:35 PM - 6:55 PM

Facilitator teaches:

"Halftime: Looking Back, Looking Ahead"

Brothers, we're halfway through 40 STRONG.

Twenty-one days down. Nineteen to go.

And you are not the same men who walked in here on Day 1.

Let me remind you where you started.

WEEK 1: AWAKENING

Three weeks ago, you were standing on the ridge.

Like Israel's army facing Goliath—armed, ready, shouting the war cry—but not engaging.

**You had theology but no transformation.
You had Sunday attendance but Monday absence.
You had knowledge but no application.**

You were passive.

Then Week 1 happened:

**Day 1: You admitted you were in a comfortable cage
Day 2: You discovered God's heart toward you as Father
Day 3: You took honest inventory of where you'd abdicated
Day 4: You identified counterfeit masculinity
Day 5: You saw God's original design
Day 6: You broke agreement with passivity
Day 7: You gathered with brothers for the first time**

Week 1 awakened you. But awakening was just the beginning.

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE

Then came the hardest week of your life.

Week 2: Repentance.

We warned you. We told you it would be brutal. And it was.

**Day 8: You acknowledged the secret sins you'd been carrying
Day 9: You confronted sexual sin directly—pornography, lust, adultery
Day 10: You faced your anger and rage
Day 11: You exposed your pride and self-sufficiency
Day 12: You dealt with greed and materialism
Day 13: You named the people you've wounded
Day 14: You gathered in this room and confessed out loud**

Day 14 was sacred.

**Some of you shared things you'd never told anyone.
Some of you cried for the first time in years.
Some of you felt exposed, terrified, vulnerable.**

But something broke that night.

The power of secrecy was shattered.
The weight you'd carried for years was lifted.
The shame that had isolated you was brought into the light.
And we prayed for you. We received you. We didn't reject you.
Because that's what brothers do.

WEEK 3: RENEWAL

After confession came rebuilding.

Week 3: Renewal.

You needed to know—not just theologically, but deep in your bones—who you are in Christ.

Day 15: You're a son, not a slave

Day 16: You're accepted, not performing

Day 17: You're forgiven, not condemned

Day 18: You're empowered, not powerless

Day 19: You're sent, not sitting

Day 20: You're beloved, not tolerated

Week 3 rebuilt your identity on truth.

Not on your performance. Not on your past. Not on your feelings.

On CHRIST.

THE SHIFT

Here's what's happened in 21 days:

WEEK 1: You woke up to the problem
(I've been passive)

WEEK 2: You dealt with the root
(Here's why I've been passive—sin, wounds, lies)

WEEK 3: You were renewed in truth
(Here's who I actually am in Christ)

And now—WEEKS 4-6: You're equipped and sent.

LOOKING AHEAD: WEEKS 4-6

The second half of 40 STRONG is different.

Weeks 1-3 were INTERNAL:

- **Awakening your heart**
- **Confessing your sin**
- **Renewing your identity**

Weeks 4-6 are EXTERNAL:

- **Equipping for battle**
 - **Engaging in mission**
 - **Being commissioned to make disciples**
-

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING (Days 22-28)

Theme: Spiritual Disciplines

You've been renewed. Now you need the practices that sustain transformation.

Days:

- **Day 22: Prayer - Conversation with God**
- **Day 23: Scripture - Hearing God's Voice**
- **Day 24: Fasting - Denying Flesh to Focus Spirit**
- **Day 25: Worship - Fixing Eyes on God**
- **Day 26: Community - Brotherhood that Sharpens**
- **Day 27: Sabbath - Rhythms of Rest**
- **Day 28: Fourth Sabbath Gathering - Equipping Celebration**

These aren't religious obligations. These are weapons for the fight ahead.

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT (Days 29-35)

Theme: Serving Others

You're not renewed to sit comfortably. You're sent on mission.

Days:

- **Day 29: Serve Your Family - Jerusalem**
- **Day 30: Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea**
- **Day 31: Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria**
- **Day 32: Serve the Lost - Evangelism**
- **Day 33: Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry**
- **Day 34: Steward Your Resources - Generosity**
- **Day 35: Fifth Sabbath Gathering - Engagement Stories**

This is where the rubber meets the road. You'll actually DO what you've been learning.

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING (Days 36-40)

Theme: Sent as Disciple-Makers

The goal isn't just personal transformation. It's multiplication.

Days:

- **Day 36: Make Disciples - The Great Commission**
- **Day 37: Mentor Younger Men - Passing the Baton**
- **Day 38: Lead Your Home Spiritually - Generational Impact**
- **Day 39: Plan Your Next 40 Days - Sustainable Rhythms**
- **Day 40: Final Commissioning Gathering - Sent Out**

Day 40 won't be the end. It'll be the BEGINNING of the rest of your life.

THE WARNING

Brothers, I need to be honest with you about something.

The enemy is not happy about what's happened in this room.

Three weeks ago, you were passive, isolated, hiding sin, living in shame.

Now?

You're awakened, confessed, renewed, brothers in arms, walking in freedom.

The enemy HATES that.

So expect:

- Temptation to return to old patterns (pornography, anger, pride)
- Attacks on your relationships (conflict at home, isolation from brothers)
- Discouragement ("This didn't work. I'm still the same.")
- Busyness (anything to keep you from finishing strong)

This is spiritual warfare. And it's real.

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NASB).

But here's the promise:

"Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4, NASB).

You have the Holy Spirit. You have your brothers. You have the truth.

The enemy is powerful. But God is MORE powerful.

THE CHARGE

So here's my charge to you tonight:

DON'T QUIT NOW.

You've come too far. You've been too honest. God has done too much.

Finish what you started.

Days 22-40 will require:

- Discipline (showing up daily even when you don't feel like it)
- Vulnerability (staying connected to your brothers)

- **Courage (actually serving people, not just learning about it)**
- **Endurance (pushing through when it gets hard)**

But you're not doing this alone.

You're 40 STRONG.

And when you finish Day 40, you will NOT be the same man you were on Day 1.

Guaranteed.

Closing Teaching:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NASB).

Steadfast. Immovable. Abounding.

That's who you're becoming.

Now—let's hear some testimonies of what God has done.

TESTIMONY TIME (45-60 minutes)

6:55 PM - 7:55 PM

Facilitator:

"We're going to spend the next hour hearing from brothers. This isn't a performance. This is testimony—bearing witness to what God has done."

Format:

- **2-3 minutes per person (strictly timed)**
- **Volunteers can share (no pressure)**
- **Focus on transformation, not just information**
- **Celebrate victories AND ongoing struggles (honesty, not hype)**

Template (optional, for men who need structure):

"Three weeks ago I was [where you started]. God showed me [what He revealed]. The biggest change has been [specific transformation]. I still struggle with [ongoing battle], but I'm learning [key truth]."

Facilitator opens:

"Who wants to go first? Don't overthink it. Just share what God has done."

[Allow silence. Someone will speak.]

After Each Testimony:

Facilitator (or another man):

"Thank you, brother. We celebrate what God has done in you."

Then: Brief applause/affirmation from the group

No commentary, no fixing, no teaching—just receive and celebrate.

Types of Testimonies to Expect:

AWAKENING STORIES:

- **"I realized I'd been passive for 15 years"**
- **"Day 3's inventory showed me I'd abdicated leadership at home"**
- **"I saw how I'd been living counterfeit masculinity"**

CONFESSION STORIES:

- **"On Day 14 I confessed pornography for the first time ever"**
- **"I told my brothers about my anger and rage"**
- **"I admitted my pride has isolated me"**

RENEWAL STORIES:

- **"Day 15 changed everything—I'm a son, not a slave"**
- **"Day 17 freed me from condemnation I'd carried for years"**
- **"Day 20 showed me God actually delights in me"**

ONGOING BATTLE STORIES:

- "I confessed pornography on Day 14. I still struggled this week. But I texted my accountability partner immediately instead of hiding."
- "I'm still battling anger, but I apologized to my kids for the first time ever."
- "I haven't arrived, but I'm not where I was."

RELATIONSHIP RESTORATION STORIES:

- "I reconciled with my wife after confessing my sexual sin"
- "I apologized to my son for years of harsh anger"
- "I reached out to a friend I'd wounded and made amends"

Facilitator Throughout:

- Keep time (gently redirect if someone goes over 3 minutes)
- Watch for men who seem like they want to share but are hesitating
- Model vulnerability if needed ("Let me share mine...")
- Celebrate each story authentically

If No One Shares Initially:

Facilitator can share first:

"Let me start. Three weeks ago I was [personal testimony]. God has shown me [specific transformation]. I'm different now."

Or call on someone you know is prepared:

"[Name], I know God has done something powerful in you. Would you share?"

Closing Testimony Time:

After 45-60 minutes (or when it feels complete):

"Brothers, what we've just heard is PROOF that God is alive and at work. These aren't just stories—these are LIVES being transformed. Let's give God praise for what He's done."

[Spontaneous applause/praise]

TRANSITION TO COMMUNION (5 minutes)

7:55 PM - 8:00 PM

Facilitator:

"We've celebrated what God has done. Now we remember WHY we can celebrate."

"Every victory you just heard—freedom from pornography, healing from anger, reconciliation in marriage, renewed identity—ALL of it is possible because of ONE thing:"

"The cross."

"Without Jesus' finished work, we'd still be dead in sin. Without His blood, we'd still be condemned. Without His resurrection, we'd still be powerless."

"So before we're commissioned for the second half of this journey, we take communion. Not to celebrate ourselves. To celebrate HIM."

COMMUNION: REMEMBERING THE CROSS (15 minutes)

8:00 PM - 8:15 PM

Setup:

- Bread and cup on central table
 - Men come forward individually
 - Take elements, return to seats
 - Eat and drink together after all have received
-

Scripture Reading:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, NASB).

THE BREAD:

"Come forward and take the bread. This is Jesus' body—broken for every sin you confessed on Day 14. Broken for the pornography, the anger, the pride, the greed, the relational failures. Every sin you brought into the light was already paid for at the cross."

"As you eat this bread, remember: Your freedom cost Him everything."

[Men come forward, take bread, return to seats.]

After all have taken bread:

"Together, we eat and remember."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your body was broken so we could be made whole. We receive Your life in us. Amen."

[All eat.]

THE CUP:

"Now come forward and take the cup. This is Jesus' blood—the new covenant. This is the promise that you are forgiven, cleansed, made righteous, adopted, sealed, beloved."

"As you drink this cup, declare: 'I am His. Nothing can separate me from His love.'"

[Men come forward, take cup, return to seats.]

After all have taken cup:

"Together, we drink and declare our covenant with Christ."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your blood was poured out for us. We are forgiven. We are clean. We are Yours. Amen."

[All drink.]

After Communion:

Facilitator:

"Brothers, you are marked by the blood of Jesus. The enemy has no claim on you. Sin has no power over you. Death has no victory over you."

"You are sons of God, bought with a price, sealed by the Spirit, beloved by the Father."

"Now—we commission you for what's ahead."

COMMISSIONING FOR WEEKS 4-6 (15 minutes)

8:15 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitator:

"Stand up. We're going to commission each other for the second half of this journey."

[All men stand in a circle]

Reading of the Commission:

Facilitator reads, all men repeat line by line:

"We have been awakened from passivity."

[All repeat]

"We have confessed our hidden sins."

[All repeat]

"We have been renewed in our identity."

[All repeat]

"Now we are equipped for battle."

[All repeat]

"We are sent on mission."

[All repeat]

"We are commissioned to make disciples."

[All repeat]

"We do not fight alone."

[All repeat]

"We are 40 STRONG."

[All shout together: "40 STRONG!"]

The Charge (Facilitator reads):

"Brothers, tomorrow Week 4 begins. You will be equipped with spiritual disciplines—the practices that sustain transformation. You'll learn to pray, to read Scripture, to fast, to worship, to live in community, to rest."

"Then Week 5: Engagement. You'll stop learning and start DOING. You'll serve your family, your workplace, your neighborhood, the lost, the broken. You'll put feet to your faith."

"Then Week 6: Commissioning. You'll be sent out as disciple-makers—men who reproduce what God has done in you."

"This will require discipline. It will require courage. It will require community."

"But you have everything you need:"

"You have the Father's love." (Day 20)

"You have the Spirit's power." (Day 18)

"You have a clear mission." (Day 19)

"You have brothers." (Right here, right now)

"So go. Finish strong. And when you gather on Day 40, you'll look back and see how far God has brought you."

Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26):

"The LORD bless you, and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace."

[All respond: "Amen!"]

Final Declaration (All men together, loudly):

"We are sons of God, accepted by grace, forgiven completely, empowered by the Spirit, sent on mission, and beloved by the Father. We will finish what we started. We are 40 STRONG!"

[All shout: "40 STRONG!"]

Closing Prayer:

"Father, thank You for what You've done in us. Protect us in the weeks ahead. Give us discipline to show up daily. Give us courage to engage in mission. Give us endurance to finish strong. We are Yours. Use us. In Jesus' name, Amen."

FELLOWSHIP & CLOSING (15 minutes)

8:30 PM - 8:45 PM

Facilitator:

"Don't rush out. Celebrate with each other. Pray for each other. Commit to checking in this week. Week 4 starts tomorrow. We'll gather again on Day 28."

Encourage:

- Men praying for each other in small groups
- Exchanging phone numbers
- Making plans to meet for coffee/accountability
- Celebrating what God has done

Provide:

- Printed overview of Days 22-28 (Week 4 preview)
- Reminder of next gathering date (Day 28)
- Resource list (counselors, recovery programs, etc.)

AFTER THE GATHERING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you get home, journal:

1. WHAT GOD DID TONIGHT:

What stood out from the testimonies?

What did I feel during communion?

What did I experience during the commissioning?

2. MY TESTIMONY:

Did I share tonight? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: How did it feel to testify?

If no: Why didn't I? What held me back?

3. LOOKING AHEAD:

What am I most excited about in Weeks 4-6?

What am I most nervous about?

What's one specific commitment I'm making for the second half?

4. TOMORROW:

Day 22 begins Week 4: Equipping - Spiritual Disciplines

Brief Prayer:

Father, Week 3 renewal is complete. Tomorrow Week 4 begins—equipping me with practices that sustain transformation. Give me discipline to show up daily and hunger to learn. Amen.

FACILITATOR NOTES (For Leaders Running the Gathering)

Pre-Gathering Preparation:

1. ENVIRONMENT:

- Celebratory atmosphere (not solemn like Day 14)
- Upbeat music
- Food/snacks available
- Bright lighting
- Energy of anticipation

2. MATERIALS:

- Communion elements
- Week 4 overview handouts
- Next gathering date reminders
- Resource lists

3. TESTIMONY PREPARATION:

- Identify 2-3 men beforehand who are prepared to share (in case no one volunteers)
 - Have someone ready to model vulnerability
 - Set timer for 3-minute limit
-

During Gathering:

TONE SHIFT:

- **Day 7: Reflective, preparing for difficulty**
- **Day 14: Heavy, confessional, sacred**
- **Day 21: CELEBRATORY, hopeful, commissioning**

This is halftime. The team is winning. Energy should reflect that.

TESTIMONY TIME MANAGEMENT:

- **Keep strict time (3 minutes max)**
 - **Affirm each testimony authentically**
 - **Don't let it become teaching or debate**
 - **Watch for men who need encouragement to share**
 - **Celebrate victories AND ongoing struggles (both are real)**
-

COMMISSIONING:

- **This should feel EMPOWERING, not burdensome**
 - **Emphasis: "You have everything you need"**
 - **Create anticipation for Weeks 4-6**
 - **Send them out confident, not anxious**
-

After Gathering - Leadership Debrief:

Within 24-48 hours:

1. **Celebrate: What did God do tonight?**
2. **Follow-up: Text/call men who shared heavy testimonies**
3. **Prepare: Week 4 begins tomorrow—are materials ready?**
4. **Pray: For each man by name as they enter second half**

CLOSING THOUGHT: HALFTIME

Theological Insight:

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NASB).

Brother, tonight you celebrated.

You heard stories of transformation.

You remembered the cross.

You were commissioned for what's ahead.

And you're not the same man you were 21 days ago.

Three weeks ago:

- **You were passive on the ridge**
- **You were hiding secret sin**
- **You were living in shame**
- **You were isolated**
- **You were powerless in your own strength**

Today:

- **You're awake and engaged**
- **You've confessed and found freedom**
- **You're walking in sonship**
- **You're connected to brothers**
- **You're empowered by the Spirit**

That's not small. That's MASSIVE.

But here's the truth:

You're only halfway.

Days 1-21 were preparation. Days 22-40 are implementation.

You've been renewed. Now you'll be equipped.

You've received truth. Now you'll apply it.

You've been transformed internally. Now you'll engage externally.

The second half will be different:

Less introspective, more active.

Less confessional, more missional.

Less about your sin, more about God's glory.

But it will still be hard.

The enemy didn't give up when you confessed on Day 14. He's not giving up now.

So finish strong.

Show up daily.

Stay connected to your brothers.

Walk by the Spirit.

Serve sacrificially.

Endure to the end.

And when you gather on Day 40, you'll be commissioned and sent—not as the same man you were, but as a disciple-maker who reproduces what God has done in you.

Halfway there, brother.

Let's finish what we started.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NASB).

Steadfast. Immovable. Abounding.

That's who you're becoming.

40 STRONG - Day 21 Complete ✓

WEEK 3: RENEWAL - COMPLETE ✓

HALFWAY POINT: REACHED ✓

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"
(Philippians 1:6, NASB)

TOMORROW: WEEK 4 BEGINS
EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines (Days 22-28)

Day 22: Prayer - Conversation with God

40 STRONG - DAY 22

PRAYER - CONVERSATION WITH GOD WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines

MORNING: THE OPEN CHANNEL (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I need to be honest with You—which is ironic, because this is a lesson on prayer, and I'm already struggling to pray. I know all the religious language. I've heard the sermons. I've read the books. But if I'm real? Prayer feels awkward. Sometimes pointless. Sometimes I don't know what to say. Sometimes I say things and wonder if You're even listening. I've prayed for things that never happened. I've begged You for help and gotten silence. I've done the "right" prayers—formulaic, polished, theologically sound—and felt nothing. And I've also had moments where I just said "Help" and felt You show up. I don't understand prayer, God. I don't know if I'm doing it right. I don't know why some prayers seem to work and others don't. I don't know how to sustain it when it feels like I'm talking to the ceiling. But here's what I do know: Jesus prayed. Constantly. Early mornings. Late nights. In crisis. In celebration. And if the Son of God needed to talk to You, then I definitely do. So teach me, Father. Not the religious performance version. The real thing. Teach me to pray like a son talking to his Dad, not an employee reporting to a boss. Teach me to bring You the mess, the questions, the anger, the gratitude—all of it. Teach me that prayer isn't about getting the words right. It's about showing up to a relationship with Someone who's already listening. I'm here. Teach me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Prayer

Read these slowly. Listen for what God is saying about prayer.

THE INVITATION TO COME NEAR:

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8, NASB).

God doesn't say "pray perfectly and I'll respond." He says "draw near and I'll draw near."

Prayer is proximity. Closeness. Relationship.

THE PROMISE OF RESPONSE:

"Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3, NASB).

God WANTS you to call to Him. He's not annoyed by your voice. He's waiting for it.

THE SPIRIT'S HELP:

"In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26, NASB).

When you don't know what to pray, the Spirit translates. You're not alone in this.

THE PERSISTENCE JESUS TAUGHT:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8, NASB).

Ask. Seek. Knock. Present tense. Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking.

THE FATHER'S EAGERNESS:

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11, NASB).

God is MORE eager to give than earthly fathers. Not less. MORE.

THE ACCESS WE HAVE:

"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, NASB).

You have CONFIDENCE to approach God. Not because you're perfect. Because Jesus made the way.

THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT:

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (Matthew 6:9-13, NASB).

Not flowery. Not long. Direct. Honest. Relational.

THE LISTENING GOD:

"Before they call I will answer; and while they are still speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24, NASB).

God is already listening. Before you finish the sentence, He hears.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Picture this: God leaning in. Eager to hear your voice. Not checking His watch. Not distracted. LISTENING.

Now say His name: "Father."

That's prayer. Right there. You just did it.

Teaching: The Difference Between Religious Performance and Real Conversation

Here's the lie most men believe about prayer:

"Prayer is something I do right or wrong. There's a formula. A script. A proper way. And if I don't do it correctly, it doesn't count. God doesn't hear. I'm wasting my time."

Translation: You've turned prayer into a performance instead of a conversation.

And when prayer becomes performance, you stop doing it.

Theological Insight:

"The simple heart that freely asks in love, obtains more than the double-minded man who complicates his prayer with crossed motives and arguments." – Thomas Merton

Prayer as Performance vs. Prayer as Conversation: What's the Difference?

PRAYER AS PERFORMANCE:

What it looks like:

- You need the right words
- You have to sound spiritual
- You can't be too honest (especially about anger, doubt, confusion)
- You need to pray long enough for it to count
- You avoid prayer when you've sinned recently
- You quote Scripture to prove you know it
- You use "thee" and "thou" (or modern equivalent: overly formal language)

What it feels like:

- Pressure to get it right
- Like you're being graded
- Exhausting
- Disconnected
- You're talking **AT** God, not **WITH** Him

What it produces:

- Avoidance (if I can't do it right, I won't do it at all)
- Guilt (I should pray more, but I don't)
- Distance from God
- Prayer as a duty, not a relationship

PRAYER AS CONVERSATION:

What it looks like:

- You bring whatever's actually on your heart

- You use normal words (the same way you'd talk to a trusted friend)
- You can be brutally honest (anger, doubt, confusion, gratitude—all welcome)
- Sometimes it's long. Sometimes it's one word: "Help."
- You pray **ESPECIALLY** when you've sinned (running **TO** God, not away)
- You don't perform—you connect

What it feels like:

- Relief (I can bring the real stuff)
- Connection (Someone's actually listening)
- Freedom (I don't have to pretend)
- Like coming home

What it produces:

- Consistency (you keep showing up)
- Intimacy with God
- Transformation (real prayer changes you)
- Prayer as relationship, not duty

The Chart:

PERFORMANCE	CONVERSATION
Formal language	Normal words
Long = better	Length doesn't matter
"I have to sound spiritual"	"I can be real"
Avoid when you've failed	Run to God when you've failed
Reciting a script	Talking to Someone real
Talking AT God	Talking WITH God

PERFORMANCE	CONVERSATION
Monologue	Dialogue
Duty	Relationship
Guilt-driven	Love-driven
"Am I doing this right?"	"I'm just showing up"

Which column describes your actual prayer life right now?

Most men would say they want the right column. But they live in the left column.

Why?

Why You Struggle with Prayer

REASON #1: YOU LEARNED PERFORMANCE PRAYER, NOT RELATIONAL PRAYER

For most men, early exposure to prayer was:

- **In church: Formal, scripted, religious language**
- **Before meals: Rushed, formulaic, routine**
- **In crisis: Desperate bargaining ("God, if You get me out of this, I'll...")**

None of that taught you CONVERSATION.

So you learned:

- **Prayer is something you do at certain times (meals, church, bedtime)**
- **Prayer requires specific language**
- **Prayer is one-directional (you talk, God listens—maybe)**

But Jesus modeled something different:

- **He prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35)**
- **He prayed all night (Luke 6:12)**

- He prayed in crisis (Luke 22:44)
- He prayed in joy (Luke 10:21)
- He prayed constantly (Luke 5:16)

Prayer wasn't an event for Jesus. It was a lifestyle. An ongoing conversation with the Father.

REASON #2: YOU DON'T THINK GOD ACTUALLY WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

The lie: *"God has more important things to deal with than my little problems."*

The truth: "Before they call I will answer; and while they are still speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24, NASB).

God is EAGER to hear from you. Not obligated. EAGER.

Think of it this way:

When your kid comes to you with something—even something small—do you think, "Man, I have more important things to deal with"? Or do you lean in because you love them?

God is a better Father than you are. If you want to hear from your kid, how much MORE does God want to hear from you?

REASON #3: YOU'VE PRAYED AND FELT LIKE GOD DIDN'T ANSWER

This is the big one.

You prayed for:

- Your marriage to heal (it didn't)
- Your addiction to stop (it's still there)
- Your kid to come back to faith (they're still far from God)
- A job (you didn't get it)
- Healing (it didn't come)

And you concluded: *"Prayer doesn't work. Or God doesn't care. Or I'm doing it wrong."*

Here's the hard truth:

God always answers prayer. But His answers aren't always "yes" or "right now."

Sometimes the answer is:

- **"Not yet" (God's timing is different than yours)**
- **"Not that" (He has something better)**
- **"Not that way" (He's answering, but differently than you expected)**
- **"Trust Me" (you won't understand now, but you will later)**

And sometimes, the biggest answer to prayer is what God does IN you while you're waiting for what you asked FOR.

Prayer changes circumstances. But it changes YOU more.

REASON #4: YOU CONFUSE UNANSWERED PRAYER WITH UNHEARD PRAYER

Just because God didn't give you what you asked for doesn't mean He didn't HEAR you.

"This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14, NASB).

He HEARS you. Always.

But hearing doesn't always mean granting.

A good father hears his kid ask for candy for breakfast. He HEARS. But he doesn't grant it. Not because he doesn't care. Because he loves them.

God hears every prayer. He just doesn't say "yes" to everything. Because He's a good Father.

REASON #5: YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

You sit down to pray and your mind goes blank.

"Um... God... uh... help me with... stuff."

And you feel stupid. So you quit.

Here's the secret: You don't need a script.

The Spirit intercedes for you with groans (Romans 8:26). When you don't have words, the Spirit translates.

Prayer can be:

- **One word: "Help."**
- **Silence: Just sitting in God's presence.**
- **A Scripture: Reading a Psalm and making it your prayer.**
- **Honesty: "God, I don't know what to say, but I'm here."**

All of it counts.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Prayer as Radio Traffic

I've been on scenes where radio traffic was absolute chaos. Multiple units calling for resources. Dispatch relaying information. Command trying to coordinate. Mayday calls cutting through everything.

But here's what I learned: The incident commander was ALWAYS monitoring the radio.

Even when the channel was jammed, even when transmissions got stepped on, even when I thought my call got buried—they heard me.

They were listening for MY voice. Waiting for my status update. Ready to respond the moment I keyed up.

That's prayer, brother.

You think your prayers are getting lost in the noise. You think God's too busy with bigger emergencies. You think your transmission isn't clear enough.

But God is ALWAYS monitoring your frequency.

He's not waiting for you to get the words perfect. He's waiting for you to KEY UP.

And here's the other thing:

On the fireground, we had a rule: Key up early. Key up often.

Don't wait until you're in trouble to call for help. Give regular updates. Stay in communication.

The worst thing you can do is go radio silent.

Same with prayer.

Don't wait until you're in crisis. Don't wait until you "feel spiritual." Don't wait until you have the perfect words.

KEY UP. Stay in communication. The incident commander is listening.

What Prayer Actually Is (And Isn't)

Let's clear up some religious nonsense:

PRAYER IS NOT:

- ✗ A vending machine (put in good behavior, get out what you want)
 - ✗ Earning God's attention (He's already paying attention)
 - ✗ Convincing God to care (He already cares more than you do)
 - ✗ Perfect words in the right order (He hears your heart, not your vocabulary)
 - ✗ Only for "spiritual" moments (you can pray anytime, anywhere)
 - ✗ A last resort ("I've tried everything else, so I guess I'll pray")
 - ✗ Manipulation ("If I pray hard enough, God HAS to give me what I want")
-

PRAYER IS:

- ✓ Conversation with Someone who's actually there
- ✓ Honest communication (bring the real stuff, not the sanitized version)
- ✓ Practiced presence (learning to recognize God is already in the room)
- ✓ Relationship maintenance (staying connected, not just crisis calls)
- ✓ Aligning your heart with God's (not changing His mind, but opening yours)
- ✓ Partnership (joining what God's already doing)
- ✓ Listening as much as talking (prayer is two-way)

The Disciples' Request: "Teach Us to Pray"

The disciples didn't ask Jesus:

- "Teach us to preach" (though He was a great preacher)
- "Teach us to do miracles" (though He did many)
- "Teach us theology" (though He taught with authority)

They asked: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Why?

Because they watched Jesus pray. And they saw something REAL happening.

They watched Him:

- Get up early to pray (Mark 1:35)
- Pray all night before big decisions (Luke 6:12)
- Pray in crisis (Luke 22:44)
- Pray in joy (Luke 10:21)
- Pray constantly (Luke 5:16)

And they realized: Jesus had ACCESS to something they didn't.

Connection. Power. Peace. Direction. Intimacy with the Father.

They wanted that.

So Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Not as a script to recite. As a TEMPLATE for conversation.

The Lord's Prayer: A Template, Not a Script

Most people treat the Lord's Prayer like a magic spell. You recite it word-for-word and you're done.

But Jesus didn't say, "Pray these exact words every time." He said, "Pray, then, in this way" (Matthew 6:9, NASB).

This WAY. This pattern. This approach.

Let's break it down:

"OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME"

Start with WHO GOD IS.

Not what you need. Not what's wrong. WHO HE IS.

- Father (relational, not distant)
- In heaven (powerful, not limited)
- Hallowed (set apart, holy, worthy of reverence)

This reorients you. Reminds you who you're talking to.

Application: Before you bring your requests, acknowledge: "God, You're good. You're powerful. You're trustworthy. You're MY Father."

"YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"

Align your heart with God's priorities.

Not "my kingdom come" or "my will be done." HIS kingdom. HIS will.

This is surrender. Submission. Trust.

Application: "God, I want what YOU want. Even if it's different than what I think I need. Your will, not mine."

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

Bring your actual needs.

Not "give me a year's supply." DAILY bread. Today's provision.

This keeps you dependent. Trusting. Coming back daily.

Application: "God, here's what I need today: [be specific]. I trust You to provide."

"AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS"

Confess and release.

Confess your sin. Receive forgiveness. Extend forgiveness to others.

You can't hold onto bitterness and expect intimacy with God.

Application: "God, I messed up with [specific sin]. Forgive me. And help me forgive [person who hurt you]."

"AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL"

Ask for protection and strength.

You're in a battle. You need help.

Application: "God, I'm weak in this area: [name it]. Protect me. Give me strength to resist."

That's the template.

Not a script to recite. A PATTERN to follow.

Sometimes your prayer will hit all these points. Sometimes just one. Sometimes none—you just sit in silence.

All of it is prayer.

Types of Prayer: A Practical Guide

Prayer isn't one-size-fits-all. Here are different types:

1. ADORATION (Focusing on Who God Is)

What it is: Praising God for His character, not for what He's done for you.

Why it matters: It reorients your perspective. Reminds you how big God is compared to your problems.

How to do it:

- **Read a Psalm about God's character (Psalm 145, 103, 139)**
- **List God's attributes: faithful, powerful, loving, just, merciful**

- **Speak them out loud: "God, You are faithful. You are powerful. You are good."**

Example: "Father, You are holy. You are wise. You are strong. You are kind. You are present. You are enough."

2. CONFESSION (Honest Acknowledgment of Sin)

What it is: Bringing your failures to God, naming them specifically, and receiving forgiveness.

Why it matters: It keeps your relationship with God clear. Unconfessed sin creates distance.

How to do it:

- **Be specific (not "forgive me for all my sins" but "I looked at porn last night. Forgive me.")**
- **Receive forgiveness (don't just confess—BELIEVE you're forgiven)**
- **Make it regular (daily examination of conscience)**

Example: "God, I was angry with my wife today and said things I shouldn't have. I was more concerned with being right than being loving. Forgive me. Help me apologize to her."

3. THANKSGIVING (Gratitude for What God Has Done)

What it is: Acknowledging specific ways God has shown up, provided, answered, or blessed.

Why it matters: It builds faith. Reminds you God is active in your life.

How to do it:

- **List specific things from today, this week, this month**
- **Be detailed (not "thanks for everything" but "thanks for that conversation with my son")**
- **Make it regular (daily gratitude practice)**

Example: "God, thank You for that job. Thank You for protecting me on the drive. Thank You for my friend who checked in on me. Thank You for convicting me before I went too far."

4. SUPPLICATION (Asking for What You Need)

What it is: Bringing your actual needs, struggles, and requests to God.

Why it matters: God invites you to ask. He wants to provide.

How to do it:

- **Be specific (not "bless my family" but "help my son with his anxiety")**
- **Be honest (if you're desperate, say it)**
- **Trust God's answer (even if it's not what you expected)**

Example: "God, I need strength to resist this temptation. I need wisdom for this decision. I need provision for this bill. I need healing in my marriage."

5. INTERCESSION (Praying for Others)

What it is: Standing in the gap for someone else's needs.

Why it matters: It moves you outside yourself. Aligns you with God's heart for others.

How to do it:

- **Pray for specific people by name**
- **Pray for their actual struggles (not vague "bless them")**
- **Ask God what HE wants for them, then pray that**

Example: "God, I lift up my buddy who's struggling with his marriage. Give him wisdom. Soften his heart. Bring reconciliation. Protect his kids."

6. LISTENING PRAYER (Silence and Waiting)

What it is: Quieting yourself to hear from God.

Why it matters: Prayer is two-way. You need to listen as much as talk.

How to do it:

- Sit in silence (5-10 minutes)
- Ask God: "What do You want to say to me?"
- Pay attention to: Scripture that comes to mind, impressions, peace, conviction
- Write down what you sense

Example: [Sitting in silence] "God, what do You want me to know today?" [Waiting. Listening. Noticing what surfaces.]

Practical Prayer Rhythms for Real Men

Here's what prayer can look like for a guy who works for a living:

MORNING CHECK-IN (2-5 minutes)

When: First thing when you wake up (before your phone)

What to say: "God, I'm awake. Here's what I'm walking into today: [name the challenges]. I need Your help with [specific thing]. Thanks for another shot at this. Let's do this together."

Why it matters: Sets the tone. Invites God into your day **BEFORE** the chaos starts.

DRIVE-TIME HONESTY (As needed)

When: In the truck, on the commute, between calls

What to say: "God, I'm pissed about [situation]. I don't know what to do. Show me what You see that I'm missing."

OR

"God, that was hard. I need strength."

OR

"God, that went well. Thank You."

Why it matters: Keeps you in constant communication. Prayer becomes lifestyle, not event.

GRATITUDE MOMENTS (Throughout the day)

When: Whenever something good happens

What to say: "That was good. Thank You."

(Doesn't need to be more complicated than that.)

Why it matters: Trains you to notice God's presence and provision.

EMERGENCY PRAYER (In crisis)

When: When you're overwhelmed, tempted, or desperate

What to say: "Help."

(God knows the rest.)

Why it matters: God doesn't need long prayers in crisis. He just needs you to KEY UP.

EVENING REVIEW (5-10 minutes)

When: Before bed

What to say: "God, here's how today went. Here's where I saw You: [specific examples]. Here's where I screwed up: [specific confession]. Thanks for grace. Let's try again tomorrow."

Why it matters: Keeps your conscience clear. Builds awareness of God's presence.

WORDLESS PRAYER (When you don't have words)

When: When you're too tired, too angry, too confused to articulate

What to do: Just sit there. No words. Just being.

Why it matters: God doesn't need your words. He wants your presence.

"The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26, NASB).

The Struggle Is Normal (And How to Push Through)

Most men struggle with prayer. Here's why—and what to do about it:

STRUGGLE #1: "I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING"

The lie: "If I don't feel God's presence, prayer isn't working."

The truth: Prayer is not about feelings. It's about faithfulness.

You don't feel love for your wife every day. But you show up to the marriage anyway. Same with prayer.

What to do:

- **Pray even when you don't feel like it**
 - **Trust that God is listening whether you feel Him or not**
 - **Feelings follow faithfulness, not the other way around**
-

STRUGGLE #2: "I DON'T HAVE TIME"

The lie: "I need 30-60 minutes of uninterrupted time or it doesn't count."

The truth: Prayer can happen in 30 seconds.

What to do:

- **Start with 2 minutes (you HAVE 2 minutes)**
 - **Pray while you're doing other things (driving, walking, showering)**
 - **Set alarms on your phone as prayer reminders**
-

STRUGGLE #3: "I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY"

The lie: "I need the perfect words or God won't listen."

The truth: God hears your heart, not your vocabulary.

What to do:

- **Pray Scripture (use the Psalms as your words)**
 - **Start with "God, I don't know what to say, but I'm here"**
 - **Let silence be your prayer when words fail**
-

STRUGGLE #4: "I FEEL LIKE A HYPOCRITE"

The lie: "How can I pray when I'm living like this?"

The truth: That's EXACTLY when you need to pray.

You don't clean up to come to God. You come to God to get clean.

What to do:

- **Confess the hypocrisy to God ("God, I feel like a fraud. Help me.")**
 - **Pray ESPECIALLY when you've failed**
 - **Remember: Jesus ate with sinners, not the self-righteous**
-

STRUGGLE #5: "PRAYER FEELS POINTLESS"

The lie: "Nothing changes, so why bother?"

The truth: Prayer changes YOU, even when circumstances don't change immediately.

What to do:

- **Keep a prayer journal (track what you pray for and how God answers)**
 - **Look for what God is doing IN you, not just FOR you**
 - **Trust that unanswered doesn't mean unheard**
-

The Posture of Prayer: How You Approach Matters

Prayer isn't about physical position. But your posture can help your heart.

SITTING

When: Morning devotions, extended prayer time

Why: Comfortable, sustainable for longer prayers

Try: Sitting upright (not slouched—you'll fall asleep)

Kneeling

When: Confession, surrender, desperation

Why: Physical act of humility and submission

Try: Kneeling by your bed, couch, or chair

STANDING/WALKING

When: Praying while active (walking, pacing)

Why: Keeps you alert, helps process thoughts

Try: Morning walk prayer, pacing while you pray

HANDS OPEN

When: Receiving, surrendering, asking

Why: Physical reminder that you're open to God

Try: Palms up, physically releasing control

HANDS RAISED

When: Worship, adoration, desperation

Why: Physical expression of surrender and praise

Try: Alone in your truck, at home, in nature

FACE DOWN

When: Deep repentance, overwhelming awe, crisis

Why: Complete physical surrender

Try: Prostrate on the floor (when you're alone)

The point: There's no "right" posture. Find what helps you connect.

Prayer and Warfare: You're in a Battle

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12, NASB).

You're in a spiritual battle. And prayer is a weapon.

The enemy wants you to believe:

- **Prayer doesn't work**
- **God isn't listening**
- **You're wasting your time**
- **You're not qualified to pray**

Why?

Because when you pray, things change. Strongholds break. Darkness flees. God moves.

The enemy doesn't fear your strength. He fears your prayers.

So he'll do everything he can to keep you from praying:

- **Distraction (suddenly you need to check your phone)**
- **Discouragement ("This isn't working")**
- **Doubt ("Does God even care?")**
- **Delay ("I'll pray later")**

Fight back by praying anyway.

Even when it feels pointless. Even when you don't see results. Even when you're discouraged.

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB).

Your prayers MATTER.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from avoidance to conversation)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. YOUR CURRENT PRAYER LIFE:

Which describes your actual relationship with prayer RIGHT NOW?

- ☐ **I pray consistently (daily or near-daily)**
- ☐ **I pray occasionally (when I remember or need something)**
- ☐ **I rarely pray (only in crisis)**
- ☐ **I avoid prayer (it feels awkward/pointless)**

Explain honestly:

2. PERFORMANCE OR CONVERSATION?

When you pray, does it feel more like:

- ☐ **Performance (I'm trying to get the words right, sound spiritual, pray long enough)**
- ☐ **Conversation (I'm talking to Someone who's actually listening)**
- ☐ **Mixture of both**

What would need to change for prayer to feel more like real conversation?

3. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE:

What's the #1 thing that keeps you from praying consistently?

- ☐ I don't know what to say
- ☐ I don't have time
- ☐ It feels pointless (God doesn't seem to answer)
- ☐ I feel like a hypocrite (how can I pray when I'm living like this?)
- ☐ I don't feel anything when I pray
- ☐ I'm still angry about unanswered prayers from the past
- ☐ Other: _____

How has this obstacle kept you from connection with God?

SECTION 2: UNANSWERED PRAYER

4. THE PRAYER THAT DIDN'T GET ANSWERED:

What's one prayer you prayed that God didn't answer the way you wanted?

How did that affect your view of prayer?

- ☐ I stopped praying as much
- ☐ I started doubting God cares
- ☐ I questioned if prayer works
- ☐ I got angry at God
- ☐ I kept praying but felt discouraged

☐ I trusted God had a reason, even though it hurt

5. REFRAMING UNANSWERED PRAYER:

Looking back, what might God have been doing IN you while you were waiting for what you asked FOR?

Can you trust that "not yet" or "not that" doesn't mean "I don't care"?

☐ Yes, I trust God's heart even when I don't understand His answers

☐ I'm working toward that trust

☐ I'm still struggling with this

SECTION 3: PRAYER AS RELATIONSHIP

6. THE INCIDENT COMMANDER IS LISTENING:

Read this again:

"God is ALWAYS monitoring your frequency. He's not waiting for you to get the words perfect. He's waiting for you to KEY UP."

What would change if you actually believed God is EAGER to hear from you?

7. KEYING UP EARLY AND OFTEN:

On the fireground, we don't wait until we're in trouble to call for help. We give regular updates.

How would your prayer life change if you "keyed up" throughout the day instead of waiting for crisis?

What's one moment today where you could have prayed but didn't?

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

8. MORNING CHECK-IN:

Will you commit to a 2-minute morning check-in with God this week?

- ☐ Yes, I'll try it
- ☐ I'll start with 3 days this week
- ☐ I'm not ready yet

If yes, what will you say? (Write it out now so you have a starting point)

"God, I'm awake. Here's what I'm walking into today: _____. I need Your help with _____. Thanks for another shot at this."

9. DRIVE-TIME PRAYER:

This week, when you're in the truck/car, will you:

- ☐ Turn off the radio for 5 minutes and just talk to God
- ☐ Use drive time to pray for people by name
- ☐ Bring God your honest emotions (anger, frustration, gratitude)
- ☐ Practice silence and listening

What's one thing you need to talk to God about during your next drive?

10. EVENING REVIEW:

Will you commit to a 5-minute evening review this week?

- ☐ **Yes, every night**
- ☐ **I'll try 3-4 nights this week**
- ☐ **Not yet**

Write out the template you'll use:

**"God, here's how today went: _____. Here's where I saw You: _____.
Here's where I messed up: _____. Thanks for grace. Let's try again tomorrow."**

11. LISTENING PRAYER:

When's the last time you sat in silence and LISTENED for God instead of just talking?

Will you try 5 minutes of listening prayer this week?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll set aside time**
- ☐ **I'll try it once**
- ☐ **I'm not ready**

If yes, when? (Be specific—schedule it)

Day: _____ Time: _____

12. PRAYING SCRIPTURE:

Prayer doesn't require original words. You can pray Scripture.

Choose one Psalm to pray this week:

- ☐ **Psalm 51 (confession and renewal)**
- ☐ **Psalm 23 (trust and provision)**
- ☐ **Psalm 139 (God's intimate knowledge of you)**
- ☐ **Psalm 145 (praise for who God is)**

Read it slowly. Make it personal. Pray it back to God.

SECTION 5: THE LIE YOU'RE BELIEVING

13. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING ABOUT PRAYER?

- ☐ "I need perfect words or God won't listen"
- ☐ "God's too busy for my small problems"
- ☐ "Prayer doesn't work because God didn't answer before"
- ☐ "I'm not spiritual enough to pray"
- ☐ "I need more time than I have"
- ☐ "God's disappointed in me, so why would He listen?"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

14. THE INVITATION TO DRAW NEAR:

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8, NASB).

God is not distant. He's waiting for you to show up.

What's one way you'll "draw near" this week?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

I am invited into conversation with the God of the universe.

Prayer is not performance—it's relationship.

I don't need perfect words—I just need to show up.

God is EAGER to hear from me, not annoyed by me.

When I don't know what to say, the Spirit intercedes for me.

Unanswered prayer doesn't mean unheard prayer.

God is always monitoring my frequency—He's waiting for me to key up.

I will pray in crisis, in gratitude, in confusion, in silence.

Prayer is my weapon, my lifeline, my connection to the Father.

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8, NASB).

I am drawing near. And He is drawing near to me.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've made prayer harder than it needs to be. I've turned conversation into performance. I've believed I need perfect words, perfect posture, perfect timing. I've avoided You when I've failed, thinking You didn't want to hear from me. I've given up when prayers went unanswered, assuming You weren't listening. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: You are EAGER to hear from me. Not obligated—EAGER. You're not grading my vocabulary. You're listening for my voice. You're not waiting for me to clean up before I approach. You're inviting me to come AS I AM.

Teach me to pray, Father. Not the religious performance version. The real thing. Teach me to bring You the mess, the questions, the anger, the gratitude—all of it. Teach me that prayer is keying up the radio, knowing the Incident Commander is always listening.

Help me draw near, trusting You'll draw near to me. Help me show up consistently—not perfectly, but faithfully. Help me believe my prayers matter, even when I don't see immediate results. And when I don't have words, remind me the Spirit intercedes for me.

I'm here, Father. I'm keying up. Teach me to pray.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Draw near to God"

Breathe out: "He draws near to you"

(James 4:8)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I talked to God today, or just ABOUT Him?

Brief Prayer: Father, I'm keying up right now. Thank You for listening.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God's presence today?

What am I grateful for?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I pray today? (Honestly)

- ☐ **Yes—morning, midday, and/or evening**
- ☐ **Occasionally—when I remembered**
- ☐ **Only in crisis**
- ☐ **Not really**

If I prayed, what did it feel like? (Performance or conversation?)

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I avoid prayer today? Why?

What kept me from "keying up"?

- ☐ Distraction
 - ☐ Busyness
 - ☐ Feeling unworthy
 - ☐ Didn't think it mattered
 - ☐ Forgot
-

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for treating prayer like a duty instead of a conversation. Forgive me for going radio silent instead of staying in communication with You.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding prayer?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"I've been avoiding prayer because _____. The lie I've believed is _____.
The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will key up by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 22 ✓ - Learned prayer is conversation, not performance. I've been making it too complicated. The Incident Commander is always listening—I just need to key up. Praying tomorrow for strength to stay consistent."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 23: "Scripture - The Owner's Manual"

Brief Prayer:

Father, You've invited me into conversation through prayer. Tomorrow, help me learn how You speak back—through Your Word. Prepare my heart to encounter Scripture not as religious obligation, but as LIFE. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE INCIDENT COMMANDER IS LISTENING

Theological Insight:

***"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness."* – Martin Luther**

Brother, here's what you need to know:

God is not reluctant to hear from you. He's EAGER.

He's not up there sighing when you pray, thinking, "Here he comes again with his problems."

He's leaning in. Listening. Waiting for your voice.

You don't need:

- **Perfect words**
- **Long prayers**
- **Religious language**
- **A clean life before you approach**

You just need to KEY UP.

The Incident Commander is always monitoring your frequency.

He heard you when you woke up this morning (even if you didn't pray).

He heard you when you were frustrated in traffic (even if you didn't say His name).

He heard you when you were tempted (even if you didn't ask for help).

He's ALWAYS listening.

But He wants you to engage. To talk. To bring Him the real stuff.

Not the sanitized version. The ACTUAL stuff.

Your anger. Your confusion. Your gratitude. Your desperation. Your questions. Your doubts. Your victories. Your failures.

All of it.

He's not grading your transmission. He's just glad you keyed up.

So tomorrow morning, before you grab your phone, before you start the coffee, before you do anything else:

KEY UP.

"Father, I'm here."

That's it. That's prayer.

And He'll respond: "I know, son. I've been waiting for you. Let's do this together."

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3, NASB).

God WANTS you to call to Him.

He's not reluctant. He's READY.

Call to Him.

He will answer.

40 STRONG - Day 22 Complete ✓

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 23

SCRIPTURE - THE OWNER'S MANUAL WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines

MORNING: THE VOICE OF GOD (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I need to be honest about the Bible. I know it's Your Word. I know it's true. I know it's important. But if I'm real? Most of the time, reading it feels like homework. Like something I'm SUPPOSED to do, not something I WANT to do. I've tried the "read through the Bible in a year" plans. I've lasted about three weeks before I quit. I've opened it up with good intentions and ended up confused, bored, or condemned. I've read passages and thought, "What does this even mean?" or "How does this apply to my life?" I've heard sermons about how the Bible is "living and active," but when I read it, it feels... dead. Like ancient words on a page that have nothing to do with my actual problems. And then I feel guilty. Because I KNOW this is Your Word. I KNOW it's supposed to be life-changing. But I don't know how to make it come alive. I don't know how to read it in a way that actually connects to my heart, not just my head. Yesterday You taught me to pray—to talk TO You. Today, teach me to listen—to hear You talk BACK through Your Word. Not as religious duty. Not as information to memorize. But as ACTUAL COMMUNICATION from my Father. Show me how to open this book and encounter YOU, not just principles or rules or stories. I want to hear Your voice. Teach me to read Scripture the way Jesus did—as LIFE. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Power of God's Word

Read these slowly. Let the Word speak about the Word.

THE WORD IS LIVING:

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

LIVING. Not dead. Not ancient. **LIVING.**

ACTIVE. Not passive. Not static. **ACTIVE.**

SHARPER than any blade. It cuts through your defenses, your excuses, your rationalizations.

THE WORD IS TRUTH:

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17, NASB).

Not "contains truth." IS truth.

In a world of lies, spin, manipulation, and confusion—this is the STANDARD.

THE WORD IS SUFFICIENT:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NASB).

ALL Scripture. Not just the parts you like. ALL of it.

PROFITABLE. For teaching (doctrine). For reproof (conviction). For correction (getting back on track). For training (how to live).

ADEQUATE. EQUIPPED. You don't need anything else.

THE WORD PRODUCES FAITH:

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17, NASB).

You can't manufacture faith. It comes from HEARING the Word.

THE WORD ENDURES:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8, NASB).

Trends change. Culture shifts. Opinions evolve. But God's Word STANDS.

Forever.

THE WORD GIVES LIFE:

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, NASB).

You need food to survive physically. You need God's Word to survive spiritually.

It's not optional. It's LIFE.

THE WORD LIGHTS YOUR PATH:

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105, NASB).

When you're lost. When you don't know what to do. When you can't see the next step.

The Word is your light.

THE WORD TRANSFORMS:

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2, NASB).

Transformation happens when your MIND is renewed. And your mind is renewed by the Word.

Pause. Close your eyes.

The God of the universe has spoken. And His words are written down. Available. Accessible.

You hold in your hands (or on your phone) the very WORDS OF GOD.

Not just information about God. Not just stories about other people. THE ACTUAL VOICE OF GOD.

How are you treating it?

Teaching: The Difference Between Reading Religiously and Reading Relationally

Here's the lie most men believe about the Bible:

"The Bible is a book I'm supposed to read to be a good Christian. It's full of rules, history, and stuff I don't understand. If I read it enough, maybe I'll be more spiritual."

Translation: You've turned Scripture into DUTY instead of DIALOGUE.

And when the Bible becomes duty, you stop reading it.

Theological Insight:

***"The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts."* – A.W. Tozer**

Reading Religiously vs. Reading Relationally: What's the Difference?

READING RELIGIOUSLY:

What it looks like:

- You read to check a box ("I read my Bible today—done")
- You read out of guilt ("I should read more")
- You measure success by quantity (chapters read, time spent)
- You focus on information (facts, history, theology)
- You read to KNOW about God
- You feel condemned when you don't understand or can't apply it

What it feels like:

- Obligation
- Homework
- Dry, disconnected
- "I'm doing this because I'm supposed to"

What it produces:

- Guilt when you don't read

- **Pride when you do read**
 - **Knowledge without transformation**
 - **Distance from God (you know ABOUT Him, but don't KNOW Him)**
-

READING RELATIONALLY:

What it looks like:

- **You read to hear from God ("What do You want to say to me today?")**
- **You read out of hunger ("I need to hear Your voice")**
- **You measure success by connection (Did I encounter God? Did something shift in me?)**
- **You focus on transformation (How does this change me?)**
- **You read to KNOW God Himself**
- **You expect the Word to meet you where you are**

What it feels like:

- **Conversation**
- **Encountering Someone real**
- **Life-giving, transforming**
- **"I'm doing this because I need it"**

What it produces:

- **Hunger for more**
 - **Humility (the Word exposes you)**
 - **Transformation (you're changed by what you read)**
 - **Intimacy with God (you KNOW Him, not just about Him)**
-

The Chart:

RELIGIOUS READING RELATIONAL READING

Information	Transformation
Duty	Delight
Checkbox mentality	Encounter mentality
"I should read"	"I need to read"
Quantity (how much)	Quality (what happened)
Know ABOUT God	KNOW God
Guilt-driven	Hunger-driven
Bible as textbook	Bible as love letter
Focus on rules	Focus on relationship
"What does this say?"	"What is God saying to ME?"

Which column describes your actual approach to Scripture right now?

Most men would say they WANT the right column. But they approach the Bible from the left column.

Why?

Why You Struggle with Reading Scripture

REASON #1: YOU WERE TAUGHT TO READ IT AS A TEXTBOOK, NOT A CONVERSATION

For most men, early exposure to the Bible was:

- **Sunday School: Memorize verses, answer questions, get a gold star**
- **Church: Listen to sermons, take notes, learn doctrine**
- **Personal study: Read it like a history book or instruction manual**

All of that taught you INFORMATION, not TRANSFORMATION.

So you learned:

- **The Bible is a book full of facts to know**
- **Success = understanding everything**
- **If you don't understand it, you're failing**

But Jesus modeled something different:

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (John 5:39, NASB).

The Pharisees KNEW the Scriptures inside and out. They memorized. They studied. They debated.

But they missed JESUS.

You can know the Bible and miss the POINT.

The Bible isn't the point. JESUS is the point.

The Bible testifies about Him. Points to Him. Reveals Him.

Reading the Bible relationally means you're looking for JESUS, not just collecting information.

REASON #2: YOU FEEL LIKE YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING (AND YOU DON'T)

You open the Bible. You read a passage. You don't understand half of it.

Cultural context you don't know. Names you can't pronounce. Genealogies that make no sense. Prophetic imagery that's confusing.

And you think: *"I must be doing this wrong. Other people seem to understand this. What's wrong with me?"*

Here's the truth:

The Bible is 66 books written over 1,500 years in three different languages by 40+ authors across multiple cultures.

OF COURSE you don't understand everything.

And that's okay.

You don't need to understand EVERYTHING to encounter GOD.

When you read, you're looking for:

- **What is God saying to ME in THIS moment?**
- **What do I need to hear TODAY?**

Not: "Do I comprehend every detail of this passage?"

Application beats comprehension.

REASON #3: YOU'VE BEEN HURT BY PEOPLE WHO WEAPONIZED SCRIPTURE

For many men, the Bible has been used as a weapon:

- **To control you ("The Bible says submit/obey/don't question")**
- **To shame you ("You call yourself a Christian? The Bible says...")**
- **To manipulate you ("God wants you to [give me money/serve me/do what I say]")**

And now, when you open the Bible, you're guarded. Defensive. Skeptical.

You're waiting for condemnation, not life.

Here's the truth:

People misuse Scripture. But that doesn't change what Scripture IS.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and PROFITABLE" (2 Timothy 3:16, NASB).

Profitable. Not punishing.

When the Word convicts you, it's not to CONDEMN you. It's to CORRECT you. To bring you back to life.

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword... and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, NASB).

The sword cuts. But it cuts to HEAL, not to kill.

Surgery hurts. But it saves your life.

The Word will expose you. Convict you. Challenge you.

But it will also RESTORE you. RENEW you. TRANSFORM you.

REASON #4: YOU READ IT LIKE A RULE BOOK INSTEAD OF A LOVE LETTER

You open the Bible looking for:

- What you're supposed to do
- What you're doing wrong
- How to be a better Christian

And you miss the **STORY** the Bible is telling:

God loves you. God pursues you. God rescues you. God transforms you.

The Bible isn't primarily a rule book (though it contains commands).

It's a **LOVE STORY**.

From Genesis to Revelation, the theme is the same:

God creating. Humanity rebelling. God pursuing. God redeeming. God restoring.

When you read Scripture, you're not just learning principles. You're encountering the God who **LOVES** you.

REASON #5: YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START (SO YOU DON'T START AT ALL)

You know you should read the Bible. But where?

Genesis? (You'll get bogged down in Leviticus.)

Matthew? (Feels like you're missing backstory.)

Revelation? (Good luck with that.)

So you don't start at all.

Here's the secret: **START WHERE YOU ARE.**

You don't need a perfect plan. You need to **OPEN THE BOOK.**

The Firefighter's Perspective: The Owner's Manual You Actually Need

Every piece of firefighting equipment comes with an owner's manual.

SCBA. Thermal imaging camera. Ladder truck. Rescue tools.

And here's the rule: You don't improvise with equipment you don't understand.

You read the manual. You learn how it works. You train with it. THEN you use it in the field.

Why?

Because when lives are on the line, you can't afford to guess.

Same with life, brother.

You're walking into a spiritual battle. Spiritual fires. Spiritual collapse.

And God gave you an OWNER'S MANUAL: Scripture.

It tells you:

- **How you're designed to function**
- **What's broken and needs repair**
- **How to navigate danger**
- **How to operate effectively**
- **How to stay alive**

You wouldn't go into a burning building without training. Why would you go into life without reading the MANUAL?

But here's the difference:

A fire equipment manual is dry. Technical. Boring.

God's Word is LIVING. It doesn't just inform you—it TRANSFORMS you.

It's not just a manual. It's the VOICE OF THE ONE WHO MADE YOU.

And when you read it, He speaks.

What Scripture Actually Is (And Isn't)

Let's clear up some religious nonsense:

SCRIPTURE IS NOT:

- ✗ A magic book (read it and your problems disappear)
 - ✗ A rule book only (do this, don't do that, or else)
 - ✗ A history textbook only (interesting stories with no application)
 - ✗ A self-help manual ("5 steps to a better life")
 - ✗ A weapon to control others ("The Bible says you have to...")
 - ✗ A test you have to pass (understand everything or you're failing)
 - ✗ Optional (you can live without it)
-

SCRIPTURE IS:

- ✓ The Word of God (God-breathed, inspired, authoritative)
 - ✓ Living and active (it does something IN you when you read it)
 - ✓ Sufficient (you don't need anything else for life and godliness)
 - ✓ The standard for truth (when culture, feelings, or opinions conflict—Scripture wins)
 - ✓ A light for your path (it shows you the next step, even when you can't see the whole journey)
 - ✓ Transformative (it renews your mind, which changes your life)
 - ✓ A means of grace (God uses it to shape you, heal you, guide you)
 - ✓ **ESSENTIAL** (you can't survive spiritually without it)
-

The Authority of Scripture: Why It Matters

"All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16, NASB).

"Inspired" = Greek *theopneustos* = "God-breathed"

This isn't just human wisdom. It's not just good ideas from religious people.

It's **GOD-BREATHED**.

What that means:

1. Scripture is TRUE.

Not "contains truth." IS truth.

When culture says one thing and Scripture says another, SCRIPTURE WINS.

2. Scripture is AUTHORITATIVE.

It has the final say.

Not your feelings. Not popular opinion. Not even your personal experience.

Scripture.

3. Scripture is SUFFICIENT.

"So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17, NASB).

You don't need:

- **Extra-biblical revelation**
- **New doctrines**
- **Secret knowledge**

You need SCRIPTURE. It's enough.

4. Scripture doesn't change.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35, NASB).

Trends change. Culture evolves. Your opinions shift.

God's Word STANDS.

How to Read Scripture: Practical Approaches for Real Men

You don't need a theology degree to read the Bible. You just need to show up.

Here's how:

APPROACH #1: READ IT CONVERSATIONALLY (Not academically)

What it means: Read the Bible the way you'd read a letter from someone you love. Not to analyze. To HEAR.

How to do it:

- Slow down (5 verses deeply > 5 chapters quickly)
- Ask: "God, what are You saying to ME in this?"
- Listen for what stands out, what convicts, what encourages

Try this: Pick a passage (a Psalm, a chapter from Proverbs, a story from the Gospels).

Read it slowly. Out loud if it helps.

When something hits you, STOP. Don't keep reading. Sit with it. Let it sink in.

APPROACH #2: READ IT CHRONOLOGICALLY (Story order, not Bible order)

The problem: The Bible isn't arranged chronologically. It's arranged by genre (Law, History, Poetry, Prophets, Gospels, Letters).

So when you read straight through, you lose the STORY.

The solution: Use a chronological reading plan. It puts the Bible in the order events happened.

Why it helps: You see the BIG STORY of God's redemption instead of disconnected pieces.

APPROACH #3: READ IT THEMATICALLY (Focus on one theme at a time)

What it means: Instead of reading straight through, pick a theme and follow it through Scripture.

Examples:

- Grace: How does God show grace from Genesis to Revelation?
- Fatherhood: What does Scripture say about God as Father?

- **Suffering:** How does God meet people in suffering?
- **Provision:** How does God provide for His people?

How to do it: Use a concordance, Bible app, or study Bible to find passages on your theme.

Read them. Journal them. Let the theme shape how you see God.

APPROACH #4: READ IT DEVOTIONALLY (One passage, multiple days)

What it means: Instead of racing through chapters, camp out on ONE passage for a week.

How to do it:

- **Day 1:** Read it slowly. What stands out?
- **Day 2:** Read it again. What do I see that I missed yesterday?
- **Day 3:** Read it again. How does this apply to my life right now?
- **Day 4:** Read it again. What is God saying to ME specifically?
- **Day 5:** Read it again. What needs to change in me because of this?

Why it works: You go DEEP instead of WIDE. The Word actually sinks in.

APPROACH #5: READ IT PRAYERFULLY (Ask the Spirit to teach you)

What it means: Before you read, PRAY. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes.

How to do it:

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law" (Psalm 119:18, NASB).

"God, I'm about to read Your Word. I don't understand everything. But You do. Teach me. Show me what I need to see. Speak to me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Then read. Expect God to speak.

APPROACH #6: READ IT WITH A PEN (Write, mark, engage)

What it means: Don't just read passively. ENGAGE.

How to do it:

- **Underline what stands out**
- **Circle words that are repeated**
- **Write questions in the margin**
- **Journal what God is saying to you**

Why it works: Writing forces you to slow down. To think. To process.

Where to Start: A Practical Reading Plan for Men Who Don't Know Where to Begin

If you don't know where to start, here's a simple plan:

WEEK 1: THE GOSPEL (Who Jesus is)

Read the Gospel of Mark. It's short (16 chapters), fast-paced, and focused on Jesus' ACTIONS.

Goal: Encounter Jesus. See what He did. Hear what He said.

WEEK 2: WISDOM (How to live)

Read Proverbs. One chapter a day (there are 31—one for each day of the month).

Goal: Practical wisdom for real life.

WEEK 3: THE PSALMS (How to pray)

Read Psalm 1, 23, 27, 51, 103, 139.

Goal: Learn to bring your real emotions to God.

WEEK 4: THE LETTERS (How to live as a believer)

Read Ephesians, Philippians, or 1 John.

Goal: Understand your identity in Christ and how to walk it out.

After that, pick a plan and keep going. You're building momentum.

The S.O.A.P. Method: A Simple Tool for Daily Bible Reading

If you need structure, use S.O.A.P.:

S = SCRIPTURE

Write out the passage you're reading (or a key verse from it).

O = OBSERVATION

What do you see? What stands out? What's the context?

A = APPLICATION

How does this apply to YOUR life? What needs to change?

P = PRAYER

Pray the passage back to God. Ask Him to help you live it out.

Example:

SCRIPTURE: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

OBSERVATION: God promises to draw near when I draw near. He's not distant. He's responsive.

APPLICATION: I've been distant from God this week. I need to intentionally draw near through prayer and Scripture.

PRAYER: "Father, I've been distant. But You promise to draw near when I draw near. Help me prioritize time with You today. I need Your presence. Amen."

Scripture and Transformation: How the Word Changes You

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2, NASB).

Transformation happens when your MIND is renewed.

And your mind is renewed by the WORD.

Here's how it works:

STEP 1: THE WORD EXPOSES YOUR THINKING

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

The Word cuts through your excuses, your rationalizations, your self-deception.

It shows you:

- **Where you're believing lies**
 - **Where you're living in sin**
 - **Where you're trusting yourself instead of God**
-

STEP 2: THE WORD REPLACES LIES WITH TRUTH

You've been believing:

- **"I'm not enough"**
- **"God's disappointed in me"**
- **"I'll never change"**
- **"This sin is too strong"**

The Word says:

- **"You are complete in Christ" (Colossians 2:10)**
- **"You are beloved" (1 John 3:1)**

- "You are being transformed" (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- "Greater is He who is in you" (1 John 4:4)

The more you **READ** the truth, the more you **BELIEVE** the truth.

STEP 3: THE WORD SHAPES YOUR DESIRES

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word" (Psalm 119:9, NASB).

The more you read Scripture, the more you start **WANTING** what God wants.

You stop wanting sin because you start wanting **HIM**.

STEP 4: THE WORD PRODUCES FAITH

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17, NASB).

You can't manufacture faith. It comes from **HEARING** the Word.

The more you read, the more you trust. The more you trust, the more you obey. The more you obey, the more you're transformed.

Scripture and Spiritual Warfare: The Sword of the Spirit

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17, NASB).

You're in a battle. And the Word is your **WEAPON**.

When the enemy whispers lies, you fight back with **TRUTH**.

EXAMPLE: JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS

Satan: "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3).

Jesus: "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4).

Jesus didn't argue. Didn't negotiate. Didn't explain.

He quoted SCRIPTURE.

And Satan fled.

APPLICATION FOR YOU:

When the enemy says: "You'll never change"

You say: "I am being transformed into His image" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

When the enemy says: "God's disappointed in you"

You say: "There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

When the enemy says: "You're not strong enough"

You say: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

The Word is your WEAPON. Use it.

The Warning: Don't Just Read It—DO It

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB).

You can read the Bible every day and still be unchanged.

If you're not APPLYING what you read, you're wasting your time.

Knowledge puffs up. Obedience transforms.

Here's the test:

After you read Scripture today, ask yourself:

"What is one thing I need to DO because of what I just read?"

Then DO IT.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from duty to delight)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH SCRIPTURE:

Which describes how you actually approach the Bible right now?

- ☐ I read it consistently (daily or near-daily)
- ☐ I read it occasionally (when I remember or feel convicted)
- ☐ I rarely read it (only in church or when someone mentions a passage)
- ☐ I avoid it (feels like homework, duty, or condemnation)

Explain honestly:

2. RELIGIOUS OR RELATIONAL?

When you read the Bible, does it feel more like:

- ☐ Duty (I'm supposed to do this)
- ☐ Dialogue (God is speaking to me)
- ☐ Mixture of both

What would need to change for Scripture reading to feel more like HEARING FROM GOD?

3. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE:

What's the #1 thing that keeps you from reading Scripture consistently?

- ☐ I don't know where to start

- ☐ I don't have time
- ☐ I don't understand what I read
- ☐ It feels boring or irrelevant
- ☐ I feel condemned when I read it
- ☐ I've been hurt by people who weaponized Scripture
- ☐ Other: _____

How has this obstacle kept you from hearing God's voice?

SECTION 2: SCRIPTURE AS WEAPON

4. THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING:

What lie is the enemy whispering to you right now?

What does SCRIPTURE say about that lie? (Look it up if you don't know)

Will you commit to speaking that truth out loud when the enemy attacks?

- ☐ Yes, I'll fight back with Scripture
- ☐ I'll try
- ☐ I'm not ready yet

5. USING THE SWORD:

Jesus fought Satan's lies with Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11).

Which of these lies do you need to fight with truth THIS WEEK?

- ☐ "You'll never change" TRUTH: "I am being transformed" (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- ☐ "God's disappointed in you" TRUTH: "No condemnation for those in Christ" (Romans 8:1)
- ☐ "You're not strong enough" TRUTH: "I can do all things through Christ" (Philippians 4:13)
- ☐ "This sin is too strong" TRUTH: "Greater is He who is in you" (1 John 4:4)
- ☐ "You're alone" TRUTH: "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)

Write out the verse you need to memorize and speak this week:

SECTION 3: TRANSFORMATION

6. INFORMATION VS. TRANSFORMATION:

Do you read the Bible primarily:

- ☐ To gain knowledge (information)
- ☐ To be changed (transformation)
- ☐ Honestly? Just to check a box

What's one way Scripture has actually CHANGED you (not just informed you)?

If you can't think of an example, what does that reveal about how you're reading?

7. DOERS, NOT JUST HEARERS:

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22).

What's one thing you've read in Scripture recently that you KNOW you need to do—but haven't yet?

What's keeping you from doing it?

- ☐ **Fear**
- ☐ **Pride**
- ☐ **Laziness**
- ☐ **Don't know how**
- ☐ **Don't want to**

Will you commit to DOING it this week?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll obey what I've read**
 - ☐ **I'll try**
 - ☐ **I'm not ready**
-

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

8. WHERE TO START:

This week, will you commit to reading Scripture daily?

- ☐ **Yes, every day**
- ☐ **I'll try 5 days this week**
- ☐ **I'll start with 3 days**

If yes, which approach will you use?

- ☐ **Read Mark (one chapter a day)**
- ☐ **Read Proverbs (one chapter a day—matches the date)**
- ☐ **Read a Psalm each morning**
- ☐ **Use the S.O.A.P. method**
- ☐ **Pick one passage and camp on it all week**

When will you read? (Be specific—schedule it)

Time: _____ **Place:** _____

9. WHAT YOU'LL READ:

Choose ONE of these plans to start this week:

- ☐ **GOSPEL FOCUS:** Read Mark 1-7 (one chapter a day)
- ☐ **WISDOM FOCUS:** Read Proverbs 1-7 (one chapter a day)
- ☐ **PSALM FOCUS:** Read Psalms 1, 23, 27, 51, 103, 139, 145 (one each day)
- ☐ **LETTER FOCUS:** Read Ephesians 1-6 (one chapter a day)
- ☐ **DEEP DIVE:** Pick ONE passage (any of the Scriptures from today's lesson) and read it every day this week using S.O.A.P.

Which plan did you choose?

10. THE S.O.A.P. METHOD:

Will you try the S.O.A.P. method this week?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll use it daily**
- ☐ **I'll try it a few times**
- ☐ **Not yet**

If yes, practice it now with TODAY'S key verse:

SCRIPTURE: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

OBSERVATION: What do you see in this verse?

APPLICATION: How does this apply to your life right now?

PRAYER: Pray this passage back to God.

11. READING WITH A PEN:

Will you engage with Scripture this week by:

- ☐ Underlining what stands out
- ☐ Circling repeated words
- ☐ Writing questions in the margin
- ☐ Journaling what God is saying to you
- ☐ All of the above

What will help you ENGAGE instead of just reading passively?

12. LISTENING FOR GOD'S VOICE:

Before you read Scripture this week, will you PRAY first?

- ☐ Yes, I'll ask the Spirit to teach me
- ☐ I'll try to remember
- ☐ I'm not sure how

Suggested prayer:

"God, I'm about to read Your Word. Open my eyes to see what You want me to see. Speak to me. Teach me. Change me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Write your own version of this prayer:

SECTION 5: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING ABOUT SCRIPTURE

13. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "I need to understand everything or I'm failing"
- ☐ "The Bible is boring and irrelevant to my life"
- ☐ "I don't have time to read Scripture"
- ☐ "I've been hurt by people who weaponized Scripture, so I avoid it"
- ☐ "Reading the Bible is just religious duty"
- ☐ "I'm not smart enough to understand it"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

14. THE WORD IS LIVING:

"For the word of God is living and active" (Hebrews 4:12, NASB).

The Word is not dead. It's LIVING.

What would change if you actually believed the Bible is God's LIVING VOICE to you?

How would you read it differently?

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

The Word of God is LIVING and ACTIVE.

Scripture is not duty—it's DIALOGUE.

I don't need to understand everything—I just need to SHOW UP.

The Bible is not a textbook—it's a LOVE LETTER.

God speaks to me through His Word.

I will read Scripture not to check a box, but to HEAR from my Father.

The Word exposes lies, reveals truth, and transforms my mind.

The Word is my weapon in spiritual battle.

I will not just be a HEARER of the Word—I will be a DOER.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105, NASB).

I am opening the Owner's Manual. And God is speaking.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've treated Your Word like homework instead of hearing from You. I've read it out of duty, not delight. I've focused on information instead of transformation. I've let busyness, confusion, and past hurt keep me from opening the Book You gave me to guide my life. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Your Word is LIVING. It's not ancient history—it's Your VOICE speaking to me right now. It's not a religious textbook—it's a conversation with my Father. It's not optional—it's LIFE.

Teach me to read Scripture the way Jesus did. Not to know ABOUT You, but to KNOW You. Not to collect information, but to be TRANSFORMED. Not to check a box, but to encounter the God who loves me.

Open my eyes to see wonderful things in Your Word. Help me slow down. Help me listen. Help me APPLY what I read, not just absorb it. And when the enemy whispers lies, help me fight back with the TRUTH of Scripture.

I'm opening the Owner's Manual, Father. Speak to me. Change me. Use Your Word to renew my mind and transform my life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Your Word is living"

Breathe out: "And active in me"

(Hebrews 4:12)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I opened Scripture today, or just thought about it?

Brief Prayer: Father, Your Word is a lamp to my feet. I need Your light right now.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God's Word come alive today?

What truth from Scripture stood out?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I read Scripture today? (Honestly)

☐ **Yes—and it felt like hearing from God**

☐ **Yes—but I rushed through it**

☐ **Yes—but I didn't apply anything**

☐ **No—I didn't make time**

If I read, what did God say to me?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I choose other things over reading Scripture today?

What lie kept me from opening the Word?

- ☐ "I don't have time"
- ☐ "It won't make a difference"
- ☐ "I don't understand it anyway"
- ☐ "I'm too tired"

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for neglecting Your Word. Forgive me for treating it like optional instead of LIFE.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding His Word?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"I've been avoiding Scripture because _____. The lie I've believed is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will read _____ (specific passage) and ask God _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 23 ✓ - Learned Scripture is God's voice, not just religious duty. I've been reading it like a textbook instead of a love letter. Committing to [specific plan] this week to hear from God daily."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 24: "Fasting - Hunger for God"

Brief Prayer:

Father, You've taught me to pray (conversation with You) and to read Scripture (hearing You speak). Tomorrow, teach me to FAST—to create space for You by removing what distracts me. Prepare my heart to hunger for You more than anything else. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE OWNER'S MANUAL YOU ACTUALLY NEED

Theological Insight:

"Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years." – C.H. Spurgeon

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You're walking into battles you can't see. Facing struggles you can't handle alone.
Making decisions with consequences you can't predict.

And God gave you an OWNER'S MANUAL.

Not a dusty religious textbook. Not ancient words that don't apply.

A LIVING WORD. God's VOICE. Your WEAPON. Your LIGHT.

You wouldn't go into a fire without knowing how your equipment works.

You wouldn't operate machinery without reading the manual.

You wouldn't build a house without blueprints.

So why are you trying to live your life without reading the WORD?

The Bible isn't just information. It's TRANSFORMATION.

It's not just history. It's YOUR STORY.

It's not just principles. It's the VOICE OF THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU.

And when you open it, expecting to hear from Him—HE SPEAKS.

Not in audible voices. But in:

- **Conviction that won't let go**
- **Comfort when you're breaking**
- **Clarity when you're confused**
- **Courage when you're afraid**
- **Truth when you're believing lies**

The Word is ALIVE.

And it's waiting for you to open it.

So tomorrow morning, before you do anything else:

Open the Book.

Ask God to speak.

And LISTEN.

He has something to say to you.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

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

The Word is LIVING.

ACTIVE.

SHARP.

And it's cutting through everything that's holding you back from LIFE.

Let it.

40 STRONG - Day 23 Complete ✓

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 24

FASTING - HUNGER FOR GOD WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines

MORNING: THE EMPTY STOMACH, THE FULL HEART (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I'm going to be honest—fasting scares me. I know what it's supposed to be. I know Jesus fasted. I know the disciples fasted. I know it's biblical and important and all that. But if I'm real? The idea of going without food (or anything else) feels uncomfortable. Maybe even impossible. I like food. I like comfort. I like my routines, my entertainment, my distractions. And the thought of giving that up—even temporarily—makes me anxious. What if I can't do it? What if I get too hungry, too irritable, too distracted? What if I try and fail? And honestly, Father, I'm not even sure what the POINT is. Does skipping a meal really make You hear me better? Does going hungry earn Your attention? Isn't that just religious performance? I've heard people talk about fasting like it's some mystical experience where You show up in powerful ways. But I've also seen people fast for the wrong reasons—to lose weight, to prove they're spiritual, to manipulate You into answering their prayers. I don't want to do this wrong. But I also don't want to avoid it just because it's hard. So teach me, Father. Teach me what fasting actually IS. Not the religious version. The REAL thing. Teach me that fasting isn't about earning Your favor—I already have that through Jesus. Teach me that it's about creating SPACE. Removing distractions. Saying "I want YOU more than I want this." Help me understand that fasting is not deprivation—it's DEVOTION. And help me believe that when I make room for You, You WILL show up. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Fasting

Read these slowly. Listen for what God is saying about fasting.

THE HEART BEHIND FASTING:

"Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:6-7, NASB).

God doesn't want religious performance. He wants TRANSFORMED HEARTS that produce justice, compassion, and action.

Fasting isn't about impressing God. It's about ALIGNING YOUR HEART with His.

JESUS' TEACHING ON FASTING:

"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:16-18, NASB).

WHEN you fast. Not IF. WHEN.

Jesus assumed His followers would fast. But He warned against doing it for show.

Fasting is between YOU and GOD. Not you and an audience.

JESUS' EXAMPLE OF FASTING:

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry" (Matthew 4:1-2, NASB).

Jesus fasted BEFORE His ministry began. BEFORE He faced spiritual warfare.

Fasting prepares you for what's coming.

FASTING AND PRAYER COMBINED:

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3, NASB).

The early church fasted when making BIG DECISIONS. When commissioning leaders. When seeking God's direction.

Fasting + Prayer = Powerful combination.

FASTING IN CRISIS:

"Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16, NASB).

When Esther faced a life-or-death decision, she called for FASTING.

In crisis, fasting helps you focus on GOD instead of your circumstances.

THE REWARD OF FASTING:

"Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am'" (Isaiah 58:9, NASB).

When you fast with the right heart, God RESPONDS.

Not because you earned it. Because you POSITIONED YOURSELF to hear Him.

FASTING FOR BREAKTHROUGH:

"This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29, NASB).

Some battles require MORE than just prayer. They require fasting.

Fasting breaks through spiritual strongholds.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Fasting is not about punishment. It's not about earning God's attention.

It's about saying: "God, I want YOU more than I want comfort. More than food. More than distraction. More than anything."

And when you do that, GOD SHOWS UP.

Teaching: The Difference Between Fasting and Performance

Here's the lie most men believe about fasting:

"Fasting is something super-spiritual people do to twist God's arm. If I go without food long enough, God will have to answer my prayer. It's like a hunger strike directed at heaven."

Translation: You've turned fasting into MANIPULATION instead of DEVOTION.

And when fasting becomes manipulation, it's worthless.

Theological Insight:

"Fasting is not a hunger strike. Fasting is not an act of self-denial for the sake of self-denial. Fasting is feasting on the word of God and the presence of God." – John Piper

Fasting as Performance vs. Fasting as Devotion: What's the Difference?

FASTING AS PERFORMANCE:

What it looks like:

- You fast to impress God (or others)
- You believe fasting EARNs God's favor
- You measure success by how long you go without food
- You're more focused on the FAST than on GOD
- You announce it to others (to prove you're spiritual)
- You're miserable and want everyone to know it
- You think: "If I suffer enough, God will give me what I want"

What it feels like:

- Transactional (I give up food, God gives me what I want)
- Performance-based (Look how spiritual I am!)
- Manipulative (God HAS to respond now)
- Proudful (I'm more committed than others)

What it produces:

- **Pride ("I fasted for 3 days!")**
 - **Disappointment (God didn't do what I wanted)**
 - **Burnout (This is miserable and pointless)**
 - **Distance from God (It becomes about the ACT, not the RELATIONSHIP)**
-

FASTING AS DEVOTION:

What it looks like:

- **You fast to create SPACE for God**
- **You believe fasting POSITIONS you to hear Him better**
- **You measure success by CONNECTION with God, not duration**
- **You're focused on GOD, not the fast**
- **You keep it between you and God (Matthew 6:16-18)**
- **You replace food/distraction with PRAYER and WORSHIP**
- **You think: "I want God MORE than I want comfort"**

What it feels like:

- **Relational (I'm making room for God)**
- **Worship-based (God, You're worth MORE than this)**
- **Surrendered (I'm opening my hands and heart)**
- **Humble (I need You more than I need food)**

What it produces:

- **Clarity (distractions are removed, you hear God better)**
 - **Intimacy (you encounter God in deeper ways)**
 - **Breakthrough (spiritual strongholds break)**
 - **Transformation (you come out CHANGED)**
-

The Chart:

PERFORMANCE

Earning favor

Manipulating God

"Look at me"

Hunger strike

Focused on the fast

Transactional

Miserable duty

Pride in suffering

Public display

"I deserve an answer now" "I'm positioning myself to hear"

DEVOTION

Creating space

Encountering God

"Show me You"

Spiritual hunger

Focused on God

Relational

Worship sacrifice

Humility in seeking

Private discipline

Which column describes how you view fasting (if you do it at all)?

Most men either avoid fasting entirely OR they approach it from the left column.

Why?

Why You Struggle with Fasting (Or Avoid It Completely)

REASON #1: YOU CONFUSE FASTING WITH DIETING

The confusion: "Fasting is just skipping meals to lose weight, right?"

The truth: NO. Fasting and dieting are COMPLETELY different.

DIETING:

- Goal: Physical results (lose weight, get healthier)
- Focus: Your body

- **Motivation:** How you look
- **Duration:** Ongoing lifestyle change
- **Replacement:** Nothing (you just eat less)

FASTING:

- **Goal:** Spiritual results (encounter God, breakthrough, clarity)
- **Focus:** Your soul
- **Motivation:** Hunger for God
- **Duration:** Temporary, focused season
- **Replacement:** Prayer, worship, Scripture (you replace FOOD with GOD)

If you skip a meal but don't replace it with SEEKING GOD, you're just dieting. Not fasting.

REASON #2: YOU THINK FASTING EARNS GOD'S FAVOR

The lie: "If I fast long enough, hard enough, God will HAVE to answer my prayer."

The truth: God doesn't respond because you EARNED it. He responds because you POSITIONED YOURSELF to hear Him.

Think of it this way:

When you turn down the music in your truck so you can hear directions from your GPS, the GPS didn't suddenly start talking. It was ALWAYS talking. You just removed the NOISE so you could HEAR.

Fasting removes the noise (food, comfort, distraction) so you can HEAR GOD.

He's always speaking. Fasting helps you LISTEN.

REASON #3: YOU'RE AFRAID YOU'LL FAIL

The fear: "What if I can't make it? What if I give up halfway through? What if I'm too weak?"

The truth: Fasting isn't about PROVING you're strong. It's about ADMITTING you're weak and NEED God.

"For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10, NASB).

If you fail, you fail. God's not grading you. He's inviting you to TRY.

Start small. One meal. Half a day. Build from there.

REASON #4: YOU DON'T SEE THE POINT

The question: "What's the point? God knows what I need. Why do I have to go hungry?"

The answer: Fasting isn't about informing God. It's about ALIGNING YOURSELF with Him.

When you fast, you're saying:

- **"God, I want YOU more than comfort"**
- **"I'm serious about this prayer, this breakthrough, this decision"**
- **"I'm removing distractions so I can FOCUS on You"**

Fasting changes YOU, not God.

REASON #5: YOU THINK IT'S ONLY FOR "SUPER-SPIRITUAL" PEOPLE

The lie: "Fasting is for pastors, missionaries, and really devoted Christians. Not for regular guys like me."

The truth: Jesus assumed ALL His followers would fast.

"WHEN you fast" (Matthew 6:16). Not "If the super-spiritual among you fast."

Fasting is for every believer. Including you.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Controlled Burns and Creating Space

In wildland firefighting, we use something called a "controlled burn."

You intentionally set a fire to REMOVE fuel (brush, dead trees, debris) so that when the REAL fire comes, there's nothing left to burn. The fire stops because there's NO FUEL.

That's fasting, brother.

You're doing a CONTROLLED BURN on your life.

You're intentionally removing FUEL (food, entertainment, distractions, comfort) so that when the REAL battle comes, you're not weighed down. You're READY.

Here's what happens when you fast:

You remove the thing you normally turn to (food, Netflix, social media, etc.), and suddenly you realize HOW OFTEN you were using it to NUMB, DISTRACT, or ESCAPE.

You get hungry, and instead of grabbing a snack, you PRAY.

You get bored, and instead of scrolling your phone, you READ SCRIPTURE.

You get uncomfortable, and instead of AVOIDING it, you SIT IN IT and let God speak.

Fasting creates SPACE.

And in that space, GOD MOVES.

What Fasting Actually Is (And Isn't)

Let's clear up some religious nonsense:

FASTING IS NOT:

- ✗ A hunger strike directed at God (trying to force His hand)**
- ✗ Earning God's favor (He already loves you fully in Christ)**
- ✗ Suffering for suffering's sake (God doesn't delight in your misery)**
- ✗ A way to lose weight (that's dieting, not fasting)**
- ✗ Showing off your spirituality (Jesus condemned that—Matthew 6:16-18)**
- ✗ A magic formula ("If I fast X days, God will do Y")**
- ✗ Only about food (you can fast from many things)**

FASTING IS:

- ✓ Creating space for God (removing distractions to focus on Him)**
- ✓ Positioning yourself to hear Him (turning down the noise)**

- ✓ Declaring your dependence ("I need You more than I need this")
 - ✓ Spiritual warfare (breaking strongholds through prayer + fasting)
 - ✓ Worship through sacrifice ("God, You're worth MORE than comfort")
 - ✓ Training your desires (teaching your body it doesn't rule you)
 - ✓ A means of grace (God uses it to transform you)
-

Biblical Examples of Fasting: Why People Fasted

Fasting isn't new. God's people have been fasting for thousands of years. Here's why:

1. FASTING FOR DIRECTION (Acts 13:2-3)

The situation: The church in Antioch needed to know WHO to send as missionaries.

What they did: They fasted and prayed.

The result: The Holy Spirit spoke: "Set apart Barnabas and Saul."

Application: When you need DIRECTION for a big decision, fast and pray.

2. FASTING IN CRISIS (Esther 4:16)

The situation: Esther's people were about to be annihilated. She had to approach the king (risking death).

What she did: She called for a 3-day fast (no food or water).

The result: God gave her favor with the king. Her people were saved.

Application: When you're in CRISIS, fast and cry out to God.

3. FASTING FOR REPENTANCE (Joel 2:12)

The situation: Israel had sinned and faced God's judgment.

What God called them to do: "Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning" (Joel 2:12).

The result: God relented from judgment.

Application: When you need to REPENT deeply, fast as an expression of sorrow and turning.

4. FASTING FOR BREAKTHROUGH (Mark 9:29)

The situation: The disciples couldn't cast out a demon.

What Jesus said: "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

Application: Some spiritual battles require MORE than just prayer. They require FASTING.

5. FASTING FOR PROTECTION (Ezra 8:21-23)

The situation: Ezra was leading God's people on a dangerous journey. Enemies surrounded them.

What he did: He proclaimed a fast to seek God's protection.

The result: "He listened to our entreaty" (Ezra 8:23). God protected them.

Application: When you're facing DANGER or opposition, fast and ask God for protection.

6. FASTING BEFORE MINISTRY (Matthew 4:1-2)

The situation: Jesus was about to launch His public ministry.

What He did: He fasted for 40 days in the wilderness.

The result: He defeated Satan's temptations and began ministry in the POWER of the Spirit.

Application: Before a BIG MISSION or calling, fast to prepare spiritually.

Types of Fasting: It's Not Just About Food

Most people think fasting = skipping meals. But fasting is BIGGER than that.

Fasting is REMOVING ANYTHING that competes for God's place in your life.

1. FOOD FASTING (The Traditional Fast)

What it is: Going without food for a set period (partial or complete).

Types:

- **Complete fast:** No food or water (use **EXTREME** caution—usually 1-3 days max, and only with medical clearance)
- **Water fast:** No food, only water (24 hours to multiple days)
- **Partial fast (Daniel Fast):** Only fruits, vegetables, water (no meat, sweets, bread)
- **One-meal fast:** Skip breakfast and lunch, eat dinner
- **Sunrise-to-sunset fast:** No food during daylight hours (like Ramadan-style, but Christian focus)

Why it works: Food is a primary comfort. When you remove it, you feel your **NEED**. That need drives you to **GOD**.

2. MEDIA FAST (The Modern Fast)

What it is: Going without TV, social media, streaming, news, YouTube, podcasts, etc.

Why it matters: Most men are **ADDICTED** to media. You scroll without thinking. You binge-watch to escape. You numb out instead of feeling.

A media fast exposes HOW MUCH you depend on screens instead of God.

How to do it:

- **Delete social media apps for a week**
 - **No TV/Netflix/YouTube for 3-7 days**
 - **No news or sports for a set period**
 - **Replace screen time with PRAYER, SCRIPTURE, WORSHIP**
-

3. TECHNOLOGY FAST

What it is: Going without your phone, computer, email (except for work essentials).

Why it matters: Your phone is the **FIRST** thing you check in the morning. The **LAST** thing you check at night.

You're more connected to your phone than to GOD.

How to do it:

- Put your phone in a drawer after work
 - No phone for the first hour of your morning
 - No phone after 8 PM
 - Use a "dumb phone" for a weekend
-

4. ENTERTAINMENT FAST

What it is: Going without video games, sports, hobbies, music, books (non-Scripture).

Why it matters: Entertainment is how you **ESCAPE**. When you remove it, you face what you've been avoiding.

How to do it:

- No video games for a week
 - No sports watching for a weekend
 - Replace entertainment time with **WORSHIP, PRAYER, SERVICE**
-

5. COMFORT FAST

What it is: Choosing discomfort intentionally (sleeping on the floor, cold showers, no coffee, no dessert, etc.).

Why it matters: Comfort is an **IDOL** for most men. You structure your life around **AVOIDING** discomfort.

Fasting from comfort trains you to ENDURE and depend on God, not circumstances.

6. RELATIONSHIP FAST (Use with Wisdom)

What it is: Temporarily pulling back from certain relationships to focus on God.

CAUTION: This does NOT mean neglecting your wife, kids, or responsibilities. It means:

- Saying no to social events for a season
 - Limiting time with friends to create space for God
 - Reducing phone calls/texts that drain you
-

7. BUYING FAST (Financial Fast)

What it is: No unnecessary purchases for a set time. Only essentials (food, bills, gas).

Why it matters: Shopping is an ESCAPE. You buy to fill a void.

A buying fast exposes what you're REALLY trying to satisfy.

How to do it:

- No Amazon for a month
 - No eating out for two weeks
 - No impulse purchases
 - Give the money you would have spent to Kingdom work
-

How to Fast: A Practical Guide for Men

Fasting isn't complicated. But it DOES require intention.

Here's how to do it:

STEP 1: DECIDE WHY YOU're FASTING

Don't just fast because you "should." Fast with PURPOSE.

Ask yourself:

- What am I seeking God for?
 - Direction for a decision?

- Breakthrough in a struggle?
- Repentance and restoration?
- Spiritual clarity?
- Protection in a battle?

Write it down. Be specific.

"I'm fasting to seek God for _____."

STEP 2: DECIDE WHAT YOU'RE FASTING FROM

Choose what you'll give up:

- One meal a day?
- All food for 24 hours?
- Social media for a week?
- TV for three days?
- Coffee for a month?

Start SMALL if you've never fasted before. One meal. Half a day.

Build from there.

STEP 3: DECIDE HOW LONG

Be realistic. Don't commit to 40 days if you've never fasted before.

Suggested starting points:

- First-time faster: Skip one meal (breakfast or lunch)
 - Intermediate: 24-hour food fast (dinner to dinner)
 - Advanced: 3-day food fast (with medical clearance)
 - Media fast: 7 days
 - Technology fast: One weekend
-

STEP 4: REPLACE THE THING YOU'RE FASTING FROM WITH GOD

This is critical.

If you skip breakfast but don't PRAY, you're just hungry. Not fasting.

If you delete Instagram but don't READ SCRIPTURE, you're just bored. Not fasting.

Fasting = Removing something + Replacing it with God.

When you get hungry → PRAY.

When you want to scroll → READ SCRIPTURE.

When you're bored → WORSHIP.

STEP 5: TELL GOD (Not Everyone Else)

"But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:17-18, NASB).

Don't announce your fast on social media.

Don't make a big show.

Tell GOD. Maybe tell your accountability partner. That's it.

STEP 6: PREPARE PHYSICALLY (If Fasting from Food)

Medical disclaimer: If you have health conditions (diabetes, heart issues, eating disorders, etc.), consult a doctor before fasting from food.

Practical prep:

- **Hydrate well the day before**
 - **Eat light the day before (don't gorge yourself)**
 - **Expect hunger pangs (they pass)**
 - **Expect headaches if you normally drink caffeine (wean off beforehand or allow black coffee)**
 - **Break your fast GENTLY (don't slam a burger—start with fruit, soup, light foods)**
-

STEP 7: WHEN YOU FEEL THE LACK, TURN TO GOD

The **POINT** of fasting is to feel the **LACK**.

When your stomach growls → That's your **CUE** to pray.

When you reach for your phone → That's your **CUE** to read Scripture.

When you're uncomfortable → That's your **CUE** to worship.

The discomfort is the **POINT**. It drives you to **GOD**.

STEP 8: JOURNAL WHAT GOD SHOWS YOU

During your fast, keep a journal.

Write down:

- What God is saying
- Scriptures that stand out
- Breakthroughs you experience
- Conviction, clarity, direction

Fasting is a **SEASON**. You want to remember what happened.

STEP 9: BREAK YOUR FAST INTENTIONALLY

When your fast ends, don't just **GO BACK** to normal.

Pray: "Father, thank You for what You showed me during this fast. Help me **LIVE** differently because of it."

Then **APPLY** what you learned.

Fasting and Spiritual Warfare: Breaking Strongholds

"This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29, NASB).

Some battles require **MORE** than just prayer.

They require **FASTING**.

Why?

Because fasting:

- **Breaks your dependence on the FLESH (you realize you're stronger in the Spirit than you thought)**
- **Cuts off the enemy's FUEL (sin thrives in comfort; fasting removes comfort)**
- **Sharpens your FOCUS (distractions are gone; you're locked in on God)**
- **Invites God's POWER (when you're weak, HE is strong)**

When to fast for warfare:

- **You're battling addiction and can't break free**
- **You're facing spiritual opposition in your family**
- **You're under heavy attack and need breakthrough**
- **You're contending for someone's salvation**
- **You're fighting a stronghold that won't budge**

Fast. Pray. Fight.

And watch God MOVE.

The Lies About Fasting (And the Truth)

LIE #1: "Fasting manipulates God into answering my prayers"

TRUTH: Fasting doesn't manipulate God. It POSITIONS you to hear Him and aligns your heart with His.

LIE #2: "Fasting earns God's favor"

TRUTH: You already HAVE God's favor through Jesus. Fasting doesn't earn it—it EXPRESSES your hunger for Him.

LIE #3: "Fasting is about suffering"

TRUTH: Fasting is about **WORSHIP**. You're saying "God, You're worth more than comfort."

LIE #4: "I'm too weak to fast"

TRUTH: Fasting **EXPOSES** your weakness so you'll depend on God's **STRENGTH**.

LIE #5: "Fasting is only for super-spiritual people"

TRUTH: Jesus assumed **ALL** His followers would fast (Matthew 6:16—"WHEN you fast").

LIE #6: "God doesn't care if I fast or not"

TRUTH: God **DOES** care. Not because He needs you to fast, but because fasting **POSITIONS** you to encounter Him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from avoidance to devotion)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH FASTING:

Have you ever fasted? (Be honest)

- ☐ **Yes, regularly**
- ☐ **Yes, occasionally**
- ☐ **Once or twice in my life**
- ☐ **Never**

If you HAVE fasted, what was your experience?

If you HAVEN'T fasted, what's kept you from trying?

2. PERFORMANCE OR DEVOTION?

When you think about fasting, does it feel more like:

- ☐ Performance (earning God's favor, proving I'm spiritual)
- ☐ Devotion (creating space for God, hungering for Him)
- ☐ I'm not sure

What would need to change for fasting to feel like WORSHIP instead of DUTY?

3. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE:

What's the #1 thing that keeps you from fasting?

- ☐ I'm afraid I'll fail
- ☐ I don't see the point
- ☐ I think it's manipulation
- ☐ I'm too weak / I love food too much
- ☐ I don't know how to start
- ☐ I think it's only for super-spiritual people
- ☐ Other: _____

How has this obstacle kept you from seeking God through fasting?

SECTION 2: FASTING WITH PURPOSE

4. WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING GOD FOR?

If you were to fast THIS WEEK, what would you be seeking God for?

- ☐ Direction for a decision
- ☐ Breakthrough in a spiritual battle
- ☐ Repentance and restoration
- ☐ Clarity about God's will
- ☐ Protection in a crisis
- ☐ Deeper intimacy with God
- ☐ Freedom from addiction or sin
- ☐ Other: _____

Write it out specifically:

"I'm fasting to seek God for _____."

5. WHAT WILL YOU FAST FROM?

If you were to fast this week, what would you remove?

- ☐ One meal a day (breakfast or lunch)
- ☐ All food for 24 hours (water only)
- ☐ Social media for 7 days
- ☐ TV/Netflix/streaming for 3-7 days
- ☐ Video games for a week
- ☐ My phone after 8 PM
- ☐ Coffee for a month
- ☐ Buying anything unnecessary for 30 days
- ☐ Other: _____

Be specific and realistic. Start small.

6. REPLACEMENT PLAN:

Fasting = Removing something + Replacing it with God.

When you feel the LACK (hunger, boredom, discomfort), what will you DO?

- ☐ **Pray**
- ☐ **Read Scripture**
- ☐ **Worship (listen to worship music, sing, etc.)**
- ☐ **Journal**
- ☐ **Sit in silence and listen for God**

Write out your replacement plan:

"When I feel _____, I will _____."

Example: "When I feel hungry, I will pray for the thing I'm fasting for."

SECTION 3: ADDRESSING THE LIES

7. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING ABOUT FASTING?

- ☐ **"Fasting manipulates God into answering my prayers"**
- ☐ **"Fasting earns God's favor"**
- ☐ **"Fasting is about suffering"**
- ☐ **"I'm too weak to fast"**
- ☐ **"Fasting is only for super-spiritual people"**
- ☐ **"God doesn't care if I fast or not"**

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

8. THE TRUTH ABOUT FASTING:

Complete this sentence:

"Fasting is not about _____. It's about _____."

Examples:

- "Fasting is not about earning God's favor. It's about positioning myself to hear Him."
- "Fasting is not about suffering. It's about worship."

Your turn:

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL COMMITMENT

9. WILL YOU FAST THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Yes, I'll commit to a fast
- ☐ I'll try a short fast (skip one meal)
- ☐ I'm not ready yet

If YES, what will you fast from, and for how long?

When will you start? (Be specific)

Day: _____ Time: _____

10. TELLING GOD (Not Everyone Else):

Will you keep your fast between you and God (and maybe one accountability partner)?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll keep it private**
- ☐ **I might tell a few people**
- ☐ **I'm tempted to announce it publicly**

Remember Matthew 6:16-18: Don't fast to be SEEN. Fast to SEEK God.

11. PHYSICAL PREPARATION (If Fasting from Food):

If you're fasting from food, will you:

- ☐ **Hydrate well the day before**
 - ☐ **Eat light the day before**
 - ☐ **Wean off caffeine beforehand (or allow black coffee)**
 - ☐ **Consult a doctor if I have medical conditions**
 - ☐ **Break the fast gently (start with light foods)**
-

12. JOURNALING DURING YOUR FAST:

Will you journal what God shows you during your fast?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll keep a fasting journal**
- ☐ **I'll try**
- ☐ **Not planning to**

What will you write about?

- ☐ **What God is saying**
 - ☐ **Scriptures that stand out**
 - ☐ **Breakthroughs I experience**
 - ☐ **Conviction, clarity, direction**
-

SECTION 5: FASTING AND WARFARE

13. SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH:

Is there a spiritual battle in your life that requires MORE than just prayer?

- ☐ **Addiction I can't break**
- ☐ **Stronghold that won't budge**
- ☐ **Family member far from God**
- ☐ **Spiritual attack on my home/family**
- ☐ **Sin pattern I keep falling into**
- ☐ **Other: _____**

"This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

Will you commit to fasting AND praying for breakthrough in this area?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll fast and fight**
 - ☐ **I'll try**
 - ☐ **I'm not ready yet**
-

14. WHAT ARE YOU DEPENDING ON MORE THAN GOD?

Fasting exposes what you're REALLY depending on.

What do you turn to for comfort, escape, or distraction instead of God?

- ☐ **Food**
- ☐ **Social media / phone**
- ☐ **TV / Netflix**
- ☐ **Video games**
- ☐ **Pornography**
- ☐ **Alcohol**
- ☐ **Work**
- ☐ **Shopping / buying stuff**
- ☐ **Other: _____**

Will you fast from that thing this week to declare: "I need GOD more than I need THIS"?

☐ **Yes, I'll remove it and replace it with God**

☐ **I'll try**

☐ **I'm not ready yet**

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Fasting is not manipulation—it's DEVOTION.

Fasting is not earning God's favor—it's POSITIONING myself to hear Him.

Fasting is not suffering—it's WORSHIP.

I am not too weak to fast—my weakness drives me to God's STRENGTH.

Fasting creates SPACE for God by removing what distracts me.

When I feel the LACK, I will turn to GOD.

I will not fast to be SEEN—I will fast to SEEK.

Fasting breaks strongholds. Fasting sharpens focus. Fasting invites God's power.

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, NASB).

I am fasting because I want GOD more than I want comfort.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've avoided fasting because it's uncomfortable. I like my food, my entertainment, my distractions, my comfort. And the thought of giving that up—even temporarily—scares me. But I also know that I've been depending on THOSE THINGS more than I've been depending on YOU. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Fasting is not about earning Your favor—I already have that through Jesus. Fasting is about creating SPACE. Removing distractions. Saying "I want YOU more than I want this."

Teach me to fast, Father. Not as a performance. Not to manipulate You. But as an act of WORSHIP. As a declaration that You are WORTH more than comfort. That I NEED You more than food. More than entertainment. More than anything.

Help me start small. Help me be faithful. And when I feel the LACK—the hunger, the boredom, the discomfort—help me turn to YOU. Fill that space with Your presence, Your voice, Your power.

I'm ready to remove the fuel. To do a controlled burn. To make room for You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "I hunger for You"

Breathe out: "More than for comfort"

(Matthew 4:4)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: What am I depending on more than God right now?

Brief Prayer: Father, I want You more than I want this. Fill the space.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God meet me today?

What am I grateful for?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I fast from anything today? (Food, media, phone, etc.)

- ☐ Yes—and I replaced it with seeking God
- ☐ Yes—but I just felt deprived (didn't turn to God)
- ☐ No—I didn't fast

If I DID fast, what happened? Did I encounter God?

STEP 3: HONESTY

What did I turn to for comfort instead of God today?

What does that reveal about what I'm REALLY depending on?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for depending on _____ more than I depend on You.
Forgive me for using comfort to ESCAPE instead of coming to You.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding fasting?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"I've been avoiding fasting because _____. The lie I've believed is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. This week I will fast from _____ to seek God for _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 24 ✓ - Learned fasting isn't manipulation—it's devotion. I've been depending on comfort more than God. Committing to fast from _____ this week to create space for Him."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 25: "Worship - Worth-ship"

Brief Prayer:

Father, You've taught me to pray (conversation), to read Scripture (Your voice), and to fast (creating space). Tomorrow, teach me to WORSHIP—to declare Your WORTH. Prepare my heart to give You the honor You deserve. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE CONTROLLED BURN

Theological Insight:

"Fasting is the voluntary denial of something for a specific time, for a spiritual purpose. It is choosing not to eat in order to feast on the presence of God." – Dallas Willard (paraphrase)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You've been carrying FUEL you don't need.

Comfort. Distraction. Entertainment. Food. Media. Stuff.

None of it is BAD. But when it competes with GOD, it becomes FUEL for the enemy.

It weighs you down. Distracts you. Numbs you. Keeps you from the BATTLES you need to fight.

Fasting is a CONTROLLED BURN.

You're intentionally removing the FUEL so that when the REAL fire comes, you're READY.

When you fast, here's what happens:

- **You realize how DEPENDENT you've been on comfort**
- **You discover how STRONG you are in the Spirit**
- **You hear GOD more clearly because the NOISE is gone**
- **You break STRONGHOLDS that prayer alone couldn't touch**
- **You ALIGN your heart with God's because you're not distracted**

It's not about suffering. It's about WORSHIP.

You're saying: "God, You're WORTH more than this. I want YOU more than I want comfort."

And when you do that, GOD SHOWS UP.

So this week, try it.

Pick one thing. One meal. One day. One distraction.

Remove it. Replace it with GOD.

And watch what happens.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, NASB).

You don't just need FOOD.

You need GOD.

And when you fast, you prove it.

40 STRONG - Day 24 Complete ✓

**"When you fast... your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you"
(Matthew 6:17-18, NASB)**

40 STRONG - DAY 25

WORSHIP - WORTH-SHIP WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines

MORNING: THE DECLARATION OF WORTH (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I need to be honest about worship. When I hear that word, I think of Sunday morning. I think of singing songs I don't know. I think of raising hands (which feels awkward). I think of emotional moments that other people seem to have but I don't. I think of performance—people on stage with guitars, lights, and production. And honestly? Most of the time, worship feels like something I **WATCH**, not something I **DO**. I stand there. I sing along (sort of). I try to feel **SOMETHING**. But mostly, I just feel... disconnected. Like I'm not doing it right. Like worship is for the emotional people, the musical people, the "really spiritual" people. Not for a guy like me. And then I feel guilty. Because I **KNOW** worship is important. I **KNOW** You deserve it. I **KNOW** the Bible is full of commands to worship. But I don't know **HOW**. Not in a way that feels real. Not in a way that connects my heart to Yours. I don't want to fake it. I don't want to go through the motions. I don't want to perform. But I also don't want to avoid worship just because I don't understand it. So teach me, Father. Teach me what worship **ACTUALLY** is. Not the stage version. Not the production. The **REAL** thing. Teach me that worship isn't about music—it's about declaring **YOUR WORTH**. Teach me that I can worship in my truck, in my garage, in the middle of a crisis. Teach me that worship changes **ME**, not just entertains **You**. Help me understand that worship isn't about how I **FEEL**. It's about what I **DECLARE** to be **TRUE** about You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Worship

Read these slowly. Listen for what God is saying about worship.

THE CALL TO WORSHIP:

"Oh come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the **LORD** our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (Psalm 95:6-7, NASB).

Worship is **RESPONDING** to who God **IS**.

He is our Maker. We are His people. That reality **DEMANDS** a response.

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH:

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24, NASB).

God doesn't want PERFORMANCE. He wants REAL worship.

In SPIRIT (from your heart, not just your mouth).

In TRUTH (based on who He ACTUALLY is, not who you imagine Him to be).

WORSHIP AS A LIVING SACRIFICE:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1, NASB).

Worship isn't just SINGING. It's offering your ENTIRE LIFE to God.

Your body. Your work. Your decisions. Your relationships. ALL of it is worship.

WORSHIP REFLECTS GOD'S WORTH:

"Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the LORD in holy array" (Psalm 29:2, NASB).

"Ascribe" = assign, declare, attribute.

You're DECLARING God's worth. Publicly. Boldly. Truthfully.

WORSHIP DEFEATS THE ENEMY:

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened" (Acts 16:25-26, NASB).

Paul and Silas were in PRISON. Beaten. Bloody. In pain.

And they WORSHIPED.

And God MOVED. Chains broke. Doors opened.

Worship is WARFARE.

WORSHIP REORIENTS YOUR PERSPECTIVE:

"I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation" (Psalm 118:13-14, NIV).

The psalmist was FALLING. Overwhelmed. Defeated.

But worship REORIENTED him. "The LORD is my strength."

Worship shifts your focus from the PROBLEM to the PROBLEM-SOLVER.

WORSHIP IS COMMANDED:

"Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing" (Psalm 100:1-2, NASB).

This isn't a suggestion. It's a COMMAND.

SHOUT. SERVE. SING. COME BEFORE HIM.

Worship is not optional.

ALL CREATION WORSHIPS:

"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1, NASB).

Creation itself WORSHIPS. The stars. The mountains. The oceans.

If ROCKS can worship, so can you.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Right now, at this moment, the entire universe is declaring God's worth.

Angels are worshiping. Creation is worshiping. Believers around the world are worshiping.

The question is: Are YOU?

Teaching: The Difference Between Performance Worship and Heart Worship

Here's the lie most men believe about worship:

"Worship is singing songs on Sunday morning. If I'm not musical or emotional, I can't really worship. So I just stand there and go through the motions until it's over."

Translation: You've turned worship into **PERFORMANCE** instead of **DECLARATION**.

And when worship becomes performance, it's empty.

Theological Insight:

"Worship is not about me. Worship is not about how I feel. Worship is about declaring the worth of God, regardless of my circumstances, my emotions, or my preferences." – Louie Giglio (paraphrase)

Performance Worship vs. Heart Worship: What's the Difference?

PERFORMANCE WORSHIP:

What it looks like:

- You worship to be **SEEN** (raising hands to look spiritual)
- You worship based on **FEELINGS** (if you don't feel it, you don't do it)
- You worship to **GET** something (emotional high, God's favor)
- You measure success by **EXPERIENCE** (did I cry? did I feel goosebumps?)
- You only worship when the **MUSIC** is good
- You believe worship = **SINGING** (if you're not singing, you're not worshiping)
- You're more aware of **PEOPLE** around you than of **GOD**

What it feels like:

- Awkward (I'm performing for an audience)
- Disconnected (I'm going through the motions)
- Fake (I'm pretending to feel something I don't)
- Transactional (I worship, God blesses me)

What it produces:

- Pride ("Look how spiritual I am")
 - Shame ("I'm not worshiping like everyone else")
 - Inconsistency (only worship when you feel like it)
 - Emptiness (it's all external, nothing changes internally)
-

HEART WORSHIP:

What it looks like:

- You worship to **DECLARE** God's worth (not to be seen)
- You worship based on **TRUTH** (regardless of how you feel)
- You worship to **GIVE** honor (not to get something)
- You measure success by **ALIGNMENT** (is my heart focused on God?)
- You worship **ANYWHERE, ANYTIME** (truck, gym, job site)
- You believe worship = **LIFESTYLE** (everything you do can be worship)
- You're more aware of **GOD** than of people

What it feels like:

- Real (I'm being honest with God)
- Connected (I'm encountering Someone actually there)
- Freeing (I don't have to pretend)
- Relational (I'm responding to God's worth)

What it produces:

- Humility (worship reminds you who God is and who you're not)

- Transformation (worship changes your perspective)
- Consistency (you worship in crisis AND in celebration)
- Intimacy (worship draws you closer to God)

The Chart:

PERFORMANCE	HEART
To be seen	To declare worth
Based on feelings	Based on truth
Getting something	Giving honor
Only when emotional	Anytime, anywhere
Sunday morning only	Lifestyle 24/7
Music-dependent	Music-optional
Watching others	Encountering God
External show	Internal alignment
Transactional	Relational
"Do I feel it?"	"Is it true?"

Which column describes your actual approach to worship?

Most men either avoid worship OR they approach it from the left column.

Why?

Why You Struggle with Worship (Or Avoid It Completely)

REASON #1: YOU THINK WORSHIP = MUSIC (And You're Not Musical)

The confusion: "I can't sing. I don't play an instrument. I'm not emotional. So I can't really worship."

The truth: Worship is not MUSIC. Music is ONE FORM of worship. But it's not the only form.

Worship is declaring God's worth through:

- **Singing (yes, but not only)**
- **Prayer**
- **Service**
- **Obedience**
- **Giving**
- **Work done for God's glory**
- **Sacrifice**
- **Living a holy life**
- **Speaking truth about God**

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, NASB).

WHATEVER YOU DO. Not just singing. EVERYTHING.

When you work with excellence → Worship.

When you serve your family → Worship.

When you resist temptation → Worship.

When you give financially → Worship.

ALL of it can be worship IF you're doing it to honor God.

REASON #2: YOU'RE WAITING TO "FEEL" SOMETHING

The lie: "Real worship is when you FEEL God's presence, get emotional, cry, or experience goosebumps. If I don't feel anything, it's not real worship."

The truth: Worship is not based on FEELINGS. It's based on TRUTH.

You don't worship because you FEEL like God is worthy. You worship because He IS worthy. Whether you feel it or not.

Think about marriage:

Do you tell your wife "I love you" only when you FEEL overwhelming emotion? Or do you say it because it's TRUE, even on days when you're tired, frustrated, or just going through the motions?

Same with worship.

You declare God's worth because it's TRUE. Not because you always feel it.

Feelings follow faithfulness, not the other way around.

REASON #3: YOU THINK YOU HAVE TO WORSHIP LIKE EVERYONE ELSE

The pressure: You look around on Sunday morning and see:

- **People raising hands**
- **People crying**
- **People swaying to the music**
- **People looking deeply moved**

And you think: *"I don't do that. I don't feel that. Something's wrong with me."*

The truth: God made you DIFFERENT. And He doesn't expect you to worship like everyone else.

Some men worship loudly. Some worship quietly.

Some raise hands. Some kneel. Some stand still.

Some cry. Some don't.

All of it is VALID as long as it's REAL.

God doesn't need you to look like the guy next to you. He wants YOU to engage YOUR heart.

REASON #4: WORSHIP FEELS AWKWARD (Especially Around Other Men)

The fear: "If I raise my hands, close my eyes, or get emotional, the guys around me will think I'm weird. Real men don't do that."

The truth: Real men don't worship based on what OTHER MEN think. They worship based on who GOD is.

David—the warrior king, the giant-slayer—danced before the Lord with ALL HIS MIGHT (2 Samuel 6:14).

His wife mocked him for it. Called him undignified.

David's response? "I will celebrate before the LORD" (2 Samuel 6:21).

He didn't care what SHE thought. He cared what GOD deserved.

If a warrior can worship without shame, so can you.

REASON #5: YOU'VE SEEN WORSHIP ABUSED OR FAKED

The wound: You've seen:

- **Worship leaders performing for attention**
- **People raising hands for show**
- **Emotional manipulation ("If you're not crying, you're not worshipping")**
- **Fake worship used to create an atmosphere**

And now you're skeptical. Guarded. You don't trust it.

The truth: People fake worship. That doesn't mean worship itself is fake.

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24, NASB).

IN TRUTH. Not in pretense. Not in manipulation. IN TRUTH.

You can worship authentically even when others are faking it.

REASON #6: YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR BODY

The awkwardness:

- **Do I raise my hands?**

- Do I close my eyes?
- Do I kneel?
- Do I stand still?
- Do I clap?

You don't know what's "right," so you do nothing.

The truth: There's no REQUIRED posture. Do what helps YOU engage.

Biblical examples:

- Raising hands (Psalm 134:2, 1 Timothy 2:8)
- Kneeling (Psalm 95:6)
- Bowing (Psalm 95:6)
- Standing (2 Chronicles 20:19)
- Clapping (Psalm 47:1)
- Shouting (Psalm 100:1)
- Dancing (Psalm 149:3)
- Being still (Psalm 46:10)

ALL of it is valid. Pick what helps YOU connect.

And don't overthink it.

The Firefighter's Perspective: The Mayday Call and Declaring What's True

On the fireground, when a firefighter is in trouble—lost, trapped, out of air, injured—they call a MAYDAY.

It's the most serious radio transmission you can make.

And here's what happens when a Mayday is called:

Everyone **STOPS** what they're doing and declares the **PRIORITY**.

"We have a **FIREFIGHTER DOWN**. **EVERYTHING ELSE** is secondary. **ALL** resources go to rescue."

The Mayday doesn't change the REALITY (the firefighter is still in trouble). But it **DECLARES** what matters **MOST**.

That's worship, brother.

When you worship, you're calling a **MAYDAY** on the lies, the distractions, the problems, the fear, the noise.

You're declaring: "GOD is the **PRIORITY**. HE is **WORTHY**. Everything else is secondary."

Worship doesn't change God. He was worthy before you worshiped. He'll be worthy after.

But worship changes **YOU**.

It **REORIENTS** your perspective. It **DECLARES** what's true. It **REMINDS** you who's in charge.

When life is chaotic, worship is your **MAYDAY**:

"God, **YOU** are still sovereign. **YOU** are still good. **YOU** are still in control. I declare it. Regardless of what I see, what I feel, or what's happening around me."

And when you declare that—**EVERYTHING SHIFTS**.

What Worship Actually Is (And Isn't)

Let's clear up some religious nonsense:

WORSHIP IS NOT:

- ✗ Music only (worship is bigger than singing)**
- ✗ A feeling (it's a declaration based on truth)**
- ✗ Emotional manipulation (creating an atmosphere through production)**
- ✗ Performance for others (to be seen or praised)**
- ✗ Earning God's favor (He already loves you fully)**
- ✗ Sunday morning only (worship is 24/7)**
- ✗ Optional (it's commanded)**

WORSHIP IS:

- ✓ **Declaring God's WORTH** (that's why it's called worth-ship)
 - ✓ **Based on TRUTH**, not feelings (you worship because He IS worthy, not because you feel like it)
 - ✓ **A LIFESTYLE**, not an event (everything you do can be worship)
 - ✓ **Spiritual WARFARE** (worship defeats the enemy)
 - ✓ **Realignment** (it shifts your focus from problems to God)
 - ✓ **Response to WHO GOD IS** (not what He's done for you, but who He IS)
 - ✓ **Both PUBLIC and PRIVATE** (corporate worship AND personal worship)
-

The Biblical Foundation: What Does "Worship" Actually Mean?

The word "worship" in Scripture comes from multiple root words:

1. HEBREW: "SHACHAH" (Most common Old Testament word)

Meaning: To bow down, to prostrate, to pay homage

Picture: Physical act of **SUBMISSION**. Getting low. Acknowledging authority.

Example: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down" (Psalm 95:6).

Application: Worship is **HUMBLING** yourself before God.

2. HEBREW: "ABAD"

Meaning: To serve, to work, to labor

Picture: Worship as **SERVICE**. Obedience. Work done for God's glory.

Example: "You shall worship the **LORD** your God and serve Him only" (Deuteronomy 6:13).

Application: Your **WORK** is worship when done for God.

3. GREEK: "PROSKUNEO" (Most common New Testament word)

Meaning: To kiss toward, to bow before, to reverence

Picture: Act of HONOR and ADORATION.

Example: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Application: Worship is HONORING God for who He is.

4. GREEK: "LATREUO"

Meaning: To serve, to minister, to render religious service

Picture: Worship as LIFESTYLE SERVICE.

Example: "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

Application: Your ENTIRE LIFE is worship.

The point:

Worship is not just SINGING. It's:

- **Bowing (submission)**
- **Serving (obedience)**
- **Honoring (adoration)**
- **Living (sacrifice)**

ALL of it together.

True Worship: "In Spirit and Truth" (John 4:23-24)

Jesus gave us the standard for worship:

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, NASB).

Two requirements: SPIRIT and TRUTH.

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT:

What it means: Worship from your HEART, not just your mouth. Real. Authentic. Engaged.

Not:

- **Going through the motions**
- **Singing words without meaning them**
- **Performing externally while checked out internally**
- **Faking emotion to look spiritual**

Instead:

- **Engaging your heart**
- **Meaning what you say/sing**
- **Being fully present**
- **Honest expression (even if it's not emotional)**

The test: Is your HEART engaged, or are you just going through motions?

WORSHIP IN TRUTH:

What it means: Worship based on who God ACTUALLY is (revealed in Scripture), not who you imagine Him to be.

Not:

- **Worshipping a god you invented in your mind**
- **Ascribing to God attributes He doesn't have**
- **Ignoring parts of God's character you don't like**
- **Worship based on feelings or preferences**

Instead:

- **Worship based on SCRIPTURE (God's revealed character)**

- Declaring what's TRUE about God (holy, just, loving, sovereign, etc.)
- Aligning your worship with REALITY, not imagination

The test: Are you worshipping the GOD OF THE BIBLE, or a god you made up?

Both are required.

Worship in SPIRIT without TRUTH = emotional experience with no foundation.

Worship in TRUTH without SPIRIT = dead orthodoxy with no heart.

SPIRIT + TRUTH = Real worship.

Worship as Warfare: How Worship Defeats the Enemy

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake" (Acts 16:25-26, NASB).

Paul and Silas were:

- In PRISON
- BEATEN
- BLEEDING
- In CHAINS

And they WORSHIPED.

Not because they felt like it. Because GOD WAS STILL WORTHY.

And worship BROKE THE CHAINS.

Why worship is warfare:

1. WORSHIP DECLARES GOD'S AUTHORITY (not the enemy's)

When you worship, you're saying: "GOD is in charge. Not you, Satan. Not my circumstances. Not my fear. GOD."

2. WORSHIP SHIFTS YOUR FOCUS (from the problem to the Problem-Solver)

The enemy wants you **FOCUSED** on the problem. Overwhelmed. Paralyzed.

Worship shifts your focus to **GOD**—who is **BIGGER** than the problem.

3. WORSHIP REMINDS YOU OF TRUTH (when lies are screaming)

The enemy whispers:

- "God abandoned you"
- "You're alone"
- "This is hopeless"

Worship **DECLARES**:

- "God is **WITH** me" (Psalm 46:1)
 - "God is **FOR** me" (Romans 8:31)
 - "God is **FAITHFUL**" (1 Corinthians 1:9)
-

4. WORSHIP INVITES GOD'S PRESENCE (and the enemy FLEES)

"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, NASB).

Worship is **SUBMISSION** to God. And when you submit to God, the enemy flees.

5. WORSHIP BREAKS STRONGHOLDS

Chains break. Prison doors open. Strongholds crumble.

When you worship in the **MIDDLE** of the battle—not after, but **DURING**—God **MOVES**.

Application:

When you're under attack:

- Pornography temptation? **WORSHIP.**
- Financial crisis? **WORSHIP.**

- Marriage falling apart? WORSHIP.
- Depression crushing you? WORSHIP.

Not because you feel like it. Because GOD IS WORTHY. And worship is WARFARE.

The Difference Between Singing ABOUT God and Singing TO God

Most worship songs fall into two categories:

SINGING ABOUT GOD (Third-person)

Examples:

- "God is so good"
- "He is mighty to save"
- "The Lord is faithful"

What it does: Declares TRUTH about God. Reminds you (and others) of His character.

Value: Builds FAITH. Teaches THEOLOGY. Encourages OTHERS.

SINGING TO GOD (Second-person)

Examples:

- "YOU are so good"
- "I worship YOU"
- "YOU are faithful"

What it does: Directly addresses GOD. Engages RELATIONSHIP.

Value: Deepens INTIMACY. Personalizes WORSHIP. Engages YOUR heart.

Both are important.

But many men only sing ABOUT God (keeping Him at a distance) instead of singing TO God (engaging Him directly).

Try this:

Next time you worship, change the words:

Instead of: "God is faithful"

Sing: "YOU are faithful, God. I trust YOU."

It shifts from INFORMATION to RELATIONSHIP.

Worship When You Don't Feel Like It: The Sacrifice of Praise

"Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15, NASB).

A SACRIFICE of praise.

What's a sacrifice?

Giving something that COSTS you.

When does worship cost?

- **When you're in pain (and you worship anyway)**
- **When you're angry (and you worship anyway)**
- **When you don't feel it (and you worship anyway)**
- **When life is falling apart (and you worship anyway)**

That's when worship is most POWERFUL.

Job's Example:

Job lost EVERYTHING. His kids. His wealth. His health.

His wife said, "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9).

Job's response:

"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21, NASB).

Job didn't FEEL like worshipping. But he CHOSE to worship because God was STILL WORTHY.

Application:

You don't worship because life is good. You worship because GOD is good.

Even when:

- **The diagnosis is bad**
- **The marriage is broken**
- **The job is lost**
- **The addiction won't break**
- **The pain won't stop**

GOD IS STILL WORTHY.

And when you declare that—THAT is worship.

Practical Ways to Worship (Beyond Sunday Morning)

You don't need a band, a stage, or a Sunday service to worship. Here's how to worship ANYWHERE:

1. WORSHIP THROUGH MUSIC (But Make It Personal)

How:

- **Listen to worship music in your truck**
- **Sing along (even if you can't carry a tune)**
- **Make it PERSONAL (change "He" to "You")**
- **Let the lyrics become YOUR prayer**

When:

- **Morning commute**
- **Gym workout**
- **Before bed**

- During hard days
-

2. WORSHIP THROUGH SCRIPTURE (Declare What's True)

How:

- Read a Psalm out loud
- Declare God's attributes from Scripture
- Pray Scripture back to God

Example: Read Psalm 145. Then pray: "God, YOU are gracious and merciful. YOU are slow to anger. YOU are great and greatly to be praised. I worship You."

3. WORSHIP THROUGH NATURE (See God's Glory)

How:

- Go for a walk and NOTICE creation
- Look at the stars and declare God's power
- Watch a sunrise and thank God for new mercies

Why it works: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).

Creation itself is WORSHIPING. Join it.

4. WORSHIP THROUGH WORK (Do Everything for God's Glory)

How:

- Before you start work, pray: "God, I do this for YOUR glory"
- Work with EXCELLENCE as unto the Lord
- Serve others as if serving Christ

Scripture: "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23, NASB).

Your WORK is worship when done for God.

5. WORSHIP THROUGH OBEDIENCE (Surrender to God's Will)

How:

- Resist temptation → Worship
- Forgive when you don't want to → Worship
- Give when it costs → Worship
- Serve when it's inconvenient → Worship

Scripture: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Obedience IS worship.

6. WORSHIP THROUGH DECLARATION (Speak Truth Out Loud)

How:

- Declare God's attributes out loud
- List what you know to be true about God
- Speak Scripture over your situation

Example: When fear hits: "God, YOU are my refuge and strength. YOU are an ever-present help in trouble. I will NOT fear. Psalm 46:1."

7. WORSHIP THROUGH GRATITUDE (Thank God Specifically)

How:

- List specific things God has done
- Thank Him for who He IS (not just what He's done)
- Keep a gratitude journal

Why it works: Gratitude is WORSHIP. It acknowledges God as the source of all good.

8. WORSHIP THROUGH SILENCE (Be Still and Know)

How:

- Sit in silence for 5-10 minutes
- Focus on God's presence
- Don't ask for anything—just BE with Him

Scripture: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10, NIV).

Sometimes the deepest worship is SILENCE.

Corporate Worship vs. Private Worship: Both Matter

CORPORATE WORSHIP (Gathering with other believers):

Why it matters:

- You worship WITH others, not just FOR yourself
- You encourage others by YOUR worship
- You're reminded you're part of something BIGGER
- Corporate worship builds UNITY

Scripture: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25, NIV).

Application: Don't skip corporate worship. Even when it's awkward. Even when the music isn't your style. SHOW UP.

PRIVATE WORSHIP (Personal time with God):

Why it matters:

- You worship without PERFORMANCE pressure
- You engage YOUR heart, not just follow others
- You develop PERSONAL intimacy with God
- Private worship sustains you when corporate worship isn't available

Scripture: "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:6, NASB).

Application: Don't rely ONLY on Sunday morning. Worship God DAILY in private.

Both are essential.

Corporate worship without private worship = shallow, performance-based.

Private worship without corporate worship = isolated, self-focused.

YOU NEED BOTH.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from performance to heart)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH WORSHIP:

Which describes how you actually approach worship RIGHT NOW?

- ☐ I worship regularly (both privately and corporately)
- ☐ I worship on Sundays but rarely during the week
- ☐ I go through the motions but feel disconnected
- ☐ I avoid worship because it feels awkward
- ☐ I don't really know how to worship

Explain honestly:

2. PERFORMANCE OR HEART?

When you worship (if you do), does it feel more like:

- ☐ Performance (trying to look spiritual, be seen, do it "right")
- ☐ Heart (genuinely declaring God's worth, regardless of who's watching)

☐ Mixture of both

What would need to change for worship to feel REAL instead of fake?

3. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE:

What's the #1 thing that keeps you from worshiping freely?

☐ I don't know what to do with my body (awkward)

☐ I'm waiting to FEEL something (and I don't)

☐ I think I have to worship like everyone else

☐ I'm afraid of what other men will think

☐ I've seen worship abused or faked

☐ I think worship = music (and I'm not musical)

☐ Other: _____

How has this obstacle kept you from encountering God through worship?

SECTION 2: WORSHIP AS DECLARATION

4. DECLARING GOD'S WORTH:

Worship = WORTH-SHIP. Declaring what God is WORTH.

Based on SCRIPTURE, what is God worth?

List 5-10 attributes of God that are TRUE (regardless of how you feel):

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now read that list **OUT LOUD** as a declaration of worship:

"God, YOU are _____. YOU are _____. I worship You."

5. WORSHIP IN CRISIS:

Have you ever worshiped in the **MIDDLE** of crisis (like Paul and Silas in prison)?

- ☐ Yes—and it shifted my perspective
- ☐ I tried, but it felt fake
- ☐ No—I wait until things are better to worship
- ☐ I've never thought about worshiping in crisis

Paul and Silas worshiped when they were:

- Beaten
- Bleeding
- In chains
- In prison

What crisis are you facing right now where you need to worship **ANYWAY**?

Will you commit to worshiping (declaring God's worth) in the MIDDLE of this crisis?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll worship even when it's hard**
 - ☐ **I'll try**
 - ☐ **I'm not ready yet**
-

SECTION 3: WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

6. WORSHIP IN SPIRIT (Heart Engagement):

When you worship, is your HEART engaged, or are you just going through the motions?

- ☐ **My heart is engaged**
- ☐ **Sometimes engaged, sometimes checked out**
- ☐ **Mostly going through the motions**
- ☐ **I don't know**

What would help you engage your HEART more fully in worship?

7. WORSHIP IN TRUTH (Based on Who God Actually Is):

Are you worshiping the GOD OF SCRIPTURE, or a god you've imagined in your mind?

- ☐ **I worship the God revealed in Scripture**
- ☐ **I'm not sure**
- ☐ **I think I've created a god that fits my preferences**

What attributes of God (revealed in Scripture) do you tend to IGNORE or avoid?

- ☐ **His holiness (He hates sin)**
- ☐ **His justice (He judges)**
- ☐ **His sovereignty (He's in control, even when I don't understand)**
- ☐ **His wrath (He punishes sin)**

☐ Other: _____

Will you commit to worshipping the WHOLE God (not just the parts you like)?

☐ Yes, I'll worship God as He truly IS

☐ I'll work on it

☐ I'm struggling with this

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

8. PRIVATE WORSHIP THIS WEEK:

Will you commit to worshipping God privately (outside of Sunday) this week?

☐ Yes, daily

☐ Yes, 3-5 times this week

☐ I'll try once or twice

☐ Not ready yet

If YES, what will you do?

☐ Listen to worship music in my truck and sing along

☐ Read a Psalm and declare God's attributes out loud

☐ Go for a walk and worship God through observing creation

☐ Start my workday with a declaration: "God, I do this for YOUR glory"

☐ Worship through obedience (resist temptation, forgive, serve)

☐ Sit in silence for 5-10 minutes and just BE with God

☐ Other: _____

When will you worship? (Be specific)

Day/Time: _____

9. WORSHIP THROUGH WORK:

**"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men"
(Colossians 3:23).**

This week, will you START your workday with this prayer?

**"God, I do this work for YOUR glory. My work is worship. Help me work with excellence
as unto You."**

☐ **Yes, I'll pray this before work each day**

☐ **I'll try a few times this week**

☐ **Not yet**

How would your WORK change if you viewed it as worship?

10. WORSHIP AS WARFARE:

**Is there a battle you're fighting right now where you need to WORSHIP instead of
worry?**

☐ **Addiction**

☐ **Financial crisis**

☐ **Marriage struggle**

☐ **Depression / anxiety**

☐ **Spiritual attack**

☐ **Temptation**

☐ **Other: _____**

**Will you commit to WORSHIPING (declaring God's worth) in the MIDDLE of this battle
this week?**

☐ **Yes—I'll worship even when I don't feel like it**

☐ **I'll try**

☐ **I'm not ready**

What will you declare about God when the enemy attacks?

Example: "God, YOU are faithful. YOU are my refuge. YOU are in control. I trust YOU."

Your declaration:

11. CORPORATE WORSHIP (Sunday):

When you're in corporate worship this Sunday, will you:

- ☐ **Engage fully (heart AND mind)**
- ☐ **Sing TO God (not just ABOUT Him)**
- ☐ **Focus on GOD (not on people around me)**
- ☐ **Worship based on TRUTH (not feelings)**
- ☐ **Stop waiting to "feel something" and just DECLARE what's true**

What's ONE thing you'll do differently this Sunday?

12. THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE:

Worship is most powerful when it COSTS you.

When will you offer a "sacrifice of praise" this week (worship when you don't feel like it)?

- ☐ **When I'm in pain**
- ☐ **When I'm angry**
- ☐ **When life is falling apart**
- ☐ **When I'm frustrated with God**
- ☐ **When I don't feel His presence**

Write out what you'll SAY/SING when you don't feel like worshiping:

"God, I don't feel like worshiping right now. But YOU are still worthy. YOU are still _____ . I choose to worship You anyway."

SECTION 5: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING ABOUT WORSHIP

13. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "Worship is only music—and I'm not musical"
- ☐ "I have to FEEL something for it to be real worship"
- ☐ "I have to worship like everyone else"
- ☐ "Real men don't raise hands or get emotional"
- ☐ "Worship is for Sunday mornings only"
- ☐ "God doesn't care if I worship or not"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

14. THE TRUTH ABOUT WORSHIP:

Complete this sentence:

"Worship is not about _____. It's about _____."

Examples:

- "Worship is not about music. It's about declaring God's worth."
- "Worship is not about feelings. It's about truth."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Worship is not performance—it's DECLARATION.

Worship is not based on feelings—it's based on TRUTH.

Worship is not music only—it's a LIFESTYLE.

I worship God because He IS worthy, not because I feel like it.

My work is worship. My obedience is worship. My life is worship.

Worship is WARFARE—it defeats the enemy and breaks chains.

I will worship in SPIRIT (heart engaged) and TRUTH (based on Scripture).

I will worship in crisis, in celebration, in pain, in joy.

**"Oh come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker"
(Psalm 95:6, NASB).**

I am a worshiper. And God is WORTHY.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've made worship about music, feelings, and performance instead of DECLARING YOUR WORTH. I've waited to feel something instead of CHOOSING to worship based on truth. I've avoided worship because it felt awkward, because I didn't know what to do, because I was afraid of what others would think. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Worship is not about ME. It's about YOU. Your worth. Your glory. Your character. You are WORTHY—whether I feel it or not. Whether life is good or falling apart. Whether I'm in a church building or in my truck. YOU ARE WORTHY.

Teach me to worship, Father. Not as performance. Not to be seen. But as HEART declaration of what is TRUE. Teach me that worship is WARFARE—that when I declare Your worth in the middle of battle, chains break and strongholds fall. Teach me that

worship is a LIFESTYLE—that my work, my obedience, my service are all acts of worship when done for Your glory.

Help me worship in SPIRIT (heart fully engaged) and TRUTH (based on who You actually are). Help me worship when I don't feel like it. Help me worship in crisis. Help me worship ANYWAY.

You are worthy, Father. I declare it today.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "You are worthy"

Breathe out: "I worship You"

(Psalm 95:6)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I declared God's worth today, or just gone through the motions?

Brief Prayer: Father, You are worthy of ALL praise. I worship You right now.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God's worth displayed today?

What am I grateful for?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I worship today? (Honestly)

- ☐ **Yes—through music, prayer, work, obedience**
- ☐ **I worshiped on autopilot (no heart engagement)**
- ☐ **I avoided worship**
- ☐ **I didn't even think about it**

If I DID worship, was my heart engaged?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I focus on my CIRCUMSTANCES more than on God today?

What would have changed if I had WORSHIPED (declared God's worth) in that moment?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for withholding worship. Forgive me for treating You as if You're only worthy when life is good. You are ALWAYS worthy.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding worship?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"I've been avoiding worship because _____. The lie I've believed is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will worship by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 25 ✓ - Learned worship is declaring God's WORTH, not just singing songs. I've been waiting to feel something instead of choosing to worship based on truth. Committing to worship this week through _____."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 26: "Sabbath - Rest in the Battle"

Brief Prayer:

Father, You've taught me to pray (conversation), read Scripture (Your voice), fast (creating space), and worship (declaring Your worth). Tomorrow, teach me to REST—to trust You enough to stop. Prepare my heart to receive the gift of Sabbath. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE MAYDAY CALL

Theological Insight:

"Worship is not about you. It's not about how you feel in the moment. Worship is about declaring the worth of God—who He is, what He's done, and what He will do—regardless of your circumstances." – Matt Redman

Brother, here's what you need to know:

When life is chaos. When the battle is raging. When everything is falling apart.

You have a choice.

You can focus on the PROBLEM. Or you can call a MAYDAY on the lies and declare THE TRUTH.

Worship is your MAYDAY.

It's you saying: "STOP. GOD is the priority. HE is worthy. Everything else is secondary."

Worship doesn't change God. He was worthy before. He'll be worthy after.

But worship changes YOU.

It REORIENTS your perspective.

It DEFEATS the enemy.

It BREAKS chains.

It DECLARES truth when lies are screaming.

Paul and Silas were in PRISON. Beaten. Bloody. Chained.

And they WORSHIPED.

Not because they felt like it. Because GOD WAS STILL WORTHY.

And when they worshiped—CHAINS BROKE. DOORS OPENED. GOD MOVED.

Same for you, brother.

You're in battles right now. Addiction. Marriage struggles. Financial crisis. Spiritual warfare.

And you have a choice.

You can focus on the CHAINS. Or you can WORSHIP the One who BREAKS chains.

So tomorrow morning, before you do anything else:

DECLARE GOD'S WORTH.

Out loud. In your truck. In your garage. Wherever you are.

"God, YOU are faithful. YOU are powerful. YOU are in control. YOU are worthy. I worship You."

And watch what happens.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Oh come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" (Psalm 95:6-7, NASB).

God is your MAKER.

You are HIS.

And that reality DEMANDS a response.

WORSHIP.

40 STRONG - Day 25 Complete ✓

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 26

SABBATH - REST IN THE BATTLE WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines

MORNING: THE DISCIPLINE OF STOPPING (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I'm going to be honest—rest feels wrong. I know You commanded it. I know Jesus modeled it. I know the Bible talks about Sabbath from Genesis to the New Testament. But if I'm real? Stopping feels like quitting. Resting feels like laziness. Taking a day off feels irresponsible. I'm wired to **PRODUCE**. To **ACHIEVE**. To **PUSH**. To **GRIND**. That's what makes me valuable, right? My work. My output. My ability to get things done. If I stop, things fall apart. If I rest, I'm falling behind. If I take a Sabbath, I'm wasting time I could be using to accomplish something. And honestly, Father, I don't even know **HOW** to rest. When I try, I feel guilty. Anxious. Restless. Like I should be **DOING** something. My mind races with everything I'm **NOT** getting done. My body doesn't know how to slow down. And then there's the religious guilt. I **KNOW** I should observe Sabbath. But I don't. And then I feel like I'm failing at another Christian discipline I can't seem to master. So I avoid the whole thing. I just keep working. Keep pushing. Keep grinding. Until I burn out. And even then, I feel guilty for being tired. This is exhausting, Father. I'm tired of being tired. I'm tired of running on empty. I'm tired of feeling like my worth is tied to my productivity. But I don't know how to stop. I don't know how to rest without feeling like I'm failing. So teach me, Father. Teach me that Sabbath isn't laziness—it's **TRUST**. Teach me that rest isn't quitting—it's **WARFARE**. Teach me that when I stop, I'm declaring: "God, **YOU'RE** in control. Not me." Help me understand that Sabbath is a **GIFT**, not a burden. And help me receive it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Sabbath

Read these slowly. Listen for what God is saying about rest.

THE CREATION OF SABBATH:

"By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:2-3, NASB).

God RESTED. Not because He was tired. But because the work was FINISHED.

He BLESSED the seventh day. SANCTIFIED it. Set it apart.

Rest is BUILT INTO CREATION.

THE COMMAND TO REST:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you" (Exodus 20:8-10, NASB).

This is one of the TEN COMMANDMENTS. Right up there with "don't murder" and "don't commit adultery."

REMEMBER the Sabbath. KEEP it holy.

It's not optional. It's COMMANDED.

THE REASON FOR SABBATH:

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11, NASB).

God didn't need to rest. He CHOSE to rest. To MODEL rest for you.

If GOD rested, what makes you think YOU don't need to?

SABBATH AS SIGN:

"You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you" (Exodus 31:13, NASB).

Sabbath is a SIGN. A declaration.

When you rest, you're saying: "God sanctifies me. Not my work. Not my effort. GOD."

JESUS AND THE SABBATH:

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NASB).

Sabbath was made FOR you. Not against you.

It's a GIFT, not a burden.

THE INVITATION TO REST:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, NASB).

Jesus INVITES you to rest.

Not someday. NOW. "Come to Me... I WILL give you rest."

REST FOR GOD'S PEOPLE:

"So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:9-10, NASB).

There REMAINS a Sabbath rest. Still available. Still commanded. Still necessary.

Rest from YOUR WORKS. Trust in HIS.

THE WARNING AGAINST RESTLESSNESS:

"In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves" (Psalm 127:2, NIV).

IN VAIN. Your hustle. Your grind. Your early mornings and late nights.

God gives REST to those He loves. It's a GIFT.

Pause. Close your eyes.

God RESTED on the seventh day. Not because He was exhausted. But because the work was DONE.

He's inviting you to rest. Not because you're lazy. But because HE'S in control.

When's the last time you actually RESTED?

Teaching: The Difference Between Sabbath and Laziness

Here's the lie most men believe about Sabbath:

"Rest is for the weak. Real men grind. Real men push through. Real men don't need a day off. If I rest, I'm lazy. If I stop, I'm quitting. My worth is tied to my productivity, so if I'm not producing, I'm worthless."

Translation: You've turned REST into a SIN instead of recognizing it as a GIFT and a COMMAND.

And when rest becomes sin, you burn out.

Theological Insight:

***"Sabbath is not simply about resting our bodies, though it certainly includes that. Sabbath is about resting our hearts in the finished work of Christ. It is ceasing from our striving and trusting in His sufficiency."* – Mark Buchanan (paraphrase)**

Sabbath vs. Laziness: What's the Difference?

LAZINESS:

What it is: Avoiding responsibility. Refusing to work. Choosing comfort over calling.

What it looks like:

- **Neglecting your duties**
- **Avoiding hard things**
- **Making excuses**
- **Living off others' labor**
- **Wasting time on meaningless things**

What Scripture says: "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied" (Proverbs 13:4, ESV).

"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber" (Proverbs 6:10-11, ESV).

Laziness is SIN. It's irresponsible. It's destructive.

SABBATH:

What it is: Intentional rest. Commanded rest. Trusting God enough to STOP.

What it looks like:

- Working hard six days
- STOPPING on the seventh
- Trusting God with what you can't control
- Recharging physically, emotionally, spiritually
- Worshiping, reflecting, connecting with God

What Scripture says: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8, NASB).

"The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27, NASB).

Sabbath is COMMANDED. It's worship. It's trust.

The Chart:

LAZINESS	SABBATH
Avoiding responsibility	Fulfilling responsibility (to rest)
Refusing to work	Working hard, then resting
Choosing comfort over calling	Choosing obedience to God's command
Living off others	Trusting God's provision
Wasting time	Redeeming time through rest
Sin	Obedience

LAZINESS

Selfish

"I don't want to work"

Undisciplined

Running FROM responsibility

SABBATH

Worship

"I trust God enough to stop"

Highly disciplined

Running TO God

Here's the key difference:

LAZY people avoid work.

SABBATH-keepers work HARD, then REST hard.

Sabbath is not laziness. It's TRUST.

Why You Struggle with Sabbath (Or Avoid It Completely)

REASON #1: YOU BELIEVE YOUR WORTH = YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

The lie: "I'm valuable when I'm producing. When I'm working. When I'm accomplishing. If I rest, I'm worthless."

The truth: Your worth is NOT tied to your productivity. It's tied to whose you ARE.

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1, NASB).

You are God's CHILD. Not His employee.

He loves you because you're HIS. Not because of what you DO.

When you rest, you're declaring: "My worth comes from God, not from my work."

REASON #2: YOU'RE AFRAID THINGS WILL FALL APART IF YOU STOP

The fear: "If I take a day off, everything will collapse. The business will fail. My family will suffer. Things will fall through the cracks. I CAN'T stop."

The truth: If your life falls apart because you take ONE DAY off, your life is built on YOU, not GOD.

"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1, NASB).

God doesn't need your 24/7 hustle. He needs your TRUST.

When you rest, you're declaring: "God can handle this. I don't have to control everything."

REASON #3: YOU FEEL GUILTY WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING

The guilt: "There's always more to do. The list never ends. If I'm resting, I'm wasting time. I should be working."

The truth: The list will NEVER end. There will ALWAYS be more to do.

Sabbath teaches you: The work is never finished. But GOD is faithful anyway.

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep" (Psalm 127:2, NASB).

God gives to His beloved EVEN IN SLEEP.

When you rest, you're declaring: "The work will be there tomorrow. But today, I trust God."

REASON #4: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO REST

The struggle: "When I try to rest, my mind races. I can't turn it off. I feel anxious. Restless. Like I'm wasting time."

The truth: You've trained yourself to ALWAYS BE ON. Your body and mind don't know how to slow down.

Rest is a DISCIPLINE. You have to LEARN it. PRACTICE it.

When you rest, you're retraining your body and mind to TRUST instead of STRIVE.

REASON #5: YOU THINK SABBATH IS OLD TESTAMENT LAW (And Doesn't Apply to You)

The dismissal: "Sabbath is Old Testament. We're under grace, not law. I don't have to observe it."

The truth: Jesus didn't ABOLISH the Sabbath. He FULFILLED it.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NASB).

Sabbath was made FOR you. It's a GIFT.

And Jesus Himself modeled rest. He withdrew. He slept. He pulled away from the crowds.

If JESUS needed rest, so do you.

When you rest, you're following JESUS' example.

REASON #6: SABBATH EXPOSES WHAT YOU'RE REALLY TRUSTING

The uncomfortable truth: When you stop working, you discover what you've been REALLY depending on:

- **Your effort (not God's provision)**
- **Your control (not God's sovereignty)**
- **Your performance (not God's grace)**
- **Your achievement (not God's faithfulness)**

Sabbath is WARFARE because it forces you to STOP and TRUST.

And that's terrifying if you've been depending on YOURSELF.

When you rest, you're confronted with: "Do I actually trust God? Or am I just saying I do while living like it all depends on me?"

The Firefighter's Perspective: The Relief and Trust

In firefighting, you work 24-hour shifts. You're ON for 24 hours straight. Ready to respond. Ready to go. Ready to fight.

And when those 24 hours are up, you GO HOME.

You don't say, "I better stay another 24 hours just in case."

You don't feel guilty for leaving.

You don't worry that the city will burn down because you're not there.

Why?

Because you TRUST the next shift. You TRUST the system. You TRUST that the job will get done even when you're not there.

That's Sabbath, brother.

You're not the only firefighter on duty. GOD is still working when you STOP.

The world doesn't rest on YOUR shoulders. It rests on HIS.

When you Sabbath, you're declaring:

"God, I trust You. I trust the next shift. I trust that You're still sovereign even when I'm resting. I trust that You can handle this without me."

And here's the other thing:

If you DON'T go home after your shift, you burn out. You make mistakes. You become a liability instead of an asset.

Same with life.

If you DON'T Sabbath, you burn out. You lose effectiveness. You become exhausted, irritable, and ineffective.

Sabbath makes you BETTER at the work God called you to. Not worse.

What Sabbath Actually Is (And Isn't)

Let's clear up some religious nonsense:

SABBATH IS NOT:

- ✗ Legalism (following rules to earn God's favor)**
- ✗ Laziness (avoiding work out of slothfulness)**
- ✗ Unproductive time (rest IS productive—it restores you)**
- ✗ Only for Sunday (Sabbath is a rhythm, not just a day)**

- ✗ Optional (God **COMMANDED** it)
 - ✗ Earned (you don't earn the right to rest—God **GIVES** rest)
 - ✗ Proof you're not committed (Jesus rested—was He uncommitted?)
-

SABBATH IS:

- ✓ Commanded rest (one of the Ten Commandments)
 - ✓ Trust in action (declaring God is in control, not you)
 - ✓ Worship (acknowledging God as Creator and Provider)
 - ✓ A GIFT (made **FOR** man, not against him)
 - ✓ Spiritual warfare (resisting the enemy's lie that your worth = your work)
 - ✓ Physical, emotional, and spiritual restoration
 - ✓ A SIGN (showing the world you trust God, not yourself)
-

The Biblical Foundation: Sabbath from Genesis to Jesus

1. SABBATH IN CREATION (Genesis 2:2-3)

The pattern: God worked six days. Rested on the seventh.

Why it matters: Rest is **BUILT INTO** the created order. It's not an afterthought.

Application: If God rested, you need to rest.

2. SABBATH IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Exodus 20:8-11)

The command: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Why it matters: This is the **FOURTH** commandment. Right up there with "don't murder."

It's **NOT** optional.

Application: Sabbath is not a suggestion. It's a **COMMAND**.

3. SABBATH AS SIGN (Exodus 31:13)

The declaration: "This is a sign between Me and you... that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you."

Why it matters: When you Sabbath, you're declaring: "God sanctifies me. Not my work."

Application: Sabbath is witness. It shows the world WHO you trust.

4. SABBATH AND THE MANNA (Exodus 16:22-30)

The test: God provided DOUBLE MANNA on the sixth day so Israel could rest on the seventh.

Some people went out on the seventh day to gather anyway. There was NOTHING.

Why it matters: God TESTS your trust. Will you rest and trust His provision? Or will you hustle on the Sabbath because you don't believe He'll provide?

Application: Sabbath reveals what you're REALLY trusting.

5. JESUS AND THE SABBATH (Mark 2:23-28)

The conflict: The Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath by picking grain.

Jesus' response: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Why it matters: Sabbath is a GIFT, not a burden. It's FOR you, not against you.

Application: Don't turn Sabbath into legalism. Receive it as the gift it is.

6. JESUS MODELED REST (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16)

The pattern: Jesus regularly withdrew to rest and pray.

"In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there" (Mark 1:35, NASB).

"But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:16, NASB).

Why it matters: If JESUS needed to withdraw and rest, you DEFINITELY do.

Application: Following Jesus means following His rhythm of work AND rest.

7. SABBATH REST IN CHRIST (Hebrews 4:9-11)

The fulfillment: "So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:9-10, NASB).

Why it matters: You REST from YOUR works. You TRUST in HIS finished work.

Sabbath is ultimately about resting in CHRIST, not your effort.

Application: Physical Sabbath points to SPIRITUAL rest in Jesus. Both matter.

Sabbath as Warfare: How Rest Defeats the Enemy

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep" (Psalm 127:2, NASB).

Rest is WARFARE.

Here's why:

1. SABBATH DECLARES: "GOD IS IN CONTROL, NOT ME"

The enemy's lie: "It all depends on you. If you stop, everything falls apart. You have to control everything."

Sabbath's declaration: "God is sovereign. He's in control. I trust Him."

When you rest, you're RESISTING the lie that you're indispensable.

2. SABBATH EXPOSES IDOLATRY

What Sabbath reveals: When you CAN'T rest, it exposes what you're REALLY worshiping:

- **Work** (your identity is tied to productivity)
- **Money** (you're afraid you won't have enough)
- **Control** (you don't trust anyone else)
- **Approval** (you need to prove yourself)

Sabbath forces you to STOP and confront: "What am I really depending on?"

3. SABBATH RESISTS THE ENEMY'S EXHAUSTION STRATEGY

The enemy's goal: Wear you down. Burn you out. Keep you so tired you can't fight.

Sabbath's resistance: Regular rest RESTORES you. Physically. Emotionally. Spiritually.

You can't fight effectively when you're exhausted. Sabbath keeps you SHARP.

4. SABBATH DECLARES YOUR WORTH IS NOT IN YOUR WORK

The enemy's lie: "You're only valuable when you're producing."

Sabbath's declaration: "My worth comes from WHO I AM in Christ, not WHAT I DO."

When you rest, you're declaring: "I'm loved because I'm God's child. Not because I'm useful."

5. SABBATH CREATES SPACE FOR GOD

The reality: When you're ALWAYS busy, you have no space to hear from God. To reflect. To worship. To just BE with Him.

Sabbath creates:

- **Time to hear God's voice**
- **Space to process what He's doing**
- **Opportunity to worship without distraction**
- **Margin to realign your heart**

Rest makes room for GOD.

How to Sabbath: Practical Guide for Modern Men

You live in a world that NEVER stops. 24/7 connectivity. Always-on culture. Hustle mentality.

How do you Sabbath in THAT world?

Here's how:

STEP 1: DECIDE WHAT DAY (And Protect It)

Old Testament: Saturday (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday)

New Testament/Christian tradition: Sunday (the day Jesus rose)

Your choice: Pick a day that works for YOUR life.

For some, Sunday is the busiest day (ministry, serving, church). So pick a different day.

The point: ONE full day (24 hours) set apart for rest. EVERY WEEK.

Protect it like you protect work:

- **Put it on the calendar**
 - **Say NO to other commitments**
 - **Don't schedule work**
 - **Guard it fiercely**
-

STEP 2: DECIDE WHAT "WORK" MEANS FOR YOU

Sabbath = ceasing from WORK.

But what IS "work" for you?

For some:

- **Physical labor**
- **Office work**
- **Emails / phone calls**
- **Errands**

- Chores

For others:

- Ministry (if you're a pastor, Sunday ISN'T rest—pick another day)
- Serving (if serving exhausts you, it's not Sabbath)

The principle: Sabbath = ceasing from WHAT YOU NORMALLY DO TO PRODUCE.

Define YOUR work. Then STOP doing it one day a week.

STEP 3: DECIDE WHAT YOU'LL DO INSTEAD

Sabbath is not just STOPPING. It's REPLACING work with rest, worship, and delight.

Categories of Sabbath activities:

WORSHIP:

- Attend corporate worship (if it's restful, not exhausting)
 - Private worship (music, prayer, Scripture)
 - Reflect on God's goodness
-

REST:

- Sleep in
 - Take a nap
 - Sit in silence
 - Read for pleasure (not for productivity)
 - Take a walk
-

DELIGHT:

- Spend time with family (NOT doing chores—ENJOYING them)
- Play with your kids

- Cook a meal and enjoy it slowly
 - Pursue a hobby (fishing, woodworking, music—whatever brings you joy)
 - Go to nature and marvel at creation
-

REFLECTION:

- Journal
 - Review the week (what did God do?)
 - Ask: "Where did I see God this week?"
 - Process emotions you've been stuffing
-

CONNECTION:

- Quality time with your wife (not task-oriented—ENJOYING her)
 - Hang out with friends (not networking—RESTING with them)
 - Call someone you love
-

The guideline: Does this RESTORE you? Does it point you to GOD? Does it bring you JOY?

If yes → Sabbath activity.

If it feels like WORK → Don't do it on Sabbath.

STEP 4: PREPARE BEFOREHAND

Saturday (if your Sabbath is Sunday):

- Finish work you need to finish
- Prep meals if cooking stresses you out
- Clean up enough so your house isn't chaos
- Set everything up so you CAN rest tomorrow

Why this matters: You can't rest if you're anxious about unfinished work.

FINISH what you can. Then TRUST God with the rest.

STEP 5: TURN OFF TECHNOLOGY (Or Severely Limit It)

The phone is the enemy of Sabbath.

Emails. Texts. Social media. News. All of it PULLS you back into work mode.

Sabbath technology rules:

- **No email**
- **No work calls/texts**
- **No social media (or very limited)**
- **No news**
- **Use your phone only for connection (calling family, listening to worship music, etc.)**

Try: Put your phone in a drawer for 24 hours. See what happens.

Why it works: Technology keeps you in HUSTLE mode. Removing it creates SPACE.

STEP 6: FIGHT THE GUILT

You WILL feel guilty the first few times you Sabbath.

Your mind will say:

- **"I should be working"**
- **"I'm wasting time"**
- **"I'm being lazy"**
- **"Other people are getting ahead while I'm resting"**

Fight back with TRUTH:

"God COMMANDED rest. This is obedience, not laziness."

"Jesus rested. If He needed it, I need it."

"My worth is not tied to my productivity."

"Rest makes me MORE effective, not less."

STEP 7: START SMALL IF YOU NEED TO

Never Sabbath before?

Don't try to go from 0 to 24 hours immediately.

Start with:

- **4 hours (Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon)**
- **Half a day**
- **Then build to a full day**

The point: Start SOMEWHERE. Build the rhythm.

STEP 8: EVALUATE AND ADJUST

After your first Sabbath, ask:

- **Did I feel rested?**
- **Did I encounter God?**
- **What worked? What didn't?**
- **What do I need to change?**

Then ADJUST.

Sabbath is not one-size-fits-all. Find what WORKS for you.

What Sabbath Looks Like for Different Men

FOR THE WORKAHOLIC:

Your struggle: You define yourself by productivity.

Your Sabbath: Complete cessation from work. No emails. No calls. No "just checking in."

Your focus: Remember WHO you are apart from WHAT you do.

FOR THE PASTOR/MINISTRY LEADER:

Your struggle: Sunday is your BUSIEST day.

Your Sabbath: Pick a different day (Monday? Friday?). Protect it fiercely.

Your focus: You can't pour from an empty cup. Rest so you can serve well.

FOR THE FATHER WITH YOUNG KIDS:

Your struggle: Sabbath feels impossible with kids. They don't rest.

Your Sabbath: Build in rhythms. Nap when they nap. Play WITH them (not work). Let your wife rest too.

Your focus: Delight in your kids. This IS Sabbath.

FOR THE ENTREPRENEUR/BUSINESS OWNER:

Your struggle: The business feels like it can't run without you.

Your Sabbath: Train others. Delegate. Build systems so you CAN rest.

Your focus: If your business collapses because you take ONE day off, you're the problem. Build sustainability.

FOR THE SINGLE MAN:

Your struggle: Sabbath feels lonely. You fill time with work.

Your Sabbath: Rest. Worship. Delight. Connect with friends or community.

Your focus: Learn to be WITH God, not just DO for God.

The Lies About Sabbath (And the Truth)

LIE #1: "I'm too busy to Sabbath"

TRUTH: If you're too busy to rest, you're too busy. Period.

LIE #2: "Sabbath is laziness"

TRUTH: Sabbath is DISCIPLINE. Lazy people avoid work. Sabbath-keepers work hard, then rest hard.

LIE #3: "Things will fall apart if I stop"

TRUTH: If everything depends on YOU, you've built your life on sand. God is still sovereign when you rest.

LIE #4: "I'll rest when I'm done"

TRUTH: You'll NEVER be done. The work is endless. Rest NOW.

LIE #5: "God needs my hustle"

TRUTH: God doesn't need ANYTHING from you. He invites you to TRUST Him.

LIE #6: "Sabbath is Old Testament law"

TRUTH: Jesus FULFILLED Sabbath, He didn't abolish it. And He modeled rest.

LIE #7: "My worth = my productivity"

TRUTH: Your worth = whose you ARE. You're God's beloved child, not His employee.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from hustle to trust)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH REST:

When's the last time you took a FULL day off (no work, no emails, no hustle)?

Do you regularly observe a Sabbath (one full day of rest per week)?

- ☐ Yes, every week
- ☐ Occasionally (once a month?)
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

Explain honestly:

2. SABBATH OR LAZINESS?

Do you view rest as:

- ☐ Laziness (something to avoid)
- ☐ Sabbath (something God commanded)
- ☐ Earned (I have to deserve it)
- ☐ A gift (God gives it freely)

What would need to change for you to see Sabbath as TRUST instead of WEAKNESS?

3. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE:

What's the #1 thing that keeps you from Sabbathing?

- ☐ I believe my worth = my productivity
- ☐ I'm afraid things will fall apart if I stop

- ☐ I feel guilty when I'm not working
- ☐ I don't know HOW to rest
- ☐ I think Sabbath doesn't apply to me
- ☐ Sabbath exposes what I'm really trusting (and I don't want to face that)
- ☐ Other: _____

How has this obstacle kept you from rest?

SECTION 2: WHAT YOU'RE REALLY TRUSTING

4. THE MANNA TEST:

God provided **DOUBLE** manna on the sixth day so Israel could rest on the seventh.

Some people didn't trust. They went out on the seventh day anyway. There was **NOTHING**.

The question: Do you **TRUST** God's provision enough to rest? Or do you hustle on the Sabbath because you don't believe He'll provide?

- ☐ I trust God enough to rest
- ☐ I SAY I trust God, but I hustle anyway
- ☐ I don't trust God—I trust my effort

What does your **LACK** of Sabbath reveal about what you're really trusting?

5. YOUR WORTH = YOUR PRODUCTIVITY?

Complete this sentence **HONESTLY**:

"I feel valuable when I'm _____."

Examples:

- "I feel valuable when I'm working"
- "I feel valuable when I'm accomplishing things"
- "I feel valuable when people need me"

Your answer:

Now complete THIS sentence:

"God says I'm valuable because _____."

Biblical answer: "I'm God's beloved child" (1 John 3:1)

Does your LIFE reflect what you SAY you believe? Or does it reflect: "My worth = my work"?

SECTION 3: SABBATH AS WARFARE

6. RESISTING THE ENEMY'S EXHAUSTION STRATEGY:

Is the enemy wearing you down through relentless BUSYNESS?

- ☐ Yes—I'm exhausted, burned out, running on empty
- ☐ I'm getting there
- ☐ No, I'm managing well

If yes, what would happen if you RESTED as an act of WARFARE?

7. WHAT SABBATH EXPOSES:

When you try to rest, what does it expose about what you're REALLY depending on?

- ☐ My effort (not God's provision)
- ☐ My control (not God's sovereignty)

- ☐ **My performance (not God's grace)**
- ☐ **My achievement (not God's faithfulness)**
- ☐ **Other:** _____

Are you willing to FACE what Sabbath exposes?

- ☐ **Yes, I need to confront this**
 - ☐ **I'll try**
 - ☐ **I'm avoiding it**
-

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL COMMITMENT

8. WILL YOU SABBATH THIS WEEK?

- ☐ **Yes, I'll commit to a full 24-hour Sabbath**
- ☐ **I'll start with a half-day Sabbath**
- ☐ **I'll try 4 hours**
- ☐ **I'm not ready yet**

If YES, what day will you Sabbath?

Day: _____

From what time to what time?

Start: _____ **End:** _____

9. DEFINING "WORK" FOR YOU:

What is "work" that you need to CEASE from on your Sabbath?

- ☐ **Physical labor**
- ☐ **Office work / emails / calls**
- ☐ **Errands / chores**
- ☐ **Ministry / serving (if it exhausts you)**
- ☐ **Technology / social media**

☐ Other: _____

10. WHAT YOU'LL DO INSTEAD:

On your Sabbath, what will you DO? (Choose 3-5 activities)

WORSHIP: ☐ Attend church (if restful) ☐ Private worship (music, prayer, Scripture) ☐

Reflect on God's goodness

REST: ☐ Sleep in / take a nap ☐ Sit in silence ☐ Read for pleasure ☐ Take a walk

DELIGHT: ☐ Quality time with family (enjoying them, not doing chores) ☐ Play with kids

☐ Cook and enjoy a meal slowly ☐ Pursue a hobby (fishing, woodworking, music, etc.)

☐ Go to nature

REFLECTION: ☐ Journal ☐ Review the week ☐ Process emotions

CONNECTION: ☐ Quality time with spouse ☐ Hang out with friends ☐ Call someone you love

11. PREPARING BEFOREHAND:

What do you need to FINISH before your Sabbath so you can actually rest?

☐ Complete work tasks

☐ Prep meals

☐ Clean up the house

☐ Set everything up so I CAN rest

☐ Other: _____

When will you do this prep work?

Day/Time: _____

12. TECHNOLOGY BOUNDARIES:

On your Sabbath, will you:

☐ Turn off my phone completely

- ☐ Put my phone in a drawer (out of sight)
- ☐ No email / work calls / texts
- ☐ No social media
- ☐ No news
- ☐ Use phone only for connection (family calls, worship music)

What's your biggest temptation regarding technology?

How will you resist it?

13. FIGHTING THE GUILT:

When guilt hits ("I should be working"), what will you SAY?

Write out 3 truths you'll speak:

1.

2.

3.

Suggested truths:

- "God COMMANDED rest. This is obedience."
- "Jesus rested. If He needed it, I need it."
- "My worth is not tied to my productivity."
- "Rest makes me MORE effective, not less."

14. STARTING SMALL:

If a full 24-hour Sabbath feels impossible, will you start smaller?

- ☐ 4 hours this week
- ☐ Half a day next week

☐ Build to a full day over the next month

What's your FIRST STEP?

SECTION 5: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

15. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING ABOUT SABBATH?

☐ "I'm too busy to Sabbath"

☐ "Sabbath is laziness"

☐ "Things will fall apart if I stop"

☐ "I'll rest when I'm done"

☐ "God needs my hustle"

☐ "My worth = my productivity"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

16. THE TRUTH ABOUT SABBATH:

Complete this sentence:

"Sabbath is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Sabbath is not laziness. It's TRUST."
- "Sabbath is not quitting. It's WARFARE."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Sabbath is not laziness—it's TRUST.

Sabbath is not quitting—it's OBEDIENCE.

Sabbath is not wasting time—it's WORSHIP.

My worth is not tied to my productivity—it's tied to whose I AM.

I am God's beloved child, not His employee.

When I rest, I'm declaring: "God is in control, not me."

Sabbath is WARFARE—it defeats the enemy's lie that I'm indispensable.

God COMMANDED rest. Jesus MODELED rest. I NEED rest.

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep" (Psalm 127:2, NASB).

I will work hard six days. And I will rest hard one day. Because God is faithful.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've believed my worth is tied to my productivity. I've hustled, ground, and pushed, thinking that's what makes me valuable. I've avoided rest because I thought it was weakness. I've felt guilty when I'm not working. I've been afraid that if I stop, everything will fall apart. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Sabbath is not laziness—it's TRUST. It's not quitting—it's OBEDIENCE. It's not wasting time—it's WORSHIP. You COMMANDED rest. You MODELED rest. And You invite me to rest because Sabbath is a GIFT, not a burden.

Teach me to Sabbath, Father. Teach me that my worth comes from WHO I AM in Christ, not WHAT I DO. Teach me that You're still sovereign when I REST. Teach me that rest is WARFARE—that when I stop and trust You, I'm defeating the enemy's lie that it all depends on me.

Help me work hard six days. And help me rest hard one day. Help me CEASE from my work and TRUST in Yours. Help me create space for You—to worship, to reflect, to delight, to just BE with You.

I'm stepping off the fireground, Father. I'm trusting the next shift. I'm trusting YOU.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "I cease from my work"

Breathe out: "I trust in Yours"

(Hebrews 4:10)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Am I hustling like it all depends on me? Or am I trusting God?

Brief Prayer: Father, You're in control. I rest in that.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God's faithfulness today (even when I wasn't working)?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I rest at all today? Or did I hustle nonstop?

☐ I built in moments of rest

☐ I pushed through without stopping

☐ I felt guilty when I rested

☐ I trusted God enough to stop

What does my rhythm today reveal about what I'm trusting?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I hustle because I didn't trust God today?

What would have changed if I had RESTED and TRUSTED instead?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for believing it all depends on me. Forgive me for not trusting You enough to rest.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding Sabbath?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"I've been avoiding Sabbath because _____. The lie I've believed is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. This week I will Sabbath by _____ (specific day/activities)."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 26 ✓ - Learned Sabbath is TRUST, not laziness. I've been believing my worth = my productivity. Committing to Sabbath on _____ (day) this week. Pray I can actually REST."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 27: "Community - You Can't Do This Alone"

Brief Prayer:

Father, You've taught me to pray, read Scripture, fast, worship, and rest. Tomorrow, teach me I can't do this alone. Prepare my heart to receive the gift of COMMUNITY. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: TRUSTING THE NEXT SHIFT

Theological Insight:

"Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms." –
Walter Brueggemann

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You're not the only firefighter on duty.

GOD is still working when you STOP.

The world doesn't rest on YOUR shoulders. It rests on HIS.

You've been living like everything depends on you:

- If you don't work, things fall apart
- If you don't hustle, you'll fail
- If you don't control everything, chaos wins

And you're EXHAUSTED.

Because you were never meant to carry that weight.

God is inviting you to REST.

Not because the work is done. It's NOT done. It will NEVER be done.

But because HE'S faithful. HE'S sovereign. HE'S in control.

When you Sabbath, you're declaring:

"God, I trust the next shift. I trust YOU. I trust that You can handle this without me. I trust that my worth doesn't come from my productivity. I trust that You give to Your beloved even in sleep."

And when you do that—when you STOP and TRUST—everything shifts.

You discover:

- God WAS faithful even when you weren't working
- The world DIDN'T fall apart when you rested
- You're MORE effective AFTER rest, not less
- Your worth ISN'T tied to your hustle

Sabbath is WARFARE, brother.

It defeats the enemy's lie that you're indispensable.

It exposes what you're really trusting.

It forces you to STOP and acknowledge: "God, You're in control. Not me."

So this week, try it.

Pick a day. Protect it. Stop working. Rest hard.

And watch what God does when you finally trust Him enough to STOP.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NASB).

Jesus INVITES you to rest.

Not someday. NOW.

"Come to Me... I WILL give you rest."

Will you come?

40 STRONG - Day 26 Complete ✓

"So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 27

COMMUNITY - YOU CAN'T DO THIS ALONE WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines

MORNING: THE LONE WOLF DELUSION (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, I need to be honest about something I don't like admitting: I'm isolated. I have people around me—coworkers, acquaintances, guys I know from church. But real friends? Brothers who actually **KNOW** me? Men I can call when I'm struggling? That's a different story. I've been living like a lone wolf. Handling things on my own. Keeping struggles to myself. Putting on a good face while dying inside. And honestly? I've convinced myself that's just how men operate. We don't talk about feelings. We don't need deep friendships. We handle our stuff and move on. Real men are self-sufficient, right? But if I'm really honest, Father, I'm lonely. I'm tired of pretending I have it all together. I'm exhausted from fighting battles alone. I'm weary of carrying burdens I was never meant to carry by myself. And when I fail—when I fall into sin, when I mess up, when I'm drowning—I have no one to call. No one who knows the real me. No one I trust enough to be honest with. I've seen what happens when men try to do life alone. I've watched them crash and burn. I've been to funerals of men who never asked for help. I've seen marriages collapse because guys had no one holding them accountable. I've witnessed good men destroyed by secret sin because they were too proud to let anyone in. And I'm terrified I'm headed down that same path. So teach me, Father. Teach me that You didn't design me to do this alone. Teach me that community isn't weakness—it's **STRENGTH**. Teach me that vulnerability isn't failure—it's **COURAGE**. Teach me that I **NEED** brothers. Not just acquaintances. Not just guys I nod at on Sunday. **REAL** brothers who know my struggles, call out my BS, and fight alongside me. Help me understand that isolation is the enemy's strategy. And help me have the guts to actually **LET PEOPLE IN**. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Community

Read these slowly. Listen for what God is saying about doing life together.

GOD IS COMMUNITY (The Trinity):

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26, NASB).

God is PLURAL. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Community within the Godhead.

You were made in the image of a COMMUNAL God. You're wired FOR relationship.

TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE:

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NASB).

ALONE, you fall and can't get up. ALONE, you freeze. ALONE, you're overpowered.

Together? You have STRENGTH. WARMTH. PROTECTION.

BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS:

"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2, NASB).

You're COMMANDED to carry burdens TOGETHER. Not alone.

If you're carrying everything yourself, you're DISOBEYING this command.

CONFESSING TO ONE ANOTHER:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16, NASB).

Confess your sins to ONE ANOTHER. Not just to God. To EACH OTHER.

Secret sin stays strong. Confessed sin loses power.

SPURRING ONE ANOTHER ON:

"And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25, NASB).

Don't FORSAKE assembling together. ENCOURAGE one another. STIMULATE each other to love and good deeds.

You need THEM. They need YOU.

IRON SHARPENING IRON:

"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, NASB).

Iron sharpens iron through FRICTION. Through COLLISION. Through CONTACT.

You can't sharpen in ISOLATION. You need other men to CHALLENGE you, REFINE you, SHARPEN you.

THE BODY NEEDS EVERY PART:

"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ... But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 20-21, NASB).

You are part of a BODY. You NEED the other members. You can't say "I don't need you."

If you're isolated, you're a severed limb. And severed limbs DIE.

WHERE TWO OR THREE GATHER:

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20, NASB).

When you gather WITH others in Jesus' name, HE SHOWS UP.

Isolation means missing out on Christ's PRESENCE in community.

Pause. Close your eyes.

You were made in the image of a COMMUNAL God.

You were designed for RELATIONSHIP. For BROTHERHOOD. For CARRYING BURDENS TOGETHER.

Isolation is not strength. It's SUICIDE.

Are you trying to do this alone?

Teaching: The Difference Between Isolation and Community

Here's the lie most men believe about community:

"Real men handle their own problems. I don't need to burden others with my struggles. I can figure this out on my own. Asking for help is weakness. Letting people in is vulnerability I can't afford. I'm fine on my own."

Translation: You've turned ISOLATION into STRENGTH and COMMUNITY into WEAKNESS.

And when isolation becomes strength, you DIE alone.

Theological Insight:

"The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone. We are called to a band of brothers and sisters who fight alongside us, encourage us when we fall, and celebrate with us when we win. To try to live the Christian life in isolation is to fundamentally misunderstand what God designed." – John Eldredge (paraphrase)

Isolation vs. Community: What's the Difference?

ISOLATION:

What it is: Living like you don't need anyone. Handling struggles alone. Keeping people at arm's length.

What it looks like:

- No one knows your real struggles
- You put on a good face while dying inside

- You have acquaintances, not real friends
- You handle temptation, sin, and crisis **ALONE**
- You never ask for help
- You share surface-level stuff but never go deep
- You're surrounded by people but still **LONELY**

What it feels like:

- Exhausting (you're carrying everything yourself)
- Lonely (even in a crowd)
- Shameful (you can't let anyone see the real you)
- Fragile (one crisis away from collapse)

What it produces:

- Secret sin (no one knows, so it grows)
- Burnout (you're carrying burdens you weren't meant to carry alone)
- Collapse (when you fall, no one's there to help you up)
- Spiritual death (severed limbs die)

COMMUNITY:

What it is: Doing life **WITH** others. Sharing burdens. Letting people **IN**. Fighting **TOGETHER**.

What it looks like:

- Other men know your **REAL** struggles
- You're honest about where you're failing
- You have brothers who call out your **BS**
- You handle temptation, sin, and crisis **WITH** others
- You ask for help when you need it
- You go **DEEP**, not just surface

- You're known AND loved

What it feels like:

- Lighter (burdens are shared)
- Supported (you're not alone)
- Safe (you can be real)
- Strong (together you're unstoppable)

What it produces:

- Freedom from secret sin (confession brings healing)
- Endurance (others carry you when you can't carry yourself)
- Accountability (brothers keep you on track)
- Spiritual health (the body functions as designed)

The Chart:

ISOLATION

"I handle this alone"

Secrets

Independence

"I'm fine" (while dying)

No accountability

Lone wolf

Exhaustion

When you fall, you stay down

Weakness masked as strength

Spiritual death

COMMUNITY

"We handle this together"

Confession

Interdependence

"I'm struggling" (honest)

Brothers who call you out

Pack

Shared burdens

When you fall, they lift you up

Strength through vulnerability

Spiritual health

Which column describes your actual life right now?

Most men SAY they value community. But they LIVE in isolation.

Why?

Why You Struggle with Community (Or Avoid It Completely)

REASON #1: YOU BELIEVE "REAL MEN DON'T NEED HELP"

The lie: "I should be able to handle this on my own. Asking for help is weak. Real men are self-sufficient."

The truth: God designed you to NEED others. Needing help isn't weakness—it's REALITY.

"Two are better than one... For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NASB).

WOE to the one who falls ALONE. That's not strength—it's STUPIDITY.

When you isolate, you're declaring: "I know better than God's design."

REASON #2: YOU'RE AFRAID OF BEING JUDGED

The fear: "If people knew the REAL me—my struggles, my sin, my failures—they'd reject me. They'd think less of me. They'd walk away."

The truth: If people reject you for being HONEST, they were never safe to begin with.

But REAL brothers? They don't reject you for struggling. They FIGHT WITH YOU.

"Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NASB).

Confession HEALS. Secrets KILL.

When you hide your sin, you're declaring: "Shame is stronger than grace."

REASON #3: YOU'VE BEEN BURNED BEFORE

The wound: You opened up once. You were vulnerable. You shared your struggle.

And someone:

- Gossiped about it
- Used it against you
- Judged you
- Walked away

And now you're GUARDED. You won't let anyone in again.

The truth: One bad experience doesn't mean ALL community is unsafe.

It means you need to find SAFE brothers. Men of character. Men who can be trusted.

"A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24, NASB).

Not every guy is your BROTHER. But SOME are. Find THEM.

When you avoid all community because of one wound, you're letting the ENEMY win.

REASON #4: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO GO DEEP

The struggle: You have friends. You hang out. You talk about sports, work, the weather.

But you never go DEEP. You never talk about what's REALLY happening.

And you don't know HOW to shift from surface to soul.

The truth: Deep friendships don't happen ACCIDENTALLY. They require INTENTIONALITY.

Someone has to GO FIRST. Someone has to be vulnerable.

That someone is YOU.

When you wait for others to go first, you stay stuck in shallow.

REASON #5: YOU'RE TOO BUSY

The excuse: "I don't have time for deep friendships. I'm too busy with work, family, responsibilities."

The truth: You MAKE time for what matters. And right now, community doesn't matter ENOUGH.

You'll make time to watch TV. To scroll your phone. To pursue hobbies.

But not for the BROTHERS who could save your life?

"Two can resist... A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:12, NASB).

You're fighting battles ALONE because you're "too busy" to build a team.

When you're too busy for community, you're too busy. Period.

REASON #6: YOU'RE PRIDEFUL

The root issue: Deep down, you believe: "I don't NEED anyone. I'm strong enough. Smart enough. Disciplined enough. I've got this."

The truth: That's PRIDE. And pride comes before the fall.

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Proverbs 16:18, NASB).

You're ONE crisis away from collapse. And when you fall, no one will be there to pick you up.

Because you never LET anyone IN.

When you isolate out of pride, you're setting yourself up for destruction.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Crew Integrity and Never Fighting Alone

In firefighting, there's a principle called CREW INTEGRITY.

It means: You NEVER separate from your crew. NEVER.

You go in TOGETHER. You work TOGETHER. You come out TOGETHER.

Why?

Because ALONE, you DIE.

Here's what happens when firefighters violate crew integrity:

- They get disoriented in smoke and can't find their way out
- They run out of air and no one knows where they are
- They get trapped and there's no one to call a Mayday for them
- They get injured and there's no one to carry them out

Lone wolves DIE on the fireground.

But crews SURVIVE.

Because when one guy runs out of air, his partner shares his air.

When one guy gets disoriented, his partner guides him out.

When one guy goes down, his crew carries him.

That's community, brother.

You're fighting spiritual fires. Battling addiction. Wrestling temptation. Facing crises.

And you're trying to do it ALONE.

You're violating crew integrity.

And it's going to GET YOU KILLED.

Here's the truth:

You NEED a crew. Men who:

- Know where you are in the battle
- Share their strength when you're weak
- Call a Mayday when you're in trouble
- Carry you out when you can't walk

Stop fighting alone. Build your crew.

What Community Actually Is (And Isn't)

Let's clear up some misconceptions:

COMMUNITY IS NOT:

- ✗ Acquaintances (guys you see at church but don't really know)
 - ✗ Shallow friendships (only talking about surface stuff)
 - ✗ A social club (getting together to hang out but never going deep)
 - ✗ Networking (using people for what they can do for you)
 - ✗ Codependency (unhealthy reliance that enables sin)
 - ✗ Forced vulnerability (sharing just to check a box)
 - ✗ Gossip sessions (talking ABOUT others instead of WITH them)
-

COMMUNITY IS:

- ✓ Brotherhood (men who actually KNOW you and are FOR you)
 - ✓ Deep relationships (talking about REAL struggles, not just sports)
 - ✓ Mutual accountability (brothers who call you out AND encourage you)
 - ✓ Bearing burdens together (sharing the load)
 - ✓ Confession and healing (bringing sin into the light)
 - ✓ Sharpening (iron sharpening iron—challenging each other to grow)
 - ✓ Fighting together (spiritual warfare as a TEAM)
-

Biblical Foundation: Why Community Isn't Optional

1. GOD IS COMMUNAL (The Trinity)

"Let Us make man in Our image" (Genesis 1:26).

God exists in COMMUNITY. Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

You're made in HIS image. You're WIRED for relationship.

Application: If God—who is PERFECT and COMPLETE—exists in community, what makes you think YOU don't need it?

2. JESUS MODELED COMMUNITY (The Disciples)

Jesus had:

- **The Twelve (His core team)**
- **The Three (Peter, James, John—His inner circle)**
- **The One (John—the disciple He loved)**

Jesus didn't do ministry ALONE. He built a TEAM.

Application: If JESUS needed community, you DEFINITELY do.

3. THE EARLY CHURCH LIVED IN COMMUNITY (Acts 2:42-47)

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 2:42, 44, NASB).

TOGETHER. IN COMMON. FELLOWSHIP. PRAYER.

The early church didn't do life ALONE. They did it TOGETHER.

Application: The Christian life was DESIGNED to be lived in community.

4. THE BODY OF CHRIST REQUIRES COMMUNITY (1 Corinthians 12)

"For even as the body is one and yet has many members... the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 21, NASB).

You are ONE PART of a BODY. You NEED the other parts.

If you're isolated, you're a severed limb. And severed limbs DIE.

Application: You can't function as God designed WITHOUT other believers.

5. THE "ONE ANOTHER" COMMANDS REQUIRE COMMUNITY

Scripture gives over 50 "one another" commands. You can't obey them ALONE.

Examples:

- **Love one another (John 13:34)**
- **Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)**
- **Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)**
- **Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25)**
- **Pray for one another (James 5:16)**
- **Admonish one another (Romans 15:14)**
- **Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)**

Application: If you're isolated, you're DISOBEYING most of the New Testament.

The Levels of Friendship: Where Are You?

Not all friendships are the same. Here are the levels:

LEVEL 1: ACQUAINTANCES

Who they are: People you know casually. Coworkers. Guys at church you nod at.

What you talk about: Weather. Sports. Surface stuff.

Value: Low. Helpful for social interaction, but not deep.

LEVEL 2: CASUAL FRIENDS

Who they are: Guys you hang out with occasionally. Grab a beer. Watch the game.

What you talk about: Work. Hobbies. Kids. Still mostly surface.

Value: Medium. Enjoyable, but not life-changing.

LEVEL 3: CLOSE FRIENDS

Who they are: Men you spend regular time with. You know their families. You care about their lives.

What you talk about: Real life. Struggles (sometimes). Goals. Challenges.

Value: High. These friendships matter.

LEVEL 4: BROTHERS (True Community)

Who they are: Men who **KNOW** you. Your struggles. Your sin. Your fears. And they're **WITH** you anyway.

What you talk about: **EVERYTHING**. Nothing's off limits. Confession. Accountability. Deep spiritual stuff.

Value: **ESSENTIAL**. These are the men who will save your life.

The question:

Do you have ANY Level 4 friendships? Any brothers who actually KNOW you?

Or are you stuck at Level 1-2, pretending you're fine while dying inside?

How to Build Real Community: Practical Steps

Community doesn't happen by accident. You have to BUILD it. Here's how:

STEP 1: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL BROTHERS

Look for men who:

- **Are following Jesus (not perfect, but pursuing Him)**
- **Are HONEST about their struggles (not fake)**
- **Are trustworthy (they won't gossip or betray you)**
- **Are in a similar season of life (similar challenges)**
- **Are hungry for MORE (not content with shallow)**

Where to find them:

- Your church (men's ministry, small groups)
- Your neighborhood
- Your workplace (Christian coworkers)
- Online communities (40 STRONG groups, etc.)

Start with 2-3 guys. You don't need a huge group. You need a FEW solid brothers.

STEP 2: INITIATE

Don't wait for them to reach out. YOU reach out.

Text them: "Hey, want to grab coffee this week? I'd like to connect."

Be INTENTIONAL. Put it on the calendar. Make it happen.

Why this matters: Most men are WAITING for someone else to go first. BE THAT GUY.

STEP 3: GO FIRST WITH VULNERABILITY

Don't wait for them to open up. YOU open up first.

Share something REAL:

- "I'm struggling with _____"
- "I need accountability with _____"
- "Can I be honest? I'm not doing well."

Why this matters: Vulnerability INVITES vulnerability. When YOU go first, you give THEM permission to be real.

STEP 4: MOVE FROM CASUAL TO COMMITTED

Casual: Hanging out when it's convenient.

Committed: Regular rhythms. Weekly check-ins. Accountability.

Suggested commitment:

- Weekly coffee/breakfast/lunch

- Bi-weekly group gathering
- Daily text check-ins (how are you REALLY doing?)

Why this matters: Deep friendships require **CONSISTENCY**. You can't go deep with sporadic contact.

STEP 5: ESTABLISH GROUND RULES

What's shared stays here. No gossip. No betrayal. Total confidentiality.

We speak truth in love. We call each other out when needed. We don't enable sin.

We fight FOR each other, not against. When one falls, we lift him up. We don't judge—we RESTORE.

Why this matters: Safety creates honesty. Without ground rules, community stays shallow.

STEP 6: PRACTICE THE "ONE ANOTHERS"

In your community, actively:

- Confess sins to one another (James 5:16)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14)
- Spur one another on (Hebrews 10:24)

Why this matters: This is **HOW** community functions. Do the "one anothers" and community **WORKS**.

STEP 7: BE CONSISTENT

Show up. Every week. Every meeting. Every check-in.

Don't flake. Don't cancel unless it's an emergency. PRIORITIZE community.

Why this matters: Trust is built through **CONSISTENCY**. If you're unreliable, community collapses.

STEP 8: GO BEYOND THE MEETINGS

Community isn't just scheduled gatherings. It's:

- Texting during the week
- Calling when you're struggling
- Showing up when someone's in crisis
- Celebrating victories together

Why this matters: Real community is **LIFE-ON-LIFE**, not just **MEETING-TO-MEETING**.

What to Actually Talk About in Community

Most men don't know HOW to go deep. Here's what to discuss:

1. SPIRITUAL BATTLES

Questions:

- Where are you being tempted right now?
 - What's the enemy attacking?
 - How's your relationship with God?
 - What are you learning in Scripture?
-

2. SIN AND STRUGGLE

Questions:

- What sin are you fighting this week?
- Where did you fail?
- What triggers you?

- How can we help?

Remember: Confession brings healing (James 5:16). Secrets keep sin strong.

3. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Questions:

- How's your marriage REALLY?
 - Where are you struggling as a husband?
 - How are your kids doing?
 - What's hard about fatherhood right now?
-

4. WORK AND CALLING

Questions:

- How's work?
 - Are you living out your calling?
 - What's stressing you out?
 - Where do you need wisdom?
-

5. GOALS AND GROWTH

Questions:

- What are you working on spiritually?
 - What's God calling you to?
 - What habits are you building?
 - Where do you want to grow?
-

6. FEARS AND DOUBTS

Questions:

- What are you afraid of?
 - What are you doubting?
 - Where do you feel inadequate?
 - What keeps you up at night?
-

The key: Be **SPECIFIC**. Not "How are you?" (answer: "Fine"). But "How are you **REALLY** doing with [specific thing we talked about last week]?"

Accountability vs. Confessional Booth: What's the Difference?

Many men confuse **ACCOUNTABILITY** with a **CONFESSIONAL BOOTH**.

CONFESSIONAL BOOTH (What NOT to do):

What it looks like:

- You confess the same sin every week
- Nothing changes
- Your "accountability partner" just listens and says "I'll pray for you"
- No real plan for change
- No follow-up

Why it doesn't work: Confession without **CHANGE** is just **REHEARSING** your sin.

REAL ACCOUNTABILITY (What TO do):

What it looks like:

- You confess your sin
- Together, you identify **TRIGGERS**
- You build a **PLAN** to resist
- You give them **PERMISSION** to ask hard questions

- They **CHECK IN** throughout the week
- They **CELEBRATE** victories and **CONFRONT** relapses

Why it works: Real accountability produces CHANGE, not just confession.

Example of REAL accountability:

BAD: "I looked at porn again this week." "Okay, I'll pray for you." [Nothing changes]

GOOD: "I looked at porn again this week." "Okay, let's dig in. **WHEN** did it happen? What **TRIGGERED** it? What were you feeling? What can you do **DIFFERENTLY** next time? I'm going to text you every night this week at 9 PM to check in. And I'm going to ask your wife how you're doing. Are you okay with that?"

See the difference?

The Hard Conversations: How to Call Out a Brother

"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted" (Galatians 6:1, NASB).

When a brother is caught in sin, you **RESTORE** him. You don't ignore it. You don't enable it.

Here's how:

STEP 1: PRAY FIRST

Before you confront, PRAY. Ask God for wisdom, timing, and humility.

STEP 2: CHECK YOUR HEART

Are you confronting out of:

- Love (you want to **RESTORE** him)?
- Or Judgment (you want to **CONDEMN** him)?

If it's judgment, DON'T confront. You'll do more harm than good.

STEP 3: GO PRIVATE FIRST

Don't call him out in front of the group. Go ONE-ON-ONE.

"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private" (Matthew 18:15, NASB).

STEP 4: SPEAK TRUTH IN LOVE

"Speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

Don't sugarcoat. Don't attack. Speak TRUTH wrapped in LOVE.

Example: "Brother, I love you. And because I love you, I need to tell you something hard. I've noticed [specific behavior]. I'm concerned. I don't want to see you destroyed by this. Can we talk about it?"

STEP 5: OFFER TO HELP, NOT JUST CRITICIZE

Don't just point out the problem. HELP him fight it.

"How can I help you fight this? What do you need from me?"

STEP 6: FOLLOW UP

Don't confront once and walk away. STAY ENGAGED. Check in. Ask how he's doing.

Real accountability is ONGOING, not one-and-done.

The Warning: Isolation Kills

"Woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:10, NASB).

WOE. Not "unfortunate." Not "that's sad." WOE.

Isolation is DEADLY.

Here's what happens when you try to do this alone:

1. SECRET SIN GROWS

"Confess your sins to one another... so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NASB).

When sin stays SECRET, it GROWS. When you bring it into the LIGHT, it loses power.

Isolated men have SECRET SINS that destroy them.

2. YOU BURN OUT

"Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2, NASB).

You're carrying burdens you were NEVER meant to carry alone.

Isolated men BURN OUT because they're carrying everything themselves.

3. YOU FALL AND STAY DOWN

"If either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, NASB).

ALONE, when you fall, you STAY DOWN.

Isolated men COLLAPSE and have no one to pick them up.

4. THE ENEMY PICKS YOU OFF

"If one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him" (Ecclesiastes 4:12, NASB).

ALONE, you're OVERPOWERED.

The enemy targets ISOLATED men because they're EASY PREY.

5. YOU LOSE PERSPECTIVE

When you're isolated, you have NO ONE to:

- **Challenge your thinking**
- **Call out your BS**
- **Speak truth when you're believing lies**

Isolated men get LOST because they have no one to guide them back.

Don't be a statistic. Build community BEFORE you crash.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from isolation to community)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF COMMUNITY:

Do you have REAL community (Level 4 friendships—brothers who KNOW you)?

- ☐ **Yes—I have 2-3 brothers who know my real struggles**
- ☐ **I have close friends (Level 3) but we don't go deep**
- ☐ **I have casual friends (Level 2) but nothing deeper**
- ☐ **I'm isolated (Level 1—acquaintances only)**

Explain honestly:

2. THE LONE WOLF DELUSION:

Are you living like a lone wolf (handling everything alone)?

- ☐ **Yes—I handle struggles, temptation, sin alone**
- ☐ **Sometimes—I share SOME things but not everything**
- ☐ **No—I have brothers who know my real battles**

If YES, what's it costing you?

3. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE:

What's the #1 thing keeping you from REAL community?

- ☐ I believe "real men don't need help"
- ☐ I'm afraid of being judged
- ☐ I've been burned before
- ☐ I don't know how to go deep
- ☐ I'm too busy
- ☐ I'm too proud to let anyone in
- ☐ Other: _____

How has this obstacle isolated you?

SECTION 2: ASSESSING THE COST OF ISOLATION

4. THE WARNING:

"Woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

Have you experienced the COST of isolation?

- ☐ Secret sin grew because no one knew
- ☐ I burned out because I carried everything alone
- ☐ I fell and stayed down because no one was there
- ☐ The enemy overpowered me because I fought alone
- ☐ I lost perspective because no one challenged my thinking
- ☐ Other: _____

Describe what happened:

5. CREW INTEGRITY:

In firefighting, you **NEVER** separate from your crew. **NEVER**.

Are you violating "crew integrity" in your spiritual life?

☐ Yes—I'm fighting alone

☐ Sometimes—I have a crew but I don't stay with them

☐ No—I fight **WITH** my brothers

If **YES**, what's at stake if you keep fighting alone?

SECTION 3: BUILDING COMMUNITY

6. IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL BROTHERS:

Who are 2-3 men who could be **REAL** brothers (Level 4)?

Look for men who:

- Follow Jesus (not perfect, but pursuing Him)
- Are honest about their struggles
- Are trustworthy
- Are in a similar season
- Are hungry for more

List their names:

1.

 2.

 3.

-

7. INITIATING:

Will you REACH OUT to one of these men THIS WEEK?

☐ **Yes—I'll text/call and set up a time to connect**

☐ **I'll try**

☐ **I'm not ready yet**

If YES, who will you reach out to?

When will you do it?

Day: _____ Time: _____

What will you say?

8. GOING FIRST WITH VULNERABILITY:

When you meet with him, will you GO FIRST and share something REAL?

☐ **Yes—I'll be honest about a struggle**

☐ **I'll try**

☐ **I'm afraid to**

What will you share?

"I'm struggling with _____. I need help."

9. MOVING FROM CASUAL TO COMMITTED:

If you already have friends, will you DEEPEN the relationship?

☐ **Yes—I'll suggest a regular rhythm (weekly coffee, etc.)**

☐ **I'll try**

☐ **Not ready yet**

What rhythm will you suggest?

- ☐ **Weekly coffee/breakfast**
 - ☐ **Bi-weekly group gathering**
 - ☐ **Daily text check-ins**
 - ☐ **Other: _____**
-

10. ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES:

When you build community, will you establish these ground rules?

- ☐ **What's shared stays here (confidentiality)**
- ☐ **We speak truth in love (call each other out)**
- ☐ **We fight FOR each other (restore, don't judge)**

Which ground rule is MOST important for you to establish?

Why?

SECTION 4: PRACTICING COMMUNITY

11. THE "ONE ANOTHERS":

Which "one another" do you need MOST right now?

- ☐ **Confess sins to one another (James 5:16)**
- ☐ **Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)**
- ☐ **Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25)**
- ☐ **Pray for one another (James 5:16)**
- ☐ **Admonish one another (Romans 15:14)**
- ☐ **Spur one another on (Hebrews 10:24)**

Who can you practice this with THIS WEEK?

12. WHAT TO TALK ABOUT:

In your next conversation with a potential brother, which topic will you discuss?

- ☐ Spiritual battles (where are you being tempted?)
- ☐ Sin and struggle (what are you fighting this week?)
- ☐ Marriage and family (how's your marriage REALLY?)
- ☐ Work and calling (are you living out your calling?)
- ☐ Goals and growth (where do you want to grow?)
- ☐ Fears and doubts (what are you afraid of?)

Write out the SPECIFIC question you'll ask:

13. ACCOUNTABILITY (Not Confessional Booth):

Do you have REAL accountability (plan for change) or just a confessional booth (confess and repeat)?

- ☐ Real accountability (confession + plan + follow-up)
- ☐ Confessional booth (just confessing, nothing changes)
- ☐ No accountability at all

If you DON'T have real accountability, will you BUILD it this week?

- ☐ Yes—I'll ask someone to hold me accountable
- ☐ I'll try
- ☐ Not ready yet

Who will you ask?

What sin/struggle do you need accountability for?

14. HARD CONVERSATIONS:

Is there a brother you need to CALL OUT (restore, not condemn)?

- ☐ Yes—I see him caught in sin
- ☐ Maybe—I'm not sure if I should say something
- ☐ No

If YES, will you confront him IN LOVE this week?

- ☐ Yes—I'll go private, speak truth in love, offer to help
- ☐ I need to pray first
- ☐ I'm afraid to

What will you say?

"Brother, I love you. I've noticed _____. I'm concerned. Can we talk?"

SECTION 5: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

15. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING ABOUT COMMUNITY?

- ☐ "Real men don't need help"
- ☐ "If people knew the real me, they'd reject me"
- ☐ "I've been burned before—I can't trust anyone"
- ☐ "I don't know how to go deep"
- ☐ "I'm too busy for community"
- ☐ "I don't NEED anyone—I can handle this alone"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

16. THE TRUTH ABOUT COMMUNITY:

Complete this sentence:

"Community is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Community is not weakness. It's **STRENGTH**."
- "Community is not optional. It's **COMMANDED**."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

I was made in the image of a **COMMUNAL** God—I'm wired for relationship.

Isolation is not strength—it's **SUICIDE**.

I **NEED** brothers. Not acquaintances. **REAL** brothers who know my struggles.

"Two are better than one"—I will **NOT** fight alone.

When I fall, I need someone to lift me up. When I'm tempted, I need someone to fight with me.

Community is not weakness—it's how God **DESIGNED** me to function.

I will confess my sins to others. I will bear burdens with others. I will fight **WITH** others.

I will **GO FIRST** with vulnerability. I will **INITIATE**. I will **BUILD** community.

"A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:12, NASB).

I am done being a lone wolf. I'm building my crew.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been living like a lone wolf. I've handled struggles alone. I've kept people at arm's length. I've convinced myself I don't need anyone. But the truth is—I'm lonely. I'm exhausted. I'm carrying burdens I was never meant to carry by myself. And I'm one crisis away from collapse. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: You made me in the image of a COMMUNAL God. You designed me for RELATIONSHIP. For BROTHERHOOD. For carrying burdens TOGETHER. Isolation is not strength—it's DISOBEDIENCE. And it's killing me.

Teach me to build community, Father. Give me the COURAGE to reach out. The HUMILITY to admit I need help. The VULNERABILITY to go first. The CONSISTENCY to show up. The WISDOM to find safe brothers. And the GRACE to extend to others what You've extended to me.

Help me remember: I'm not the only firefighter on duty. I have a CREW. And together, we're stronger. Together, we can resist. Together, we can carry each other. Together, we can SURVIVE.

I'm done fighting alone, Father. Help me build my crew.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Two are better than one"

Breathe out: "I will not fight alone"

(Ecclesiastes 4:9)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Am I isolating today? Or am I engaging community?

Brief Prayer: Father, I need brothers. Help me build community.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I experience COMMUNITY today (even in small ways)?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I isolate today or engage with others?

- ☐ I reached out to someone
- ☐ I was honest about a struggle
- ☐ I isolated and handled things alone
- ☐ I avoided vulnerability

What does my behavior today reveal?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I choose ISOLATION over COMMUNITY today?

What was I afraid of?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for believing the lie that I can do this alone. Forgive me for pride, fear, and isolation.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding community?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"I've been isolating because _____. The lie I've believed is _____.
The truth from Scripture is _____. This week I will build community by
_____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 27 ✓ - Learned isolation kills. I've been living like a lone wolf and it's exhausting.
Committing to reach out to _____ this week to build real community. Pray for
courage."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 28: "Service - The Outward Expression"

Brief Prayer:

Father, You've taught me prayer, Scripture, fasting, worship, Sabbath, and community. Tomorrow, teach me SERVICE—that the Christian life flows OUTWARD. Prepare my heart to GIVE, not just RECEIVE. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: CREW INTEGRITY

Theological Insight:

"It is not good for the man to be alone." – Genesis 2:18

That was true in the Garden. It's true now.

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You're not Superman. You're not invincible. You're not meant to do this alone.

You're a FIREFIGHTER.

And firefighters NEVER fight alone. NEVER.

Crew integrity means:

- You go in TOGETHER
- You work TOGETHER
- You come out TOGETHER

When you violate crew integrity, you DIE.

Same in life.

When you isolate:

- Secret sin grows
- You burn out
- You fall and stay down
- The enemy picks you off
- You lose perspective

You're not meant to be a LONE WOLF. You're meant to be part of a PACK.

Two are better than one.

When one falls, the other lifts him up.

When one is cold, the other keeps him warm.

When one is overpowered, the other fights WITH him.

A cord of THREE strands is not quickly torn apart.

You. Your brother. And JESUS.

That's the crew.

So this week, stop fighting alone.

Reach out to a potential brother. Text him. Set up a time. GO FIRST with vulnerability.

Build your crew. Because the battles are coming. And you can't survive them ALONE.

But WITH your brothers? You're UNSTOPPABLE.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NASB).

WOE to the one who falls ALONE.

Don't be that guy.

Build your crew.

40 STRONG - Day 27 Complete ✓

"A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:12, NASB)

40 STRONG - DAY 28

FOURTH SABBATH GATHERING: Equipping Celebration WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - Complete

MORNING: PERSONAL PREPARATION (Before the gathering)

Opening Prayer

Father, one week ago I was commissioned for the second half of this journey. Week 4, You've equipped me with the disciplines that sustain transformation—prayer, Scripture, fasting, worship, Sabbath, and community. I've learned these aren't religious obligations. They're WEAPONS. They're the practices that keep me connected to You, anchored in truth, and fighting alongside my brothers. Tonight, I gather to celebrate what You've taught me and to be commissioned for Week 5—where learning becomes DOING. Where theology becomes action. Where renewal becomes mission. Give me courage to testify to what You've done this week. Give me ears to hear my brothers' stories. Give me anticipation for what's ahead—not anxiety, but holy expectation. We're four weeks in. Two weeks remain. And I'm not the same man I was on Day 1. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRE-GATHERING REFLECTION (20-30 minutes alone)

Before you arrive tonight, review your journey through Week 4. You may be asked to share from these.

1. WEEK 4 REVIEW: EQUIPPING - Spiritual Disciplines (Days 22-27)

Day 22: Prayer - Conversation with God Day 23: Scripture - The Owner's Manual Day 24: Fasting - Hunger for God Day 25: Worship - Worth-ship Day 26: Sabbath - Rest in the Battle Day 27: Community - You Can't Do This Alone

Which day from Week 4 impacted you most?

What discipline did God challenge you to practice?

Which discipline felt most difficult? Why?

Which discipline brought the most breakthrough?

2. RECAP: WEEKS 1-3 (The Foundation)

Before Week 4, you completed:

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - You woke up from passivity **WEEK 2: REPENTANCE** - You confessed hidden sin **WEEK 3: RENEWAL** - You were rebuilt in your identity

How have the Week 4 disciplines SUSTAINED what God did in Weeks 1-3?

Examples:

- "Prayer helped me stay connected to God instead of drifting back to passivity"
- "Scripture kept me anchored in truth when lies tried to creep back"
- "Community kept me accountable when I was tempted to isolate again"

3. SPECIFIC VICTORIES THIS WEEK

Did you pray differently after Day 22?

☐ Yes - I prayed more consistently ☐ Yes - I prayed more honestly (not just religious words) ☐ Yes - I heard from God in new ways ☐ Not yet - I'm still learning

Share specifically:

Did you engage Scripture differently after Day 23?

☐ Yes - I read daily (or most days) ☐ Yes - I read relationally (not just information) ☐ Yes - God spoke to me through His Word ☐ Not yet - I'm still inconsistent

Share specifically:

Did you fast this week (Day 24)?

☐ Yes - from food ☐ Yes - from media/technology ☐ Yes - from another distraction ☐ No - I didn't try ☐ I tried but struggled

If you fasted, what happened?

Did you worship differently after Day 25?

☐ Yes - I worshiped as declaration, not just singing ☐ Yes - I worshiped in crisis (not just when things were good) ☐ Yes - I worshiped through my work/life ☐ Not yet - worship still feels awkward

Share specifically:

Did you Sabbath after Day 26?

☐ Yes - I took a full day of rest ☐ Yes - I took a partial Sabbath (half day, few hours) ☐ No - I couldn't stop working ☐ No - I felt too guilty to rest

If you did Sabbath, what changed?

Did you pursue community after Day 27?

☐ Yes - I reached out to a brother this week ☐ Yes - I went deeper with an existing friendship ☐ Yes - I confessed a struggle instead of hiding ☐ No - I'm still isolated

Share specifically:

4. ONGOING BATTLES

Week 4 equipped you with disciplines. But you're still in a battle.

Where did you struggle this week?

☐ Returned to old sin patterns (pornography, anger, etc.) ☐ Felt discouraged ("This isn't working") ☐ Got too busy to practice the disciplines ☐ Isolated from brothers ☐ Other:

Be specific:

How did you respond when you failed?

☐ I confessed to God and my brothers (fought back) ☐ I hid it and felt shame (went silent) ☐ I rationalized it ("I'm too busy/tired") ☐ I'm still processing it

5. THE TESTIMONY YOU'LL SHARE

If you were asked to share for 2-3 minutes tonight, what would you say?

Template:

"This week God taught me [which discipline]. The biggest breakthrough was [specific example]. I still struggle with [ongoing battle], but I'm learning [key truth about the discipline]."

Write a brief outline:

6. LOOKING AHEAD: WEEK 5 PREVIEW

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others (Days 29-35)

The shift: From **LEARNING** to **DOING**. From internal to external. From receiving to **GIVING**.

Days 29-35 Overview:

- **Day 29: Serve Your Family - Jerusalem (those closest)**
- **Day 30: Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea (your sphere of influence)**
- **Day 31: Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria (those you'd normally avoid)**
- **Day 32: Serve the Lost - Evangelism (sharing the Gospel)**
- **Day 33: Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry (the hurting)**
- **Day 34: Steward Your Resources - Generosity (time, money, gifts)**
- **Day 35: Fifth Sabbath Gathering - Engagement Stories**

What are you most excited about?

What are you most anxious about?

What's one specific way you plan to serve in Week 5?

GATHERING FORMAT (2.5 hours total)

ARRIVAL & FELLOWSHIP (15 minutes)

6:00 PM - 6:15 PM

Tonight's Atmosphere:

Different from previous gatherings:

- **Day 7: Reflective, preparing for the hard work ahead**
- **Day 14: Heavy, confessional, sacred silence**
- **Day 21: Celebratory, hopeful, halftime momentum**
- **Day 28: PRACTICAL, equipped, transitioning to action**

As men arrive:

- **Coffee, snacks available**
- **Conversations about the week (What worked? What was hard?)**
- **Energy of being EQUIPPED and ready**
- **Anticipation for moving from learning to DOING**
- **Instrumental music (steady, focused, purposeful)**

Facilitator role:

- **Welcome each man warmly**

- "Week 4 complete—you're EQUIPPED! Week 5 starts tomorrow—time to ENGAGE!"
- Create anticipation for the shift from internal to external focus
- Celebrate that they showed up and finished the week

Theological Insight:

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB).

Weeks 1-4 have been largely HEARING (awakening, confessing, renewing, equipping).

Week 5 is DOING.

Tonight we celebrate being equipped. Tomorrow we ACT.

OPENING: WORSHIP AS EQUIPPED WARRIORS (20 minutes)

6:15 PM - 6:35 PM

Tonight's worship theme: EQUIPPED AND READY

Not just celebration (like Day 21). Not just confession (like Day 14).

Tonight: Worship as WARRIORS who've been trained and are ready for battle.

Suggested songs:

- "Surrounded (Fight My Battles)"
- "God of Angel Armies"
- "Stand In Your Love"
- "Tremble"
- "The Roar" (Maverick City)
- "Defender"

Encourage:

- Bold declaration
- Confident worship
- Standing firm

- Eyes forward (not just reflecting back, but looking ahead)

Between songs, read these declarations (all men read together from screen):

After song 1:

"The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" (2 Corinthians 10:4, NASB).

[All respond loudly:] "We are EQUIPPED for battle!"

After song 2:

"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (Ephesians 6:13, NASB).

[All respond:] "We will STAND FIRM!"

After song 3:

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7, NASB).

[All respond:] "We have POWER, LOVE, and DISCIPLINE!"

Closing worship with this declaration (all men):

"We have been awakened. We have confessed. We have been renewed. We have been EQUIPPED. Now we are SENT. We will not sit on the sidelines. We will ENGAGE. We are 40 STRONG!"

[All shout:] "40 STRONG!"

TEACHING: EQUIPPED AND READY (20 minutes)

6:35 PM - 6:55 PM

Facilitator teaches:

"From Learning to Doing: The Shift to Engagement"

Brothers, Week 4 is complete.

You've been EQUIPPED.

And tonight, we celebrate what God has taught you this week.

But first, let me remind you where you've been.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR (Quick Recap)

WEEK 1: AWAKENING You woke up from passivity. You realized you'd been standing on the ridge—armed but not engaging.

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE You confessed hidden sin. Pornography. Anger. Pride. Greed. Relational failures. On Day 14, you brought it into the light.

WEEK 3: RENEWAL You were rebuilt in your identity. Son, not slave. Accepted, not performing. Forgiven, not condemned. Empowered, not powerless. Sent, not sitting. Beloved, not tolerated.

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING You learned the disciplines that **SUSTAIN** transformation.

And that's what we're celebrating tonight.

WEEK 4: THE WEAPONS YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN

This week wasn't about religious duty. It was about WEAPONS.

Spiritual disciplines are not burdens. They're TOOLS for the battle.

Here's what you learned:

DAY 22: PRAYER - Conversation with God

Prayer is not performance. It's DIALOGUE.

You learned:

- **God is eager to hear from you (not annoyed)**
- **Prayer is keying up the radio—the Incident Commander is ALWAYS listening**

- You don't need perfect words—you just need to **SHOW UP**

The weapon: Direct access to the God of the universe. Anytime. Anywhere.

The question: Did you pray this week? Really pray—not just religious words, but honest conversation?

DAY 23: SCRIPTURE - The Owner's Manual

Scripture is not a textbook. It's God's VOICE.

You learned:

- The Word is **LIVING** and **ACTIVE** (Hebrews 4:12)
- It's not optional—it's **LIFE** (Matthew 4:4)
- You read it relationally (to encounter God), not just informationally

The weapon: God's truth—sharper than any sword, exposing lies, revealing reality.

The question: Did you open the Book this week? Did you **HEAR** from God?

DAY 24: FASTING - Hunger for God

Fasting is not earning God's favor. It's declaring: "I want YOU more than comfort."

You learned:

- Fasting creates **SPACE** for God
- It's not just food—it's anything that distracts you from Him
- Fasting is **WARFARE** (it defeats the enemy's lie that you're in control)

The weapon: Removing distractions to focus on **GOD**. Controlled burn. Making room.

The question: Did you fast this week? From food? Media? Comfort? What happened?

DAY 25: WORSHIP - Worth-ship

Worship is not music. It's declaring God's **WORTH.**

You learned:

- Worship is based on TRUTH, not feelings
- Worship is WARFARE (when you worship in crisis, chains break)
- Worship is a LIFESTYLE (everything you do can be worship)

The weapon: Declaring what's TRUE about God when lies are screaming. Realignment.

The question: Did you worship this week? In crisis? Through your work? As declaration?

DAY 26: SABBATH - Rest in the Battle

Sabbath is not laziness. It's TRUST.

You learned:

- Rest is COMMANDED (Exodus 20:8)
- Your worth is not tied to your productivity
- When you rest, you declare: "God is in control, not me"

The weapon: Trust in action. Resisting the enemy's exhaustion strategy. Refueling.

The question: Did you Sabbath this week? Did you STOP and trust God?

DAY 27: COMMUNITY - You Can't Do This Alone

Community is not optional. It's SURVIVAL.

You learned:

- Isolation kills (Ecclesiastes 4:10—WOE to the one who falls alone)
- You need brothers who KNOW you, call you out, fight WITH you
- Crew integrity—you NEVER fight alone

The weapon: Brotherhood. Accountability. Shared burdens. Iron sharpening iron.

The question: Did you reach out to a brother this week? Did you go DEEP? Or did you isolate?

THE TRUTH: YOU'VE BEEN EQUIPPED

Brothers, you now have:

✅ **Prayer - Direct line to God** ✅ **Scripture - God's voice and truth** ✅ **Fasting - Space and focus** ✅ **Worship - Declaration and warfare** ✅ **Sabbath - Rest and trust** ✅ **Community - Brothers in the fight**

You are EQUIPPED.

Not perfectly. Not completely. But SUFFICIENTLY.

You have everything you need to fight the battles ahead.

THE SHIFT: FROM LEARNING TO DOING

Here's what's happening tomorrow.

Weeks 1-4 have been largely INTERNAL:

- **Awakening your heart**
- **Confessing your sin**
- **Renewing your identity**
- **Learning the disciplines**

Weeks 5-6 are EXTERNAL:

- **Engaging in mission**
- **Serving others**
- **Making disciples**

The shift:

From RECEIVING to GIVING.

From LEARNING to DOING.

From INTERNAL transformation to EXTERNAL mission.

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT (Days 29-35)

Tomorrow, Week 5 begins: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others

You've been renewed. You've been equipped. Now you're SENT.

The days:

Day 29: Serve Your Family - Jerusalem Your wife. Your kids. The people closest to you. Service starts at HOME.

Day 30: Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea Your coworkers. Your neighbors. The people in your daily sphere.

Day 31: Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria The people you'd normally avoid. The uncomfortable. The "other."

Day 32: Serve the Lost - Evangelism Actually sharing the Gospel. Not just living it— SPEAKING it.

Day 33: Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry The hurting. The marginalized. The forgotten.

Day 34: Steward Your Resources - Generosity Your time. Your money. Your gifts. Using what God gave you for His kingdom.

Day 35: Fifth Sabbath Gathering - Engagement Stories You'll gather again and share what God did when you actually SERVED.

THE CALL: ACT ON WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB).

You've HEARD for four weeks.

Now it's time to DO.

Here's the challenge:

Week 5 will feel different.

It's not MORE learning. It's APPLICATION.

It's not MORE knowledge. It's OBEDIENCE.

It's not MORE theology. It's MISSION.

And that's HARDER.

Because:

- It requires **COURAGE** (serving people is risky)
- It requires **SACRIFICE** (it'll cost you time, comfort, pride)
- It requires **FAITH** (you'll step out not knowing the outcome)
- It requires **HUMILITY** (you'll serve people who may not appreciate it)

But this is what you were MADE for.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

You were created for GOOD WORKS.

Not to earn salvation. But to LIVE OUT the salvation you've received.

Week 5 is where you walk in what God prepared for you.

THE WARNING: THE ENEMY ISN'T DONE

Brothers, I need to be straight with you.

The enemy is NOT happy about what's happened in this room over four weeks.

You've been awakened. Confessed. Renewed. Equipped.

And now you're about to ENGAGE.

Expect attacks:

- Temptation to fall back into old sin
- Discouragement ("Week 5 is too hard, I can't do this")
- Distraction (suddenly everything is urgent and you're too busy to serve)
- Division (conflict with brothers, isolation)

But remember:

***"Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4, NASB).**

You have:

- The **SPIRIT** inside you (Day 18)

- The FATHER's affection over you (Day 20)
- Your BROTHERS beside you (Day 27)
- The DISCIPLINES sustaining you (Week 4)

You are NOT alone. You are NOT unprepared. You are EQUIPPED.

THE CHARGE

Here's my charge to you:

FINISH STRONG.

You've come four weeks. Two weeks remain.

Don't quit NOW.

Don't coast through Week 5 because "you've already done the hard work."

Week 5 IS the hard work. It's where theology becomes ACTION.

So:

- Show up daily (even when you don't feel like it)
- Serve sacrificially (it'll cost you something)
- Stay connected to your brothers (don't isolate)
- Walk by the Spirit (moment by moment dependence)
- Expect God to move (He's not done with you yet)

And when you gather on Day 35, you'll have STORIES to tell.

Not just "I learned this." But "I DID this. And God showed up."

Closing Teaching:

"So then, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NASB).

Steadfast. Don't quit.

Immovable. Don't drift.

Always abounding. Don't coast.

Your work is NOT in vain.

God SEES it. He HONORS it. He USES it.

Now—let's hear what God did this week.

TESTIMONY TIME (45-60 minutes)

6:55 PM - 7:55 PM

Facilitator:

"We're going to spend the next hour hearing from brothers about Week 4. This isn't about perfection. It's about PRACTICE. What happened when you actually tried these disciplines?"

Format:

- **2-3 minutes per person (strictly timed)**
- **Volunteers can share (no pressure)**
- **Focus on PRACTICE, not theory**
- **Celebrate breakthroughs AND struggles (both are real)**

Template (optional, for men who need structure):

"This week God taught me [which discipline]. The biggest breakthrough was [specific example]. I still struggle with [ongoing battle], but I'm learning [key truth]."

Facilitator opens:

"Who wants to share? What discipline did God use to meet you this week?"

[Allow silence. Someone will speak.]

After Each Testimony:

Facilitator (or another man):

"Thank you, brother. We celebrate what God is doing in you."

Then: Brief applause/affirmation from the group

No commentary, no fixing, no teaching—just receive and celebrate.

Types of Testimonies to Expect:

PRAYER STORIES (Day 22):

- "I prayed every morning this week—first time I've been consistent in years"
- "I prayed honestly for the first time—told God I was angry"
- "God answered a specific prayer I've been praying for months"

SCRIPTURE STORIES (Day 23):

- "I read Scripture daily this week using the S.O.A.P. method"
- "God spoke to me through a passage I'd read 100 times before"
- "I memorized a verse to fight temptation—and it worked"

FASTING STORIES (Day 24):

- "I fasted from food for 24 hours—and heard God more clearly than I have in years"
- "I fasted from social media all week—realized how addicted I was"
- "I tried to fast but failed—but I learned my dependence on comfort"

WORSHIP STORIES (Day 25):

- "I worshiped in my truck during a crisis instead of panicking"
- "I worshiped through my work this week—changed my whole perspective"
- "I raised my hands in worship for the first time ever (and it wasn't weird)"

SABBATH STORIES (Day 26):

- "I took a full Sabbath for the first time in 10 years—and the world didn't fall apart"
- "I rested instead of working—and realized how much I tie my worth to productivity"
- "I couldn't Sabbath—too much guilt. But I see why I need to"

COMMUNITY STORIES (Day 27):

- "I called a brother when I was tempted—instead of hiding"
- "I went deeper with a friend this week—shared something I've never told anyone"
- "I reached out to start building community—it's scary but necessary"

BATTLE STORIES (Ongoing Struggles):

- "I fell into pornography this week. But I confessed immediately instead of hiding for weeks like I used to."
 - "I got angry at my kids again. But I apologized—which I've never done before."
 - "I didn't do any of the disciplines well. But I showed up to this gathering instead of quitting."
-

Facilitator Throughout:

- Keep time (gently redirect if someone goes over 3 minutes)
 - Watch for men who seem like they want to share but are hesitating
 - Model vulnerability if needed
 - Celebrate BOTH victories AND struggles
-

If No One Shares Initially:

Facilitator can share first:

"Let me start. This week God taught me [specific discipline]. Here's what happened: [brief testimony]."

Or call on someone you know is prepared:

"[Name], I know this week was significant for you. Would you share?"

Closing Testimony Time:

After 45-60 minutes (or when it feels complete):

"Brothers, what we've just heard is PROOF that these disciplines WORK. Not because we're perfect at them. But because GOD meets us when we practice them. These are the weapons that sustain transformation. Let's give God praise."

[Spontaneous applause/praise]

TRANSITION TO COMMUNION (5 minutes)

7:55 PM - 8:00 PM

Facilitator:

"We've celebrated what God has taught us this week. Now we remember the FOUNDATION of everything we've learned."

"Prayer works because Jesus opened the way to the Father."

"Scripture is alive because it testifies about Jesus."

"Fasting creates space for Jesus."

"Worship declares Jesus' worth."

"Sabbath rest is possible because Jesus finished the work."

"Community exists because Jesus made us ONE BODY."

"All of it—EVERY discipline, EVERY breakthrough, EVERY victory—rests on ONE thing:"

"The CROSS."

"So before we're commissioned for Week 5, we take communion. We remember WHY we can engage in mission. Because HE already completed His."

COMMUNION: REMEMBERING THE FINISHED WORK (15 minutes)

8:00 PM - 8:15 PM

Setup:

- **Bread and cup on central table**
- **Men come forward individually**
- **Take elements, return to seats**

- Eat and drink together after all have received

Scripture Reading:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, NASB).

THE BREAD:

"Come forward and take the bread. This is Jesus' body—broken so you could be **WHOLE**. Broken so you could be **FORGIVEN**. Broken so you could be **EMPOWERED**. Every discipline you practiced this week is possible because of **THIS**."

"As you eat this bread, remember: Your access to God cost Him **EVERYTHING**."

[Men come forward, take bread, return to seats.]

After all have taken bread:

"Together, we eat and remember."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your body was broken so we could approach the Father with confidence. We receive Your life in us. Amen."

[All eat.]

THE CUP:

"Now come forward and take the cup. This is Jesus' blood—the new covenant. The **PROMISE** that you are forgiven, cleansed, adopted, sealed, empowered, sent."

"As you drink this cup, declare: 'I am His. I am **SENT**.'"

[Men come forward, take cup, return to seats.]

After all have taken cup:

"Together, we drink and declare our covenant with Christ."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your blood was poured out for us. We are Yours. We are forgiven. We are SENT. Amen."

[All drink.]

After Communion:

Facilitator:

"Brothers, you have been equipped by the DISCIPLINES. You have been purchased by the BLOOD. You have been empowered by the SPIRIT. Now you are SENT."

"Week 5 begins tomorrow. And you're ready."

COMMISSIONING FOR WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT (15 minutes)

8:15 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitator:

"Stand up. We're going to commission each other for Week 5—where we move from LEARNING to DOING."

[All men stand in a circle]

Reading of the Commission:

Facilitator reads, all men repeat line by line:

"We have been awakened from passivity."

[All repeat]

"We have confessed our hidden sins."

[All repeat]

"We have been renewed in our identity."

[All repeat]

"We have been equipped with spiritual disciplines."

[All repeat]

"Now we are SENT to serve."

[All repeat]

"We will serve our families."

[All repeat]

"We will serve our neighbors."

[All repeat]

"We will serve the lost and broken."

[All repeat]

"We will not just LEARN—we will DO."

[All repeat]

"We are 40 STRONG."

[All shout together: "40 STRONG!"]

The Charge (Facilitator reads):

"Brothers, tomorrow Week 5 begins: ENGAGEMENT.

You've learned the disciplines. Now you'll PRACTICE them while SERVING.

You'll pray FOR the people you serve.

You'll let Scripture GUIDE your service.

You'll fast to create SPACE for God to work.

You'll worship WHILE you serve.

You'll rest AFTER you serve.

You'll serve WITH your brothers in community.

Week 5 is where it all comes together.

Day 29: You'll serve your FAMILY. Your wife. Your kids. The people closest to you. Service starts at home.

Day 30: You'll serve your WORKPLACE and NEIGHBORHOOD. Your sphere of influence.

Day 31: You'll serve the DIFFERENT and OUTCAST. The uncomfortable. The people you'd normally avoid.

Day 32: You'll serve the LOST. You'll share the Gospel—not just live it, but SPEAK it.

Day 33: You'll serve the BROKEN. Compassion ministry. Meeting real needs.

Day 34: You'll STEWARD YOUR RESOURCES. Generosity with time, money, and gifts.

Day 35: You'll gather HERE again and share your stories.

This will require:

- **COURAGE** (serving is risky)
- **SACRIFICE** (it'll cost you)
- **FAITH** (you'll step out not knowing the outcome)
- **HUMILITY** (you'll serve people who may not appreciate it)

But you have everything you need:

- **The Father's love** (Day 20)
- **The Spirit's power** (Day 18)
- **Your brothers** (Day 27)
- **The disciplines** (Week 4)

So go. SERVE. And when you gather on Day 35, you'll have stories of what God did when you actually PUT FEET TO YOUR FAITH."

Blessing (Ephesians 3:20-21):

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

[All respond: "Amen!"]

Final Declaration (All men together, loudly):

"We are sons of God, equipped with spiritual weapons, sent on mission, and empowered by the Spirit. We will not just LEARN—we will DO. We will SERVE. We are 40 STRONG!"

[All shout: "40 STRONG!"]

Closing Prayer:

"Father, thank You for equipping us this week. Thank You for the disciplines that sustain us. Tomorrow we ENGAGE. Give us courage to serve. Give us eyes to see the needs around us. Give us strength to sacrifice. Give us joy in the doing. We are Yours. Use us. In Jesus' name, Amen."

FELLOWSHIP & CLOSING (15 minutes)

8:30 PM - 8:45 PM

Facilitator:

"Don't rush out. Pray for each other. Commit to serving TOGETHER in Week 5 if possible. Make plans to check in. Week 5 starts tomorrow. We'll gather again on Day 35 to share what God did."

Encourage:

- **Men praying for each other in small groups**
- **Making plans to serve TOGETHER (family BBQ, neighborhood project, etc.)**
- **Accountability commitments for the week ahead**
- **Celebrating what God has done**

Provide:

- **Printed overview of Days 29-35 (Week 5 preview)**
- **Reminder of next gathering date (Day 35)**
- **Serving ideas/opportunities list**

- Contact info for brothers

AFTER THE GATHERING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you get home, journal:

1. WHAT GOD DID TONIGHT:

What stood out from the testimonies?

What did I feel during communion?

What did I experience during the commissioning?

2. MY TESTIMONY:

Did I share tonight? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: How did it feel?

If no: Why didn't I? What held me back?

3. LOOKING AHEAD TO WEEK 5:

What am I most excited about?

What am I most nervous about?

What's ONE specific way I will serve this week?

Day 29 (Family): _____

Day 30 (Workplace/Neighborhood): _____

Day 31 (Different/Outcast): _____

Day 32 (Lost/Evangelism): _____

Day 33 (Broken/Compassion): _____

Day 34 (Resources/Generosity): _____

4. TOMORROW:

Day 29 begins Week 5: Engagement - Serving Others

Brief Prayer:

Father, Week 4 equipping is complete. Tomorrow Week 5 begins—putting faith into ACTION. Give me courage to SERVE sacrificially. Help me see the needs around me and respond with Your love. I'm equipped. I'm ready. Send me. Amen.

FACILITATOR NOTES (For Leaders Running the Gathering)

Pre-Gathering Preparation:

1. ENVIRONMENT:

- Purposeful atmosphere (not just celebration, but commissioning)
- Steady, focused music
- Food/snacks available
- Energy of being EQUIPPED and READY
- Vision casting for Week 5

2. MATERIALS:

- Communion elements
- Week 5 overview handouts

- Serving ideas/opportunities list
- Next gathering date reminders (Day 35)

3. TESTIMONY PREPARATION:

- Identify 2-3 men beforehand who practiced disciplines and can share
 - Be ready to model vulnerability about YOUR practice (not perfection)
 - Have timer ready for 3-minute limit
-

During Gathering:

TONE:

- Day 7: Reflective, preparing
- Day 14: Heavy, confessional
- Day 21: Celebratory, halftime
- Day 28: EQUIPPED and READY—transitioning to ACTION

This is the bridge from INTERNAL (Weeks 1-4) to EXTERNAL (Weeks 5-6).

Energy should be: "We've learned. Now we DO."

TESTIMONY MANAGEMENT:

- Keep strict time (3 minutes max)
 - Celebrate BOTH victories AND struggles
 - Don't let it become theoretical—keep it practical
 - Watch for men who need encouragement to share
-

COMMISSIONING:

- This should feel ACTIVATING, not overwhelming
- Emphasis: "You're EQUIPPED—now GO"
- Create anticipation for Week 5 service

- Send them out **CONFIDENT** and **READY**
-

After Gathering - Leadership Debrief:

Within 24-48 hours:

1. **Celebrate:** What breakthroughs happened with the disciplines?
 2. **Follow-up:** Text/call men who shared struggles
 3. **Prepare:** Week 5 service opportunities—are they clear?
 4. **Pray:** For each man by name as they **ENGAGE**
-

CLOSING THOUGHT: EQUIPPED AND SENT

Theological Insight:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB).

Brother, tonight you celebrated being EQUIPPED.

You heard stories of men PRACTICING the disciplines:

- **Praying consistently**
- **Reading Scripture relationally**
- **Fasting to create space**
- **Worshiping in crisis**
- **Sabbathing and trusting**
- **Building community**

And you're not the same man you were seven days ago.

One week ago (Day 21):

- **You were at halftime—renewed but not yet equipped**

Today (Day 28):

- You're **EQUIPPED** with weapons for the battle

You have:

- Prayer - direct access to God
- Scripture - God's voice and truth
- Fasting - space and focus
- Worship - declaration and warfare
- Sabbath - rest and trust
- Community - brothers in the fight

You are **READY**.

But here's the truth:

The second half shifts **NOW**.

Weeks 1-4 were **INTERNAL**:

- Awakening
- Repentance
- Renewal
- Equipping

Weeks 5-6 are **EXTERNAL**:

- Engagement (serving others)
- Commissioning (making disciples)

Tomorrow the shift happens.

From **LEARNING** to **DOING**.

From **THEOLOGY** to **ACTION**.

From **RECEIVING** to **GIVING**.

Week 5 will be **HARDER** because it requires:

- Courage (serving people is risky)
- Sacrifice (it'll cost you)

- Faith (you won't see all the results)
- Humility (people may not appreciate it)

But you're EQUIPPED.

You're not going into Week 5 EMPTY.

You're going FULL:

- Full of truth (Week 3 renewal)
- Full of weapons (Week 4 equipping)
- Full of the Spirit (Day 18)
- Full of brothers (Day 27)

So finish strong.

Two weeks remain.

Don't quit NOW.

Don't coast through Week 5 thinking "I've already done the hard part."

Week 5 IS the hard part. It's where FAITH becomes WORKS.

Show up daily. Serve sacrificially. Stay connected. Walk by the Spirit.

And when you gather on Day 35, you'll have STORIES.

Not just "I learned this."

But "I DID this. And God SHOWED UP."

You're equipped, brother.

Now GO.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB).

You've HEARD for four weeks.

Now it's time to DO.

40 STRONG - Day 28 Complete ✓

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING - COMPLETE ✓

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NASB)

Week 4 Disciplines Learned: ✓ Prayer - Conversation with God ✓ Scripture - The Owner's Manual ✓ Fasting - Hunger for God ✓ Worship - Worth-ship ✓ Sabbath - Rest in the Battle ✓ Community - You Can't Do This Alone

EQUIPPED AND READY

40 STRONG - DAY 29

SERVE YOUR FAMILY - JERUSALEM WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others

MORNING: THE FIRST MISSION FIELD (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is the day I've been dreading. Not because I don't love my family. But because I know the truth: I serve everyone ELSE better than I serve THEM. I volunteer at church while my wife gets my leftovers. I'm patient with coworkers while my kids get my anger. I'm present for meetings while my family gets the back of my phone. I show up for strangers while my wife feels invisible. I give my best to the world while my family gets my scraps. And if I'm brutally honest, Father, it's easier to serve STRANGERS than to serve my FAMILY. Strangers don't see my failures. Strangers don't know my patterns. Strangers appreciate my help and move on. But my family? They see EVERYTHING. They know when I'm faking it. They live with the gap between my PUBLIC persona and my PRIVATE reality. They experience the man I am when no one's watching. And that terrifies me. Because I'm NOT the man at home that I pretend to be in public. I'm more patient with people at church than with my wife. I'm more engaged with people at work than with my kids. I'm more servant-hearted with acquaintances than with the people who matter most. That's hypocrisy, Father. And You see it. My family feels it. And I can't hide from it anymore. So here's my confession: I've been serving in JERUSALEM last, when You said it should be FIRST. I've been trying to save the world while losing my family. I've been building a ministry while neglecting my home. I've been pursuing a platform while my wife is drowning. I've been chasing significance while my kids are starving for my attention. Forgive me, Father. Today, teach me that service starts at HOME. Not at church. Not in public. At HOME. Teach me to serve my WIFE like Christ served the church—sacrificially, intentionally, consistently. Teach me to serve my KIDS—present, engaged, leading them spiritually, not just providing for them financially. Teach me that my family is not an INTERRUPTION to my ministry—they ARE my ministry. Help me understand that if I'm not serving well at home, my public service is WORTHLESS. And give me the courage to actually DO what You're calling me to today. Not just acknowledge it. ACT on it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Serving Your Family

Read these slowly. Let the weight of each passage settle.

THE ACTS 1:8 PATTERN - JERUSALEM FIRST:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

JERUSALEM first. Not last. FIRST.

Your home. Your family. The people CLOSEST to you.

If you skip Jerusalem to reach "the remotest part of the earth," you've missed the point.

HUSBANDS: LOVE YOUR WIVES:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27, NASB).

LOVE your wives. Not tolerate. Not coexist with. LOVE.

JUST AS CHRIST loved the church. Sacrificially. Intentionally. Completely.

GAVE HIMSELF UP. It cost Him EVERYTHING.

FATHERS: BRING THEM UP:

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

Do NOT provoke. Don't crush their spirits with harshness, criticism, or absence.

DO bring them up. ACTIVELY. INTENTIONALLY.

In DISCIPLINE (structure, boundaries, training).

In INSTRUCTION of the Lord (teaching them WHO God is).

IF YOU DON'T PROVIDE FOR YOUR OWN:

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

WORSE than an unbeliever.

Not just financially. EMOTIONALLY. SPIRITUALLY. RELATIONALLY.

If you're not PROVIDING for your family, your faith is QUESTIONABLE.

LIVE WITH YOUR WIFE IN AN UNDERSTANDING WAY:

"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7, NASB).

LIVE WITH her. Not just coexist in the same house.

In an UNDERSTANDING way. Know her. Learn her. Study her.

SHOW HER HONOR. Publicly and privately.

SO THAT your prayers will not be HINDERED.

Neglect your wife = God doesn't hear your prayers.

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER:

"Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3, NASB).

HONOR. Not just when they're easy to honor. HONOR.

This is the FIRST commandment with a PROMISE attached.

THE HYPOCRITE WHO SERVES PUBLICLY BUT FAILS PRIVATELY:

"For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5, NASB).

If you can't MANAGE your household, you're DISQUALIFIED from leading the church.

Service starts at HOME. If you're failing there, your public ministry is INVALID.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT STARTS WITH LOVE:

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NASB).

Love GOD first.

Love your NEIGHBOR second.

And your CLOSEST neighbors? Your FAMILY.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Service starts at HOME.

Not at church. Not in public. Not where people see.

At HOME. Where your wife sees you. Where your kids know the REAL you.

How are you REALLY doing at home?

Teaching: The Difference Between Public Service and Private Faithfulness

Here's the lie most men believe about serving their family:

"I work hard to provide for them. I show up. I'm not abusive. I go to church with them. That's enough. The real ministry is OUT THERE—serving at church, helping others, making an impact. My family? They're fine. They have what they need."

Translation: You've turned your FAMILY into an AFTERTHOUGHT and PUBLIC SERVICE into your PRIORITY.

And when your family becomes an afterthought, you've FAILED.

Theological Insight:

***"The man who is careless about his family is worse than an unbeliever. He may claim to love God, but if he doesn't love the people God gave him to care for, his claim is empty."* – Charles Spurgeon (paraphrase)**

Public Service vs. Private Faithfulness: What's the Difference?

PUBLIC SERVICE (The Counterfeit):

What it looks like:

- You volunteer at church regularly
- You help people publicly
- You're known as a "servant"
- You give time to ministry
- But at HOME, your wife is exhausted, unsupported, invisible
- At HOME, your kids barely know you
- At HOME, you're checked out, irritable, unavailable

What it feels like:

- Fulfilling (people appreciate you)
- Validating (you're making a difference)
- Visible (people SEE your service)
- Easy (strangers don't know your failures)

What it produces:

- A PUBLIC reputation as a servant
- A PRIVATE reality of neglect
- Hypocrisy (you're NOT the man at home that you are in public)
- Bitterness in your wife (she's drowning while you're serving others)
- Distance from your kids (they see Dad serve everyone but them)

PRIVATE FAITHFULNESS (The Real Thing):

What it looks like:

- You serve your WIFE first (helping, listening, pursuing her heart)
- You serve your KIDS consistently (present, engaged, leading spiritually)
- You prioritize HOME over public ministry
- No one sees it. No one applauds it. But GOD sees it.
- And your FAMILY experiences it.

What it feels like:

- Unglamorous (no one's clapping)
- Costly (it requires SACRIFICE)
- Daily (it never stops)
- Hidden (no recognition)

What it produces:

- A PRIVATE reality of faithfulness
- A wife who feels loved, honored, supported
- Kids who know Dad is present, engaged, FOR them
- Integrity (you're the SAME man at home that you are in public)
- A family that THRIVES because Dad is FAITHFUL

The Chart:

PUBLIC SERVICE

Serves at church

Volunteers for ministry

Helps strangers

Visible, applauded

"Look at what I do"

Wife gets leftovers

PRIVATE FAITHFULNESS

Serves at home FIRST

Prioritizes family

Helps wife and kids FIRST

Hidden, unseen

"No one sees this but God"

Wife gets your BEST

PUBLIC SERVICE

Kids get scraps

Hypocrisy

Reputation management

Easy (strangers don't know you)

PRIVATE FAITHFULNESS

Kids get your PRESENCE

Integrity

Character formation

Hard (family sees EVERYTHING)

Which column describes your **ACTUAL** life?

Most men want to be in the **RIGHT** column. But they **LIVE** in the **LEFT** column.

Why?

Why You Struggle to Serve Your Family (Or Avoid It)

REASON #1: IT'S EASIER TO SERVE STRANGERS THAN FAMILY

The reality: Strangers **APPRECIATE** your service. They thank you. They don't see your failures.

Your **FAMILY**? They see **EVERYTHING**. They know your patterns. They know when you're faking it.

The truth: If you're more patient with **STRANGERS** than with your **WIFE**, you're not servant-hearted. You're **IMAGE-MANAGING**.

If you're more engaged with **COWORKERS** than with your **KIDS**, you're not building the kingdom. You're building your **REPUTATION**.

When you serve strangers but neglect family, you're a **HYPOCRITE**.

REASON #2: PUBLIC SERVICE GETS RECOGNITION. PRIVATE FAITHFULNESS DOESN'T.

The lie: "If I volunteer at church, people will see me as a servant. If I just serve my family, no one notices."

The truth: **GOD** notices. And that's what matters.

"Take care not to practice your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1, NASB).

Public service for recognition = NO REWARD from God.

Private faithfulness unseen by men = FULL REWARD from God.

When you serve for recognition, you're serving YOURSELF, not your family.

REASON #3: YOU'RE EXHAUSTED FROM WORK AND HAVE NOTHING LEFT

The excuse: "I work all day. I'm tired. My family should understand—I'm doing this FOR them."

The truth: Your wife didn't sign up to be a SINGLE PARENT while you're married to your JOB.

Your kids didn't ask for a DAD who provides financially but is ABSENT emotionally.

Work is NOT your excuse to neglect your family.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

PROVIDE. Not just money. TIME. PRESENCE. EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT.

When you use work as an excuse to check out at home, you've FAILED.

REASON #4: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO SERVE YOUR WIFE

The struggle: "I don't know what she needs. When I try to help, I do it wrong. It's easier to just not try."

The truth: ASK HER.

"Honey, how can I serve you today? What would help you most?"

Then DO IT. Even if it's not what you'd prefer. Even if it feels awkward.

"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way" (1 Peter 3:7, NASB).

UNDERSTANDING. That requires LEARNING her. KNOWING her. ASKING her.

When you don't know how to serve her, it's because you haven't ASKED.

REASON #5: YOU THINK "PROVIDING FINANCIALLY" = SERVING

The lie: "I work hard. I provide. The bills are paid. The house is nice. That's my job. She should be grateful."

The truth: Financial provision is **NOT** the same as **SERVING**.

Your wife doesn't just need a **PAYCHECK**. She needs a **PARTNER**.

Your kids don't just need a **HOUSE**. They need a **DAD** who's **PRESENT**.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NASB).

Christ didn't just **PROVIDE** for the church. He **GAVE HIMSELF**.

When you think providing = serving, you've **MINIMIZED** your calling.

REASON #6: YOUR FAMILY SEES THE REAL YOU (And That's Uncomfortable)

The fear: Your family knows:

- When you're faking it
- When you're angry
- When you're selfish
- When you're checked out

They see the **GAP** between your public persona and your private reality.

And that's **UNCOMFORTABLE**.

The truth: That discomfort is **CONVICTION**.

God is exposing the **HYPOCRISY** so you can **REPENT** and **CHANGE**.

When your family makes you uncomfortable, it's because they're showing you who you **REALLY** are.

The Firefighter's Perspective: The First Structure You Enter

In firefighting, there's a principle: You don't skip the first structure to get to the second.

If there are two houses on fire, you don't drive PAST the first house to save the second.

You start with the CLOSEST. The FIRST. Then you move outward.

That's Jerusalem, brother.

Acts 1:8 says: "You shall be My witnesses both in JERUSALEM, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

JERUSALEM first. Not last. FIRST.

Your HOME. Your FAMILY. The people CLOSEST to you.

Here's what happens when firefighters violate this principle:

They skip the first structure because it looks "too far gone" or "not worth saving."

They rush to the second structure because it's "more important" or "has more value."

And people DIE in the first structure because NO ONE entered.

Same with your family.

You skip JERUSALEM (your home) because:

- **It's "too messy"**
- **It's "not glamorous"**
- **Public ministry feels "more important"**

And your FAMILY suffers. Your WIFE drowns. Your KIDS starve for your attention.

Because you drove PAST the first structure to save the second.

Here's the truth:

If you're not faithful in JERUSALEM, your ministry in "Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth" is INVALID.

"For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5, NASB).

You can't SKIP your family to serve the church.

You can't NEGLECT your wife to build a ministry.

You can't IGNORE your kids to reach the lost.

Service starts at HOME. Period.

What Serving Your Family Actually Looks Like

Let's get PRACTICAL. Here's what serving your family actually involves:

FOR MARRIED MEN: SERVING YOUR WIFE

Your wife is your FIRST ministry. Not the church. Not your career. HER.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NASB).

Christ GAVE HIMSELF for the church. Sacrificially. Fully. Intentionally.

1. SERVE HER BY LISTENING (Without Fixing)

What it looks like:

- **She shares her day. You PUT DOWN YOUR PHONE.**
- **She shares her struggles. You LISTEN without immediately solving.**
- **She shares her feelings. You VALIDATE them instead of dismissing them.**

Why it matters: Most women don't need you to FIX everything. They need to be HEARD.

Practical: Tonight, ask her: "How was your day?" Then LISTEN. Don't interrupt. Don't fix. Just HEAR her.

2. SERVE HER BY HELPING (Without Being Asked)

What it looks like:

- **You see dishes in the sink. You WASH THEM.**
- **You see laundry piling up. You HELP.**
- **You see she's overwhelmed. You JUMP IN.**

Why it matters: Serving without being asked shows: "I SEE you. I notice your load. I'm WITH you."

Practical: Today, do ONE thing around the house WITHOUT being asked. Dishes. Laundry. Vacuuming. Pick up the kids. Whatever helps.

3. SERVE HER BY LEADING SPIRITUALLY

What it looks like:

- You initiate prayer TOGETHER (not just at meals)
- You lead family devotions
- You model repentance (you apologize when you're wrong)
- You pursue God FIRST so you can lead her well

Why it matters: Spiritual leadership is NOT domination. It's SERVICE. You go first. You model. You lead by EXAMPLE.

Practical: Tonight, ask her: "Can we pray together before bed?" Then LEAD that prayer.

4. SERVE HER BY PURSUING HER HEART

What it looks like:

- You DATE your wife (not just after you're married—KEEP dating her)
- You ask about her DREAMS, not just her TO-DO list
- You pursue HER, not just physical intimacy
- You make her feel WANTED, not just needed

Why it matters: Marriage isn't just COEXISTENCE. It's PURSUIT. You don't stop pursuing after the wedding.

Practical: This week, plan a DATE. Even if it's just coffee. Pursue her HEART.

5. SERVE HER BY HONORING HER PUBLICLY

What it looks like:

- You speak **WELL** of her to others (not jokes at her expense)
- You **DEFEND** her when others criticize
- You make her feel **VALUED** in front of others

Why it matters: "Show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7, NASB).

HONOR. Not just privately. **PUBLICLY.**

Practical: This week, **BRAG** about your wife to someone. Tell a friend what you appreciate about her.

FOR FATHERS: SERVING YOUR KIDS

Your kids are your **SECOND** ministry. Not your career. Not your hobbies. **THEM.**

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

1. SERVE THEM BY BEING PRESENT (Not Just Physically There)

What it looks like:

- You're **HOME**, and you're **ENGAGED** (not just on your phone)
- You **PLAY** with them (get on the floor, build Legos, throw the ball)
- You're **AVAILABLE** emotionally (not just providing financially)

Why it matters: Kids don't need a **PERFECT** dad. They need a **PRESENT** dad.

Practical: Tonight, put your **PHONE AWAY** for 30 minutes. **PLAY** with your kids. Be **FULLY** present.

2. SERVE THEM BY TEACHING THEM ABOUT GOD

What it looks like:

- You read the Bible **WITH** them (not just send them to Sunday School)
- You **PRAY** with them at bedtime

- You answer their questions about God **HONESTLY**
- You model what it looks like to follow Jesus

Why it matters: "Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

BRING THEM UP. You're responsible for their spiritual formation.

Practical: Tonight, **PRAY** with your kids before bed. Even if it's awkward. Even if you don't know what to say. **DO IT.**

3. SERVE THEM BY DISCIPLINING IN LOVE (Not Anger)

What it looks like:

- You set **BOUNDARIES** (because you love them)
- You discipline to **TRAIN**, not to punish out of anger
- You're **CONSISTENT** (not harsh one day, permissive the next)
- You explain **WHY** (not just "because I said so")

Why it matters: "Do not provoke your children to anger" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

Harsh, inconsistent, angry discipline CRUSHES their spirit.

Practical: If you've been harsh, **APOLOGIZE**. Model repentance. Show them what it looks like to admit you were wrong.

4. SERVE THEM BY AFFIRMING THEM

What it looks like:

- You **SAY** "I'm proud of you" (not just when they succeed)
- You **NOTICE** their efforts, not just their results
- You **SPEAK LIFE** over them (not criticism)

Why it matters: Your words shape their **IDENTITY**. Affirm them. Build them up.

Practical: Today, tell each of your kids **ONE** thing you're proud of. Be **SPECIFIC**.

5. SERVE THEM BY PROTECTING THEM

What it looks like:

- You protect them **PHYSICALLY** (safe home, safe environment)
- You protect them **EMOTIONALLY** (you don't expose them to adult conflict)
- You protect them **SPIRITUALLY** (you guard what influences them)

Why it matters: You're the **SHEPHERD** of your home. Shepherds **PROTECT**.

Practical: This week, evaluate: What influences (media, friends, activities) do I need to **PROTECT** my kids from?

FOR SINGLE MEN OR MEN WITHOUT KIDS: SERVING YOUR FAMILY

You still have a FAMILY to serve:

1. YOUR PARENTS:

- Honor them (even if they're difficult)
- Call them regularly
- Help them practically
- Forgive them if needed

2. YOUR SIBLINGS:

- Stay connected
- Be present in their lives
- Serve them practically

3. YOUR CHURCH FAMILY:

- Serve the body of Christ
- Invest in younger believers
- Build spiritual family

4. YOUR FUTURE FAMILY (if single):

- Prepare **NOW** to be a godly husband/father

- **Build character in private so you're ready for public responsibility**
-

The Hard Truth: Your Family Knows the Real You

Here's what makes serving your family HARDER than serving strangers:

Strangers see your BEST.

Your family sees your WORST.

Strangers see:

- **Your patience**
- **Your kindness**
- **Your servant heart**
- **Your best behavior**

Your family sees:

- **Your anger**
- **Your selfishness**
- **Your laziness**
- **Your hypocrisy**

And that's UNCOMFORTABLE.

But here's the truth:

Your family is the TEST of your character.

If you're patient with STRANGERS but harsh with your WIFE, you're not patient. You're PERFORMING.

If you're kind to COWORKERS but irritable with your KIDS, you're not kind. You're IMAGE-MANAGING.

Your family reveals WHO YOU REALLY ARE.

And God uses them to REFINE you.

"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, NASB).

Your family SHARPENS you. Through conflict. Through daily friction. Through seeing your failures.

Don't RUN from that. EMBRACE it.

Let your family expose your sin so you can REPENT.

Let them challenge you so you can GROW.

Let them see the REAL you so you can become the man God's calling you to be.

The Warning: Don't Serve the World While Losing Your Family

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36, NASB).

Variation: What does it profit a man to save the world, but lose his FAMILY?

You can:

- **Build a ministry**
- **Serve at church**
- **Help the poor**
- **Make an impact**

But if your WIFE is drowning, you've FAILED.

If your KIDS don't know you, you've FAILED.

If you're serving everyone ELSE while neglecting JERUSALEM, you've FAILED.

Don't be the pastor with a THRIVING church and a BROKEN home.

Don't be the volunteer with a STELLAR reputation and a NEGLECTED wife.

Don't be the servant-leader at WORK and the CHECKED-OUT dad at home.

Service starts at JERUSALEM. Your HOME. Your FAMILY.

If you're not faithful THERE, your ministry ELSEWHERE is INVALID.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from public service to private faithfulness)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. WHERE ARE YOU REALLY SERVING?

Be **BRUTALLY** honest. Where do you give your **BEST**?

- ☐ At church (volunteering, serving)
- ☐ At work (giving my all to my career)
- ☐ Helping others publicly
- ☐ At **HOME** with my wife and kids

If you're **NOT** giving your best at **HOME**, where **IS** it going?

2. PUBLIC SERVICE VS. PRIVATE FAITHFULNESS:

Which describes your **ACTUAL** life?

- ☐ Public service (I serve at church/work but neglect home)
- ☐ Private faithfulness (I prioritize family **FIRST**)
- ☐ Mix of both

What would your **WIFE** say? Your **KIDS**?

3. THE GAP:

Is there a **GAP** between the man you are **IN PUBLIC** and the man you are **AT HOME**?

- ☐ Yes—I'm more patient/kind/servant-hearted in public
- ☐ Sometimes—I'm inconsistent
- ☐ No—I'm the same at home and in public

If **YES**, what does that gap reveal?

SECTION 2: SERVING YOUR WIFE (If Married)

4. HOW ARE YOU SERVING YOUR WIFE?

Rate yourself HONESTLY (1=Failing, 10=Thriving):

Listening (without fixing): ____/10

Helping (without being asked): ____/10

Leading spiritually: ____/10

Pursuing her heart: ____/10

Honoring her publicly: ____/10

Which area needs the MOST work?

5. WHAT DOES SHE ACTUALLY NEED?

When's the last time you ASKED your wife: "How can I serve you?"

Will you ask her TODAY?

☐ **Yes—I'll ask tonight**

☐ **I'll try**

☐ **I'm afraid to ask (because I know the answer)**

If you're AFRAID to ask, what does that tell you?

6. ARE YOU GIVING HER YOUR BEST OR YOUR LEFTOVERS?

After work, do you:

- ☐ Come home exhausted and check out (phone, TV, etc.)
- ☐ Come home and ENGAGE with your family

On weekends, do you:

- ☐ Prioritize hobbies, sports, personal time
- ☐ Prioritize family time, serving your wife, being present

Be honest: Is your wife getting your BEST or your SCRAPS?

7. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP:

Do you lead your wife spiritually?

- ☐ Yes—I initiate prayer, lead devotions, model repentance
- ☐ Sometimes—I try but I'm inconsistent
- ☐ No—she leads spiritually, not me
- ☐ No—neither of us leads

If you're NOT leading, what's stopping you?

- ☐ I don't know how
- ☐ I'm too ashamed of my own failures
- ☐ I'm too lazy/busy
- ☐ Other: _____

Will you START leading this week?

- ☐ Yes—I'll pray with her tonight
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ Not ready
-

SECTION 3: SERVING YOUR KIDS (If a Father)

8. HOW ARE YOU SERVING YOUR KIDS?

Rate yourself HONESTLY (1=Failing, 10=Thriving):

Being present (not just physically there): ____/10

Teaching them about God: ____/10

Disciplining in love (not anger): ____/10

Affirming them: ____/10

Protecting them: ____/10

Which area needs the MOST work?

9. ARE YOU PRESENT?

When you're home, are you REALLY there?

- ☐ **Yes—I'm engaged, playing, listening**
- ☐ **Sometimes—I'm there but distracted (phone, work, etc.)**
- ☐ **No—I'm checked out**

What's ONE thing you'll do TODAY to be FULLY present?

Example: Put phone away for 30 minutes and PLAY with them.

10. ARE YOU TEACHING THEM ABOUT GOD?

Do you pray WITH your kids?

- ☐ **Yes—regularly (daily or near-daily)**
- ☐ **Occasionally**
- ☐ **Rarely**
- ☐ **Never**

If you DON'T pray with them, will you START tonight?

- ☐ **Yes—I'll pray with them at bedtime**

- ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I don't know how
-

11. ARE YOU AFFIRMING THEM?

When's the last time you told your kids: "I'm proud of you"?

Will you tell them TODAY?

- ☐ Yes—I'll tell each kid one thing I'm proud of
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I struggle with this
-

12. HAVE YOU APOLOGIZED?

Have you been harsh, angry, or absent with your kids?

- ☐ Yes—I've been harsh/angry
- ☐ Yes—I've been absent (physically or emotionally)
- ☐ No—I've been consistent and loving

If YES, will you APOLOGIZE to them?

- ☐ Yes—I'll apologize today
- ☐ I should, but I'm afraid/proud
- ☐ I don't think I need to

Remember: Apologizing models REPENTANCE. It shows them what it looks like to admit you're wrong.

SECTION 4: THE PRIORITY SHIFT

13. JERUSALEM FIRST:

Acts 1:8: "You shall be My witnesses both in JERUSALEM, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Are you serving in JERUSALEM (home) FIRST? Or are you skipping it to reach "the remotest part of the earth"?

- ☐ I'm serving Jerusalem first (family is my priority)
- ☐ I'm skipping Jerusalem (I serve at church/work but neglect home)
- ☐ I'm trying to balance both

If you're SKIPPING Jerusalem, what needs to change?

14. WHAT WILL YOU CUT?

To serve your family FIRST, what do you need to CUT from your schedule?

- ☐ Extra church commitments
- ☐ Volunteer responsibilities
- ☐ Work hours (saying no to overtime, side projects)
- ☐ Hobbies (golf, gaming, sports)
- ☐ Social media / screen time

Be specific: What will you cut THIS WEEK?

SECTION 5: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

15. ONE THING FOR YOUR WIFE (if married):

What's ONE way you'll serve your wife TODAY?

- ☐ Listen to her (put down phone, give full attention)
- ☐ Help around the house (dishes, laundry, cooking)
- ☐ Pray with her
- ☐ Plan a date

☐ Honor her publicly (brag about her to someone)

☐ Other: _____

When will you do it?

Time: _____

16. ONE THING FOR YOUR KIDS (if a father):

What's ONE way you'll serve your kids TODAY?

☐ Be fully present (no phone for 30 minutes, play with them)

☐ Pray with them at bedtime

☐ Affirm them (tell each one thing you're proud of)

☐ Apologize if you've been harsh

☐ Teach them something about God

☐ Other: _____

When will you do it?

Time: _____

17. ONE THING FOR YOUR FAMILY (if single or no kids):

What's ONE way you'll serve YOUR family TODAY?

☐ Call my parents

☐ Help a sibling

☐ Spend time with extended family

☐ Prepare for future family (build character now)

☐ Other: _____

When will you do it?

SECTION 6: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

18. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "Providing financially = serving"
- ☐ "Public service is more important than private faithfulness"
- ☐ "My family should understand—I'm doing this FOR them"
- ☐ "I'm too tired from work to serve at home"
- ☐ "I don't know how to serve my wife/kids"
- ☐ "My family is FINE—they don't need more from me"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

19. THE TRUTH ABOUT SERVING YOUR FAMILY:

Complete this sentence:

"Serving my family is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Serving my family is not optional. It's my FIRST ministry."
- "Serving my family is not just providing financially. It's being PRESENT."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

My family is my FIRST ministry.

Service starts at JERUSALEM—my home, my wife, my kids.

I will not serve the world while neglecting those closest to me.

My wife deserves my BEST, not my leftovers.

My kids need me PRESENT, not just providing.

I will listen to my wife. I will help without being asked. I will lead spiritually.

I will be present with my kids. I will teach them about God. I will affirm them.

I will not be a hypocrite—serving publicly while failing privately.

My family sees the REAL me. And I will be the same man at home that I am in public.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

I will be FAITHFUL in Jerusalem. My family is my mission field.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been serving everyone ELSE better than I serve my FAMILY. I've given my best to strangers while my wife gets my leftovers. I've been present for others while my kids get my scraps. I've volunteered at church while neglecting JERUSALEM—my own home. I've been a hypocrite—patient with strangers, harsh with my wife. Kind to coworkers, irritable with my kids. Engaged in public, checked out at home. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: My family is my FIRST ministry. Not the church. Not my career. Not public service. My FAMILY. Service starts at JERUSALEM. And if I'm not faithful at home, my public ministry is WORTHLESS.

Teach me to serve my wife like Christ served the church—sacrificially, intentionally, consistently. Help me LISTEN to her. HELP her without being asked. LEAD her spiritually. PURSUE her heart. HONOR her publicly.

Teach me to serve my kids. Help me be PRESENT—not just physically there, but emotionally engaged. Help me teach them about You. Help me discipline in love, not anger. Help me affirm them. Help me protect them.

Forgive me for the GAP between who I am in public and who I am at home. Close that gap. Make me the SAME man everywhere. A man of INTEGRITY.

I'm starting today, Father. One act of service. One moment of presence. One step toward faithfulness in Jerusalem.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Service starts at home"

Breathe out: "Jerusalem first"

(Acts 1:8)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I served my family today? Or just everyone else?

Brief Prayer: Father, help me serve JERUSALEM first—my family.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

How did God show up in my family today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I serve my family today? (Honestly)

☐ **Yes—I was present, helpful, engaged**

☐ **Somewhat—I tried but was distracted**

☐ No—I gave them leftovers while serving others

If I DID serve, how did it feel?

If I DIDN'T, what got in the way?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I give my BEST to others while giving my SCRAPS to my family today?

What does that reveal?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for neglecting my family today. Forgive me for serving others while ignoring those closest to me.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding my family?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I served my family by _____ (or didn't serve them, and here's why: _____). The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will serve JERUSALEM first by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 29 ✓ - Learned service starts at HOME, not in public. I've been giving my family leftovers. Today I served by _____ (specific action). Tomorrow I'll serve them by _____. Pray I'm faithful in Jerusalem."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 30: "Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I served (or started serving) JERUSALEM—my home, my family. Tomorrow I'll expand to JUDEA—my workplace, my neighborhood. Help me see the needs around me and respond with Your love. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: THE FIRST STRUCTURE

Theological Insight:

"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" – Mark 8:36 (NASB)

What does it profit a man to save the world, but LOSE his family?

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You can build a ministry. You can serve at church. You can make an impact.

But if your WIFE is drowning, you've FAILED.

If your KIDS don't know you, you've FAILED.

If you're serving everyone ELSE while neglecting JERUSALEM, you've FAILED.

Service starts at HOME.

Not at church. Not in public. Not where people see and applaud.

At HOME. Where your wife sees the REAL you. Where your kids know if you're ACTUALLY following Jesus or just PERFORMING.

You don't skip the first structure to save the second.

JERUSALEM first. Then Judea. Then Samaria. Then the remotest part of the earth.

Your FAMILY is the first structure. Enter THERE.

If you're faithful in JERUSALEM, God will SEND you to Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

But if you're NOT faithful at home, your ministry elsewhere is INVALID.

So today, serve your FAMILY.

Not perfectly. Not with all the answers. Just FAITHFULLY.

Listen to your wife. Help around the house. Pray with her. Pursue her heart.

Be present with your kids. Play with them. Teach them about God. Affirm them.

And when you fail (because you WILL), APOLOGIZE. Model repentance.

Your family is your first mission field.

Don't skip it to reach the world.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

PROVIDE. Not just financially. EMOTIONALLY. SPIRITUALLY. RELATIONALLY.

Your family is your FIRST responsibility.

Don't fail them.

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Day 1

"You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB)

SERVICE STARTS AT JERUSALEM—YOUR HOME.

40 STRONG - DAY 30

SERVE YOUR WORKPLACE/NEIGHBORHOOD - JUDEA WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others

MORNING: THE MISSION FIELD YOU WALK PAST (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, yesterday I faced the truth about serving my family first. Jerusalem. Today, the mission field expands to JUDEA—my workplace, my neighborhood, the people I see EVERY DAY but barely notice. And if I'm honest? I've been BLIND to them. I drive past my neighbors every morning and never wave. I work alongside people 40+ hours a week and never ask how they're really doing. I see the same cashier, the same barista, the same coworker every single day—and I treat them like FURNITURE. Invisible. Convenient. Transactional. I use them for what they provide (my coffee, my paycheck, my groceries) and move on. I've never learned their names. I've never asked about their lives. I've never offered to help. I've never shared the Gospel. They're just... THERE. Background noise in MY story. And that's sin, Father. Because You didn't put them in my path by ACCIDENT. You stationed me in this workplace for a REASON. You placed me in this neighborhood on PURPOSE. These aren't random people. They're MY MISSION FIELD. The people You've given me proximity to. The people I see more than anyone except my family. And I've been treating work like it's just about a PAYCHECK—clock in, survive, clock out, repeat. I've been treating my neighborhood like it's just a PLACE I SLEEP—drive in, close the garage, ignore everyone, drive out. I've been so focused on "reaching the world" that I've IGNORED the world right in front of me. The coworker who's going through a divorce. The neighbor who just lost his job. The cashier who looks exhausted every time I see her. The guy at the gym who's always alone. I see them. But I don't SEE them. I'm too busy. Too focused on myself. Too consumed with MY problems to notice THEIRS. Forgive me, Father. Today, teach me that my workplace is not just a job—it's a MISSION FIELD. Teach me that my neighborhood is not just a ZIP code—it's JUDEA, the next ring of Your Kingdom expansion. Teach me to work with EXCELLENCE, not just competence—because my work is WITNESS. Teach me to see PEOPLE, not just coworkers, neighbors, or service providers. Teach me that PROXIMITY equals RESPONSIBILITY. If You've placed someone in my path, it's MY job to serve them. Open my eyes today, Father. Help me SEE the people I've been walking past. Help me NOTICE their needs. And give me the courage to actually DO something about it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Serving Your Sphere of Influence

Read these slowly. Let them challenge your blindness.

THE ACTS 1:8 PROGRESSION - JUDEA NEXT:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

After JERUSALEM (family), comes JUDEA (your sphere of influence).

Your workplace. Your neighborhood. The people you encounter DAILY.

WHATEVER YOU DO, WORK FOR THE LORD:

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Colossians 3:23-24, NASB).

WHATEVER you do. Not just "ministry." WORK. Your JOB.

Do it HEARTILY. Not half-heartedly. Not grudgingly. HEARTILY.

As for the LORD. Not for your boss. Not for a paycheck. For CHRIST.

YOUR WORK IS WITNESS:

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need" (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, NASB).

WORK with your hands. Do your job WELL.

So that you BEHAVE PROPERLY toward outsiders. Your work ethic is WITNESS.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF:

"The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31, NASB).

Your NEIGHBOR. Not just the people you LIKE. The people who live NEAR you.

Love them AS YOURSELF. Practically. Sacrificially.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN - PROXIMITY CREATES RESPONSIBILITY:

"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him" (Luke 10:33-34, NASB).

The Samaritan CAME UPON the wounded man. Proximity.

He SAW him. He didn't look away.

He FELT COMPASSION. He let it move him.

He ACTED. He didn't just feel bad—he DID something.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN:

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NASB).

Your GOOD WORKS are meant to be SEEN. Not for YOUR glory. For GOD's glory.

Your workplace. Your neighborhood. These are stages for the LIGHT.

AMBASSADORS IN EVERY PLACE:

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20, NASB).

You are an AMBASSADOR. Everywhere you go.

At work. In your neighborhood. At the coffee shop. The gym. The grocery store.

God is making His appeal THROUGH you.

DO GOOD TO ALL PEOPLE:

"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10, NASB).

While we have OPPORTUNITY. Every day is an opportunity.

Do good to ALL PEOPLE. Not just Christians. ALL.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Think about the people you encounter EVERY DAY:

- **Coworkers**
- **Neighbors**
- **The barista who makes your coffee**
- **The cashier at the grocery store**
- **The guy you see at the gym**
- **The people in your apartment building**

How many of them do you actually KNOW?

How many have you SERVED?

Teaching: The Difference Between Occupation and Mission

Here's the lie most men believe about work and neighborhood:

"Work is just a job. I show up, do my work, get paid, go home. That's it. My neighborhood? I don't know those people. We wave occasionally. That's enough. Real ministry happens at CHURCH, not at work or in my neighborhood. This is just... life. Not mission."

Translation: You've turned JUDEA into NEUTRAL TERRITORY instead of recognizing it as YOUR MISSION FIELD.

And when Judea becomes neutral territory, you WASTE your influence.

Theological Insight:

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. For most men, that place is not 'full-time ministry.' It's their

workplace, their neighborhood, their daily sphere of influence." – Frederick Buechner (paraphrase)

Occupation vs. Mission: What's the Difference?

OCCUPATION (Just a Job):

What it looks like:

- You work for a **PAYCHECK** (that's the only reason you're there)
- You do the **MINIMUM** to keep your job
- You avoid coworkers (just trying to survive)
- You complain constantly (about your boss, your job, your company)
- You separate "work" from "faith" (Sunday = Christian, Monday-Friday = secular)
- You see your job as an **INTERRUPTION** to real ministry

What it feels like:

- Draining (just trying to make it to Friday)
- Meaningless (it's just a job)
- Frustrating (you're stuck here)
- Disconnected from God (He's not part of your workday)

What it produces:

- Mediocre work (because you don't care)
 - Wasted influence (no one sees Christ in you)
 - Burnout (work feels pointless)
 - Compartmentalized faith (God is for Sundays, not Mondays)
-

MISSION (Kingdom Work):

What it looks like:

- You work for GOD'S GLORY (the paycheck is secondary)
- You work with EXCELLENCE (because you represent Christ)
- You engage coworkers (they're your mission field)
- You serve sacrificially (going above and beyond)
- You integrate faith and work (Monday-Friday is MINISTRY)
- You see your job as ASSIGNED by God for Kingdom purposes

What it feels like:

- Purposeful (even mundane work has meaning)
- Fulfilling (you're serving God through your work)
- Strategic (you're positioned here for a reason)
- Connected to God (He's WITH you at work)

What it produces:

- Excellent work (because you're serving Christ)
- Powerful witness (people see something different in you)
- Kingdom impact (lives changed through your influence)
- Integrated faith (every day is sacred, not just Sunday)

The Chart:

OCCUPATION	MISSION
Work for paycheck	Work for God's glory
Do minimum	Work with excellence
Avoid coworkers	Engage as mission field
Complain constantly	Serve joyfully
Sunday = sacred, Monday = secular Every day is sacred	
Work interrupts ministry	Work IS ministry

OCCUPATION

Isolated from faith

Meaningless grind

Survival mode

"Just a job"

MISSION

Integrated with faith

Kingdom assignment

Mission mode

"Divine appointment"

Which column describes your ACTUAL approach to work?

Most men WANT to see work as mission. But they TREAT it as just occupation.

Why?

Why You Struggle to Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood

REASON #1: YOU SEE WORK AS "SECULAR" (Not Ministry)

The lie: "Real ministry happens at CHURCH. Work is just... work. It's secular. It's not spiritual."

The truth: There is NO DIVIDE between sacred and secular if you're doing EVERYTHING for God's glory.

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23, NASB).

WHATEVER you do. Spreadsheets. Emails. Manual labor. Customer service. ALL of it is worship if done for God.

When you separate "sacred" from "secular," you waste 40+ hours a week.

REASON #2: YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE (Not Engage)

The reality: Work is HARD. You're stressed. You're overwhelmed. You're just trying to get through the day.

Engaging coworkers? Serving sacrificially? That feels like TOO MUCH.

The truth: Survival mode is NOT the Christian life.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, NASB).

ABUNDANT life. Not survival.

When you're in survival mode, you can't see the mission field around you.

REASON #3: YOU DON'T SEE YOUR COWORKERS AS PEOPLE (Just Obstacles)

The reality: Your coworkers are:

- **Annoying**
- **Incompetent**
- **Drama-filled**
- **In your way**

So you AVOID them. You do your work and go home.

The truth: Your coworkers are IMAGE-BEARERS. They're eternal souls. They're LOST or BROKEN or HURTING.

And God put you NEXT TO THEM for a reason.

When you see coworkers as obstacles, you miss the mission.

REASON #4: YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS (And You're Fine With That)

The reality: You've lived in your neighborhood for YEARS and don't know your neighbors' NAMES.

You wave. You nod. But you've never had a real conversation.

The truth: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31, NASB).

Your NEIGHBOR. The people who live NEAR you.

Not "love them from a distance." LOVE them. Which requires KNOWING them.

When you don't know your neighbors, you can't love them.

REASON #5: YOU'RE AFRAID OF AWKWARDNESS (So You Don't Engage)

The fear: "If I try to serve, it'll be awkward. If I share my faith, they'll think I'm weird. If I get to know my neighbors, what if they're annoying? It's easier to just... not."

The truth: The Gospel is INHERENTLY awkward. Jesus was awkward. The cross is offensive.

If you avoid awkwardness, you avoid MISSION.

When comfort is your priority, mission becomes impossible.

REASON #6: YOU'RE WAITING FOR THE "RIGHT TIME" (Which Never Comes)

The excuse: "I'll serve my coworkers when I have more time."

"I'll get to know my neighbors when things settle down."

"I'll share the Gospel when the opportunity presents itself."

The truth: WHILE WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, do good (Galatians 6:10).

The opportunity is NOW. Not someday. NOW.

When you wait for the "right time," you miss TODAY's opportunities.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Serving the Community You're Stationed In

In firefighting, you're not just stationed at a fire station. You're stationed IN A COMMUNITY.

That community becomes YOUR responsibility.

Here's how it works:

You live at the station for 24 hours. You eat there. Sleep there. Work there.

But you also SERVE there.

You're not just waiting for fires. You're:

- **Visiting schools (teaching fire safety)**
- **Checking smoke detectors in homes**
- **Helping elderly residents change batteries**
- **Participating in community events**

- Being **PRESENT** and **VISIBLE**

Why?

Because proximity creates **RESPONSIBILITY**.

If you're **STATIONED** in a community, you **SERVE** that community.

Same with your workplace and neighborhood.

You're not **RANDOMLY** at your job. God **STATIONED** you there.

You're not **RANDOMLY** in your neighborhood. God **PLACED** you there.

You spend 40+ hours a week at work. That's **YOUR** fire station.

You live in your neighborhood every day. That's **YOUR** community.

Proximity = Responsibility.

God didn't put you there by **ACCIDENT**. He **ASSIGNED** you there.

So **SERVE** there.

What Serving Your Workplace Actually Looks Like

Let's get **PRACTICAL**. Here's how to serve at work:

1. WORK WITH EXCELLENCE (Not Just Competence)

What it looks like:

- You do **MORE** than required (go above and beyond)
- You show up **ON TIME** (or early)
- You do quality work (not cutting corners)
- You have a good attitude (not complaining)

Why it matters: Your **WORK ETHIC** is **WITNESS**.

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23, NASB).

If you're a lazy, complaining Christian, you're a **TERRIBLE** witness.

Practical: This week, do **ONE THING** with **EXCELLENCE** that you'd normally do half-heartedly.

2. SERVE YOUR COWORKERS (Not Just Tolerate Them)

What it looks like:

- You **HELP** without being asked
- You cover for someone who's struggling
- You bring coffee/donuts for the team
- You celebrate others' successes (not jealous)

Why it matters: "Through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13, NASB).

Serving coworkers = living out the Gospel.

Practical: This week, help a coworker with **THEIR** task (even if it's not your job).

3. LISTEN TO YOUR COWORKERS (Really Listen)

What it looks like:

- You ask: "How are you **REALLY** doing?"
- You **LISTEN** to their struggles (without fixing or preaching)
- You remember what they share and follow up

Why it matters: Most people are **LONELY**. They're **HURTING**. And no one **LISTENS**.

When you listen, you show them they **MATTER.**

Practical: This week, have a **REAL** conversation with one coworker. Ask about their life. **LISTEN**.

4. BE HONEST AND TRUSTWORTHY (Integrity in All Things)

What it looks like:

- You don't lie (even "little" lies)
- You don't steal (time, supplies, credit)

- You keep your word (if you say you'll do it, you DO IT)
- You don't gossip

Why it matters: "Whoever walks in integrity walks securely" (Proverbs 10:9, NASB).

Your INTEGRITY (or lack thereof) is WITNESS.

Practical: This week, when tempted to cut a corner or tell a "white lie," DON'T. Choose integrity.

5. SPEAK TRUTH (When Appropriate)

What it looks like:

- You don't participate in crude jokes or gossip
- You gently correct false narratives
- You share your faith WHEN ASKED (and be ready to answer)

Why it matters: "Always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15, NASB).

People are WATCHING. When they ask WHY you're different, be READY.

Practical: If someone asks why you're different (positive attitude, integrity, kindness), tell them about JESUS.

6. PRAY FOR YOUR WORKPLACE

What it looks like:

- You pray for your BOSS (even if difficult)
- You pray for COWORKERS by name
- You pray for the CULTURE to shift
- You pray for OPPORTUNITIES to share the Gospel

Why it matters: "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men" (1 Timothy 2:1, NASB).

Prayer CHANGES things. And it changes YOU.

Practical: This week, pray for 3 coworkers BY NAME daily.

7. INVITE COWORKERS INTO YOUR LIFE

What it looks like:

- You invite them to lunch (not just eating at your desk)
- You invite them to church (if appropriate)
- You include them in your life outside work

Why it matters: Relationships are built outside the TRANSACTIONAL.

Practical: This week, invite ONE coworker to lunch or coffee.

What Serving Your Neighborhood Actually Looks Like

Let's get PRACTICAL. Here's how to serve your neighbors:

1. LEARN THEIR NAMES (Start There)

What it looks like:

- You introduce yourself (if you haven't)
- You learn their names and REMEMBER them
- You learn about their families

Why it matters: You can't LOVE someone you don't KNOW.

Practical: This week, introduce yourself to ONE neighbor you've never spoken to.

2. BE PRESENT AND VISIBLE (Not Hidden in Your House)

What it looks like:

- You spend time OUTSIDE (mowing lawn, sitting on porch, walking)
- You wave and TALK (not just drive in and close the garage)
- You're AVAILABLE (not always rushing)

Why it matters: Proximity creates opportunity.

Practical: This week, spend 30 minutes OUTSIDE where neighbors can see you. Be approachable.

3. HELP WITHOUT BEING ASKED

What it looks like:

- You see a neighbor struggling with groceries—you **HELP**
- You see their trash can fell over—you **FIX IT**
- You see they need yard work—you **OFFER**

Why it matters: "Let us do good to all people" (Galatians 6:10, NASB).

Serve without expectation.

Practical: This week, do ONE THING to help a neighbor WITHOUT being asked.

4. INVITE THEM OVER (Hospitality)

What it looks like:

- You host a BBQ and invite neighbors
- You invite them for dinner
- You create space for relationship

Why it matters: "Be hospitable to one another without complaint" (1 Peter 4:9, NASB).

Hospitality builds COMMUNITY.

Practical: This month, host something simple (BBQ, coffee, game night) and invite neighbors.

5. MEET NEEDS PRACTICALLY

What it looks like:

- Elderly neighbor needs help with technology—you **HELP**
- Single mom neighbor needs lawn mowed—you **MOW IT**

- Neighbor is sick—you bring a meal

Why it matters: Practical service = tangible love.

Practical: This week, identify **ONE NEED** in your neighborhood and **MEET IT**.

6. PRAY FOR YOUR NEIGHBORS

What it looks like:

- You pray for each neighbor **BY NAME**
- You pray as you walk your neighborhood
- You ask God to open doors for the Gospel

Why it matters: Prayer prepares the soil for the Gospel.

Practical: This week, walk your neighborhood and **PRAY** for each house you pass.

7. SHARE THE GOSPEL (When Appropriate)

What it looks like:

- You build **RELATIONSHIP** first
- You share your **STORY** (what Jesus has done in you)
- You invite them to **CHURCH**
- You're ready to explain the Gospel when asked

Why it matters: "How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14, NASB).

They need to HEAR. You're the messenger.

Practical: As you build relationships, be **READY** to share Jesus when the opportunity comes.

The Hard Truth: Proximity = Responsibility

Here's the uncomfortable reality:

If God has placed someone in your PATH, you're RESPONSIBLE for them.

Not responsible for their SALVATION. Only God saves.

But responsible for:

- **WITNESSING** to them
- **SERVING** them
- **LOVING** them
- **PRAYING** for them

The Good Samaritan didn't walk by the wounded man saying, "Someone else will help him."

He SAW him. He STOPPED. He HELPED.

You see your coworkers 40+ hours a week.

You see your neighbors every day.

That's not RANDOM. That's ASSIGNMENT.

"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people" (Galatians 6:10, NASB).

WHILE WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY.

You have opportunity EVERY DAY.

The coworker at the desk next to you.

The neighbor across the street.

The cashier you see every week.

God put them in your path. Will you SERVE them? Or walk by?

The Warning: Don't Wait for "Full-Time Ministry"

Many men think: "Someday I'll do REAL ministry. Right now, I just have this job. This neighborhood. But SOMEDAY, I'll serve God full-time."

Here's the truth:

If you're not FAITHFUL in Judea (your workplace, your neighborhood), God won't SEND you to "the remotest part of the earth."

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10, NASB).

Your WORKPLACE is the "little thing." If you're not faithful THERE, you won't be faithful ANYWHERE.

Your neighborhood is the training ground. If you won't serve the people you SEE every day, you won't serve anyone.

Don't despise your CURRENT assignment while dreaming of a FUTURE one.

Serve WHERE YOU ARE. God will expand from there.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from occupation to mission)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR WORKPLACE?

Be BRUTALLY honest. Do you see your job as:

- ☐ **Just a paycheck (occupation)**
- ☐ **A mission field (Kingdom assignment)**
- ☐ **An interruption to real ministry**
- ☐ **A place I'm stuck until something better comes**
- ☐ **A divine assignment from God**

Explain:

2. OCCUPATION OR MISSION?

Which describes your ACTUAL approach to work?

- ☐ **Occupation (do minimum, survive, complain, disconnect faith)**
- ☐ **Mission (work with excellence, engage coworkers, integrate faith)**
- ☐ **Mix of both**

What would your COWORKERS say about you?

3. DO YOU KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS?

How many neighbors can you name?

☐ **0-2**

☐ **3-5**

☐ **6-10**

☐ **More than 10**

When's the last time you had a REAL conversation with a neighbor?

SECTION 2: SERVING YOUR WORKPLACE

4. YOUR WORK ETHIC:

Rate yourself HONESTLY (1=Failing, 10=Thriving):

Working with excellence (not just competence): ___/10

Serving coworkers (not just tolerating them): ___/10

Listening to coworkers (really hearing them): ___/10

Being honest and trustworthy (integrity): ___/10

Speaking truth when appropriate: ___/10

Praying for your workplace: ___/10

Which area needs the MOST work?

5. DO YOUR COWORKERS SEE CHRIST IN YOU?

If your coworkers were asked: "What makes [your name] different?"—what would they say?

- ☐ "Nothing—they're just like everyone else"
- ☐ "They work hard and have a good attitude"
- ☐ "They're kind and helpful"
- ☐ "They're a Christian, and it shows"
- ☐ "I don't know—we don't really talk"

Be honest: Does your LIFE at work point to Jesus?

6. HAVE YOU SHARED THE GOSPEL AT WORK?

Have you ever shared the Gospel with a coworker?

- ☐ Yes—I've shared my faith openly
- ☐ Sort of—they know I'm a Christian but I haven't explained the Gospel
- ☐ No—I'm afraid of being weird/getting in trouble
- ☐ No—no one's ever asked

If NO, what's stopping you?

- ☐ Fear of rejection
- ☐ Fear of HR/professionalism concerns
- ☐ Don't know how
- ☐ Haven't built relationship yet
- ☐ Other: _____

7. WHO NEEDS YOUR HELP AT WORK?

Which coworker is:

- Struggling personally? _____
- Going through a hard time? _____
- Isolated or lonely? _____
- Overworked and overwhelmed? _____

What's ONE way you can SERVE them this week?

SECTION 3: SERVING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

8. DO YOU ACTUALLY KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS?

List your neighbors' NAMES (as many as you can):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

If you can't name at least 3, you don't KNOW your neighbors.

9. ARE YOU PRESENT OR HIDDEN?

When you're home, are you:

- ☐ Present and visible (outside, approachable, engage neighbors)
- ☐ Hidden (drive in, close garage, stay inside)
- ☐ Mix of both

How would your neighbors describe you?

- ☐ "Friendly, approachable, helpful"
- ☐ "Keeps to themselves, but nice when we see them"
- ☐ "Don't really know them"

10. HAVE YOU SERVED YOUR NEIGHBORS?

When's the last time you:

- Helped a neighbor without being asked? _____
- Invited a neighbor over? _____
- Had a real conversation with a neighbor? _____
- Prayed for a neighbor by name? _____

If you can't remember, you're NOT serving your neighborhood.

11. WHO NEEDS YOUR HELP IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Which neighbor:

- Is elderly and needs help? _____
- Is a single parent struggling? _____
- Is new to the neighborhood? _____
- Seems lonely or isolated? _____

What's ONE way you can SERVE them this week?

SECTION 4: PROXIMITY = RESPONSIBILITY

12. THE PEOPLE GOD PUT IN YOUR PATH:

Who do you see REGULARLY but have never really engaged?

- ☐ The barista at your coffee shop
- ☐ The cashier at the grocery store
- ☐ The person at the gym you see every day
- ☐ The coworker at the desk next to you
- ☐ The neighbor across the street

☐ Other: _____

Pick ONE. What's their NAME?

If you don't know, will you LEARN it this week?

☐ Yes

☐ I'll try

☐ Not ready

13. THE GOOD SAMARITAN TEST:

When you see someone in need (coworker struggling, neighbor overwhelmed, stranger needing help), do you:

☐ Stop and help (like the Samaritan)

☐ Keep walking (like the priest and Levite)

☐ Notice but rationalize why you can't help

Be honest: How often do you WALK BY instead of STOPPING?

SECTION 5: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

14. ONE THING FOR YOUR WORKPLACE:

What's ONE way you'll serve at work TODAY?

☐ Work with excellence on a task I'd normally half-do

☐ Help a coworker without being asked

☐ Have a real conversation (ask "How are you REALLY doing?")

☐ Pray for 3 coworkers by name

☐ Invite a coworker to lunch/coffee

☐ Other: _____

When will you do it?

15. ONE THING FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:

What's ONE way you'll serve your neighborhood THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Introduce myself to a neighbor I don't know
- ☐ Spend 30 minutes outside (be visible and approachable)
- ☐ Help a neighbor without being asked
- ☐ Invite a neighbor over
- ☐ Meet a practical need
- ☐ Walk the neighborhood and PRAY
- ☐ Other: _____

When will you do it?

Day: _____

16. ONE PERSON YOU'LL ENGAGE:

Who is ONE PERSON (coworker, neighbor, regular stranger) you'll intentionally ENGAGE this week?

Name: _____

What will you do?

SECTION 6: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

17. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "Work is secular—real ministry is at church"
- ☐ "I'm just trying to survive—I can't engage others"

☐ "My coworkers are obstacles, not mission field"

☐ "I don't know my neighbors, and that's fine"

☐ "Engaging others will be awkward"

☐ "I'll serve when I have more time"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

18. THE TRUTH ABOUT JUDEA:

Complete this sentence:

"My workplace/neighborhood is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "My workplace is not just a job. It's a MISSION FIELD."
- "My neighborhood is not just where I sleep. It's JUDEA—my assigned territory."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

My workplace is not just a job—it's a MISSION FIELD.

My neighborhood is not just where I live—it's JUDEA, my assigned territory.

Proximity = Responsibility. God placed me here on PURPOSE.

I will work with EXCELLENCE, not just competence—because I serve Christ.

I will ENGAGE my coworkers, not avoid them—they're my mission field.

I will KNOW my neighbors, not ignore them—they're eternal souls.

I will SERVE where I am, not wait for a future assignment.

**"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men"
(Colossians 3:23, NASB).**

I am STATIONED in this workplace. I am ASSIGNED to this neighborhood. I will serve JUDEA.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been BLIND to the mission field around me. I see my coworkers 40+ hours a week but don't really SEE them. I live next to neighbors every day but don't KNOW them. I've treated work as "just a job"—something I survive, not a mission I engage. I've treated my neighborhood as "just where I sleep"—a place I ignore, not a community I serve. I've walked PAST people You placed in my path. I've been so focused on "reaching the world" that I've IGNORED the world right in front of me. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: My workplace is JUDEA—my assigned mission field. My neighborhood is JUDEA—my territory to serve. You didn't place me here by ACCIDENT. You STATIONED me here. Proximity = Responsibility.

Help me work with EXCELLENCE today—not for my boss, but for YOU. Help me ENGAGE my coworkers—really see them, listen to them, serve them. Help me be PRESENT in my neighborhood—visible, approachable, helpful. Open my eyes to see the NEEDS around me. Give me courage to MEET those needs. Give me boldness to share the GOSPEL when the opportunity comes.

I'm not waiting for a future assignment. I'm serving WHERE I AM. Starting today.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Serve where I am"

Breathe out: "Judea is my mission"

(Acts 1:8)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I engaged anyone TODAY? Or just survived?

Brief Prayer: Father, help me SEE the people around me and SERVE them.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see God at WORK today? In my neighborhood?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I serve Judea today? (Work, neighborhood)

☐ **Yes—I engaged, served, noticed needs**

☐ **Somewhat—I tried but was distracted**

☐ **No—I just survived and went home**

If I DID serve, what happened?

If I DIDN'T, what got in the way?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I walk PAST someone I should have STOPPED for today?

Why did I keep walking?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for being **BLIND** to the mission field around me. Forgive me for walking **PAST** people You placed in my path.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding my workplace/neighborhood?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today at work/in my neighborhood, I noticed _____ (or didn't notice anything because I was blind). The person I should have engaged but didn't was _____. The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will serve Judea by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 30 ✓ - Learned proximity = responsibility. I've been **BLIND** to Judea (work/neighborhood). Today I served by _____ (specific action). Tomorrow I'll engage _____. Pray I see people, not obstacles."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 31: "Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I served (or started serving) **JUDEA**—my workplace, my neighborhood. Tomorrow the mission expands to **SAMARIA**—the people I'd normally **AVOID**, the uncomfortable, the different, the outcast. Give me courage to cross barriers I've built. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU'RE STATIONED HERE

Theological Insight:

"Bloom where you're planted." – Unknown

God **PLANTED** you in this workplace. In this neighborhood.

Don't despise where you are while dreaming of where you'll be.

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You spend 40+ hours a week at **WORK**. That's not random. That's **ASSIGNMENT**.

You live in a **NEIGHBORHOOD** with people next door. That's not accident. That's **PROXIMITY**.

God **STATIONED** you there.

Like a firefighter assigned to a community, you're responsible for the people in your **SPHERE**.

You don't skip Judea to reach "the remotest part of the earth."

Jerusalem (family). **THEN** Judea (workplace, neighborhood). **THEN** Samaria. **THEN** the world.

If you're not faithful in Judea, God won't expand your territory.

So SERVE where you are.

Work with EXCELLENCE (not just competence).

ENGAGE your coworkers (not avoid them).

KNOW your neighbors (not ignore them).

HELP without being asked.

LISTEN to their struggles.

PRAY for them by name.

And when the opportunity comes, SHARE THE GOSPEL.

Your workplace is not "just a job." It's a MISSION FIELD.

Your neighborhood is not "just where you sleep." It's JUDEA.

You're STATIONED there. So SERVE there.

Starting today.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Colossians 3:23-24, NASB).

You're not serving your BOSS.

You're not serving for a PAYCHECK.

You're serving CHRIST.

And He SEES. He REWARDS. He's WITH you.

40 STRONG - Day 30 Complete ✓

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Day 2

"You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB)

YOU'RE STATIONED IN JUDEA. SERVE THERE.

MORNING: THE PEOPLE YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is the prayer I don't want to pray. Because today's assignment forces me to face something ugly in my heart: I have built WALLS. Walls around who I'm willing to serve. Who I'm comfortable with. Who I consider "my people." I serve my family (Jerusalem). I serve my coworkers and neighbors who are LIKE me (Judea). But Samaria? The DIFFERENT? The UNCOMFORTABLE? The people I've been AVOIDING? I don't serve them. I cross the street to avoid them. I lock my car doors when I see them. I change the subject when they're mentioned. I make excuses for why I can't help. I justify my prejudice by calling it "wisdom" or "safety" or "common sense." But it's not wisdom, Father. It's sin. It's prejudice. It's the ugliness I've hidden even from myself. Let me be brutally honest about who "those people" are for me: The homeless guy I drive past every day without making eye contact. The immigrant family I judge for not speaking English. The person with a different skin color I've made assumptions about. The recovering addict I don't trust. The single mom I've dismissed. The LGBTQ coworker I avoid. The person with a different political view I've written off. The mentally ill person who makes me uncomfortable. The ex-con trying to rebuild his life. The Muslim, the atheist, the person whose lifestyle I don't approve of. I've labeled them. Categorized them. Put them in boxes marked "NOT MY PROBLEM." And I've done it while calling myself a Christian. While attending church. While reading my Bible. I've sung "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world" while harboring prejudice in my heart. I've quoted "God so loved the WORLD" while loving only people who look like me, think like me, live like me. I've preached grace while showing none to "those people." This is hypocrisy, Father. And You see it. You see how I've built a comfortable Christian bubble where everyone is SAFE, ACCEPTABLE, LIKE ME. You see how I've turned the Gospel—which breaks ALL barriers—into a COUNTRY CLUB where only certain people are welcome. You see how I justify it. How I defend it. How I don't even recognize it as sin. Forgive me, Father. Today, expose every prejudice I've hidden. Every wall I've built. Every person I've avoided. Every group I've written off. Show me the SAMARIA in my life—the people I consider "OTHER," "LESS THAN," "NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY." And give me the courage Jesus had—to cross EVERY barrier, touch the UNTOUCHABLE, eat with SINNERS, talk to OUTCASTS, serve the people EVERYONE

ELSE avoided. Because if I only love people who are EASY to love, I'm not following Jesus. I'm following my COMFORT. Help me be uncomfortable today. Help me cross the barriers I've built. Help me serve SAMARIA. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Serving the Different/Outcast

Read these slowly. Let them expose your prejudice.

THE ACTS 1:8 PROGRESSION - SAMARIA INCLUDED:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

SAMARIA. Not optional. Not "if you feel like it." COMMANDED.

Samaria = the people you'd normally AVOID. The uncomfortable. The different.

THE HATRED BETWEEN JEWS AND SAMARITANS:

"For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9, NASB).

CENTURIES of hatred. Prejudice. Separation.

Jews considered Samaritans:

- **Half-breeds (racially mixed)**
- **Heretics (wrong religion)**
- **Unclean (don't associate with them)**
- **Enemies (mutual hatred)**

Sound familiar?

JESUS BREAKS THE BARRIER - THE SAMARITAN WOMAN:

"Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. And He had to pass through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel

of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink'" (John 4:1-7, NASB).

Jesus **HAD TO** pass through Samaria. Most Jews went **AROUND**.

Jesus **INITIATED** conversation with:

- A Samaritan (hated race)
- A woman (lower status)
- Alone (culturally inappropriate)
- With a questionable past (five husbands)

He crossed **EVERY** barrier.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN - REDEFINING "NEIGHBOR":

"And behold, a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' And He said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.' But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:25-29, NASB).

The lawyer wanted to **LIMIT** who he had to love. "Who is my neighbor?"

Translation: "Who can I **EXCLUDE**?"

Jesus' answer: The **SAMARITAN** (the one you **HATE**) is your neighbor.

JESUS TOUCHED THE UNTOUCHABLE:

"And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matthew 8:2-3, NASB).

Lepers were **UNTOUCHABLE**. Literally. By law.

Jesus TOUCHED him. Physical contact with the outcast.

JESUS ATE WITH SINNERS:

"While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick'" (Matthew 9:10-12, NIV).

Tax collectors = traitors, thieves, collaborators with Rome.

Sinners = the morally unacceptable.

Jesus RECLINED AT TABLE with them. Full fellowship.

IN CHRIST, NO BARRIERS:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, NASB).

The Gospel ABOLISHES every barrier:

- **Racial (Jew/Greek)**
- **Economic (slave/free)**
- **Gender (male/female)**

ALL ONE in Christ.

GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY:

"Opening his mouth, Peter said: 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him'" (Acts 10:34-35, NASB).

God shows NO PARTIALITY. No favoritism. No prejudice.

EVERY NATION. EVERY PERSON.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES:

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:44-45, NASB).

Not just love your FRIENDS. Love your ENEMIES.

God gives sun and rain to BOTH righteous and unrighteous.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Who is YOUR Samaria?

Who are the people you AVOID?

Who makes you UNCOMFORTABLE?

Who have you labeled "NOT MY PROBLEM"?

Teaching: The Difference Between Selective Service and Gospel Service

Here's the lie most men believe about serving others:

"I serve people. I'm kind. I help when I can. I just... have boundaries. There are certain people I'm not comfortable with. Certain groups I don't relate to. Certain situations I avoid. That's not prejudice—it's wisdom. It's common sense. I serve MOST people. Just not... THOSE people."

Translation: You've turned the GOSPEL (which breaks all barriers) into SELECTIVE SERVICE (only comfortable people allowed).

And when service becomes selective, it's not the GOSPEL.

Theological Insight:

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same." – Luke 6:32-33 (NASB)

Selective Service vs. Gospel Service: What's the Difference?

SELECTIVE SERVICE (Comfortable Christianity):

What it looks like:

- You serve people who are **LIKE YOU** (same race, class, politics, lifestyle)
- You avoid people who make you **UNCOMFORTABLE**
- You help people who are **SAFE, ACCEPTABLE, GRATEFUL**
- You serve people who can **REPAY** you (socially, relationally)
- You have **BOUNDARIES** that conveniently exclude "those people"
- You justify prejudice by calling it "wisdom" or "safety"

What it feels like:

- Comfortable (no awkwardness, no risk)
- Controlled (you choose who deserves help)
- Safe (no threat, no challenge)
- Self-righteous ("I'm a good person—I help **SOME** people")

What it produces:

- A segregated Gospel (only for people like you)
- Hidden prejudice (you don't even see it as sin)
- Comfort-zone Christianity (Jesus as lifestyle enhancement, not **LORD**)
- Missed opportunities (God wanted to use you, but you said no)

GOSPEL SERVICE (Barrier-Breaking Love):

What it looks like:

- You serve people who are **DIFFERENT** (race, class, politics, lifestyle)
- You **CROSS** barriers you'd normally avoid
- You help people who are **UNCOMFORTABLE, MESSY, UNGRATEFUL**
- You serve people who can't repay you

- You let the GOSPEL (not comfort) determine who you serve
- You acknowledge prejudice and FIGHT it

What it feels like:

- Uncomfortable (awkward, risky, challenging)
- Surrendered (God chooses, not you)
- Costly (it requires sacrifice)
- Humbling (you're confronted with your own sin)

What it produces:

- A Gospel for ALL (no barriers, no exclusions)
- Exposed prejudice (you see your sin and REPENT)
- Radical Christianity (Jesus as LORD, not just Savior)
- Kingdom impact (lives changed because you crossed the barrier)

The Chart:

SELECTIVE SERVICE	GOSPEL SERVICE

Serve people LIKE ME	Serve the DIFFERENT

Comfortable, safe	Uncomfortable, risky

People I choose	People God puts in my path

People who can repay	People who can't repay

"I have boundaries"	"The Gospel breaks barriers"

Avoid the messy	Engage the messy

Serve the deserving	Serve the undeserving (like Jesus served me)

Hidden prejudice	Exposed and repented prejudice

Cultural Christianity	Radical discipleship

SELECTIVE SERVICE GOSPEL SERVICE

"I'm a good person" "I'm a sinner saved by grace"

Which column describes your ACTUAL service?

Most men claim the RIGHT column. But they LIVE in the LEFT column.

Why?

Why You Avoid Serving "Those People" (The Uncomfortable Truth)

REASON #1: YOU'RE AFRAID (Fear Masquerading as Wisdom)

The excuse: "I don't serve THOSE people because it's not SAFE. I have to protect my family. I have to be WISE."

The truth: Sometimes it's wisdom. Often it's FEAR disguised as wisdom.

You're afraid of:

- **Physical danger (they might hurt me)**
- **Relational awkwardness (I don't know how to relate)**
- **Being taken advantage of (they might use me)**
- **Association (people will judge me for helping THEM)**

The Gospel: "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18, NASB).

Fear-based decisions often EXCLUDE the very people Jesus INCLUDED.

When fear determines who you serve, you're not following Jesus.

REASON #2: YOU'RE PREJUDICED (Hidden or Obvious)

The reality: You have prejudice. Maybe:

- **Racial (assumptions based on skin color)**
- **Economic (assumptions based on wealth/poverty)**

- Cultural (assumptions based on language, nationality)
- Lifestyle (assumptions based on life choices)

You don't call it "prejudice." You call it:

- "Being realistic"
- "Pattern recognition"
- "Common sense"
- "Personal preference"

The truth: Prejudice by any other name is still SIN.

"God is not one to show partiality" (Acts 10:34, NASB).

If God shows NO partiality, neither should you.

When you avoid people based on prejudice, you're sinning.

REASON #3: YOU FEEL SUPERIOR (Pride)

The subtle sin: You look at "those people" and think:

- "I worked hard to get where I am—they should too"
- "I made good choices—they made bad ones"
- "I'm not like them"
- "They don't deserve help"

The truth: "But for the grace of God, there go I."

You're not BETTER than them. You're just BLESSED.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB).

You didn't EARN your position. It's GRACE.

When you feel superior to others, you've forgotten the Gospel.

REASON #4: THEY MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE (Comfort as Idol)

The reality: Serving "those people" is:

- Awkward (you don't know what to say)
- Messy (their problems are complicated)
- Inconvenient (it disrupts your life)
- Uncomfortable (it challenges your worldview)

So you AVOID it.

The truth: COMFORT is not the goal of the Christian life. OBEDIENCE is.

Jesus was constantly UNCOMFORTABLE:

- Touching lepers
- Eating with sinners
- Talking to outcasts
- Confronting systems

When comfort determines who you serve, you've made an IDOL of ease.

REASON #5: YOU DON'T SEE THEM AS IMAGE-BEARERS (Dehumanization)

The dangerous progression: You start seeing "those people" as:

- Problems, not people
- Statistics, not souls
- Categories, not individuals
- Threats, not image-bearers

You DEHUMANIZE them to justify AVOIDING them.

The truth: EVERY PERSON is made in God's image. EVERY PERSON.

"God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27, NASB).

The homeless man. The immigrant. The addict. The prostitute. The person you disagree with.

ALL made in God's image. ALL loved by God. ALL worthy of dignity.

When you dehumanize others, you're rejecting God's image in them.

REASON #6: YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THEM (Lack of Empathy)

The blind spot: You've never been:

- **Homeless**
- **An immigrant in a foreign land**
- **Addicted**
- **Discriminated against**
- **Desperate**

So you can't IMAGINE what it's like. And you judge from DISTANCE.

The truth: Empathy requires PROXIMITY.

Jesus BECAME human to save humans. He entered our SUFFERING.

When you refuse proximity, you can't have empathy.

The Firefighter's Perspective: You Don't Get to Choose Who You Rescue

In firefighting, you don't get to CHOOSE who you rescue.

You respond to the call. You enter the structure. You search for victims.

And you rescue WHOEVER is there.

You don't ask:

- **What's their race?**
- **What's their economic status?**
- **What's their lifestyle?**
- **Do they deserve to be saved?**

You rescue them. Period.

Because a LIFE is a LIFE.

Here's the parallel:

When you show up to serve, you don't get to CHOOSE who you serve based on COMFORT.

God puts someone in your path. You SERVE them.

You don't ask:

- **Are they like me?**
- **Are they comfortable?**
- **Do they deserve help?**
- **Will they appreciate it?**

You serve them. Because they're made in God's image.

And if firefighters—who are just doing a JOB—can serve without discrimination, how much MORE should CHRISTIANS (who've been saved by GRACE) serve without discrimination?

Who Is Your Samaria? (Getting Specific)

Let's get UNCOMFORTABLE. Who are the people YOU avoid?

1. THE HOMELESS

Why you avoid them:

- **They make you uncomfortable**
- **You don't know if they're "really" in need**
- **You're afraid they'll use money for drugs/alcohol**
- **You don't want to engage**

The Gospel challenge: "For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in" (Matthew 25:35, NASB).

Jesus identifies with the HOMELESS.

What serving looks like:

- **Make eye contact. See them as HUMAN.**
 - **Learn their NAME.**
 - **Buy them a meal (not just give money).**
 - **Ask: "What do you need?"**
 - **Pray with them if they're willing.**
-

2. PEOPLE OF A DIFFERENT RACE

Why you avoid them:

- **You're uncomfortable with racial tension**
- **You don't know how to relate**
- **You've made assumptions based on stereotypes**
- **You stay in your comfortable cultural bubble**

The Gospel challenge: "There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, NASB).

The Gospel ABOLISHES racial barriers.

What serving looks like:

- **Build REAL relationships across racial lines (not tokenism).**
 - **Listen to their experiences without defending yourself.**
 - **Acknowledge and repent of prejudice.**
 - **Advocate for justice.**
-

3. IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

Why you avoid them:

- **Language barriers**
- **Cultural differences**
- **Political views on immigration**

- Fear of the "other"

The Gospel challenge: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34, NASB).

What serving looks like:

- Help them learn English.
 - Welcome them into your community.
 - Help with practical needs (housing, jobs, navigation).
 - Defend them against prejudice.
-

4. THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Why you avoid them:

- Theological disagreement with lifestyle
- Fear of being seen as "affirming sin"
- Don't know how to love without compromising conviction
- Cultural/political tensions

The Gospel challenge: Jesus ate with SINNERS. He didn't affirm their sin. But He LOVED them.

You can have theological convictions AND show love.

What serving looks like:

- Treat them with DIGNITY (they're image-bearers).
 - Build REAL relationships (not just evangelize and disappear).
 - Speak truth IN LOVE (not love without truth OR truth without love).
 - Defend them against HATRED (even if you disagree with lifestyle).
-

5. THE ADDICTED

Why you avoid them:

- They're messy, unreliable, unpredictable
- You've been burned before (helped and they relapsed)
- You don't know how to help without enabling
- You're afraid of codependency

The Gospel challenge: "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12, NASB).

Addiction is sickness. Jesus came for the SICK.

What serving looks like:

- Support recovery programs.
- Offer rides to meetings.
- Celebrate small victories.
- Love them through relapses (without enabling).

6. EX-CONS/PEOPLE WITH A CRIMINAL PAST

Why you avoid them:

- You don't trust them
- You're afraid for your family's safety
- You judge them for their past
- You don't think they can change

The Gospel challenge: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB).

If GOD gives second chances, who are YOU to withhold them?

What serving looks like:

- Hire them (give them a chance).
- Mentor them through reentry.
- Advocate for them.
- See them as NEW creations, not defined by their past.

7. PEOPLE YOU DISAGREE WITH POLITICALLY

Why you avoid them:

- **Political polarization**
- **They're "on the other side"**
- **You've demonized them**
- **You can't imagine serving "the enemy"**

The Gospel challenge: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NASB).

If you only love people who AGREE with you, you're not following Jesus.

What serving looks like:

- **Have conversations across the aisle.**
- **Serve them WITHOUT requiring political agreement.**
- **Humanize "the other side."**
- **Model unity in Christ above political identity.**

8. THE MENTALLY ILL

Why you avoid them:

- **They're unpredictable**
- **You don't understand mental illness**
- **They make you uncomfortable**
- **You don't know how to help**

The Gospel challenge: Jesus healed the demon-possessed, the tormented, the broken.

What serving looks like:

- **Educate yourself on mental illness.**
- **Support mental health ministries.**

- Show patience and compassion.
 - Don't stigmatize—HUMANIZE.
-

9. THE ELDERLY/DISABLED

Why you avoid them:

- It's uncomfortable
- You're too busy
- You don't know what to say
- They slow you down

The Gospel challenge: "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27, NASB).

What serving looks like:

- Visit nursing homes.
 - Help with practical needs.
 - LISTEN to their stories.
 - Give them dignity and time.
-

10. PEOPLE WHOSE LIFESTYLE YOU DISAPPROVE OF

Why you avoid them:

- You judge their life choices
- You don't want to be associated with "that kind of person"
- You think serving them = condoning their lifestyle

The Gospel challenge: Jesus ate with TAX COLLECTORS and SINNERS. The Pharisees judged Him for it.

Are you more like Jesus or the Pharisees?

What serving looks like:

- Love them WITHOUT requiring them to change first.

- Build relationships that EARN the right to speak truth.
 - Show grace (like God showed YOU).
-

How to Serve Samaria: Practical Steps

Here's how to actually CROSS the barriers you've built:

STEP 1: ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PREJUDICE (Confession)

What it looks like:

- Pray: "God, show me my hidden prejudice."
- Identify WHO you avoid and WHY.
- CONFESS it as sin (not justify it as "preference").

Why it matters: You can't FIGHT what you won't ACKNOWLEDGE.

Practical: Journal: "The people I avoid are _____. The reason I avoid them is _____. This is sin, and I repent."

STEP 2: SEEK PROXIMITY (Not Distance)

What it looks like:

- GO to the places where "those people" are.
- Put yourself in UNCOMFORTABLE situations.
- Build REAL relationships (not drive-by service).

Why it matters: Proximity breeds empathy. Distance breeds dehumanization.

Practical: This week, GO to a place you normally avoid. Homeless shelter. Immigrant community center. AA meeting (as support). Nursing home. SHOW UP.

STEP 3: LISTEN TO THEIR STORIES (Before You Speak)

What it looks like:

- ASK about their life.

- **LISTEN** without interrupting, fixing, or judging.
- Let their **STORY** reshape your assumptions.

Why it matters: Stories humanize. Statistics dehumanize.

Practical: Have a conversation with someone **DIFFERENT** from you. Learn their name. Hear their story. Just **LISTEN**.

STEP 4: SERVE PRACTICALLY (Meet Real Needs)

What it looks like:

- Ask: "What do you need?"
- Meet **PRACTICAL** needs (food, rides, help with paperwork, etc.).
- Don't just give **MONEY**—give **TIME, PRESENCE, DIGNITY**.

Why it matters: Love is **VERB**, not just feeling.

Practical: This week, meet **ONE PRACTICAL NEED** for someone in your Samaria.

STEP 5: ADVOCATE (Use Your Voice)

What it looks like:

- Speak **UP** when others are dehumanized.
- **DEFEND** those who can't defend themselves.
- Use your **PRIVILEGE** to amplify marginalized voices.

Why it matters: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8, NIV).

Practical: When you hear prejudiced comments, **SPEAK UP**. Don't stay silent.

STEP 6: REPENT OF SUPERIORITY (Humble Yourself)

What it looks like:

- Remember: "But for the grace of God, there go I."
- Acknowledge you're **NO BETTER** than "those people."

- **Serve from GRATITUDE for grace, not from SUPERIORITY.**

Why it matters: "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, NASB).

Practical: When tempted to judge, pray: "God, I'm a sinner saved by grace. Help me see them as You see them."

STEP 7: BUILD LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS (Not Just One-Time Service)

What it looks like:

- **COMMIT** to ongoing relationship (not just a project).
- **Show up CONSISTENTLY** (not just when convenient).
- **Let them into YOUR life too** (mutuality, not charity).

Why it matters: One-time service can be self-serving. Long-term relationship is LOVE.

Practical: Commit to serving **ONE PERSON** in Samaria for the next 6 months. Build **REAL** relationship.

The Hard Truth: If You Only Love People Like You, You're Not Following Jesus

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:32, NASB).

EVEN SINNERS love people who are easy to love.

The TEST of Christian love is: Do you love people who are DIFFERENT? DIFFICULT? UNCOMFORTABLE?

If you only love people:

- **Who look like you**
- **Who think like you**
- **Who live like you**
- **Who can repay you**

You're not following Jesus. You're following CULTURE.

Jesus loved:

- **Samaritans (hated race)**
- **Tax collectors (traitors)**
- **Prostitutes (moral outcasts)**
- **Lepers (untouchables)**
- **Romans (oppressors)**

He crossed EVERY barrier. Broke EVERY social norm. Touched the UNTOUCHABLE.

And He calls you to do the same.

Not because it's COMFORTABLE. But because it's the GOSPEL.

The Warning: Selective Service Is Not the Gospel

You can serve your family (Jerusalem). ✓

You can serve your workplace and neighborhood (Judea). ✓

But if you SKIP Samaria, you're not following Acts 1:8.

You're creating a SEGREGATED Gospel.

A Gospel that only reaches people who are SAFE. COMFORTABLE. LIKE YOU.

That's not the Gospel Jesus preached.

Jesus' Gospel breaks ALL barriers:

- **Racial**
- **Economic**
- **Social**
- **Moral**
- **Political**
- **Cultural**

ALL barriers.

If your Gospel doesn't break barriers, it's not the GOSPEL.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from selective service to Gospel service)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. WHO IS YOUR SAMARIA?

Who are the people YOU avoid?

- ☐ The homeless
- ☐ People of a different race
- ☐ Immigrants/refugees
- ☐ LGBTQ community
- ☐ The addicted
- ☐ Ex-cons/people with criminal past
- ☐ People you disagree with politically
- ☐ The mentally ill
- ☐ The elderly/disabled
- ☐ People whose lifestyle you disapprove of
- ☐ Other: _____

Be BRUTALLY honest. Who makes you UNCOMFORTABLE?

2. WHY DO YOU AVOID THEM?

For the group(s) you checked above, WHY do you avoid them?

- ☐ Fear (physical safety, being taken advantage of)
- ☐ Prejudice (hidden or obvious)
- ☐ Superiority (I'm better than them)

- ☐ Comfort (they make me uncomfortable)
- ☐ Dehumanization (I don't see them as image-bearers)
- ☐ Lack of empathy (I've never been them)
- ☐ Other: _____

What does this reveal about your heart?

3. SELECTIVE SERVICE OR GOSPEL SERVICE?

Be HONEST. Do you practice:

- ☐ Selective service (only serve people like me, comfortable, safe)
- ☐ Gospel service (cross barriers, serve the different/uncomfortable)
- ☐ Mix of both

What would need to change for you to practice GOSPEL service?

SECTION 2: ACKNOWLEDGING PREJUDICE

4. DO YOU HAVE PREJUDICE?

Be BRUTALLY honest. Do you have prejudice based on:

- ☐ Race (assumptions based on skin color)
- ☐ Economic status (assumptions based on wealth/poverty)
- ☐ Nationality/culture (assumptions based on where someone's from)
- ☐ Lifestyle (assumptions based on life choices)
- ☐ Politics (assumptions based on political views)
- ☐ Religion (assumptions based on faith background)

☐ Other: _____

Will you **CONFESS** this as **SIN**?

☐ Yes—I acknowledge this is sin and I repent

☐ I'm not ready to call it sin yet

☐ I don't think I have prejudice

If you checked "I don't think I have prejudice," you're **LYING**. Everyone has prejudice.
The question is: will you **ACKNOWLEDGE** it?

5. THE PREJUDICE YOU JUSTIFY:

What prejudice do you **JUSTIFY** by calling it something else?

☐ "Being realistic" (actually: stereotyping)

☐ "Common sense" (actually: fear-based discrimination)

☐ "Protecting my family" (actually: avoiding uncomfortable people)

☐ "Personal preference" (actually: selective service)

☐ "Wisdom" (actually: prejudice disguised as discernment)

Write out the **TRUTH**:

"I've been calling _____ 'wisdom,' but it's actually _____."

SECTION 3: CROSSING BARRIERS

6. HAVE YOU EVER CROSSED A BARRIER?

When's the last time you served someone who:

- Looked different from you? _____
- Had a different economic status? _____
- Made you uncomfortable? _____

- Couldn't repay you? _____

If you can't remember, you're living in a **CHRISTIAN BUBBLE**.

7. WHERE DO YOU NEED PROXIMITY?

Which group do you need to seek **PROXIMITY** to (not avoid)?

What would that look like **PRACTICALLY** this week?

- ☐ Go to a homeless shelter and volunteer
- ☐ Visit an immigrant community center
- ☐ Attend a recovery meeting (as support)
- ☐ Have a meal with someone of a different race
- ☐ Visit a nursing home
- ☐ Other: _____

Will you **DO IT**?

- ☐ Yes—I'll go this week
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I'm too afraid/uncomfortable
-

8. WHOSE STORY DO YOU NEED TO HEAR?

Who is **ONE PERSON** in your "Samaria" whose **STORY** you need to hear?

Name (or description): _____

Will you **SEEK THEM OUT** and **LISTEN** this week?

- ☐ Yes—I'll have a conversation
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I don't know how to approach them
-

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL SERVICE

9. WHAT PRACTICAL NEED CAN YOU MEET?

This week, what's ONE PRACTICAL NEED you can meet for someone in your Samaria?

- ☐ Buy a meal for a homeless person
- ☐ Help an immigrant with paperwork/English
- ☐ Support a recovery program
- ☐ Visit an elderly/disabled person
- ☐ Advocate for someone being dehumanized
- ☐ Other: _____

When will you do it?

Day: _____ Time: _____

10. WILL YOU ADVOCATE?

When you hear someone being dehumanized, will you SPEAK UP?

- ☐ Yes—I'll defend them
- ☐ I'll try (but I'm afraid of conflict)
- ☐ I stay silent

Practice NOW. What will you SAY when you hear prejudiced comments?

Example: "That's not true. They're made in God's image. Let's not dehumanize them."

SECTION 5: REPENTING OF SUPERIORITY

11. DO YOU FEEL SUPERIOR?

Be HONEST. Do you look at "those people" and think:

- ☐ "I worked hard—they should too"
- ☐ "I made good choices—they made bad ones"

- ☐ "I'm not like them"
- ☐ "They don't deserve help"
- ☐ "They brought this on themselves"

If you checked ANY of these, you're struggling with PRIDE.

Will you REPENT?

- ☐ Yes—I confess this as sin
- ☐ I struggle to see this as sin
- ☐ I don't think I'm superior

Prayer of repentance:

"Father, I've felt SUPERIOR to _____. I've judged them. I've looked down on them. But I'm NO BETTER. I'm a sinner saved by GRACE. Forgive me."

12. "BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD..."

Complete this sentence:

"But for the grace of God, I could be _____."

Examples:

- Homeless
- Addicted
- Alone
- Desperate
- Outcasted

Your turn:

Does this change how you see "those people"?

SECTION 6: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

13. ONE BARRIER YOU'LL CROSS THIS WEEK:

What's ONE BARRIER you'll cross this week?

- ☐ Racial (serve someone of a different race)
- ☐ Economic (serve someone in poverty)
- ☐ Cultural (serve an immigrant/refugee)
- ☐ Lifestyle (serve someone whose lifestyle you disapprove of)
- ☐ Political (serve someone you disagree with politically)
- ☐ Other: _____

Be SPECIFIC. Who will you serve?

How will you serve them?

When?

14. ONE PERSON IN SAMARIA YOU'LL ENGAGE:

Who is ONE PERSON in your Samaria you'll intentionally engage this week?

Name/description: _____

What will you do?

- ☐ Learn their name
- ☐ Hear their story
- ☐ Meet a practical need
- ☐ Build a relationship
- ☐ Other: _____

SECTION 7: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

15. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "Avoiding 'those people' is wisdom, not prejudice"
- ☐ "I'm better than them because I made better choices"
- ☐ "Serving them means condoning their lifestyle"
- ☐ "I don't have prejudice"
- ☐ "I serve MOST people—just not THOSE people"
- ☐ "Comfort is more important than obedience"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

16. THE TRUTH ABOUT SAMARIA:

Complete this sentence:

"Serving Samaria is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Serving Samaria is not optional. It's **COMMANDED**."
- "Serving Samaria is not condoning sin. It's loving image-bearers."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Samaria is not optional—it's COMMANDED.

I will not serve only people who are LIKE ME. I will cross barriers.

I have prejudice. I confess it as SIN. I FIGHT it.

I am not BETTER than "those people." I'm a sinner saved by GRACE.

The Gospel breaks ALL barriers—racial, economic, social, moral, political.

I will seek PROXIMITY to people I've been avoiding.

I will LISTEN to their stories before I speak.

I will meet PRACTICAL needs, not just feel sympathy.

I will ADVOCATE for those who are dehumanized.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, NASB).

I will serve SAMARIA. Starting today.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been AVOIDING Samaria. I've built walls around who I'm willing to serve. I've called it "wisdom," but it's PREJUDICE. I've called it "preference," but it's SIN. I serve people who are LIKE ME while avoiding people who are DIFFERENT. I cross the street to avoid the homeless. I make assumptions about people based on race. I judge people based on lifestyle. I've dehumanized image-bearers by calling them "those people." I've felt SUPERIOR when I'm just BLESSED. I've loved people who can REPAY while ignoring those who can't. And I've done it while calling myself a Christian. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: The Gospel breaks ALL barriers. Jesus touched lepers. Ate with sinners. Talked to outcasts. Crossed EVERY barrier. And He calls me to do the same.

Open my eyes to see MY Samaria—the people I've been avoiding. Give me COURAGE to cross the barriers I've built. Give me HUMILITY to repent of superiority. Give me COMPASSION to see them as You see them—image-bearers, loved, worthy of dignity.

Help me seek PROXIMITY this week. Help me LISTEN to their stories. Help me meet PRACTICAL needs. Help me ADVOCATE when they're dehumanized. Help me build LONG-TERM relationships, not just do one-time service.

I'm uncomfortable, Father. But I'm OBEDIENT. I will serve Samaria.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Break the barriers"

Breathe out: "Serve Samaria"

(Acts 1:8)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I avoided anyone TODAY because they're "different"?

Brief Prayer: Father, help me see people as You see them.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did God challenge my prejudice today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I cross a barrier today? Or stay in my comfort zone?

☐ I crossed a barrier (served someone different/uncomfortable)

☐ I stayed comfortable (avoided Samaria)

If I CROSSED a barrier, what happened?

If I AVOIDED, what was I afraid of?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I see someone in my "Samaria" and AVOID them today?

Why did I avoid them?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for avoiding Samaria today. Forgive me for choosing COMFORT over OBEDIENCE.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding Samaria?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I avoided/served _____ (person in Samaria). The barrier I need to cross is _____. The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will serve Samaria by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 31 ✓ - Faced my prejudice. I've been avoiding _____ (Samaria group). Today I confessed it as SIN. Tomorrow I'll cross the barrier by _____ (specific action). Pray for courage."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 32: "Serve the Lost - Evangelism"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I faced Samaria—the people I've been avoiding. Tomorrow the mission expands: serving the LOST by sharing the GOSPEL. Give me boldness to SPEAK, not just serve silently. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU DON'T GET TO CHOOSE

Theological Insight:

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." – Luke 6:32 (NASB)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You don't get to CHOOSE who you serve based on COMFORT.

Jesus didn't choose COMFORTABLE people. He chose OUTCASTS.

He touched LEPERS. Ate with SINNERS. Talked to SAMARITANS.

He crossed EVERY barrier the religious people built.

And He calls you to do the same.

Not because it's EASY. But because it's the GOSPEL.

Your Samaria is waiting.

The homeless man you drive past.

The immigrant you've judged.

The person of a different race you've avoided.

The addict you don't trust.

The person whose lifestyle you disapprove of.

God put them in your PATH. Will you CROSS the barrier? Or walk by?

Proximity = Responsibility.

You SEE them. Now SERVE them.

Not because they DESERVE it. But because JESUS served YOU when you didn't deserve it.

Cross the barrier this week.

Learn their NAME. Hear their STORY. Meet a NEED.

And watch what God does when you actually OBEY.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, NASB).

The Gospel breaks ALL barriers.

Will you?

40 STRONG - Day 31 Complete ✓

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Day 3

"You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB)

MORNING: THE CONVERSATION YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is the prayer that terrifies me. Because today's assignment is the one I've been **AVOIDING** my entire Christian life: **EVANGELISM**. Sharing the Gospel. Actually **SPEAKING** about Jesus to people who don't know Him. And if I'm brutally honest? I'm terrified. I'm terrified of being **REJECTED**. Of being seen as "that guy"—the pushy Christian who makes everyone uncomfortable. I'm terrified of not knowing what to **SAY**. Of freezing up. Of saying the wrong thing. Of looking foolish. I'm terrified they'll ask questions I can't **ANSWER**. That they'll bring up objections I don't know how to address. That I'll mess it up and turn them **AWAY** from Jesus instead of toward Him. I'm terrified of being **JUDGED**. "Who are **YOU** to talk about Jesus? You're not perfect. You sin. You struggle. You have no right to tell **ME** about God." And honestly, Father? They're **RIGHT**. I'm **NOT** perfect. I **DO** sin. I'm a **MESS**. How can I share the Gospel when I'm still fighting battles in my own life? How can I tell someone about Jesus when I failed yesterday? When I'm still struggling with pornography, anger, pride? When my own life is far from the standard? So I stay **SILENT**. I serve people. I try to "live the Gospel." I tell myself: "My **LIFE** is my witness. I don't need to **SPEAK**. My actions will show them Jesus." But deep down, I know that's a **COPOUT**. Because people can't read my mind. They don't know **WHY** I'm kind, patient, helpful. They might think I'm just a **NICE GUY**. They might appreciate my character but never connect it to **CHRIST**. And if I never **SPEAK**, they'll never **HEAR**. They'll never know the Gospel. They'll never have the opportunity to be **SAVED**. And that **TERRIFIES** me even more than rejection. Because there are people in my life **RIGHT NOW** who are **LOST**. My coworker. My neighbor. My family member. The guy at the gym. The barista. The cashier. People I **SEE** every day. People You've placed in my **PATH**. And they're headed for eternity without **CHRIST**. They're going to stand before God and hear "Depart from Me." They're going to spend eternity separated from You. And I **KNOW** this. I believe in heaven and hell. I believe Jesus is the **ONLY** way. I believe they're **LOST**. But I stay **SILENT**. Because I'm more afraid of awkwardness than I am of their eternity. I'm more concerned with **MY** comfort than **THEIR** souls. I prioritize being **LIKED** over being **OBEDIENT**. And that's sin, Father. That's **COWARDICE** disguised as "respect" or "not wanting to be pushy." Forgive me, Father. Today, shatter every excuse I've built. Every rationalization. Every fear that

keeps me silent. Remind me that the Gospel is the **POWER** of God for salvation. That people **CANNOT** be saved without **HEARING**. That faith comes by **HEARING** the Word of God. That I'm **COMMANDED** to make disciples, not **INVITED**. Show me that evangelism is not about **MY** perfection—it's about **HIS** finished work. That I don't need to have all the answers—I just need to share **MY** story and **HIS** truth. That rejection of the Gospel is not rejection of **ME**—it's rejection of **CHRIST**. And give me **BOLDNESS** today, Father. Not arrogance. Not pushiness. But holy **BOLDNESS** to actually **SPEAK**. To create conversations. To share my story. To present the Gospel clearly. To invite people to respond. Even if I'm scared. Even if I stumble over my words. Even if they reject it. Help me care more about **THEIR** eternity than **MY** comfort. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Evangelism

Read these slowly. Let them expose your silence.

THE GREAT COMMISSION - NOT A SUGGESTION:

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20, NASB).

GO. Not "if you feel like it." **GO.**

MAKE DISCIPLES. Not just live a good life. **MAKE DISCIPLES.**

OF ALL THE NATIONS. Everyone. Everywhere.

This is a **COMMAND**, not a suggestion.

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!'" (Romans 10:14-15, NASB).

They **CAN'T** call on Him if they haven't **BELIEVED**.

They **CAN'T** believe if they haven't **HEARD**.

They CAN'T hear without someone PREACHING (telling them).

Your SILENCE condemns them to not hearing.

EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED:

"For 'whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Romans 10:13, NASB).

WHOEVER. Not just "good people." WHOEVER.

They call. They're saved.

But they can't call if they've never HEARD.

FAITH COMES BY HEARING:

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17, NASB).

Faith comes by HEARING. Not by osmosis. Not by observation. HEARING.

The WORD of Christ. The Gospel. Spoken. Declared. Shared.

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER 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" (Romans 1:16, NASB).

The GOSPEL (not your testimony alone, not your good deeds) is the POWER of God for salvation.

Not ashamed. BOLD.

WE ARE AMBASSADORS:

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20, NASB).

You are an AMBASSADOR. Representing Christ. Speaking on His behalf.

God makes His appeal THROUGH you.

ALWAYS BE READY:

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15, NASB).

ALWAYS be ready. Not "when you feel qualified." ALWAYS.

To give an ACCOUNT for the HOPE you have.

With GENTLENESS and REVERENCE (not arrogance or pushiness).

THE URGENCY OF NOW:

"Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation'" (2 Corinthians 6:2, NASB).

NOW. Not someday. NOW.

Today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow is not guaranteed.

JESUS CAME TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST:

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10, NASB).

Jesus came to SEEK and SAVE the LOST.

If that was His mission, it's YOURS too.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Think about the people in your life who are LOST:

- **Family members who don't know Jesus**
- **Coworkers who've never heard the Gospel**
- **Neighbors who are far from God**

- Friends who are headed for eternity without Christ

Have you ever TOLD them about Jesus?

Teaching: The Difference Between "Living the Gospel" and Speaking the Gospel

Here's the lie most men believe about evangelism:

"I don't need to TALK about Jesus. I just need to LIVE like Him. My LIFE is my witness. People will see how I live and want what I have. Actions speak louder than words. I'll just be a good person, serve people, show love—and that's evangelism."

Translation: You've turned EVANGELISM into SILENCE and justified it by calling it "lifestyle evangelism."

And when evangelism becomes silent, people stay LOST.

Theological Insight:

"Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." This quote, often attributed to St. Francis, is NOT BIBLICAL. It's always necessary to use words. The Gospel must be PROCLAIMED, not just LIVED. You cannot be saved by watching someone live a good life. You're saved by HEARING and BELIEVING the Gospel." – Voddie Baucham (paraphrase)

"Living the Gospel" (Only) vs. Speaking the Gospel: What's the Difference?

"LIVING THE GOSPEL" ONLY (Silent Witness):

What it looks like:

- You live a moral life
- You serve people
- You're kind, patient, loving
- You never SPEAK about Jesus
- You hope people "figure it out" by watching you

What it sounds like:

- "My life is my witness"
- "I don't need to preach—I just live it"
- "Actions speak louder than words"
- "I'll just be a good example"

Why it feels safe:

- No risk of rejection (you never bring up Jesus)
- No awkwardness (you avoid the conversation)
- No need to know what to say (you don't say anything)
- You feel like a good Christian (you're "living the Gospel")

The problem:

- People can't READ YOUR MIND
- They might think you're just a NICE PERSON
- They don't know WHY you're different
- They never HEAR the Gospel
- They stay LOST

The truth: "How will they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14, NASB).

Living a good life is NECESSARY. But it's not SUFFICIENT.

Your LIFE creates the platform. Your WORDS deliver the Gospel.

SPEAKING THE GOSPEL (Biblical Evangelism):

What it looks like:

- You live a life that backs up your words (INTEGRITY)
- You actually SPEAK about Jesus (PROCLAMATION)
- You share your story (TESTIMONY)
- You explain the Gospel (TRUTH)
- You invite a response (CALL TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH)

What it sounds like:

- "Can I tell you what Jesus has done for me?"
- "I'd love to share why I have hope"
- "Have you ever heard the Gospel?"
- "Would you be interested in knowing more about Jesus?"

Why it feels risky:

- Risk of rejection (they might say no)
- Awkwardness (it's uncomfortable)
- Requires clarity (you need to know what to say)
- Requires dependence on God (you can't do this in your own strength)

The promise:

- People **HEAR** the Gospel
- The Holy Spirit **WORKS** (conviction, faith)
- Some **BELIEVE** and are **SAVED**
- You're **OBEDIENT** to the Great Commission

The truth: "Faith comes from hearing" (Romans 10:17, NASB).

They can't have faith if they don't HEAR. And they can't hear if you don't SPEAK.

The Chart:

"LIVING THE GOSPEL" ONLY SPEAKING THE GOSPEL

Silent witness	Vocal proclamation
Hope they "figure it out"	Clearly explain the Gospel
Avoid the conversation	Initiate the conversation
"My life is my witness"	"My life backs up my words"
No risk, no awkwardness	Risk, awkward, costly

"LIVING THE GOSPEL" ONLY SPEAKING THE GOSPEL

They might think you're nice They HEAR about Jesus

Safe, comfortable Obedient, bold

People stay LOST Some are SAVED

Which describes your ACTUAL approach to evangelism?

Most men hide behind "living the Gospel" because it's SAFE.

But it's not BIBLICAL.

Why You Avoid Evangelism (The Real Reasons)

REASON #1: YOU'RE AFRAID OF REJECTION

The fear: "If I share the Gospel, they'll reject me. They'll think I'm weird. They'll avoid me. I'll lose the relationship."

The truth: If they reject the Gospel, they're rejecting CHRIST, not you.

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18, NASB).

Yes, some will reject. But SOME will believe.

When fear of rejection keeps you silent, you're choosing YOUR comfort over THEIR soul.

REASON #2: YOU DON'T FEEL QUALIFIED

The lie: "I can't share the Gospel because I'm not perfect. I still sin. I'm not a pastor or theologian. I don't have all the answers."

The truth: You don't need to be PERFECT. You need to be FORGIVEN.

You don't need to be a SCHOLAR. You need to know YOUR story and THE Gospel.

"Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you" (Mark 5:19, NASB).

Just tell what Jesus has DONE FOR YOU.

When you wait to be "qualified," you'll never speak.

REASON #3: YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

The struggle: "I freeze up. I don't know how to start the conversation. I don't know how to explain the Gospel clearly."

The truth: You can LEARN. It's a skill, not a spiritual gift only for some.

You need:

- **Your STORY (what Jesus did for YOU)**
- **The GOSPEL (what Jesus did for EVERYONE)**
- **An INVITATION (will you trust Him?)**

When you don't know what to say, LEARN. Don't stay silent.

REASON #4: YOU'RE AFRAID OF BEING "THAT GUY"

The fear: "I don't want to be PUSHY. I don't want to be the obnoxious Christian who makes everyone uncomfortable. I don't want to be 'that guy.'"

The truth: There's a difference between BOLD and OBNOXIOUS.

BOLD: Clearly sharing the Gospel with love and respect.

OBNOXIOUS: Being arrogant, condescending, or manipulative.

"Always being ready to make a defense... with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15, NASB).

GENTLENESS and REVERENCE. Not arrogance.

When you avoid evangelism because you don't want to be "that guy," you're letting FEAR determine your obedience.

REASON #5: YOU'VE SEEN BAD EXAMPLES

The wound: You've seen evangelism done BADLY:

- **Street preachers yelling condemnation**
- **Door-to-door sales pitches**
- **Manipulation tactics**
- **Arrogant "Bible thumpers"**

So you avoid it entirely.

The truth: Just because SOME do it badly doesn't mean YOU shouldn't do it at all.

Do it WELL. Do it with LOVE. Do it like JESUS.

When you let bad examples keep you silent, the LOST still don't hear.

REASON #6: YOU'RE TOO COMFORTABLE

The reality: Evangelism is UNCOMFORTABLE. It disrupts your life. It risks relationships. It costs you something.

And you've chosen COMFORT over OBEDIENCE.

The truth: "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25, NASB).

Comfort is not the goal. OBEDIENCE is.

When comfort is your priority, evangelism becomes impossible.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Rescue Requires Action AND Words

In firefighting, rescue requires MORE than just action. It requires COMMUNICATION.

Here's how search and rescue works:

You enter a burning structure. Visibility is zero (thick smoke). You're searching for victims.

You don't just walk through silently hoping to bump into them.

You CALL OUT:

- **"FIRE DEPARTMENT! CALL OUT IF YOU CAN HEAR ME!"**
- **"WE'RE HERE TO HELP! WHERE ARE YOU?"**
- **"STAY LOW! WE'RE COMING TO GET YOU!"**

Why?

Because victims can't SEE you through the smoke. They might be disoriented, terrified, hiding.

If you don't CALL OUT, they might not know you're there. They might stay HIDDEN. They might DIE.

Your ACTIONS (entering the structure) matter.

But your WORDS (calling out) are what save lives.

Same with evangelism.

Your LIFE (actions, character, service) matters. It creates the platform.

But your WORDS (Gospel proclamation) are what save SOULS.

You can't rescue people from a burning building SILENTLY.

And you can't rescue people from hell SILENTLY either.

You have to CALL OUT. You have to SPEAK.

"Faith comes by HEARING." Not by watching. HEARING.

What Evangelism Actually Looks Like (Practical Steps)

Let's get PRACTICAL. Here's how to actually share the Gospel:

STEP 1: PRAY FOR BOLDNESS (You Can't Do This Alone)

What it looks like:

- **Pray DAILY: "God, give me boldness to speak about Jesus."**
- **Pray for SPECIFIC PEOPLE by name: "Open a door to share with _____."**
- **Pray for the HOLY SPIRIT to prepare hearts.**

Why it matters: "Grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all boldness" (Acts 4:29, NASB).

Even the APOSTLES prayed for boldness. You need it too.

Practical: This week, pray **DAILY** for boldness and for specific people God wants you to reach.

STEP 2: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS (Earn the Right to Speak)

What it looks like:

- **Be PRESENT** in people's lives (don't just show up to evangelize and disappear)
- **SERVE** them practically
- **LISTEN** to their struggles
- **Be GENUINE** (not fake or transactional)

Why it matters: People are more likely to **HEAR** the Gospel from someone they **TRUST**.

Practical: Identify 3 people in your life who are lost. **INVEST** in relationship with them.

STEP 3: SHARE YOUR STORY (Your Testimony)

What it looks like: Tell what **JESUS** has done for **YOU**. Three parts:

1. **BEFORE Jesus:** What was your life like? What were you searching for? What was broken?
2. **MEETING Jesus:** How did you come to know Him? What happened?
3. **AFTER Jesus:** How has your life changed? What's different now?

Why it matters: Your **STORY** is undeniable. They can argue with **THEOLOGY**. They can't argue with **YOUR EXPERIENCE**.

Practical: Write out your testimony (3-5 minutes). Practice it. Be ready to share it.

STEP 4: EXPLAIN THE GOSPEL (The Good News)

What it looks like:

A simple Gospel presentation (use this framework):

GOD:

- **God created you for relationship with Him (Genesis 1:27)**
- **He loves you and has a purpose for your life**

SIN:

- **But we've all sinned—we've rebelled against God (Romans 3:23)**
- **Our sin separates us from God**
- **The penalty for sin is death—eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23)**

CHRIST:

- **But God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die in your place (John 3:16)**
- **Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for YOUR sins, and rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)**
- **He paid the penalty YOU owed**

RESPONSE:

- **You must REPENT (turn from sin) and BELIEVE in Jesus (trust Him as Savior and Lord) (Acts 20:21)**
- **If you confess Jesus as Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead, you will be SAVED (Romans 10:9)**
- **Salvation is a FREE GIFT—you can't earn it (Ephesians 2:8-9)**

Why it matters: The GOSPEL is the power of God for salvation. Not just your story. The GOSPEL.

Practical: Memorize a simple Gospel outline. Practice explaining it.

STEP 5: CREATE GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS (Don't Wait—Initiate)

What it looks like:

Ask questions that create openings:

- **"Do you have a faith background?"**

- "Have you ever thought about spiritual things?"
- "Can I share something that's really important to me?"
- "Would you be open to hearing about what Jesus has done in my life?"

Use transitions from everyday conversations:

- They share a struggle → "Can I pray for you?" Then later: "Can I share what's helped me through hard times?"
- They ask about your weekend → "I went to church. Do you ever think about spiritual things?"
- They notice something different about you → "Can I tell you why I have hope?"

Why it matters: Most people won't ASK about Jesus unless you CREATE the conversation.

Practical: This week, ASK one person: "Do you have a faith background?" See where the conversation goes.

STEP 6: INVITE A RESPONSE (Don't Just Share—Call Them to Respond)

What it looks like:

After sharing the Gospel, ASK:

- "Does this make sense?"
- "What do you think about what I've shared?"
- "Is there anything keeping you from trusting Jesus right now?"
- "Would you like to pray and ask Jesus to save you?"

Why it matters: Evangelism is not complete until you invite RESPONSE.

Practical: Don't just share and walk away. ASK them to respond.

STEP 7: FOLLOW UP (Win Them to Jesus, Then Disciple Them)

What it looks like:

- If they SAY YES: Celebrate! Pray with them. Get them connected to a church. Disciple them.
- If they SAY NO: Love them. Pray for them. Stay in relationship. Keep the door open.
- If they SAY "NOT YET": Respect that. Don't pressure. But continue to pray and look for future opportunities.

Why it matters: Evangelism is not just "closing the deal." It's starting a discipleship relationship.

Practical: If someone responds to the Gospel, COMMIT to walking with them for the next 6-12 months.

How to Share Your Testimony (The 3-Part Framework)

Write out your testimony using this framework:

PART 1: BEFORE JESUS (What was your life like?)

Questions to answer:

- What were you like before Jesus?
- What were you searching for?
- What was broken, empty, or unsatisfying?
- What sin were you enslaved to?

Keep it:

- **HONEST** (don't sanitize, but don't glorify sin either)
- **BRIEF** (2-3 sentences)
- **RELATABLE** (they should see themselves in your story)

Example: "Before I knew Jesus, I thought success would satisfy me. I chased career, money, and approval. But no matter what I achieved, I was still empty. I was angry, prideful, and controlled by lust."

PART 2: MEETING JESUS (How did you come to know Him?)

Questions to answer:

- **How did you hear the Gospel?**
- **What made you realize you needed Jesus?**
- **How did you respond?**

Keep it:

- **CLEAR (what happened?)**
- **GOSPEL-CENTERED (focus on JESUS, not just a decision you made)**
- **BRIEF (3-4 sentences)**

Example: "A friend shared the Gospel with me. I realized I was a sinner in need of a Savior. I couldn't save myself. So I repented of my sin and trusted Jesus as my Lord and Savior."

PART 3: AFTER JESUS (How has your life changed?)

Questions to answer:

- **What's different now?**
- **How has Jesus changed you?**
- **What does He mean to you today?**

Keep it:

- **HONEST (you still struggle, but Jesus is transforming you)**
- **HOPEFUL (point to the hope you have)**
- **BRIEF (2-3 sentences)**

Example: "Jesus has changed everything. I'm still a work in progress, but I have HOPE now. I'm forgiven. I'm free. I'm not perfect, but I'm being transformed by His grace."

Total testimony: About 3-5 minutes

Practice it. Be ready to share it.

The Urgency of Eternity: Why This Matters NOW

Here's the reality most Christians AVOID thinking about:

People are LOST. And they're running out of time.

"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27, NASB).

One death. Then JUDGMENT.

No second chances. No reincarnation. No "figuring it out" after death.

Your coworker who doesn't know Jesus? If he dies today, he stands before God LOST.

Your neighbor who's never heard the Gospel? If she dies tomorrow, she spends eternity separated from God.

Your family member who's rejected Christ? Time is running out.

And you KNOW this.

You believe in heaven and hell. You believe Jesus is the ONLY way.

So why are you SILENT?

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14, NASB).

They CAN'T be saved if they don't HEAR.

And they can't hear if you don't SPEAK.

Today might be their last chance. Will you tell them?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from silence to proclamation)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. HAVE YOU EVER SHARED THE GOSPEL?

Be BRUTALLY honest. Have you ever clearly shared the Gospel with someone?

☐ **Yes—I've shared the Gospel multiple times**

- ☐ **Yes—but only once or twice (and it's been a long time)**
- ☐ **Sort of—I've mentioned I'm a Christian, but never explained the Gospel**
- ☐ **No—I've never clearly shared the Gospel with anyone**

If NO or "Sort of," why not?

2. "LIVING THE GOSPEL" OR SPEAKING IT?

Which describes your ACTUAL approach?

- ☐ **Living the Gospel ONLY (silent witness, hoping they figure it out)**
- ☐ **Speaking the Gospel (vocal proclamation, clear explanation)**
- ☐ **Both (I live AND speak)**

If you're living ONLY (silent), what's keeping you from SPEAKING?

3. WHO IN YOUR LIFE IS LOST?

List 3-5 people in your life who are LOST (don't know Jesus):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Have you ever shared the Gospel with them?

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

If NO, what's stopping you?

SECTION 2: CONFRONTING FEAR

4. WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

What's your #1 fear about evangelism?

- ☐ **Fear of rejection (they'll reject me)**
- ☐ **Fear of being unqualified (I'm not perfect/don't know enough)**
- ☐ **Fear of not knowing what to say (I'll freeze up)**
- ☐ **Fear of being "that guy" (pushy, obnoxious)**
- ☐ **Fear of losing the relationship**
- ☐ **Other: _____**

The truth:

For each fear, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

5. REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL:

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18, NASB).

If someone rejects the Gospel, they're rejecting CHRIST, not you.

Does this truth FREE you to speak?

- ☐ **Yes—I'm ready to risk rejection**
- ☐ **Somewhat—I still struggle with fear**
- ☐ **No—I'm still afraid**

What would need to change for you to be BOLD?

SECTION 3: FEELING UNQUALIFIED

6. "I'M NOT QUALIFIED":

Do you feel UNQUALIFIED to share the Gospel because:

- ☐ I'm not perfect
- ☐ I still struggle with sin
- ☐ I don't know enough theology
- ☐ I'm not a pastor/evangelist
- ☐ I don't have all the answers

The truth:

You don't need to be PERFECT. You need to be FORGIVEN.

You don't need ALL the answers. You need YOUR story and THE Gospel.

Will you share the Gospel ANYWAY?

- ☐ Yes—I'm ready despite my imperfections
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I'm still not ready
-

7. DO YOU KNOW YOUR STORY?

Can you clearly share your testimony in 3-5 minutes?

- ☐ Yes—I've written it out and practiced it
- ☐ Sort of—I have a general idea but haven't practiced
- ☐ No—I don't know how to share my story

If NO or "Sort of," will you WRITE it out THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Yes—I'll use the 3-part framework (Before/Meeting/After Jesus)

- ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ Not ready
-

8. DO YOU KNOW THE GOSPEL?

Can you clearly explain the Gospel in 2-3 minutes?

- ☐ Yes—I can explain God/Sin/Christ/Response
- ☐ Sort of—I have a general idea but it's not clear
- ☐ No—I don't know how to explain it clearly

If NO or "Sort of," will you LEARN a simple Gospel outline THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Yes—I'll memorize the framework from today
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ Not ready
-

SECTION 4: CREATING GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS

9. HAVE YOU EVER INITIATED A GOSPEL CONVERSATION?

Have you ever asked someone: "Do you have a faith background?" or "Can I share what Jesus means to me?"

- ☐ Yes—I've initiated Gospel conversations
- ☐ Once or twice, but it's been a long time
- ☐ No—I wait for them to ask (which they never do)

If you WAIT for them to ask, they'll NEVER hear.

Will you INITIATE a conversation this week?

- ☐ Yes—I'll ask someone about their faith background
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I'm too afraid
-

10. WHO WILL YOU TALK TO THIS WEEK?

From your list of LOST people (question #3), who will you have a Gospel conversation with THIS WEEK?

Name: _____

What will you say to START the conversation?

Example: "Can I ask—do you have any kind of faith background?"

When will you do it?

Day: _____ Time/Place: _____

SECTION 5: INVITING A RESPONSE

11. DO YOU INVITE RESPONSE?

When you share about Jesus (if you do), do you INVITE a response?

- ☐ Yes—I ask "Would you like to trust Jesus?"
- ☐ No—I just share and hope they figure it out
- ☐ I've never shared, so I haven't invited response

The truth:

Sharing without inviting response is INCOMPLETE evangelism.

Will you INVITE response this week?

- ☐ Yes—I'll ask them to respond
 - ☐ I'll try
 - ☐ I'm afraid to
-

12. WHAT IF THEY SAY NO?

If you share the Gospel and they say NO, will you:

- ☐ Love them, pray for them, stay in relationship

☐ Feel rejected and pull away

☐ Give up on them

Remember: A "no" today doesn't mean "no" forever. Keep praying. Keep loving. Keep the door open.

SECTION 6: THE URGENCY OF ETERNITY

13. DO YOU BELIEVE IN HELL?

Be honest. Do you REALLY believe people without Christ are headed for eternal separation from God?

☐ Yes—I believe in heaven and hell

☐ I'm not sure

☐ I don't like to think about it

If you BELIEVE it, does your LIFE reflect that urgency?

14. IF TODAY WAS THEIR LAST DAY:

If your LOST coworker/neighbor/family member died TODAY, where would they spend eternity?

Does that URGENCY change how you approach evangelism?

☐ Yes—I need to speak NOW

☐ Somewhat

☐ I still prioritize my comfort

SECTION 7: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

15. PRAY FOR BOLDNESS:

Will you pray DAILY this week for boldness to share the Gospel?

☐ Yes—I'll pray every morning

☐ I'll try

☐ Not ready

Prayer to pray:

"Father, give me BOLDNESS to speak about Jesus. Open doors. Prepare hearts. Give me courage to overcome fear."

16. WRITE YOUR TESTIMONY:

Will you WRITE OUT your testimony this week using the 3-part framework?

☐ Yes—I'll write it out (Before/Meeting/After Jesus)

☐ I'll try

☐ Not ready

When will you do it?

Day: _____

17. LEARN THE GOSPEL:

Will you MEMORIZE a simple Gospel outline this week?

☐ Yes—I'll use the framework from today (God/Sin/Christ/Response)

☐ I'll try

☐ Not ready

Practice explaining it to someone (even just a friend or family member who's already a Christian). Get comfortable with it.

18. INITIATE ONE GOSPEL CONVERSATION:

Who will you have a Gospel conversation with THIS WEEK?

Name: _____

What's your plan?

- ☐ Ask about their faith background
- ☐ Share my testimony
- ☐ Explain the Gospel
- ☐ Invite them to respond

When: _____

SECTION 8: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

19. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "My life is my witness—I don't need to speak"
- ☐ "I'm not qualified because I'm not perfect"
- ☐ "I don't know what to say"
- ☐ "I don't want to be pushy"
- ☐ "If I share, they'll reject me"
- ☐ "There's no urgency—I can wait"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

20. THE TRUTH ABOUT EVANGELISM:

Complete this sentence:

"Evangelism is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Evangelism is not optional. It's **COMMANDED**."
- "Evangelism is not just living. It's **SPEAKING**."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Evangelism is not optional—it's COMMANDED.

The Great Commission is for ME, not just pastors or evangelists.

I don't need to be perfect to share Jesus—I need to be FORGIVEN.

My LIFE creates the platform. My WORDS deliver the Gospel.

"Faith comes by HEARING"—they can't hear if I don't SPEAK.

I will not let FEAR of rejection keep me SILENT.

I will PRAY for boldness. I will KNOW my story. I will LEARN the Gospel.

I will INITIATE conversations. I will INVITE response.

People are LOST and running out of time. I will SPEAK.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16, NASB).

I will share the Gospel. Starting today.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been SILENT. I've justified my silence by calling it "living the Gospel," but the truth is—I've been AFRAID. Afraid of rejection. Afraid of being seen as "that guy." Afraid of not knowing what to say. Afraid of losing relationships. I've prioritized MY comfort over THEIR souls. I've cared more about being LIKED than being OBEDIENT. And people in my life are LOST because I've never told them about Jesus. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: The Great Commission is not a SUGGESTION—it's a COMMAND. Evangelism is not optional. It's not just for pastors or evangelists. It's for

ME. I don't need to be perfect to share Jesus. I just need to know MY story and THE Gospel. I don't need all the answers. I just need BOLDNESS to SPEAK.

Give me that boldness today, Father. Shatter every fear that keeps me silent. Remind me that rejection of the Gospel is not rejection of ME—it's rejection of CHRIST. Remind me that people CAN'T be saved without HEARING. And they can't hear if I don't SPEAK.

Help me PRAY for boldness. Help me WRITE my testimony. Help me LEARN the Gospel. Help me INITIATE conversations. Help me INVITE response. Give me eyes to see the URGENCY—people are running out of time.

I'm done being silent. I will SPEAK.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Faith comes by hearing"

Breathe out: "I will speak"

(Romans 10:17)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I created an opportunity to share Jesus TODAY?

Brief Prayer: Father, give me BOLDNESS to speak about Jesus.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did God open a door for the Gospel today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I share the Gospel today? Or stay silent?

- ☐ I shared (or initiated a conversation)
- ☐ I had an opportunity but stayed silent
- ☐ No opportunity presented itself

If I STAYED SILENT when I had an opportunity, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I choose MY comfort over THEIR soul today?

What was I afraid of?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for staying silent today. Forgive me for fearing rejection more than I care about their eternity.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding evangelism?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I shared the Gospel with _____ / Today I stayed silent because _____. The fear I need to overcome is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will create a Gospel conversation by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 32 ✓ - Faced my fear of evangelism. I've been SILENT when I should SPEAK. Tomorrow I'll initiate a Gospel conversation with _____. Pray for BOLDNESS. Faith comes by hearing."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 33: "Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I faced evangelism—speaking the Gospel to the LOST. Tomorrow I'll serve the BROKEN—compassion ministry. Give me eyes to see the hurting and hands to serve them. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: RESCUE REQUIRES WORDS

Theological Insight:

"How will they hear without a preacher?" – Romans 10:14 (NASB)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You can live a PERFECT life. You can serve sacrificially. You can be the kindest, most patient, most loving person anyone knows.

But if you never SPEAK about Jesus, people will stay LOST.

Because FAITH comes by HEARING.

Not by watching. HEARING.

You're a firefighter in a burning building.

You've entered the structure (you're PRESENT in people's lives).

You're searching for victims (you're SERVING them).

But if you never CALL OUT, they'll never know you're there.

You have to SPEAK.

"FIRE DEPARTMENT! CALL OUT!"

"We're here to HELP!"

"This is the WAY OUT!"

Same with the Gospel.

You have to SAY: "Can I tell you about JESUS?"

"This is the way to SALVATION."

"This is the way OUT of sin and death."

Your LIFE creates the platform.

But your WORDS deliver the message.

So this week, SPEAK.

Write your testimony. Learn the Gospel. Pray for boldness.

Then INITIATE a conversation.

You'll be scared. Your hands will shake. You'll stumble over your words.

But do it anyway.

Because someone's ETERNITY depends on it.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14, NASB).

They CAN'T be saved if they don't HEAR.

And they can't hear if you don't SPEAK.

Will you tell them?

40 STRONG - Day 32 Complete ✓

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Day 4

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16, NASB)

FAITH COMES BY HEARING. SPEAK THE GOSPEL.

MORNING: THE SUFFERING YOU LOOK AWAY FROM (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this prayer exposes something dark in my heart: I see suffering and I LOOK AWAY. I drive past the homeless man on the corner—I avoid eye contact. I hear about the refugee crisis—I change the channel. I see the single mom struggling—I rationalize why it's not my problem. I know there's a foster care crisis—I scroll past. I'm aware of human trafficking—I feel bad for a moment, then move on with my life. The broken are all around me. The hurting. The desperate. The marginalized. The forgotten. People living in poverty I can't imagine. People experiencing pain I've never known. People trapped in situations I've never faced. And I SEE them. But I don't HELP them. I feel a twinge of sympathy. I think, "That's sad." I might even pray a quick prayer: "God, help them." But then I go back to my comfortable life. I justify it by saying: "I can't help everyone." "I don't know how to help." "What difference would I make?" "There are organizations for that." "I have my own problems." And the truth is, Father, I'm NUMB. I've seen so much suffering on the news, on social media, in my own community—that I've become DESENSITIZED. Another tragedy. Another crisis. Another broken person. I scroll. I swipe. I look away. Because if I REALLY let myself FEEL their pain, if I REALLY let myself SEE their suffering—it would WRECK me. It would cost me. It would disrupt my comfortable life. It would require SACRIFICE. So I stay at a DISTANCE. I keep suffering at arm's length. I insulate myself with comfort, entertainment, busyness. I build walls between me and "those people." I live in my safe bubble while the world BURNS around me. And I call myself a Christian. I sing "Amazing Grace" while ignoring the grace-starved. I preach about Jesus who "had compassion on the crowds" while I walk past crowds without SEEING them. I quote "faith without works is dead" while my faith produces no works for the broken. This is hypocrisy, Father. And You see it. You see how I've compartmentalized my faith—Sunday = spiritual, Monday-Saturday = secular. You see how I've separated the Gospel from JUSTICE, MERCY, COMPASSION. You see how I've turned Christianity into a TICKET TO HEAVEN instead of a CALL TO SERVE. You see how I love the idea of helping the poor more than I love actually helping the poor. Forgive me, Father. Today, shatter my numbness. Break through my desensitization. Open my eyes to REALLY SEE the broken. Soften my heart to FEEL their pain. Move me from PITY to COMPASSION to ACTION. Teach me that faith without

compassion is DEAD. That loving God and ignoring "the least of these" is IMPOSSIBLE. That the Gospel is not just spiritual—it's HOLISTIC. Body AND soul. Bread AND truth. Justice AND mercy. Show me that Jesus didn't just preach—He HEALED. He didn't just speak—He TOUCHED. He didn't just offer spiritual hope—He met PRACTICAL needs. And He calls me to do the SAME. Help me see that serving the broken is not OPTIONAL—it's the evidence that my faith is REAL. Give me EYES to see. A HEART that breaks. HANDS that serve. And the COURAGE to act. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Serving the Broken

Read these slowly. Let them wreck your comfort.

THE LEAST OF THESE - THE JUDGMENT STANDARD:

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats... Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:31-32, 34-40, NASB).

When you serve the LEAST of these, you serve JESUS.

When you IGNORE the least of these, you ignore JESUS.

This is the JUDGMENT STANDARD.

PURE RELIGION:

"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27, NASB).

PURE religion = caring for the VULNERABLE.

Orphans. Widows. The defenseless. The broken.

Not JUST personal holiness. HOLINESS + COMPASSION.

JESUS HAD COMPASSION:

"Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, NASB).

Jesus SAW the people. Not just glanced. SAW.

He FELT compassion. Deep, gut-wrenching care.

They were DISTRESSED. DISPIRITED. Like sheep without a shepherd.

And He ACTED. He healed. He taught. He fed. He served.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN - COMPASSION IN ACTION:

"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you'" (Luke 10:33-35, NASB).

He SAW. He FELT compassion. He ACTED.

He didn't just pray. He didn't just feel bad.

He STOPPED. He HELPED. He PAID. He FOLLOWED UP.

Compassion = ACTION.

OPEN YOUR HAND TO THE POOR:

"If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall

generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks" (Deuteronomy 15:7-8, NASB).

Do NOT harden your heart. Do NOT close your hand.

OPEN your hand. GENEROUSLY.

Sufficient for his NEED.

SPEAK UP FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT SPEAK:

"Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9, NASB).

SPEAK UP. Don't stay silent.

For the MUTE. The UNFORTUNATE. The AFFLICTED. The NEEDY.

DEFEND their rights. Be their ADVOCATE.

DO NOT OPPRESS THE VULNERABLE:

"Thus has the LORD of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another'" (Zechariah 7:9-10, NASB).

JUSTICE. KINDNESS. COMPASSION.

Do NOT oppress the vulnerable.

Do NOT devise evil against them.

PROTECT them.

WHOEVER HAS THE WORLD'S GOODS:

"But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:17-18, NASB).

If you **HAVE** and you **SEE** someone in **NEED** and you **CLOSE YOUR HEART**—the love of God does **NOT** abide in you.

Love is not just **WORDS**. It's **DEEDS**. **TRUTH**. **ACTION**.

JESUS HEALED THE BROKEN:

"And Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23, NASB).

Jesus didn't **JUST** preach. He **HEALED**.

He met **SPIRITUAL** needs **AND** **PHYSICAL** needs.

Gospel **AND** compassion. Truth **AND** mercy.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Who are the **BROKEN** in your world?

Who is hurting, suffering, desperate?

Have you **SEEN** them? Or looked away?

Teaching: The Difference Between Pity and Compassion

Here's the lie most men believe about serving the broken:

"I feel bad for them. I really do. Poverty is terrible. Suffering is awful. I wish things were different. But what can I **DO**? I'm just one person. The problem is too **BIG**. There are organizations for that. I'll pray for them. Maybe donate some money. But personally **GET INVOLVED**? I don't have time. I don't know how. It's too messy. Too complicated. Too overwhelming."

Translation: You've turned **COMPASSION** into **PITY** and convinced yourself that **FEELING BAD** is the same as **DOING GOOD**.

And when compassion becomes pity, nothing **CHANGES**.

Theological Insight:

"Compassion is not feeling sorry for people. Compassion is entering into their suffering, bearing their burden, and acting to relieve it. Pity observes from a distance. Compassion gets close. Pity makes you feel better. Compassion costs you something." – Henri Nouwen (paraphrase)

Pity vs. Compassion: What's the Difference?

PITY (Feeling Without Action):

What it looks like:

- You **FEEL** bad when you see suffering
- You think, "That's so sad"
- You might pray: "God, help them"
- You might donate money (from a distance)
- But you stay **SEPARATED** from their pain
- You don't get personally **INVOLVED**
- You look away and move on with your life

What it sounds like:

- "I wish I could help, but..."
- "That's terrible, but what can I do?"
- "Someone should do something"
- "I'll pray for them"

Why it feels safe:

- No personal cost (just feelings)
- No disruption to your life
- No mess, no complexity
- You feel like a "good person" for caring

The problem:

- **NOTHING CHANGES**
 - **The broken stay broken**
 - **Your pity doesn't feed, clothe, heal, or rescue anyone**
 - **You've mistaken EMOTION for ACTION**
-

COMPASSION (Suffering With, Acting For):

What it looks like:

- **You SEE the suffering (don't look away)**
- **You FEEL their pain (gut-level empathy)**
- **You ENTER their world (proximity, not distance)**
- **You ACT to relieve their suffering (practical help)**
- **You SACRIFICE something (time, money, comfort, safety)**
- **You stay ENGAGED (long-term, not one-time)**

What it sounds like:

- **"How can I help?"**
- **"What do you need?"**
- **"I'm going to DO something"**
- **"I'll walk with you through this"**

Why it's costly:

- **Requires SACRIFICE (time, money, energy)**
- **Disrupts your LIFE (it's messy, complicated)**
- **Demands PROXIMITY (you get close to pain)**
- **No guarantee of SUCCESS (some problems are huge)**

The promise:

- **LIVES are changed**
- **Suffering is RELIEVED (even if not eliminated)**

- You become the **HANDS** and **FEET** of Jesus
- You obey the **GOSPEL**

The Chart:

PITY	COMPASSION
Feeling bad from afar	Entering their suffering
"That's sad"	"How can I help?"
Pray but don't act	Pray AND act
Stay separated	Get close
Donate from distance	Personal involvement
One-time gesture	Long-term commitment
Keeps you comfortable	Costs you something
Makes YOU feel better	Actually HELPS them
Nothing changes	Lives are changed

Which describes your **ACTUAL** response to suffering?

Most men **FEEL** pity. Few practice **COMPASSION**.

Why?

Why You Avoid Serving the Broken

REASON #1: IT'S OVERWHELMING (The Problem Is Too Big)

The excuse: "There's so much suffering. Poverty. Homelessness. Addiction. Abuse. Trafficking. Refugees. Foster care crisis. Where do I even **START**? I can't fix everything. So why try?"

The truth: You can't fix EVERYTHING. But you can help SOMEONE.

"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40, NASB).

ONE. Even ONE. Jesus sees it.

When you let the SIZE of the problem paralyze you, you help NO ONE.

REASON #2: IT'S MESSY (You Don't Want Complications)

The reality: Serving the broken is:

- **COMPLICATED** (their problems are layered)
- **MESSY** (addiction, mental illness, trauma, dysfunction)
- **UNPREDICTABLE** (they might relapse, disappoint you, take advantage)
- **DRAINING** (compassion fatigue is real)

So you AVOID it. You stay in your clean, predictable, controlled life.

The truth: Jesus entered the MESS. He touched lepers. He ate with sinners. He got DIRTY.

If you only serve when it's CLEAN, you'll never serve the broken.

When you prioritize COMFORT over COMPASSION, you're not following Jesus.

REASON #3: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP (So You Don't Try)

The struggle: "I want to help, but I don't know HOW. What if I make it worse? What if I enable them? What if I say the wrong thing? I don't have training. I'm not a social worker."

The truth: You don't need to be an EXPERT. You need to be WILLING.

Start SMALL. Ask: "What do you need?" LISTEN. Then DO what you can.

When you wait to be "qualified," you'll never START.

REASON #4: YOU'RE AFRAID OF BEING USED (They Might Take Advantage)

The fear: "What if they're lying? What if they use the money for drugs? What if they're scamming me? I've been burned before."

The truth: Yes, some people will take advantage. That's the RISK of compassion.

But would you rather:

- **Risk being used but HELP someone truly in need?**
- **Or protect yourself and potentially ignore someone Jesus sent you to serve?**

When fear of being used keeps you from helping, you've chosen SAFETY over OBEDIENCE.

REASON #5: YOU'VE BECOME NUMB (Compassion Fatigue)

The reality: You've seen SO MUCH SUFFERING (news, social media, everywhere) that you're DESENSITIZED.

Another crisis. Another tragedy. Scroll. Swipe. Move on.

You feel nothing because you've learned to SHUT DOWN to protect yourself.

The truth: Numbness is a DEFENSE MECHANISM. But it's not CHRISTLIKE.

Jesus never became NUMB. He kept FEELING. Kept SEEING. Kept ACTING.

When you allow numbness to protect you from pain, you also cut yourself off from COMPASSION.

REASON #6: YOU SEPARATE "SPIRITUAL" FROM "PHYSICAL" (False Dichotomy)

The lie: "My job is to share the GOSPEL, not fix social problems. I care about their SOUL, not just their circumstances. Feeding the hungry is nice, but SAVING them is what matters."

The truth: Jesus did BOTH. He preached AND healed. He taught AND fed.

"Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease" (Matthew 4:23, NASB).

Gospel AND compassion. Truth AND mercy. Both/and, not either/or.

When you separate spiritual from physical, you've created a FALSE Gospel.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Triage and Total Commitment

In firefighting and emergency medicine, there's a concept called TRIAGE.

What it is: When you arrive on scene with MULTIPLE casualties, you assess and prioritize:

- **Red tag (immediate): Life-threatening, need help NOW**
- **Yellow tag (delayed): Serious but stable, can wait**
- **Green tag (minor): Walking wounded, minimal care needed**
- **Black tag (deceased): Beyond help**

You can't save everyone. So you prioritize to save the MOST lives.

Here's the parallel for compassion ministry:

You CAN'T help everyone. The need is overwhelming.

But you CAN:

- **ASSESS** the needs around you
- **PRIORITIZE** where God is calling you
- **COMMIT** fully to THAT mission
- **Trust God** with the rest

You don't have to fix EVERY problem. But you DO need to address SOME.

And here's the other reality:

When firefighters commit to a rescue, they go ALL IN.

They don't stand outside and PRAY for the person inside.

They don't just FEEL BAD for them.

They ENTER the fire. They RISK their lives. They DO whatever it takes.

Same with compassion ministry.

When God calls you to serve the broken, GO ALL IN.

Don't just pray. ACT.

Don't just feel bad. GET INVOLVED.

Don't stay at a distance. GET CLOSE.

Who Are "The Broken"? (Getting Specific)

Let's identify WHO the broken are in YOUR world:

1. THE POOR/HOMELESS

Who they are:

- **People living in poverty**
- **Homeless individuals and families**
- **People struggling to afford food, housing, basic needs**

How to serve:

- **Volunteer at homeless shelters or food banks**
 - **Buy meals, not just give money (if you're concerned about misuse)**
 - **Provide practical items (socks, hygiene kits, blankets)**
 - **Support organizations addressing root causes (job training, addiction recovery, mental health)**
 - **LISTEN to their stories (they're humans, not statistics)**
-

2. THE SICK/DISABLED

Who they are:

- **People battling chronic illness**
- **People with disabilities**
- **Elderly facing health challenges**
- **Families caring for sick loved ones**

How to serve:

- Visit hospitals, nursing homes
 - Provide meals for families dealing with illness
 - Offer respite care for caregivers
 - Help with practical needs (rides to appointments, yard work, errands)
 - PRESENCE matters (just show up, sit with them)
-

3. ORPHANS/FOSTER KIDS

Who they are:

- Kids in foster care (400,000+ in the U.S.)
- Orphans globally
- Kids waiting for adoption

How to serve:

- Become a foster parent or adoptive parent
 - Support foster families (meals, respite care, donations)
 - Mentor foster kids
 - Volunteer with foster care organizations
 - Advocate for policy changes
-

4. WIDOWS/SINGLE PARENTS

Who they are:

- Widows struggling alone
- Single moms/dads overwhelmed

How to serve:

- Help with home repairs, yard work, car maintenance
- Provide childcare so they can rest
- Include them in holidays/family events (loneliness is real)

- Financial support when appropriate
 - HONOR them (don't stigmatize)
-

5. VICTIMS OF ABUSE/TRAFFICKING

Who they are:

- Domestic violence survivors
- Human trafficking victims (sex trafficking, labor trafficking)
- People trapped in exploitation

How to serve:

- Support organizations combating trafficking (financially, volunteer)
 - Learn the signs of trafficking and report
 - Support safe houses and shelters
 - Advocate for victims (legal, emotional, spiritual support)
 - Create awareness (educate your community)
-

6. REFUGEES/IMMIGRANTS

Who they are:

- People fleeing war, persecution, disaster
- Immigrants starting over in a new country

How to serve:

- Help with resettlement (housing, furniture, job search)
 - Teach English
 - Navigate systems (healthcare, education, legal)
 - Welcome them into your community (friendship, not just charity)
 - Advocate for just immigration policies
-

7. THE ADDICTED

Who they are:

- **People battling addiction (drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling)**
- **Families affected by addiction**

How to serve:

- **Support recovery programs (financially, volunteer)**
 - **Mentor people in recovery**
 - **Provide accountability**
 - **Celebrate small victories**
 - **Don't give up when they relapse (recovery is a process)**
-

8. THE IMPRISONED/EX-OFFENDERS

Who they are:

- **People currently incarcerated**
- **Ex-offenders reentering society**

How to serve:

- **Prison ministry (visit, write letters, mentor)**
 - **Support reentry programs (job training, housing)**
 - **Hire ex-offenders (give second chances)**
 - **Walk with them through reintegration (it's HARD)**
 - **Advocate for justice reform**
-

9. THE MENTALLY ILL

Who they are:

- **People battling mental illness (depression, anxiety, PTSD, schizophrenia, etc.)**
- **Families caring for mentally ill loved ones**

How to serve:

- **Educate yourself on mental illness (reduce stigma)**
 - **Support mental health ministries**
 - **Be patient, compassionate (don't dismiss or spiritualize)**
 - **Encourage professional help (therapy, medication are NOT unspiritual)**
 - **LISTEN without judgment**
-

10. VICTIMS OF DISASTER/CRISIS

Who they are:

- **People affected by natural disasters (hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes)**
- **Refugees from war zones**
- **Communities in crisis**

How to serve:

- **Donate to disaster relief**
 - **Volunteer for rebuild efforts**
 - **Provide temporary housing**
 - **Long-term support (crises don't end when the news cycle moves on)**
-

How to Serve the Broken: Practical Steps

Here's how to actually HELP (not just feel bad):

STEP 1: SEE THEM (Don't Look Away)

What it looks like:

- **Make EYE CONTACT with the homeless person**
- **Don't change the channel when you see suffering**
- **Don't scroll past stories of pain**

- **NOTICE** the broken in your community

Why it matters: You can't serve who you don't **SEE**.

Practical: This week, **STOP** and make eye contact with someone you'd normally avoid. **SEE** them as a **PERSON**.

STEP 2: FEEL THEIR PAIN (Let Your Heart Break)

What it looks like:

- **Don't NUMB** yourself to suffering
- **Let yourself FEEL** the weight of their pain
- **Ask God** to give you **HIS** heart for the broken

Why it matters: Compassion begins with **FEELING**.

Practical: Pray: "God, break my heart for what breaks Yours."

STEP 3: GET CLOSE (Proximity, Not Distance)

What it looks like:

- **Don't serve from AFAR** (just donate money)
- **Get CLOSE** to the broken (visit, volunteer, build relationship)
- **Enter their WORLD** (don't expect them to come to yours)

Why it matters: Proximity breeds empathy. Distance breeds apathy.

Practical: This month, volunteer at **ONE** place where the broken are (shelter, prison, hospital, etc.).

STEP 4: ASK "WHAT DO YOU NEED?" (Don't Assume)

What it looks like:

- **Don't decide** for them what they need
- **ASK:** "How can I help? What do you need?"
- **LISTEN** to their answer

- Meet the **ACTUAL** need (not what you think they need)

Why it matters: Dignity means letting them **TELL** you what would help.

Practical: Next time you want to help, **ASK** first. Then act based on their answer.

STEP 5: MEET PRACTICAL NEEDS (Do Something Tangible)

What it looks like:

- Provide **FOOD** (meals, groceries, restaurant gift cards)
- Provide **SHELTER** (housing, hotel, safe place)
- Provide **CLOTHING** (coats, shoes, professional clothes for job interviews)
- Provide **TRANSPORTATION** (rides to appointments, work)
- Provide **FINANCIAL HELP** (rent, bills, **BUT** with wisdom)

Why it matters: "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" (James 2:15-16, NASB).

Faith without WORKS is dead.

Practical: This week, meet **ONE PRACTICAL NEED** for someone broken.

STEP 6: COMBINE COMPASSION WITH TRUTH (Gospel + Mercy)

What it looks like:

- Meet **PHYSICAL** needs (food, shelter, etc.)
- **AND** share the **GOSPEL** (they need Jesus)
- Don't do **ONLY** social work (they need more than bread)
- Don't do **ONLY** preaching (they need bread too)

Why it matters: Jesus met **BOTH** needs. So should you.

Practical: As you serve, look for opportunities to share **HOPE** in Christ.

STEP 7: COMMIT LONG-TERM (Not Just One-Time)

What it looks like:

- Don't just do a one-time project
- Build ONGOING RELATIONSHIP
- Walk WITH them through the journey (recovery, healing, rebuilding)
- Stay even when it's HARD

Why it matters: Real transformation takes TIME. One-time help is nice. Long-term commitment is LOVE.

Practical: Pick ONE person or ONE organization and commit for 6-12 months.

STEP 8: INVITE OTHERS (Don't Do It Alone)

What it looks like:

- Invite your FAMILY to serve together
- Invite your SMALL GROUP
- Mobilize your CHURCH
- Partner with ORGANIZATIONS already doing the work

Why it matters: You can do MORE together. And it creates a culture of compassion.

Practical: This month, invite 2-3 people to serve WITH you.

The Balance: Compassion Without Enabling

One of the FEARS people have about helping the broken is: "What if I ENABLE them?"

Valid concern. Here's the balance:

ENABLING (Helps You Feel Good, Hurts Them Long-Term):

What it looks like:

- You do everything FOR them (rob them of dignity)
- You give without ANY accountability

- You rescue them from consequences they need to face
- You create **DEPENDENCY** instead of empowerment
- You ignore **ROOT** issues (just treat symptoms)

Example: Giving money to an active addict without addressing the addiction = ENABLING.

EMPOWERING (Helps Them Long-Term, Even If Harder):

What it looks like:

- You help **WITH** them (not just **FOR** them—they participate)
- You provide help **WITH** accountability
- You address **ROOT** causes (addiction, job skills, trauma)
- You help them build **INDEPENDENCE**
- You set healthy **BOUNDARIES**

Example: Paying for rehab, walking with them through recovery, celebrating sobriety = EMPOWERING.

The principle:

Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach him to fish, feed him for life.

BUT: If he's STARVING, give him the fish FIRST. Then teach him.

Meet immediate need. THEN address root causes.

The Hard Truth: You Will Be Taken Advantage Of

Here's the reality:

SOME people will take advantage of your compassion.

They'll lie. They'll manipulate. They'll use you.

And that's the COST of compassion.

"Give to everyone who asks of you" (Luke 6:30, NASB).

EVERYONE. Even the ones who might misuse it.

"But what if they use my money for drugs?"

Then they're accountable to GOD for that. You're accountable for YOUR obedience.

Your job is to GIVE with wisdom and discernment. Their job is to steward what you gave.

Yes, use wisdom:

- **Give FOOD instead of cash (if you're concerned)**
- **Give through ORGANIZATIONS you trust**
- **Set BOUNDARIES to protect yourself from being repeatedly used**

But don't let fear of being used keep you from HELPING.

Better to risk being used occasionally than to ignore someone Jesus sent you to serve.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from pity to compassion)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. PITY OR COMPASSION?

Be BRUTALLY honest. When you see suffering, do you practice:

- ☐ **Pity (feel bad from afar, don't act)**
- ☐ **Compassion (feel their pain, get close, act)**
- ☐ **Numbness (don't feel anything anymore)**

What would your ACTIONS (not your feelings) reveal?

2. DO YOU LOOK AWAY?

When you see suffering (homeless person, news story, person in crisis), do you:

☐ Look away and move on

☐ Feel bad but do nothing

☐ Stop and help

Be honest: How often do you LOOK AWAY?

3. HAVE YOU SERVED THE BROKEN?

When's the last time you personally served someone who was:

- **Poor/homeless?** _____
- **Sick/disabled?** _____
- **An orphan/foster kid?** _____
- **A widow/single parent?** _____
- **A victim of abuse/trafficking?** _____
- **A refugee/immigrant?** _____
- **Addicted?** _____
- **Imprisoned/ex-offender?** _____
- **Mentally ill?** _____

If you can't remember recent service in ANY of these areas, you're NOT serving the broken.

SECTION 2: WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

4. WHY DO YOU AVOID SERVING THE BROKEN?

What's your #1 reason for NOT serving the broken?

☐ It's overwhelming (problem is too big)

☐ It's messy (too complicated)

☐ I don't know how to help

- ☐ I'm afraid of being used
- ☐ I've become numb (compassion fatigue)
- ☐ I separate spiritual from physical (just preach, don't serve)
- ☐ Other: _____

For the reason you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

5. ARE YOU NUMB?

Have you become DESENSITIZED to suffering?

- ☐ Yes—I see suffering and feel nothing
- ☐ Sometimes—I've learned to shut down
- ☐ No—I still feel deeply

If YES, will you ask God to BREAK your heart again?

- ☐ Yes—I'll pray: "God, break my heart for what breaks Yours"
- ☐ I'm afraid of feeling that much pain
- ☐ I like being numb (it protects me)

SECTION 3: THE "LEAST OF THESE"

6. MATTHEW 25:31-46 - THE JUDGMENT STANDARD:

"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."

Jesus says serving the broken = serving HIM.

Ignoring the broken = ignoring HIM.

Does this change how you view compassion ministry?

- ☐ Yes—I see it as serving Jesus now

☐ Somewhat—I'm processing this

☐ No—I still see it as optional

What do your ACTIONS reveal about your faith?

7. "PURE RELIGION":

"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27, NASB).

Do you practice "pure religion"?

☐ Yes—I regularly serve the vulnerable

☐ Rarely—I serve occasionally but not regularly

☐ No—I focus on personal holiness but not compassion

If NO or RARELY, what needs to change?

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL COMPASSION

8. WHO IS ONE BROKEN PERSON YOU'LL SERVE?

From the categories listed (poor, sick, orphan, widow, abused, refugee, addicted, imprisoned, mentally ill, disaster victim), who is ONE PERSON you can serve THIS WEEK?

Name/description: _____

What do they need?

☐ Food

☐ Shelter/housing

☐ Clothing

☐ Transportation

- ☐ Financial help
- ☐ Companionship/presence
- ☐ Advocacy/speaking up for them
- ☐ Other: _____

What will you DO?

When?

Day: _____ **Time:** _____

9. WHERE WILL YOU VOLUNTEER?

What's ONE place you can volunteer THIS MONTH where the broken are?

- ☐ Homeless shelter
- ☐ Food bank
- ☐ Hospital/nursing home
- ☐ Foster care organization
- ☐ Prison ministry
- ☐ Refugee resettlement
- ☐ Recovery program
- ☐ Other: _____

When will you sign up?

10. WILL YOU GET CLOSE?

Serving the broken requires PROXIMITY (getting close).

Will you:

- ☐ Visit a place where the broken are (shelter, prison, hospital)

- ☐ Invite a broken person into your HOME (meal, hospitality)
- ☐ Build a RELATIONSHIP (not just donate from afar)
- ☐ All of the above

If you're hesitant, what's stopping you?

SECTION 5: COMPASSION + TRUTH

11. ARE YOU COMBINING GOSPEL + MERCY?

When you serve the broken, do you:

- ☐ Meet physical needs ONLY (social work, no Gospel)
- ☐ Preach the Gospel ONLY (no practical help)
- ☐ BOTH (meet needs AND share hope in Christ)

The truth:

Jesus did BOTH. He healed AND preached.

Will you do the same?

- ☐ Yes—I'll meet needs and share the Gospel
 - ☐ I lean toward one or the other—I need balance
-

12. HAVE YOU SHARED JESUS WITH THE BROKEN?

When you serve the broken, have you shared the GOSPEL?

- ☐ Yes—I look for opportunities to share hope
- ☐ Sometimes—but I'm hesitant
- ☐ No—I just meet physical needs

If NO, why not?

- ☐ I don't want to seem manipulative ("help with strings attached")
- ☐ I'm afraid they'll reject the Gospel

- ☐ I don't know how to bring it up
- ☐ I think meeting needs IS the Gospel

Remember: Meeting needs WITHOUT pointing to Jesus is social work, not Gospel ministry. Do BOTH.

SECTION 6: LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

13. ONE-TIME OR ONGOING?

When you serve the broken, is it:

- ☐ One-time (single project, then done)
- ☐ Occasional (when it's convenient)
- ☐ Ongoing (committed long-term relationship)

The truth:

One-time help is nice. Long-term commitment is LOVE.

Will you commit to serving ONE person or ONE organization for 6-12 months?

- ☐ Yes—I'll commit long-term
- ☐ I'll try
- ☐ That feels like too much

Who/what will you commit to?

14. WILL YOU INVITE OTHERS?

Will you invite others to serve WITH you?

- ☐ Yes—I'll invite family/friends/small group
- ☐ I'll try
- ☐ I want to serve alone

Who will you invite?

SECTION 7: COMPASSION WITHOUT ENABLING

15. ARE YOU ENABLING OR EMPOWERING?

When you help the broken, do you:

- ☐ **Enable (do everything FOR them, create dependency)**
- ☐ **Empower (help WITH them, build independence)**
- ☐ **I'm not sure**

Example of ENABLING:

Giving money repeatedly without addressing ROOT issues.

Example of EMPOWERING:

Helping them get into recovery, job training, therapy—addressing ROOT causes.

What's ONE way you can EMPOWER (not just enable) this week?

16. HAVE YOU BEEN TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF?

Have you been taken advantage of when trying to help?

- ☐ **Yes—and it made me hesitant to help again**
- ☐ **Yes—but I kept serving anyway**
- ☐ **No—I've never tried to help**

If YES, will you let that STOP you from serving?

- ☐ **No—I'll keep serving with wisdom**
- ☐ **Yes—I'm too afraid of being used again**

Remember: Risk of being used is the COST of compassion. Don't let fear stop you from obeying.

SECTION 8: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

17. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "The problem is too big—I can't make a difference"
- ☐ "Serving the broken is too messy/complicated"
- ☐ "I don't know how to help"
- ☐ "They might take advantage of me"
- ☐ "I just need to preach—practical help is optional"
- ☐ "Someone else will help them"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

18. THE TRUTH ABOUT SERVING THE BROKEN:

Complete this sentence:

"Serving the broken is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Serving the broken is not optional. It's the EVIDENCE of real faith."
- "Serving the broken is not just social work. It's GOSPEL ministry."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Serving the broken is not optional—it's the EVIDENCE of real faith.

I will not look away from suffering. I will SEE them.

I will not just feel pity. I will practice COMPASSION.

I will not stay at a distance. I will get CLOSE.

I will not just donate money. I will get INVOLVED.

I will meet PRACTICAL needs. I will share the GOSPEL. Both/and.

I will commit LONG-TERM. Not just one-time projects.

When I serve "the least of these," I serve JESUS.

"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27, NASB).

I will serve the broken. Starting today.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've LOOKED AWAY from suffering. I've felt PITY but practiced no COMPASSION. I've stayed at a DISTANCE to protect my comfort. I've been NUMB to pain. I've separated the Gospel from MERCY, truth from JUSTICE. I've sung about Your love while ignoring those who desperately NEED that love. I've claimed to follow Jesus while avoiding the very people He SOUGHT. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Serving the broken is not OPTIONAL. It's the evidence that my faith is REAL. When I serve "the least of these," I serve JESUS. When I ignore them, I ignore HIM.

Break my heart, Father. Shatter my numbness. Open my eyes to REALLY SEE the broken. Soften my heart to FEEL their pain. Move me from pity to ACTION.

Show me WHO You're calling me to serve. Give me COURAGE to get close. Give me WISDOM to help without enabling. Give me ENDURANCE to commit long-term. And remind me that the Gospel is BOTH spiritual and physical—truth AND mercy, bread AND hope.

I'm done looking away. I will SEE. I will FEEL. I will ACT.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "Open my eyes"

Breathe out: "To serve the broken"

(Matthew 25:40)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Have I SEEN suffering today? Did I act or look away?

Brief Prayer: Father, give me eyes to see and a heart that acts.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Where did I see Jesus in "the least of these" today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I serve the broken today? Or look away?

☐ **I served (met a need, showed compassion)**

☐ **I saw suffering but looked away**

☐ **I felt pity but didn't act**

If I LOOKED AWAY, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I choose MY COMFORT over THEIR PAIN today?

What does that reveal?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for looking away from suffering today. Forgive me for staying comfortable while others suffer.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding the broken?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I saw suffering in _____. I responded by _____ (or didn't respond because _____). The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will serve the broken by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 33 ✓ - Faced my avoidance of the broken. I've been looking away. Tomorrow I'll serve _____ (specific person/organization) by meeting _____ (specific need). Pray for compassion, not just pity."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 34: "Steward Your Resources - Generosity"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I faced serving the broken—compassion ministry. Tomorrow I'll learn to STEWARD my resources—generosity with time, money, and gifts. Teach me that everything I have is YOURS. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: WHEN YOU SERVE THEM, YOU SERVE ME

Theological Insight:

"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." – Matthew 25:40 (NASB)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

The broken are all around you.

The homeless man on the corner. The refugee family. The foster kid. The widow. The sick. The addicted. The imprisoned.

And Jesus says: When you serve THEM, you serve ME.

When you feed the hungry, you feed JESUS.

When you clothe the naked, you clothe JESUS.

When you visit the prisoner, you visit JESUS.

This is not METAPHOR. This is REALITY.

Jesus IDENTIFIES with the broken.

So when you IGNORE them, you ignore HIM.

When you LOOK AWAY from their suffering, you look away from HIS face.

You can't love Jesus and ignore "the least of these."

So this week, SERVE.

Don't just feel bad. ACT.

Don't stay at a distance. Get CLOSE.

Don't donate from afar. Get INVOLVED.

Find ONE person who's broken. Ask: "What do you need?"

Then MEET that need.

Feed them. Clothe them. Visit them. Walk with them.

And when you do, you're serving JESUS HIMSELF.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:17-18, NASB).

Don't love with WORDS only.

Love in DEED and TRUTH.

Serve the broken.

40 STRONG - Day 33 Complete ✓

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Day 5

"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40, NASB)

WHEN YOU SERVE THE BROKEN, YOU SERVE JESUS.

40 STRONG - DAY 34

STEWARD YOUR RESOURCES - GENEROSITY WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others

MORNING: THE GRIP YOU WON'T LOOSEN (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this prayer forces me to confront something I protect fiercely: MY MONEY. MY TIME. MY STUFF. And if I'm brutally honest? I have a CLOSED FIST. I SAY I trust You. I SAY You're my provider. I SAY everything I have comes from You. But when it comes to actually GIVING—to actually opening my hand and releasing what I'm gripping—I hesitate. I calculate. I rationalize. I hold back. Because deep down, I believe a lie: "This is MINE. I EARNED it. I worked hard for it. I deserve to keep it. I need it for MY security, MY comfort, MY future." I give—but only what's COMFORTABLE. Only what doesn't cost me anything. Only what I won't miss. I'll give a few dollars here and there. I'll throw some change in the offering plate. I'll donate old clothes I don't wear anymore. But SACRIFICIAL giving? RADICAL generosity? Actually trusting You with my FINANCES? That terrifies me. Because money equals CONTROL. Money equals SECURITY. Money equals POWER. And if I loosen my grip on my money, I'm vulnerable. I'm dependent. I'm TRUSTING You instead of trusting my BANK ACCOUNT. The same is true with my TIME. I say I don't have time to serve. I don't have time to volunteer. I don't have time for people. But the truth is—I have PLENTY of time. I just spend it on MYSELF. Netflix. Sports. Hobbies. Scrolling. Entertainment. I have time for what I WANT. I just don't have time for what You're CALLING

me to. And my TALENTS, my GIFTS? I use them to advance MY career, build MY platform, earn MY recognition. I rarely use them to build YOUR kingdom. I'm talented. I'm gifted. I'm capable. But I'm using it all for MYSELF. This is IDOLATRY, Father. I've made an idol out of MONEY, TIME, and CONTROL. I've built my security on what I can ACCUMULATE, MANAGE, and POSSESS. I've gripped tightly to what was never MINE in the first place. Because everything I have is YOURS. My money? You gave it. My time? You gave it. My talents? You gave them. My possessions? You provided them. I'm not the OWNER. I'm the STEWARD. The MANAGER. The TEMPORARY CUSTODIAN. And one day I'll stand before You and give an ACCOUNT for how I stewarded what You entrusted to me. Did I use it for YOUR kingdom? Or MY comfort? Did I give generously? Or hoard selfishly? Did I trust YOU? Or trust my bank account? Right now, Father, I'm failing that test. I'm hoarding. I'm gripping. I'm trusting the GIFT more than the GIVER. Forgive me. Today, teach me that You OWN it all. That I'm just a steward, not an owner. Teach me that GENEROSITY is not about what I can AFFORD—it's about TRUST. Teach me that the more I GRIP, the more I LOSE. But the more I RELEASE, the more I GAIN. Teach me that I can't out-give You. That You're not asking me to give because You NEED my money—You're asking me to give so I can experience FREEDOM. Freedom from the love of money. Freedom from greed. Freedom from the illusion that STUFF can satisfy. Pry open my closed fist, Father. Teach me to hold EVERYTHING with an open hand. Help me give JOYFULLY, SACRIFICIALLY, RADICALLY. Not out of guilt. Not out of obligation. But out of GRATITUDE for what You've given me. Everything I have is Yours. Help me LIVE like it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Stewardship and Generosity

Read these slowly. Let them expose your grip.

GOD OWNS EVERYTHING:

"The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psalm 24:1, NASB).

The earth is the LORD'S. Not yours. HIS.

ALL it contains. Your house. Your car. Your bank account. Your stuff.
ALL of it belongs to GOD.

You're not the OWNER. You're the STEWARD.

EVERYTHING COMES FROM GOD:

"But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You" (1 Chronicles 29:14, NASB).

ALL THINGS come from GOD.

When you give, you're not giving YOUR stuff. You're giving HIS stuff BACK to Him.

YOU'RE A STEWARD, NOT AN OWNER:

"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2, NIV).

You've been given a TRUST. A stewardship. A responsibility.

God will hold you ACCOUNTABLE for how you managed what He entrusted to you.

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21, NASB).

EARTH treasures = temporary, perishable, stealable.

HEAVEN treasures = eternal, permanent, secure.

WHERE your treasure is = WHERE your heart is.

If your treasure is on earth (bank account, possessions), your HEART is there too.

YOU CAN'T SERVE GOD AND MONEY:

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24, NASB).

CANNOT. Not "it's hard." CANNOT.

You WILL serve one. The question is: WHICH?

THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF EVIL:

"For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10, NASB).

The LOVE of money (not money itself) = root of evil.

It causes people to WANDER from faith. To PIERCE themselves with griefs.

GIVE AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU:

"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38, NASB).

GIVE. And God gives BACK.

Not so you can hoard. But so you can give AGAIN.

Generosity creates a CYCLE, not a dead end.

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING:

"And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the

offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on" (Luke 21:1-4, NASB).

The rich gave from SURPLUS. Didn't cost them anything.

The widow gave from POVERTY. It cost her EVERYTHING.

God measures generosity not by AMOUNT but by SACRIFICE.

BRING THE WHOLE TITHE:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows'" (Malachi 3:10, NASB).

Bring the WHOLE tithe (10%).

TEST God in this. He PROMISES to provide.

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER:

"Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7, NASB).

Not GRUDGINGLY. Not out of COMPULSION.

CHEERFULLY. Joyfully. Because giving is WORSHIP.

THOSE WHO SOW GENEROUSLY:

"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6, NASB).

Sow SPARINGLY = reap SPARINGLY.

Sow BOUNTIFULLY = reap BOUNTIFULLY.

You reap what you sow. In generosity too.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Think about YOUR resources:

- Your MONEY (how much do you give?)
- Your TIME (how much do you serve?)
- Your TALENTS (are you using them for God's kingdom or your advancement?)

Are you holding with an OPEN HAND or a CLOSED FIST?

Teaching: The Difference Between Ownership and Stewardship

Here's the lie most men believe about their resources:

"It's MY money. I EARNED it. I worked hard for it. I deserve to spend it how I want. I'll give a little to the church, help out when I can, but the rest is MINE. Same with my time—it's MINE. I work all week, I deserve to do what I want with my free time. And my talents? I use them to advance my career, provide for my family, build my future. That's not selfish—that's RESPONSIBLE."

Translation: You've turned STEWARDSHIP into OWNERSHIP and convinced yourself that what God GAVE you is actually YOURS.

And when you believe you're the owner, generosity becomes OPTIONAL.

Theological Insight:

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill

"God doesn't need your money. He wants your heart. And He knows that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." – Randy Alcorn (paraphrase)

Ownership vs. Stewardship: What's the Difference?

OWNERSHIP (The Illusion):

What it looks like:

- You believe: "This is MY money, MY time, MY stuff"
- You think you EARNED it (by your hard work)
- You feel entitled to KEEP it, SPEND it, USE it however you want
- Giving is OPTIONAL (if I feel like it, if I can afford it)
- You give from SURPLUS (only what you won't miss)
- Your security is in your BANK ACCOUNT, not God

What it sounds like:

- "I earned this—I deserve to keep it"
- "I'll give when I can afford it"
- "I worked hard for this—I'm not just giving it away"
- "I need to take care of MY family first"
- "God helps those who help themselves"

Why it feels safe:

- You're in CONTROL
- Your security is in what you can SEE (money, possessions)
- No risk, no vulnerability
- You determine how much to give (comfortable amounts only)

The problem:

- You're living a LIE (it's not yours—it's God's)
- You're building security on what's TEMPORARY (money fails)
- You're missing out on BLESSING (God can't bless a closed fist)
- Your heart is divided (serving God AND money)
- You'll give an account to God for how you HOARDED

STEWARDSHIP (The Reality):

What it looks like:

- You believe: "This is GOD'S money, time, stuff—I'm managing it FOR Him"

- You recognize everything you have came from GOD (not your effort alone)
- You hold EVERYTHING with an open hand (God can take or give)
- Giving is EXPECTED (it's part of stewarding well)
- You give SACRIFICIALLY (it costs you something)
- Your security is in GOD, not your resources

What it sounds like:

- "Everything I have is God's—I'm just managing it"
- "How much should I give?" (not "How little can I give?")
- "God provided this—I want to use it for His kingdom"
- "Where is God calling me to give?"
- "I can't out-give God"

Why it feels risky:

- You're DEPENDENT on God (not on your bank account)
- Your security is in what you CAN'T see (God's provision)
- Requires TRUST and FAITH
- You give even when it's uncomfortable

The promise:

- You're living in TRUTH (it IS God's)
- Your security is in what's ETERNAL (God never fails)
- God BLESSES open hands (He can give you more to steward)

- Your heart is UNDIVIDED (serving God, not money)
- You'll hear "Well done, good and faithful servant"

The Chart:

OWNERSHIP

STEWARDSHIP

"This is MINE"

"This is GOD'S"

I earned it

God provided it

I deserve to keep it

I'm managing it for God

Giving is optional

Giving is expected

Give from surplus

Give sacrificially

Closed fist

Open hand

Security in MONEY

Security in GOD

"How little can I give?" "How much should I give?"

Hoard for MY future

Invest in GOD'S kingdom

I'm the OWNER

I'm the MANAGER

Which describes your ACTUAL relationship with money, time, and talents?

Most men claim STEWARDSHIP theologically. But live OWNERSHIP practically.

Why?

Why You Struggle with Generosity

REASON #1: YOU BELIEVE THE LIE: "I EARNED THIS"

The lie: "I worked HARD for this money. I put in the hours. I made the sacrifices. I EARNED it. So it's MINE."

The truth: WHO gave you the ability to work? WHO gave you your skills? WHO gave you opportunities?

"But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18, NASB).

HE gave you the POWER to make wealth. Not just the wealth. The POWER.

When you think you earned it alone, you've forgotten GOD.

REASON #2: MONEY = SECURITY (You Trust It More Than God)

The reality: Your bank account makes you feel SAFE. In control. Secure.

So you HOARD it. Build it up. Protect it.

Because deep down, you trust your MONEY more than you trust GOD.

The truth: Money is a TERRIBLE security.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19, NASB).

Money can be LOST. Stolen. Devalued. Gone.

God CANNOT be lost. He's ETERNAL. UNCHANGING. FAITHFUL.

When you trust money more than God, you've built on sand.

REASON #3: YOU'RE AFRAID THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH

The fear: "If I give, I won't have enough. I need to save for emergencies. For retirement. For my kids' college. I can't afford to be generous."

The truth: GOD PROVIDES.

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19, NASB).

HE will supply. Not MIGHT. WILL.

When fear of scarcity keeps you from giving, you're calling God a LIAR.

REASON #4: YOU GIVE FROM SURPLUS (Not Sacrifice)

The comfortable approach: "I'll give what I won't miss. What's LEFT OVER. What's comfortable."

The truth: God doesn't measure generosity by AMOUNT. He measures by SACRIFICE.

The widow gave TWO COINS—all she had. The rich gave MUCH—but from surplus.

Jesus said the widow gave MORE (Luke 21:1-4).

When you only give what's comfortable, you're not being generous. You're being SAFE.

REASON #5: YOU LOVE STUFF (Materialism/Consumerism)

The heart issue: You love what money can BUY:

- The house, the car, the clothes
- The status, the comfort, the lifestyle
- The upgrades, the experiences, the STUFF

So you spend on YOURSELF and have little left to give.

The truth: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21, NASB).

If your treasure is in STUFF, your heart is there too.

When you love stuff more than God, you've committed IDOLATRY.

REASON #6: YOU DON'T TITHE (You've Never Learned to Give First)

The pattern: You get paid. You pay bills. You spend on yourself. THEN, if there's anything left, maybe you give.

The truth: Tithing means giving the FIRST 10%, not the LEFTOVERS.

"Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce" (Proverbs 3:9, NASB).

FIRST. Not last. FIRST.

When you give God the leftovers, you're saying He's not a PRIORITY.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Everything Belongs to the Department

In firefighting, NOTHING belongs to you personally.

The truck? Not yours. The equipment? Not yours. The gear? Not yours.

It ALL belongs to the DEPARTMENT.

You're just USING it. MANAGING it. STEWARDING it.

Here's what happens if a firefighter treats department property like it's HIS:

He neglects maintenance (not my problem—it's not mine).

He misuses equipment (I'll use it however I want).

He hoards resources (I'm keeping this for myself).

Result? People DIE. The mission FAILS. He's FIRED.

Because he forgot the fundamental reality: IT'S NOT YOURS. You're a STEWARD.

Same with your money, time, and talents.

It's NOT yours. It's GOD'S.

You're just managing it FOR Him.

One day you'll give an ACCOUNT:

"What did you DO with what I gave you?"

"Did you use it for MY kingdom? Or YOUR comfort?"

"Did you give generously? Or hoard selfishly?"

"Did you invest in ETERNITY? Or just in STUFF?"

You're a steward. Act like it.

The Three Resources God Gave You to Steward

God has entrusted you with THREE primary resources. Here's how to steward them well:

RESOURCE #1: YOUR MONEY

THE PRINCIPLE: GIVE THE FIRST 10% (The Tithe)

What it is: Tithing = giving the FIRST 10% of your income to God (through the local church).

Why it matters: Tithing is not about God NEEDING your money. It's about YOU learning to TRUST God.

When you give the FIRST 10%, you're declaring: "God, I trust YOU to provide with the 90%, more than I can provide for myself with 100%."

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse" (Malachi 3:10, NASB).

WHOLE tithe = 10%. Into the STOREHOUSE = the local church.

WHERE TO START: THE TITHE (10%)

If you're NOT tithing currently:

STEP 1: Start with SOMETHING (even 1-2%)

STEP 2: Increase incrementally (move toward 10% over time)

STEP 3: Give the FIRST fruits (before you pay anything else)

If you ARE tithing (10%):

STEP 4: Give BEYOND the tithe (offerings, generosity, radical giving)

The tithe is the FLOOR, not the CEILING.

HOW TO TITHE PRACTICALLY:

- 1. Calculate 10% of your gross income** (before taxes)
 - 2. Give it FIRST** (as soon as you get paid, not at the end of the month)
 - 3. Give to your LOCAL CHURCH** (the storehouse where you're fed spiritually)
 - 4. Give even when it's tight** (that's TRUST)
 - 5. Track it** (so you see God's faithfulness over time)
-

BEYOND THE TITHE: OFFERINGS AND RADICAL GENEROSITY

The tithe is the BASELINE. But God calls you to MORE:

OFFERINGS: Giving BEYOND 10% to specific needs (missions, compassion ministry, building projects, etc.)

RADICAL GENEROSITY: Giving sacrificially when God prompts (the family in crisis, the ministry need, the person struggling)

Examples:

- Someone loses their job → you pay their rent
 - A missionary needs support → you give a month's salary
 - A single mom's car breaks down → you pay to fix it
-

THE HEART BEHIND GIVING MONEY:

NOT:

- To earn God's favor (you already have it through Christ)
- To manipulate God into blessing you (that's transactional)
- Out of guilt or obligation (God loves a cheerful giver)

BUT:

- Out of GRATITUDE (God gave EVERYTHING—Jesus)
 - Out of TRUST (God will provide)
 - Out of WORSHIP (giving is an act of worship)
 - Out of LOVE (for God and for others)
-

RESOURCE #2: YOUR TIME

THE PRINCIPLE: TIME IS YOUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE

You can make more MONEY. You can't make more TIME.

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil"
(Ephesians 5:15-16, NASB).

MAKE THE MOST of your time. It's LIMITED. Use it WISELY.

WHERE YOUR TIME ACTUALLY GOES:

Most men SAY they don't have time to serve. But they have PLENTY of time. They just spend it on:

- Entertainment (TV, movies, gaming, sports)
- Social media (scrolling, scrolling, scrolling)
- Hobbies (golf, fishing, working out—good things, but not ULTIMATE things)
- Sleep (more than needed)
- Wasted time (just killing time)

You have 168 hours a week.

Work: 40-50 hours

Sleep: 56 hours (8/night)

That leaves 60-70 hours.

PLENTY of time to serve. You just don't PRIORITIZE it.

HOW TO STEWARD YOUR TIME WELL:

- 1. AUDIT your time** (track where it actually goes for one week)
 - 2. ELIMINATE time-wasters** (excessive TV, social media, etc.)
 - 3. PRIORITIZE what matters:**
 - Time with GOD (prayer, Scripture)
 - Time with FAMILY (present, engaged)
 - Time SERVING (volunteer, help others)
 - 4. SAY NO to good things** (so you can say YES to the BEST things)
 - 5. SERVE WEEKLY** (commit to regular service, not just when convenient)
-

PRACTICAL TIME COMMITMENTS:

Daily:

- 15-30 minutes with God (prayer, Scripture)
- Quality time with family (meals, conversations, presence)

Weekly:

- 2-4 hours serving (church, compassion ministry, discipleship, etc.)
- Sabbath rest (1 day to recharge)

Monthly:

- Serve a major need (help someone move, big project, etc.)
-

RESOURCE #3: YOUR TALENTS/GIFTS

THE PRINCIPLE: USE YOUR GIFTS FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10, NASB).

EMPLOY your gift. USE it. Don't BURY it.

IN SERVING ONE ANOTHER. Not just for personal gain.

AS GOOD STEWARDS. You'll give an account for how you used what God gave you.

WHAT ARE YOUR TALENTS/GIFTS?

Natural talents:

- Skills (construction, tech, finance, writing, music, etc.)
- Abilities (leadership, teaching, organizing, problem-solving)

Spiritual gifts:

- Teaching, serving, giving, mercy, encouragement, administration, etc.

The question: Are you using them for GOD'S kingdom? Or just YOUR advancement?

HOW TO STEWARD YOUR TALENTS WELL:

1. IDENTIFY your gifts (What are you good at? What do others affirm in you?)

2. USE them for the KINGDOM:

- Teach (Sunday School, discipleship)
- Serve (use construction skills to help the needy, tech skills for the church, etc.)
- Lead (serve in leadership at church or ministry)
- Create (use artistic gifts for worship, design, media)

3. DON'T BURY your talents:

Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30):

The master gave talents to three servants.

Two INVESTED and MULTIPLIED.

One BURIED it (out of fear).

The master PRAISED the two who invested. CONDEMNED the one who buried.

Don't bury what God gave you.

The Blessing of Generosity: What Happens When You Give

Here's what happens when you actually OPEN your hand:

1. YOU EXPERIENCE FREEDOM (From the Love of Money)

"For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10, NASB).

When you give generously, you BREAK the power of money over you.

You prove: "Money doesn't control ME. I control IT."

Generosity = FREEDOM.

2. YOUR HEART FOLLOWS YOUR TREASURE

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"
(Matthew 6:21, NASB).

When you invest in GOD'S KINGDOM, your HEART moves toward God.

When you invest in STUFF, your heart moves toward stuff.

You can CHANGE your heart by CHANGING where you invest.

3. GOD PROVIDES (He Can't Bless a Closed Fist)

"Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38, NASB).

God BLESSES generosity. Not so you can HOARD. But so you can GIVE MORE.

An open hand can RECEIVE. A closed fist CANNOT.

4. YOU STORE UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN

"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20, NASB).

Every dollar you give to God's kingdom = treasure in HEAVEN.

ETERNAL. PERMANENT. SECURE.

You can't take your money to heaven. But you CAN send it ahead.

5. YOU REFLECT GOD'S CHARACTER

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son"
(John 3:16, NASB).

God is a GIVER. Radically generous.

When you give, you reflect HIS character.

6. YOU EXPERIENCE JOY

"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7, NASB).

Generosity produces JOY. Not begrudging obligation. JOY.

There's something deeply SATISFYING about giving.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from ownership to stewardship)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. OWNERSHIP OR STEWARDSHIP?

Be BRUTALLY honest. Do you live like:

- ☐ OWNER (this is MY money, time, stuff—I earned it)
- ☐ STEWARD (this is GOD'S money, time, stuff—I'm managing it for Him)

What do your SPENDING HABITS reveal?

2. WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"

(Matthew 6:21, NASB).

Where is your treasure RIGHT NOW?

- ☐ In STUFF (house, car, possessions, lifestyle)
- ☐ In BANK ACCOUNT (savings, investments, security)
- ☐ In GOD'S KINGDOM (giving, serving, investing eternally)

If someone looked at your bank statement, what would they say you TREASURE?

3. CLOSED FIST OR OPEN HAND?

When it comes to your resources, are you holding with:

- ☐ CLOSED FIST (gripping tightly, afraid to let go)
- ☐ OPEN HAND (holding loosely, ready to give)

Be honest: What are you GRIPPING that you need to RELEASE?

SECTION 2: MONEY - TITHING AND GIVING

4. DO YOU TITHE?

Do you give the FIRST 10% of your income to God (through your local church)?

- ☐ Yes—I tithe 10% or more
- ☐ I give, but less than 10%
- ☐ I give occasionally, but not consistently
- ☐ No—I don't tithe at all

If NO or less than 10%, what's stopping you?

- ☐ I can't afford it (bills, debt, expenses)
 - ☐ I don't trust the church with money
 - ☐ I don't think tithing is required in the New Testament
 - ☐ I'm afraid there won't be enough
 - ☐ I give to other things instead
 - ☐ Honestly, I'm just selfish
-

5. WHERE DOES GIVING FIT IN YOUR BUDGET?

When you get paid, what order do you pay things?

- ☐ TITHE FIRST (10% to God), then bills/expenses
- ☐ Bills first, then tithe IF there's anything left
- ☐ Bills and spending first, rarely anything left to give

The truth:

"Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the FIRST of all your produce" (Proverbs 3:9, NASB).

FIRST. Not last. FIRST.

Will you start giving the FIRST 10%?

- ☐ Yes—starting with my next paycheck
 - ☐ I'll work toward it incrementally
 - ☐ I'm not ready
-

6. CALCULATE YOUR TITHE:

What is 10% of your monthly income?

Monthly income (before taxes): \$_____

10% (tithe): \$_____

Are you currently giving that amount?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If NO, what would you need to CUT from your budget to tithe?

7. DO YOU GIVE BEYOND THE TITHE?

Do you give OFFERINGS beyond the 10%?

- ☐ Yes—I give to missions, special needs, compassion ministry

☐ Occasionally—when I feel prompted

☐ No—I only tithe (or less)

The truth:

The tithe is the FLOOR, not the CEILING.

Where is God calling you to give BEYOND 10%?

8. RADICAL GENEROSITY:

When's the last time you gave SACRIFICIALLY (it actually cost you something)?

Who is ONE PERSON or ONE MINISTRY you can give to RADICALLY this month?

How much?

☐ A week's salary

☐ A month's salary

☐ Pay off someone's debt

☐ Fund a specific need

☐ Other: _____

SECTION 3: TIME - STEWARDSHIP

9. WHERE DOES YOUR TIME ACTUALLY GO?

Track your time for ONE WEEK. How many hours do you spend on:

Entertainment (TV, movies, gaming, sports): ____ hours

Social media/phone: ____ hours

Hobbies: ____ hours

Serving/volunteering: ____ hours

Time with God: ____ hours

Quality time with family: ____ hours

Be honest: Do you have time to serve? Or do you just spend it on YOURSELF?

10. WILL YOU COMMIT TIME TO SERVE?

How many hours per week will you commit to SERVING?

☐ 2 hours/week

☐ 4 hours/week

☐ 6+ hours/week

Where will you serve?

When?

Day/time: _____

SECTION 4: TALENTS - STEWARDSHIP

11. WHAT ARE YOUR TALENTS/GIFTS?

List your talents and spiritual gifts:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
-

12. ARE YOU USING THEM FOR GOD'S KINGDOM?

For each talent/gift you listed, are you using it for:

- ☐ MY advancement (career, platform, recognition)
- ☐ GOD'S kingdom (serving, building the church, helping others)
- ☐ Both

If you're using them primarily for YOURSELF, what needs to change?

13. WHERE WILL YOU SERVE WITH YOUR TALENTS?

How can you use your talents to serve God's kingdom THIS MONTH?

- ☐ Teach (Sunday School, small group, discipleship)
- ☐ Serve practically (construction, tech, finance, admin)

☐ Create (design, media, music, writing)

☐ Lead (serve in leadership)

☐ Other: _____

SECTION 5: THE HEART ISSUES

14. DO YOU TRUST MONEY MORE THAN GOD?

Be HONEST. When you think about the future, what makes you feel secure?

☐ My bank account (I feel safe when I have money saved)

☐ God's provision (I trust Him even when money is tight)

☐ Both (I'm learning to trust God)

If you trust MONEY more than GOD, what would need to change?

15. ARE YOU AFRAID THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH?

Does fear of scarcity keep you from giving?

☐ Yes—I'm afraid if I give, I won't have enough

☐ Sometimes—I struggle with this

☐ No—I trust God to provide

The truth:

"And my God will supply all your needs" (Philippians 4:19, NASB).

Will you TRUST God's promise?

- ☐ Yes—I'll give even when I'm afraid
 - ☐ I'm working on it
 - ☐ I'm not ready
-

16. DO YOU LOVE STUFF?

Be HONEST. Do you love what money can buy?

- ☐ Yes—I love upgrading, buying, having nice things
- ☐ Sometimes—I struggle with materialism
- ☐ No—I'm content with what I have

The truth:

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"
(Matthew 6:21, NASB).

If you treasure STUFF, your heart is there.

What STUFF do you need to release?

SECTION 6: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

17. ONE STEP WITH MONEY:

What's ONE STEP you'll take with your finances THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Start tithing 10% (or increase toward 10%)

- ☐ Give a sacrificial offering to a specific need
- ☐ Cut unnecessary spending to free up money to give
- ☐ Create a budget that prioritizes giving FIRST
- ☐ Other: _____

How much will you give THIS WEEK?

\$_____

To whom/what?

18. ONE STEP WITH TIME:

What's ONE STEP you'll take with your time THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Eliminate time-wasters (cut TV/social media by ____ hours)
- ☐ Commit to regular service (sign up to volunteer)
- ☐ Spend quality time with family (no phone, present)
- ☐ Other: _____

When?

19. ONE STEP WITH TALENTS:

What's ONE STEP you'll take with your talents THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Offer to serve with my talents (teach, build, create, lead)

- ☐ Use my skills to help someone in need
- ☐ Stop using my talents ONLY for personal gain
- ☐ Other: _____

Who will you help?

SECTION 7: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

20. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "I earned this—it's MINE"
- ☐ "Money equals security—I need to hoard it"
- ☐ "If I give, there won't be enough"
- ☐ "I'll give when I can afford it"
- ☐ "Tithing isn't required in the New Testament"
- ☐ "I don't have time to serve"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

21. THE TRUTH ABOUT STEWARDSHIP:

Complete this sentence:

"My resources are not _____. They're _____."

Examples:

- "My resources are not MINE. They're GOD'S—I'm just managing them."
- "My resources are not for hoarding. They're for GIVING."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Everything I have belongs to GOD. I'm the steward, not the owner.

My money, my time, my talents—all GIFTS from God, entrusted to me to manage.

I will not grip tightly. I will hold with an OPEN HAND.

I will give the FIRST 10% (tithe) and give BEYOND when God prompts.

I will not trust my BANK ACCOUNT. I will trust GOD.

I will not hoard out of FEAR. I will give out of FAITH.

I will use my TIME to serve, not just for myself.

I will use my TALENTS for God's kingdom, not just my advancement.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"
(Matthew 6:21, NASB).

My treasure is in HEAVEN. My heart follows.

I am a STEWARD. And one day I'll give an account.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been living like an OWNER when I'm actually a STEWARD. I've gripped tightly to what was never MINE. I've trusted my bank account more than I've trusted YOU. I've hoarded out of FEAR when You've called me to give out of FAITH. I've spent my time on MYSELF. I've used my talents for MY advancement. And I've given You LEFTOVERS instead of FIRSTFRUITS. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Everything I have is YOURS. My money came from You. My time is a gift from You. My talents were given by You. I'm not the OWNER. I'm the MANAGER. The STEWARD.

Teach me to hold EVERYTHING with an open hand. Pry open my closed fist. Help me give the FIRST 10%—and beyond. Help me trust YOU to provide with 90% more than I can provide for myself with 100%. Help me use my TIME to serve, not just for entertainment. Help me use my TALENTS for Your kingdom, not just my career.

Break the power of money over me. Shatter my love of STUFF. Replace my fear of scarcity with FAITH in Your provision. Show me that generosity is not about what I can AFFORD—it's about TRUST.

I want to hear "Well done, good and faithful servant" one day. Help me steward well TODAY.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: **"All I have is Yours"**

Breathe out: **"I hold with open hands"**

(Psalm 24:1)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Am I gripping or releasing TODAY?

Brief Prayer: Father, everything I have is Yours. Help me steward it well.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What did God PROVIDE today (money, time, opportunities)?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I steward my resources well today?

- ☐ Yes—I gave generously, used time wisely, served with my talents
- ☐ Somewhat—I tried but struggled
- ☐ No—I hoarded, wasted time, used talents selfishly

If I DIDN'T steward well, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

When did I choose HOARDING over GIVING today?

What was I afraid of?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for gripping tightly when You've called me to hold loosely. Forgive me for trusting money more than You.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding stewardship?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I stewarded my resources by _____ / Today I hoarded because _____. The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. Tomorrow I will steward well by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 34 ✓ - Learned I'm a STEWARD, not an owner. Everything belongs to God. This week I'll give \$ _____ (tithe/offering) and serve _____ hours. Pray I trust God, not my bank account."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Tomorrow: Day 35 - Fifth Sabbath Gathering - Engagement Celebration

Brief Prayer:

Father, Week 5 is complete. Tomorrow I gather with brothers to celebrate ENGAGEMENT—serving Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the lost, the broken, and stewarding resources. Prepare me to testify to what You've done. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU'RE THE MANAGER, NOT THE OWNER

Theological Insight:

"The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains." – Psalm 24:1 (NASB)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

Everything you have is GOD'S.

Your paycheck? HE provided the job.

Your house? HE gave you the ability to buy it.

Your car? HIS provision.

Your time? HIS gift.

Your talents? HE gave them.

You're not the OWNER. You're the MANAGER.

And one day you'll stand before God and give an ACCOUNT:

"What did you DO with what I gave you?"

"Did you GIVE generously? Or HOARD selfishly?"

"Did you use your TIME to serve? Or just yourself?"

"Did you use your TALENTS for My kingdom? Or your advancement?"

You'll answer. So steward WELL.

This week, OPEN your hand.

Start tithing (or increase toward 10%).

Give a sacrificial offering.

Commit time to serve.

Use your talents for God's kingdom.

And watch what God does when you actually TRUST Him with your resources.

You can't out-give God.

But you CAN prove whether you trust Him or your bank account.

So GIVE. SERVE. STEWARD.

Everything belongs to Him anyway.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"

(Matthew 6:21, NASB).

Where's your treasure?

Your heart will follow.

40 STRONG - Day 34 Complete ✓

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Day 6

"The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psalm 24:1, NASB)

EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD. YOU'RE THE STEWARD.

40 STRONG - DAY 35

FIFTH SABBATH GATHERING: Engagement Celebration WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - Complete

MORNING: PERSONAL PREPARATION (Before the gathering)

Opening Prayer

Father, five weeks ago I was passive on the ridge—awakened but not engaging. Week 1, You awakened me. Week 2, I confessed hidden sin. Week 3, You renewed my identity. Week 4, You equipped me with spiritual disciplines. Week 5, You sent me OUT—to serve my family, my workplace, my neighborhood, the different, the lost, the broken. To steward my resources. And I'm not the same man I was 35 days ago. Tonight, I gather with my brothers to celebrate ENGAGEMENT—not just learning, but DOING. To share stories of what happened when I actually SERVED. When I crossed barriers. When I shared the Gospel. When I opened my hand. Give me courage to testify to what You've done. Give me ears to hear my brothers' stories. Give me anticipation for Week 6—the FINAL week, where I'm commissioned and SENT as a disciple-maker. We're almost there, Father. Five weeks down. Five days to go. And You're not done with me yet. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRE-GATHERING REFLECTION (20-30 minutes alone)

Before you arrive tonight, review your journey through Week 5. You may be asked to share from these.

1. WEEK 5 REVIEW: ENGAGEMENT - Serving Others (Days 29-34)

Day 29: Serve Your Family - Jerusalem Day 30: Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea Day 31: Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria Day 32: Serve the Lost - Evangelism Day 33: Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry Day 34: Steward Your Resources - Generosity

Which day from Week 5 challenged you most?

What did God call you to DO this week?

Did you actually DO it? (Be honest)

- ☐ Yes—I served in ways I've never served before
- ☐ Partially—I tried but didn't follow through on everything
- ☐ No—I learned a lot but didn't act

2. SPECIFIC SERVICE STORIES FROM WEEK 5

DAY 29 - JERUSALEM (Family):

Did you serve your family differently this week?

- ☐ Yes—I was more present, helpful, engaged

- ☐ Somewhat—I tried but was inconsistent
- ☐ No—I didn't change my behavior at home

If YES, what did you do?

How did they respond?

DAY 30 - JUDEA (Workplace/Neighborhood):

Did you serve your workplace or neighborhood this week?

- ☐ Yes—I engaged coworkers, helped neighbors
- ☐ Somewhat—I tried but didn't follow through
- ☐ No—I stayed in my routine

If YES, what did you do?

DAY 31 - SAMARIA (The Different/Outcast):

Did you cross a barrier and serve someone you'd normally avoid?

- ☐ Yes—I served someone different/uncomfortable
- ☐ Somewhat—I wanted to but didn't follow through

☐ No—I stayed in my comfort zone

If YES, what barrier did you cross?

DAY 32 - EVANGELISM (The Lost):

Did you share the Gospel with someone this week?

☐ Yes—I had a Gospel conversation

☐ I tried but the opportunity didn't come

☐ No—I stayed silent

If YES, what happened?

DAY 33 - COMPASSION MINISTRY (The Broken):

Did you serve someone who's broken (poor, sick, hurting)?

☐ Yes—I met a practical need

☐ I saw the need but didn't act

☐ No—I looked away

If YES, what did you do?

DAY 34 - STEWARDSHIP (Generosity):

Did you give generously with your money, time, or talents this week?

- ☐ Yes—I gave sacrificially
- ☐ Yes—I tithed or gave beyond normal giving
- ☐ No—I held onto my resources

If YES, what did you give?

3. RECAP: WEEKS 1-4 (The Foundation for Engagement)

Before Week 5, you completed:

WEEK 1: AWAKENING - You woke up from passivity **WEEK 2: REPENTANCE** - You confessed hidden sin **WEEK 3: RENEWAL** - You were rebuilt in your identity **WEEK 4: EQUIPPING** - You learned spiritual disciplines

How did Weeks 1-4 PREPARE you for Week 5 (Engagement)?

Example: "Week 3's renewal in identity gave me confidence to serve. Week 4's disciplines gave me tools to sustain service."

4. THE TESTIMONY YOU'LL SHARE

If you were asked to share for 2-3 minutes tonight, what would you say?

Template:

"This week God called me to serve _____ (who/what). The hardest part was _____ (barrier/fear). But I did it anyway. Here's what happened: _____ (story). I'm learning _____ (key truth)."

Write a brief outline:

5. LOOKING AHEAD: WEEK 6 PREVIEW

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers (Days 36-40)

The FINAL week. The culmination of 40 STRONG.

Days 36-40 Overview:

- **Day 36: Make Disciples** - The Great Commission (not just convert, but DISCIPLE)
- **Day 37: Mentor Younger Men** - Passing the Baton (reproduce what God has done in you)
- **Day 38: Lead Your Home Spiritually** - Generational Impact (your family as your first disciples)
- **Day 39: Plan Your Next 40 Days** - Sustainable Rhythms (what happens after Day 40?)
- **Day 40: Final Commissioning Gathering** - Sent Out (you're commissioned and SENT)

What are you most excited about?

What are you most anxious about?

After 40 STRONG ends, what do you want to be TRUE about your life?

GATHERING FORMAT (2.5 hours total)

ARRIVAL & FELLOWSHIP (15 minutes)

6:00 PM - 6:15 PM

Tonight's Atmosphere:

Different from previous gatherings:

- **Day 7:** Reflective, preparing for the work ahead
- **Day 14:** Heavy, confessional, sacred
- **Day 21:** Celebratory, halftime momentum
- **Day 28:** Equipped and ready, transitioning to action
- **Day 35:** CELEBRATORY and TESTIMONIAL—sharing stories of actual SERVICE, anticipating the FINAL week

As men arrive:

- Coffee, snacks available
- Energy of CELEBRATION (Week 5 was about DOING, not just learning)
- Conversations about what happened when they SERVED
- Anticipation for the FINAL WEEK ahead
- Upbeat music (celebratory, victorious)

Facilitator role:

- Welcome each man enthusiastically
- "Week 5 complete—you ENGAGED! You SERVED! Now let's hear the stories!"
- Create anticipation for testimonies

- Remind them: ONE WEEK LEFT (Days 36-40)

Theological Insight:

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB).

Week 5 was about being DOERS. Tonight we celebrate the DOING.

OPENING: WORSHIP AS SERVANTS (20 minutes)

6:15 PM - 6:35 PM

Tonight's worship theme: SERVANTS OF THE KING

Not just celebration. Not just reflection. But worship as MEN WHO SERVE.

Suggested songs:

- "Here I Am to Worship"
- "The Heart of Worship"
- "I Surrender All"
- "Take My Life and Let It Be"
- "Jesus Paid It All"
- "Build My Life"

Encourage:

- Worship as SERVICE (giving to God)
- Humble posture (we're servants)
- Gratitude for the privilege of serving

Between songs, read these declarations (all men read together from screen):

After song 1:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, NASB).

[All respond loudly:] "We are SERVANTS, not masters!"

After song 2:

"But you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).

[All respond:] "We serve JERUSALEM, JUDEA, SAMARIA, and beyond!"

After song 3:

"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40, NASB).

[All respond:] "When we serve others, we serve JESUS!"

Closing worship with this declaration (all men):

"We have been awakened. We have confessed. We have been renewed. We have been equipped. We have ENGAGED. We served

our families, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, the different, the lost, the broken. We opened our hands and gave. We are DOERS of the Word. We are 40 STRONG!"

[All shout:] "40 STRONG!"

TEACHING: FROM LEARNING TO DOING (20 minutes)

6:35 PM - 6:55 PM

Facilitator teaches:

"Week 5: The Week Everything Changed"

Brothers, Week 5 is complete.

And it was DIFFERENT from Weeks 1-4.

Let me show you the progression:

THE JOURNEY SO FAR (Weeks 1-5 Recap)

WEEK 1: AWAKENING

You woke up from passivity. You realized you'd been standing on the ridge—armed but not engaging.

You took inventory. You identified counterfeit masculinity. You saw God's design.

You broke agreement with passivity.

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE

The hardest week of your life.

You acknowledged secret sins. You confronted pornography, anger, pride, greed, relational failures.

On Day 14, you confessed OUT LOUD in this room.

The weight lifted. The shame broke. The power of secrecy shattered.

WEEK 3: RENEWAL

After confession, you were rebuilt.

You learned WHO YOU ARE in Christ:

- Son, not slave
- Accepted, not performing
- Forgiven, not condemned
- Empowered, not powerless
- Sent, not sitting
- Beloved, not tolerated

Your IDENTITY was anchored in TRUTH.

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING

You were equipped with spiritual disciplines—the weapons that sustain transformation:

- Prayer (conversation with God)

- Scripture (God's voice)
- Fasting (hunger for God)
- Worship (worth-ship)
- Sabbath (rest and trust)
- Community (you can't do this alone)

You had the TOOLS. Now you needed to USE them.

THE SHIFT: WEEK 5 - ENGAGEMENT

And then Week 5 happened.

The shift from LEARNING to DOING.

From INTERNAL to EXTERNAL.

From RECEIVING to GIVING.

Weeks 1-4 were about YOU:

- Your passivity
- Your sin
- Your identity
- Your disciplines

Week 5 was about OTHERS:

- Serving your family
- Serving your workplace/neighborhood
- Serving the different/outcast

- Serving the lost
- Serving the broken
- Stewarding your resources

Week 5 forced you to ACT.

Not just learn. ACT.

Not just feel convicted. OBEY.

Not just agree theologically. ENGAGE practically.

And that's HARD.

WEEK 5 BREAKDOWN: WHAT YOU WERE CALLED TO DO

Let me remind you what Week 5 demanded:

DAY 29: SERVE YOUR FAMILY - JERUSALEM

You were confronted with the truth: You serve everyone ELSE better than your FAMILY.

You volunteer at church while your wife gets leftovers.

You're patient with coworkers while your kids get your anger.

The call: Serve your FAMILY first. Not last. FIRST.

Listen to your wife. Help without being asked. Lead spiritually. Be present with your kids.

How many of you actually DID this?

DAY 30: SERVE YOUR WORKPLACE/NEIGHBORHOOD - JUDEA

You spend 40+ hours a week at work. You live in a neighborhood.

And you've been BLIND to the mission field right in front of you.

The call: Your workplace is not just a job—it's a MISSION FIELD. Your neighborhood is not just where you sleep—it's JUDEA.

Work with excellence. Engage coworkers. Know your neighbors' names. Serve them.

How many of you actually DID this?

DAY 31: SERVE THE DIFFERENT/OUTCAST - SAMARIA

This was the most UNCOMFORTABLE day.

You were forced to face your PREJUDICE. Your WALLS. The people you AVOID.

The homeless. The immigrant. The person of a different race. The LGBTQ individual. The addict. The person you disagree with politically.

The call: CROSS THE BARRIER. Serve someone you'd normally avoid. Get CLOSE to someone who makes you uncomfortable.

How many of you actually DID this?

DAY 32: SERVE THE LOST - EVANGELISM

The day you've been avoiding your entire Christian life: SPEAK the Gospel.

Not just live it. SPEAK it.

The call: Share the Gospel with someone. Actually INITIATE a conversation about Jesus. Invite them to respond.

How many of you actually DID this?

DAY 33: SERVE THE BROKEN - COMPASSION MINISTRY

You were confronted with the suffering you LOOK AWAY from.

The homeless. The sick. The orphan. The widow. The trafficked. The refugee. The addicted. The imprisoned.

The call: Don't just feel pity. Practice COMPASSION. Get close. Meet a need. ACT.

How many of you actually DID this?

DAY 34: STEWARD YOUR RESOURCES - GENEROSITY

You were forced to confront your GRIP.

You're holding tightly to YOUR money, YOUR time, YOUR talents.

The call: Open your hand. You're a STEWARD, not an owner. Give the first 10%. Give sacrificially. Use your time to serve. Use your talents for God's kingdom.

How many of you actually DID this?

THE REALITY: SOME OF YOU DID. SOME DIDN'T.

Here's the truth, brothers:

Some of you CRUSHED Week 5. You actually SERVED. You crossed barriers. You shared the Gospel. You gave generously.

And you have STORIES to tell tonight. Stories of what God did when you obeyed.

But some of you didn't.

You learned a lot. You were convicted. You intended to act.

But when it came time to ACTUALLY SERVE—you hesitated. You rationalized. You stayed comfortable.

And that's okay to admit.

Because tonight is not about PERFORMANCE. It's about HONESTY.

Some will share victory stories. Some will share struggle stories.

Both are REAL. Both are VALUABLE.

LOOKING AHEAD: WEEK 6 - COMMISSIONING

Tomorrow, Week 6 begins: **COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers**

This is the FINAL WEEK. Days 36-40.

And here's what's happening:

DAY 36: MAKE DISCIPLES - THE GREAT COMMISSION

You're not just called to CONVERT people. You're called to DISCIPLE them.

The Great Commission is not "make converts." It's "make DISCIPLES."

That means: TEACHING them. WALKING with them. REPRODUCING what God has done in YOU.

DAY 37: MENTOR YOUNGER MEN - PASSING THE BATON

You're not the finish line. You're a LINK in the chain.

God has done something in you over 40 days. Now you PASS IT ON.

You mentor younger men. You invest in the next generation. You REPRODUCE.

DAY 38: LEAD YOUR HOME SPIRITUALLY - GENERATIONAL IMPACT

Your family is your FIRST disciples.

Are you leading your wife spiritually? Are you discipling your kids?

Or are you abdicating spiritual leadership at home?

DAY 39: PLAN YOUR NEXT 40 DAYS - SUSTAINABLE RHYTHMS

Day 40 is not the END. It's the BEGINNING of the rest of your life.

So on Day 39, you'll plan: What are the RHYTHMS you'll continue?

What disciplines will you sustain? What service will you maintain?

DAY 40: FINAL COMMISSIONING GATHERING - SENT OUT

The final gathering. The culmination.

You'll be COMMISSIONED and SENT.

Not to just go back to normal life. But to LIVE what you've learned. To MULTIPLY what God has done.

THE CHARGE FOR WEEK 6

Brothers, Week 6 is the FINAL WEEK.

Don't coast now.

You've come too far. You've been too honest. God has done too much.

FINISH STRONG.

Week 6 will require:

- **Vision** (seeing yourself as a disciple-MAKER, not just a disciple)
- **Intentionality** (planning how to sustain this beyond Day 40)
- **Humility** (you're not the finish line—you're passing the baton)
- **Commitment** (this doesn't end on Day 40—it's just beginning)

And when you gather on Day 40, you will NOT be the same man you were on Day 1.

Guaranteed.

Closing Teaching:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB).

GO. MAKE DISCIPLES. TEACH them.

That's Week 6.

Now—let's hear what happened in Week 5.

TESTIMONY TIME (45-60 minutes)

6:55 PM - 7:55 PM

Facilitator:

"We're going to spend the next hour hearing STORIES. Not theory. Not theology. STORIES. What happened when you actually SERVED? When you crossed a barrier? When you shared the Gospel? When you gave generously?"

Format:

- 2-3 minutes per person (strictly timed)
- Volunteers can share (no pressure)
- Focus on STORIES, not just lessons learned
- Celebrate victories AND struggles (both are real)

Template (optional, for men who need structure):

"This week God called me to serve _____ (who/what). The hardest part was _____ (barrier/fear). But I did it anyway. Here's what happened: _____ (story). I'm learning _____ (key truth)."

Facilitator opens:

"Who has a story from Week 5? What happened when you ENGAGED?"

[Allow silence. Someone will speak.]

After Each Testimony:

Facilitator (or another man):

"Thank you, brother. We celebrate what God did through you."

Then: Brief applause/affirmation from the group

No commentary, no fixing, no teaching—just receive and celebrate.

Types of Testimonies to Expect:

JERUSALEM STORIES (Serving Family):

- "I've been neglecting my wife for years. This week I asked her: 'How can I serve you?' She cried. We had the best conversation we've had in months."
- "I put my phone away and actually PLAYED with my kids. My son said, 'Dad, where have you been?'"

- "I apologized to my wife for being checked out. It was hard. But it opened a door."

JUDEA STORIES (Workplace/Neighborhood):

- "I've worked next to this guy for 3 years and never had a real conversation. I asked about his life. Turns out he's going through a divorce. Now I'm walking with him."
- "I introduced myself to my neighbor for the first time. We've lived next to each other for 5 years."
- "I helped a coworker with a project. He asked why I was different. I told him about Jesus."

SAMARIA STORIES (Crossing Barriers):

- "I bought a homeless man a meal and sat with him. He told me his story. I cried. I'd been avoiding him for months."
- "I reached out to someone I've had political disagreements with. We had coffee. It was uncomfortable but good."
- "I volunteered at a refugee center. I met a family from Syria. My prejudice was shattered."

EVANGELISM STORIES (Sharing the Gospel):

- "I've never shared the Gospel in my life. This week I did. My hands were shaking. I stumbled over my words. But I DID IT. He didn't accept Christ, but the door is open."
- "I asked a coworker: 'Do you have a faith background?' It led to a 2-hour conversation about Jesus."

- "I shared my testimony with a friend. He asked if he could pray to receive Christ. I led him in prayer. I'VE NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE."

COMPASSION STORIES (Serving the Broken):

- "I volunteered at a homeless shelter for the first time. I've driven past it for years. It wrecked me. I'm going back."
- "I visited a nursing home. An elderly woman hadn't had a visitor in months. She held my hand and cried."
- "I donated to a trafficking rescue organization AND started volunteering. I can't unsee what I learned."

STEWARDSHIP STORIES (Generosity):

- "I've never tithed. This week I gave the first 10%. I was terrified. But God provided."
- "I gave a month's salary to a family in crisis. It hurt. But I've never felt more free."
- "I cut my entertainment budget in half and gave the rest. I don't miss it."

STRUGGLE STORIES (Honest Failures):

- "I wanted to serve this week. I planned to. But I didn't follow through. I let fear win."
- "I had an opportunity to share the Gospel. I froze. I'm disappointed in myself."
- "I learned a lot but didn't act. I need to be honest about that."

Facilitator Throughout:

- Keep time (gently redirect if someone goes over 3 minutes)
 - Watch for men who seem like they want to share but are hesitating
 - Model vulnerability if needed
 - Celebrate BOTH victories AND struggles
-

If No One Shares Initially:

Facilitator can share first:

"Let me start. This week God called me to _____ (personal story of service). Here's what happened..."

Or call on someone you know is prepared:

"[Name], I know Week 5 was significant for you. Would you share?"

Closing Testimony Time:

After 45-60 minutes (or when it feels complete):

"Brothers, what we've just heard is PROOF that God is ALIVE and WORKING. These aren't just STORIES—these are LIVES being transformed and OTHERS being served. Some of you crushed it. Some of you struggled. But ALL of you are HERE. And that matters. Let's give God praise."

[Spontaneous applause/praise]

TRANSITION TO COMMUNION (5 minutes)

7:55 PM - 8:00 PM

Facilitator:

"We've celebrated what God has done through us this week. Now we remember WHY we can serve at all."

"Every act of service you just heard about—every family served, every barrier crossed, every Gospel conversation, every dollar given—ALL of it is possible because of ONE thing:"

"Jesus SERVED us first."

"He didn't come to BE served. He came TO serve. And to give His life as a ransom for many."

"Before you could serve ANYONE, He served YOU."

"He washed feet. He healed the sick. He fed the hungry. He touched the untouchable. He gave EVERYTHING."

"And then He went to the cross. And He DIED. For YOU."

"So before we're commissioned for the FINAL week, we take communion. We remember the ULTIMATE act of service."

COMMUNION: REMEMBERING THE SERVANT KING (15 minutes)

8:00 PM - 8:15 PM

Setup:

- Bread and cup on central table
- Men come forward individually

- Take elements, return to seats
 - Eat and drink together after all have received
-

Scripture Reading:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, NASB).

THE BREAD:

"Come forward and take the bread. This is Jesus' body—broken so you could serve. Broken so you could be FREE. Broken so you could have LIFE. Every act of service you did this week was POSSIBLE because of THIS. He served you FIRST."

"As you eat this bread, remember: The Servant King gave EVERYTHING for you."

[Men come forward, take bread, return to seats.]

After all have taken bread:

"Together, we eat and remember."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that You came to SERVE, not to be served. Thank You that Your body was broken so we could live and serve. We receive Your life in us. Amen."

[All eat.]

THE CUP:

"Now come forward and take the cup. This is Jesus' blood—the new covenant. The PROMISE that you are forgiven, empowered, SENT. You are not just a disciple. You are a disciple-MAKER."

"As you drink this cup, declare: 'I am His. I am SENT.'"

[Men come forward, take cup, return to seats.]

After all have taken cup:

"Together, we drink and declare our covenant with Christ."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your blood was poured out for us. We are forgiven. We are empowered. We are SENT. Amen."

[All drink.]

After Communion:

Facilitator:

"Brothers, you have been served by JESUS. You have ENGAGED in service to others. Now you are being commissioned for the FINAL WEEK—where you become disciple-MAKERS. You're not just

DISCIPLES. You MAKE disciples. You REPRODUCE what God has done in you."

"Week 6 begins tomorrow. And you're ready."

COMMISSIONING FOR WEEK 6: FINAL WEEK (15 minutes)

8:15 PM - 8:30 PM

Facilitator:

"Stand up. We're going to commission each other for the FINAL WEEK of 40 STRONG."

[All men stand in a circle]

Reading of the Commission:

Facilitator reads, all men repeat line by line:

"We have been awakened from passivity."

[All repeat]

"We have confessed our hidden sins."

[All repeat]

"We have been renewed in our identity."

[All repeat]

"We have been equipped with spiritual disciplines."

[All repeat]

"We have ENGAGED in service to others."

[All repeat]

"Now we are commissioned as disciple-MAKERS."

[All repeat]

"We will MAKE disciples, not just BE disciples."

[All repeat]

"We will MENTOR younger men."

[All repeat]

"We will LEAD our homes spiritually."

[All repeat]

"We will PLAN sustainable rhythms beyond Day 40."

[All repeat]

"This is the FINAL week. We will FINISH STRONG."

[All repeat]

"We are 40 STRONG."

[All shout together: "40 STRONG!"]

The Charge (Facilitator reads):

"Brothers, tomorrow Week 6 begins: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers.

This is the FINAL WEEK. Days 36-40.

Day 36: You'll learn to MAKE DISCIPLES. Not just convert people. DISCIPLE them. Walk with them. Teach them. Reproduce what God has done in you.

Day 37: You'll learn to MENTOR YOUNGER MEN. You're not the finish line. You're a link in the chain. Pass the baton.

Day 38: You'll learn to LEAD YOUR HOME SPIRITUALLY. Your family is your first disciples. Are you leading them?

Day 39: You'll PLAN YOUR NEXT 40 DAYS. What rhythms will you sustain? What disciplines will you maintain? Day 40 is not the END—it's the BEGINNING.

Day 40: You'll gather HERE for the FINAL COMMISSIONING. You'll be sent out as disciple-makers. Commissioned. Released. SENT.

This will require:

- VISION (seeing yourself as a disciple-maker)
- INTENTIONALITY (planning beyond Day 40)
- HUMILITY (you're passing the baton, not hoarding what God gave you)
- COMMITMENT (this doesn't end on Day 40—it's just beginning)

You have everything you need:

- The Father's love (Day 20)
- The Spirit's power (Day 18)
- Your brothers (Day 27)
- The disciplines (Week 4)

- Experience serving (Week 5)

So go. FINISH STRONG. And when you gather on Day 40, you'll be COMMISSIONED and SENT—not as the same man you were on Day 1, but as a disciple-maker who reproduces what God has done."

Blessing (2 Timothy 2:2):

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Entrust to FAITHFUL MEN who will teach OTHERS.

That's you. You're the faithful men. Now you entrust to others.

[All respond: "Amen!"]

Final Declaration (All men together, loudly):

"We are sons of God, equipped with spiritual weapons, sent to SERVE and make DISCIPLES. We will not just BE disciples—we will MAKE disciples. We will FINISH STRONG. We are 40 STRONG!"

[All shout: "40 STRONG!"]

Closing Prayer:

"Father, thank You for Week 5. Thank You for sending us OUT to serve. Thank You for the stories we heard tonight. Tomorrow the FINAL week begins. Give us VISION to see ourselves as disciple-

makers. Give us HUMILITY to pass the baton. Give us INTENTIONALITY to sustain what You've started. We will finish strong. In Jesus' name, Amen."

FELLOWSHIP & CLOSING (15 minutes)

8:30 PM - 8:45 PM

Facilitator:

"Don't rush out. Pray for each other. Celebrate what God has done. Commit to finishing strong together. Week 6 starts tomorrow. We gather ONE MORE TIME on Day 40 for the final commissioning."

Encourage:

- Men praying for each other in small groups
- Making plans to meet during Week 6
- Accountability commitments for the final week
- Celebrating what God has done

Provide:

- Printed overview of Days 36-40 (Week 6 preview)
 - Reminder of FINAL gathering date (Day 40)
 - Encouragement to finish strong
-

AFTER THE GATHERING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you get home, journal:

1. WHAT GOD DID TONIGHT:

What stood out from the testimonies?

What did I feel during communion?

What did I experience during the commissioning?

2. MY TESTIMONY:

Did I share tonight? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: How did it feel?

If no: Why didn't I? What held me back?

3. LOOKING AHEAD TO WEEK 6:

What am I most excited about in the FINAL WEEK?

What am I most nervous about?

After Day 40, what do I want to be TRUE about my life?

4. TOMORROW:

Day 36 begins Week 6: Commissioning - Sent as Disciple-Makers

Brief Prayer:

Father, Week 5 engagement is complete. Tomorrow the FINAL WEEK begins—commissioning as a disciple-maker. Give me vision to see myself not just as a disciple, but as someone who MAKES disciples. Help me finish strong. Amen.

FACILITATOR NOTES (For Leaders Running the Gathering)

Pre-Gathering Preparation:

1. ENVIRONMENT:

- Celebratory atmosphere (Week 5 was about DOING—celebrate the stories)
- Upbeat, victorious music
- Food/snacks available

- Energy of anticipation (FINAL WEEK ahead)
- Vision casting for Week 6

2. MATERIALS:

- Communion elements
- Week 6 overview handouts
- Final gathering date reminders (Day 40)
- Celebration of progress (5 weeks complete, 1 to go)

3. TESTIMONY PREPARATION:

- Identify 2-3 men beforehand who have powerful service stories
- Be ready to share your OWN story if no one volunteers
- Have timer ready for 3-minute limit
- Prepare to celebrate BOTH victories and struggles

During Gathering:

tone:

- Day 7: Reflective, preparing
- Day 14: Heavy, confessional
- Day 21: Celebratory, halftime
- Day 28: Equipped and ready
- **Day 35: CELEBRATORY and TESTIMONIAL—stories of SERVICE, anticipating FINAL WEEK**

This is about celebrating ENGAGEMENT (doing, not just learning) and preparing for COMMISSIONING (reproducing what God has done).

TESTIMONY MANAGEMENT:

- Keep strict time (3 minutes max)
 - Celebrate victories (family served, Gospel shared, generosity practiced)
 - Honor struggles (tried but failed, learned but didn't act)
 - Don't let it become theoretical—keep it STORY-BASED
-

COMMISSIONING:

- This should feel TRANSITIONAL (moving to the FINAL week)
 - Emphasis: "You're becoming disciple-MAKERS, not just disciples"
 - Create anticipation for Week 6
 - Remind them: ONE WEEK LEFT
-

After Gathering - Leadership Debrief:

Within 24-48 hours:

1. **Celebrate:** What service stories stood out? What did God do in Week 5?

2. **Follow-up:** Text/call men who shared powerful testimonies or struggles
 3. **Prepare:** Week 6 is FINAL WEEK—are materials ready for Days 36-40?
 4. **Pray:** For each man by name as they enter the FINAL WEEK
 5. **Plan Day 40:** The final commissioning gathering—make it POWERFUL
-

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU'RE BECOMING DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Theological Insight:

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Brother, tonight you celebrated ENGAGEMENT.

You heard stories of men who actually SERVED:

- Families restored
- Workplaces transformed
- Barriers crossed
- Gospel conversations initiated
- Broken people helped
- Resources given generously

And you're not the same man you were five weeks ago.

Five weeks ago (Day 1):

- You were passive on the ridge
- You were hiding secret sin
- You were living in shame
- You were equipped but not engaging

Today (Day 35):

- You're awake and active
- You've confessed and found freedom
- You're walking in your identity
- You're SERVING others

That's MASSIVE.

But here's the truth:

You're only FIVE DAYS from the finish.

Week 6 begins tomorrow: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers.

The shift now is from being a DISCIPLE to being a disciple-MAKER.

From RECEIVING to REPRODUCING.

From being FED to FEEDING others.

God didn't transform you just so YOU could be blessed.

He transformed you so you could REPRODUCE that transformation in OTHERS.

You're a link in the chain. Not the finish line.

So finish strong.

Show up daily for the final five days.

Learn to make disciples.

Learn to mentor younger men.

Learn to lead your home spiritually.

Plan sustainable rhythms beyond Day 40.

And when you gather on Day 40, you'll be COMMISSIONED and SENT.

Not as the same man. But as a disciple-MAKER.

Five weeks down.

Five days to go.

Let's finish what we started.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB).

GO. MAKE DISCIPLES.

That's Week 6.

40 STRONG - Day 35 Complete ✓

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT - COMPLETE ✓

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22, NASB)

YOU ENGAGED. YOU SERVED. NOW YOU'LL REPRODUCE.

Week 5 Completed: ✓ Day 29: Serve Your Family - Jerusalem ✓ Day 30: Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea ✓ Day 31: Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria ✓ Day 32: Serve the Lost - Evangelism ✓ Day 33: Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry ✓ Day 34: Steward Your Resources - Generosity

FIVE WEEKS COMPLETE. FIVE DAYS REMAIN.

40 STRONG - DAY 36

MAKE DISCIPLES - THE GREAT COMMISSION WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers

MORNING: THE FINAL WEEK BEGINS (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is it. The FINAL WEEK. Day 36 of 40. Five weeks complete. Five days remain. And today marks a SHIFT—from being just a disciple to becoming a disciple-MAKER. And if I'm brutally honest? That terrifies me. Because I can barely manage my OWN spiritual life. I'm still fighting battles. Still struggling with sin. Still learning to pray, read Scripture, serve, give. How can I MAKE disciples when I'm still BEING disciplined? How can I TEACH when I'm still LEARNING? How can I REPRODUCE what God has done in me when the work feels INCOMPLETE? But here's my deeper confession, Father: I've never actually MADE a disciple. I've been a Christian for ___ years, and I've never intentionally walked with someone, taught them, modeled faith for them, reproduced what I've learned. I've attended church. I've learned theology. I've grown (somewhat). But I've never MULTIPLIED. I've never passed it on. I've been a CONSUMER, not a REPRODUCER. I've been the END of the line, not a LINK in the chain. I receive. I learn. I grow. But it STOPS with me. I don't invest in younger men. I don't mentor. I don't disciple. Why? Because it's EASIER to just focus on myself. It's less MESSY to work on my own growth than to help someone else grow. It's less RISKY to be a disciple than to make disciples. And honestly, I'm not sure I'm QUALIFIED. What do I have to offer? I'm not a pastor.

I'm not a theologian. I'm just a guy who's figuring this out myself. Who am I to TEACH someone else? But the Great Commission doesn't say "Go make disciples IF you're qualified." It says "GO and make disciples." Period. It's not a SUGGESTION for super-spiritual Christians. It's a COMMAND for ALL disciples. Every disciple is called to MAKE disciples. Every link in the chain is responsible for the NEXT link. And if the chain stops with ME—if I just RECEIVE and never REPRODUCE—then I've FAILED the mission. So forgive me, Father, for being the end of the line. For consuming but not reproducing. For learning but not teaching. For growing but not multiplying. Today, shift my thinking. Teach me that discipleship is not about MY perfection—it's about PASSING ON what I've received. Teach me that I don't need to be an EXPERT—I just need to be ONE STEP AHEAD and willing to WALK WITH someone. Teach me that the goal of the Christian life is not just PERSONAL transformation—it's GENERATIONAL multiplication. Give me VISION to see myself as a disciple-MAKER. Give me COURAGE to invest in younger men. Give me HUMILITY to pass the baton instead of hoarding what You've given me. This is the FINAL WEEK. And You're not done with me yet. But after Day 40, the real work BEGINS—reproducing what You've done in me. Prepare me for that. Starting today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Making Disciples

Read these slowly. Let them expose your consumerism.

THE GREAT COMMISSION - THE COMMAND:

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20, NASB).

ALL AUTHORITY = Jesus has it. He's sending you with His authority.

GO = Not "sit and wait." GO.

MAKE DISCIPLES = Not just converts. Not just believers. DISCIPLES.

OF ALL NATIONS = Everyone. Everywhere.

BAPTIZING = Bringing them into the family.

TEACHING THEM = This is discipleship. Teaching them to OBEY everything Jesus commanded.

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS = You're not alone in this. Jesus is WITH you.

ENTRUST TO FAITHFUL MEN - THE MULTIPLICATION STRATEGY:

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Four generations in ONE verse:

1. PAUL (me)
2. TIMOTHY (you)
3. FAITHFUL MEN (them)

4. OTHERS ALSO (multiplication)

ENTRUST = Pass it on. Don't hoard it.

To FAITHFUL MEN = Not everyone. Faithful, teachable men.

Who will be able to TEACH OTHERS ALSO = They reproduce. It multiplies.

This is the STRATEGY: Multiplication, not just addition.

FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN:

"And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matthew 4:19, NASB).

FOLLOW ME = The call to discipleship.

I WILL MAKE YOU = Jesus does the transforming.

FISHERS OF MEN = The goal is REPRODUCTION. Catching more fish (making more disciples).

AS THE FATHER SENT ME, I SEND YOU:

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (John 20:21, NASB).

AS the Father SENT Jesus, Jesus SENDS you.

You're SENT. Not optional. SENT.

LIKE A NURSING MOTHER - PAUL'S HEART FOR DISCIPLES:

"But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, NASB).

GENTLE as a nursing mother. TENDER.

IMPART not only the GOSPEL but also OUR OWN LIVES.

Discipleship = giving your LIFE, not just information.

They became DEAR to us. Relationship.

LIKE A FATHER - PAUL'S ROLE:

"You know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11, NASB).

EXHORTING = Challenging them to grow.

ENCOURAGING = Building them up.

IMPLORING = Pleading with them.

AS A FATHER = Discipleship is FATHERLY. Caring. Invested.

UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU:

"My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19, NASB).

IN LABOR = Discipleship is HARD WORK. It's like childbirth.

UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU = The goal: CHRIST-LIKENESS in them.

BE IMITATORS OF ME:

"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1, NASB).

BE IMITATORS OF ME. Paul could say this because HE was imitating Christ.

Discipleship = MODELING. They watch you. You watch Christ.

THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED AND RECEIVED AND HEARD AND SEEN:

"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9, NASB).

LEARNED = Teaching.

RECEIVED = Doctrine passed on.

HEARD = What they heard you say.

SEEN IN ME = What they SAW you DO.

Discipleship = LIFE-ON-LIFE. Not just classroom.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Think about YOUR spiritual journey:

WHO disciplined YOU? Who invested in you? Who walked with you?

Now ask: WHO are YOU discipling? Who are you investing in? Who are you walking with?

Teaching: The Difference Between Conversion and Discipleship

Here's the lie most Christians believe about the Great Commission:

"The Great Commission is about EVANGELISM. Getting people saved. Once they pray the prayer, my job is done. Discipleship is for pastors and Bible teachers. I'm just a regular Christian. I share the Gospel when I can, but actually DISCIPLING someone? That's not my calling."

Translation: You've turned the Great Commission into CONVERSION ONLY and abdicated your responsibility to MAKE DISCIPLES.

And when the goal is just conversion, you produce CONSUMERS, not DISCIPLE-MAKERS.

Theological Insight:

"The Great Commission is not 'Go into all the world and make CONVERTS.' It's 'Go into all the world and make DISCIPLES.' A convert is someone who prays a prayer. A disciple is someone whose entire life is being transformed to look like Jesus. And making disciples is EVERY Christian's job." – Francis Chan (paraphrase)

Conversion vs. Discipleship: What's the Difference?

CONVERSION (The Starting Line):

What it is: Someone hears the Gospel, repents, believes, and is SAVED. Born again. Forgiven. Justified.

What it looks like:

- They pray to receive Christ
- They're baptized
- They start attending church (maybe)
- They have eternal life

Why it's essential: "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB).

Salvation is BY FAITH. Without conversion, there's no salvation.

The problem: If you stop at CONVERSION, you've only completed STEP ONE.

DISCIPLESHIP (The Marathon):

What it is: Someone who's been CONVERTED is now being TRAINED to follow Jesus. Transformed. Taught. Equipped. Sent.

What it looks like:

- They're learning to OBEY Jesus (not just believe in Him)

- They're being TRANSFORMED (character change, not just positional change)
- They're being EQUIPPED (learning spiritual disciplines, theology, service)
- They're being SENT (they become disciple-makers themselves)

Why it's essential: "Teaching them to observe ALL that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20, NASB).

The Great Commission doesn't end at conversion. It's TEACHING them to OBEY.

The goal: "Until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19, NASB).

CHRIST FORMED IN THEM. Complete transformation.

The Chart:

CONVERSION	DISCIPLESHIP
One-time event	Ongoing process
"Pray this prayer"	"Follow Jesus daily"
Positional (justified, saved)	Transformational (sanctified, growing)
Focus: Getting IN	Focus: Growing UP
"You're saved!"	"Now let's walk together"
Addition (one more convert)	Multiplication (they make disciples too)

CONVERSION

Often shallow

Transfer of information

Can happen in 5 minutes

The STARTING line

DISCIPLESHIP

Deep, life-changing

Transfer of LIFE

Takes YEARS

The MARATHON

Both are ESSENTIAL.

You need CONVERSION (salvation).

But conversion without DISCIPLESHIP produces BABY Christians who never grow up.

Why You Avoid Making Disciples

REASON #1: YOU THINK YOU'RE NOT QUALIFIED

The lie: "I can't make disciples because I'm not a pastor, Bible scholar, or spiritual giant. I'm just a regular guy. I'm still figuring this out myself."

The truth: You don't need to be PERFECT. You just need to be ONE STEP AHEAD and willing to WALK WITH someone.

"The things which you have heard from me... entrust these to faithful men" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Paul told TIMOTHY (who wasn't perfect) to disciple OTHERS.

You don't need to know EVERYTHING. You just need to share what YOU'VE LEARNED.

When you wait to be "qualified," you'll never START.

REASON #2: YOU'VE BEEN A CONSUMER, NOT A REPRODUCER

The pattern: You go to church. You learn. You grow (somewhat).

But it STOPS with you. You never PASS IT ON.

You CONSUME teaching. You don't REPRODUCE disciples.

The truth: "Freely you received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8, NASB).

You've received SO MUCH over the years. Teaching. Discipleship (maybe). Growth.

Now it's time to GIVE.

When you only consume and never reproduce, you're the end of the line.

REASON #3: IT'S EASIER TO FOCUS ON YOURSELF

The reality: Working on YOUR spiritual life is simpler:

- You control the schedule
- You don't have to deal with someone else's mess
- You can go at your own pace
- Less accountability

Discipling someone ELSE is HARD:

- They have questions you can't answer
- They fail and disappoint you
- It takes TIME, ENERGY, COMMITMENT
- You're responsible for their growth

The truth: Discipleship is MESSY. But it's the MISSION.

When you only focus on yourself, you've missed the point of the Christian life.

REASON #4: YOU'RE AFRAID OF HYPOCRISY

The fear: "How can I disciple someone when I'm still struggling with sin? They'll see my failures. They'll think I'm a hypocrite."

The truth: Discipleship is NOT presenting yourself as PERFECT. It's walking TOGETHER toward Christ.

They NEED to see you struggle, repent, grow. That's MODELING.

"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1, NASB).

Paul said "imitate ME." But also "AS I imitate Christ."

You're both following JESUS. You're just a few steps ahead.

When fear of hypocrisy keeps you from discipling, you've believed a lie.

REASON #5: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW

The struggle: "I've never MADE a disciple. I don't know what to DO. What do we talk about? How often do we meet? What's the process?"

The truth: You can LEARN. It's simpler than you think.

Discipleship = RELATIONSHIP + INTENTIONALITY.

Spend time together. Share life. Teach what you know. Model what you're learning.

When you don't know how, LEARN. Don't stay paralyzed.

REASON #6: YOU DON'T HAVE ANYONE TO DISCIPLE

The excuse: "I would disciple someone if there was someone to disciple. But there's no one asking."

The truth: Don't WAIT for someone to ask. LOOK for someone to invest in.

Ask God: "Who do You want me to disciple?"

Then INVITE them.

When you wait for someone to ask, you'll wait forever.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Training the Next Generation

In firefighting, experienced firefighters are REQUIRED to train new firefighters.

It's not optional. It's the JOB.

Here's how it works:

You're a seasoned firefighter. You've been on the job for years.

A rookie joins the crew. Fresh out of the academy. Book knowledge but no experience.

Your job? Train him.

Not just TELL him how to fight fires. SHOW him.

You take him on calls. You walk him through procedures. You let him TRY (under supervision). You CORRECT when he messes up. You ENCOURAGE when he does well.

You give him LIFE-ON-LIFE training.

Because reading a manual is NOT the same as fighting actual fires.

And here's the critical part:

If you DON'T train the next generation, the fire service DIES.

When veteran firefighters retire without training rookies, there's NO ONE to replace them.

The knowledge, skill, and experience DIES with them.

Same with discipleship.

If you don't MAKE disciples, the faith stops with YOU.

When you die (or when Christ returns), what you learned DIES with you.

Unless you REPRODUCE.

You're not the FINISH LINE. You're a LINK in the chain.

Paul disciplined Timothy.

Timothy disciplined faithful men.

Faithful men disciplined others.

Four generations. MULTIPLICATION.

Who are YOU training?

If the answer is "no one," you've broken the chain.

What Is Discipleship? (Getting Clear)

Let's define it clearly:

DISCIPLESHIP IS:

1. RELATIONAL

It's not a PROGRAM or CLASS (though those can help).

It's LIFE-ON-LIFE. Relationship. Friendship. Doing life together.

"We were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives" (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NASB).

You give your LIFE, not just information.

2. INTENTIONAL

It doesn't happen by accident.

You CHOOSE to invest. You SCHEDULE time. You're PURPOSEFUL.

"Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20, NASB).

TEACHING = intentional transfer of truth.

3. TRANSFORMATIONAL

The goal is not INFORMATION. It's TRANSFORMATION.

"Until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19, NASB).

CHRIST FORMED = they start looking like Jesus.

4. REPRODUCIBLE

You're not just making a DISCIPLE. You're making a disciple-MAKER.

"Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

They TEACH OTHERS. Multiplication.

5. MODELED

You're not just TELLING them what to do. You're SHOWING them.

"The things you have learned and received and heard and SEEN IN ME" (Philippians 4:9, NASB).

SEEN IN ME = they watch your life.

How to Make Disciples: Practical Steps

Here's how to actually DO this:

STEP 1: PRAY FOR GOD TO SHOW YOU WHO TO DISCIPLE

What it looks like: Pray: "God, who do You want me to invest in? Who are You calling me to disciple?"

Look for:

- Someone YOUNGER in the faith (or younger in age)
- Someone HUNGRY (teachable, willing to learn)
- Someone FAITHFUL (they'll actually show up and do the work)

Don't look for:

- Someone PERFECT (they don't exist)
- Someone who has it all together (they don't need discipleship then)

Practical: This week, pray daily for God to show you ONE PERSON to disciple.

STEP 2: INVITE THEM

What it looks like: Don't wait for them to ask. YOU invite.

"Hey, I've been thinking. Would you be interested in meeting regularly—grabbing coffee, talking about life and faith, walking through this together? I'm not an expert, but I'd love to invest in you if you're interested."

Why this matters: Most younger guys are WAITING for an older guy to invest in them. But they're afraid to ask.

YOU initiate.

Practical: Text or call the person God puts on your heart. Invite them to coffee THIS WEEK.

STEP 3: ESTABLISH A RHYTHM (Consistency Matters)

What it looks like: Decide on a regular meeting time:

- Weekly breakfast/coffee (ideal)
- Bi-weekly lunch
- Monthly longer hangout

Put it on the CALENDAR. Make it CONSISTENT.

Why this matters: Discipleship requires CONSISTENCY. Sporadic meetings don't produce transformation.

Practical: Commit to meeting WEEKLY for at least 6 months.

STEP 4: BUILD RELATIONSHIP (Life-on-Life)

What it looks like: Don't just meet in a coffee shop for formal Bible study.

DO LIFE TOGETHER:

- Work on a project together
- Serve together
- Go to a game together
- Let them into your HOME, your FAMILY, your REAL LIFE

Why this matters: Discipleship happens in the MARGINS. In real life. Not just formal meetings.

Practical: Invite them to help you with something (yard work, house project, serving at church). Do life TOGETHER.

STEP 5: SHARE YOUR LIFE (Not Just Information)

What it looks like: Don't just TEACH Bible content (though that's important).

Share:

- Your STORY (how God saved you, what He's done in you)
- Your STRUGGLES (where you're battling, how you're fighting)
- Your FAILURES (how you've messed up and repented)
- Your VICTORIES (where God has shown up)

Why this matters: "We were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives" (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NASB).

YOUR LIFE. Not just doctrine.

Practical: Be HONEST. Let them see the REAL you. Model authenticity.

STEP 6: TEACH THEM THE BASICS

What to teach:

THE GOSPEL (make sure they understand it clearly)

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:

- How to pray
- How to read Scripture
- How to fast
- How to worship
- How to Sabbath
- How to live in community

OBEDIENCE:

- How to repent
- How to fight sin
- How to serve
- How to give
- How to share their faith

THEOLOGY:

- Who God is
- Who they are in Christ
- The work of the Holy Spirit

Practical: Use a simple tool (like 40 STRONG, a discipleship book, or a systematic plan). Don't wing it.

STEP 7: MODEL WHAT YOU'RE TEACHING

What it looks like: Don't just TELL them to pray. PRAY WITH THEM.

Don't just TELL them to serve. SERVE TOGETHER.

Don't just TELL them to share the Gospel. SHOW THEM how.

Why this matters: "The things you have learned and received and heard and SEEN IN ME" (Philippians 4:9, NASB).

SEEN. They need to SEE it, not just HEAR it.

Practical: Whatever you're teaching, DO IT WITH THEM first.

STEP 8: HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE

What it looks like: Ask hard questions:

- "How's your walk with God this week?"
- "Where did you struggle with sin?"
- "Did you do what you said you'd do?"
- "How's your marriage? Your family? Your work?"

Why this matters: Accountability produces growth. Without it, they drift.

Practical: Every meeting, ask: "How are you REALLY doing?" Don't let them give surface answers.

STEP 9: CHALLENGE THEM TO GROW

What it looks like: Don't just comfort. CHALLENGE.

- "I think God is calling you to step up here."

- "You need to deal with this sin."
- "It's time to take the next step."

Why this matters: "We were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11, NASB).

EXHORT = challenge. ENCOURAGE = build up. IMPLORE = plead.

A father does ALL THREE.

Practical: Don't just be a "nice guy." Be a SPIRITUAL FATHER who challenges them to grow.

STEP 10: RELEASE THEM TO MAKE DISCIPLES

What it looks like: After 6-12 months, challenge them:

"Now it's YOUR turn. Who are YOU going to disciple? Let's talk about who God is putting on your heart."

Why this matters: "Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

TEACH OTHERS ALSO. Multiplication.

The goal is not just to make THEM a disciple. It's to make them a disciple-MAKER.

Practical: At the 6-month mark, start talking about who THEY will invest in. Help them identify someone. Coach them through it.

The Four Stages of Discipleship (I Do, We Do, You Do, You Teach)

Here's a simple framework for discipleship:

STAGE 1: I DO, YOU WATCH

What it looks like: You MODEL. They OBSERVE.

- I pray. You listen.
- I share the Gospel with someone. You watch.
- I serve. You observe.

Why it matters: They need to SEE it done before they can DO it.

STAGE 2: WE DO TOGETHER

What it looks like: We DO IT TOGETHER. Side by side.

- We pray together.
- We share the Gospel together (I start, you finish).
- We serve together.

Why it matters: They learn by DOING, not just watching.

STAGE 3: YOU DO, I WATCH

What it looks like: Now THEY do it. You WATCH and COACH.

- You pray. I listen and give feedback.
- You share the Gospel. I observe and encourage.
- You serve. I'm there for support.

Why it matters: They need to TRY. And fail. And learn.

STAGE 4: YOU TEACH SOMEONE ELSE

What it looks like: Now THEY disciple someone. And you coach THEM through it.

Why it matters: This is MULTIPLICATION. They're not just disciples. They're disciple-MAKERS.

What to Cover in Discipleship: A Suggested Plan

If you're wondering "What do we actually DO when we meet?"—here's a simple 12-month plan:

MONTHS 1-3: FOUNDATION

Focus: Gospel, Identity, Spiritual Disciplines

- Week 1-4: The Gospel (who God is, who we are, what Christ did)
 - Week 5-8: Identity in Christ (son, accepted, forgiven, empowered, sent, beloved)
 - Week 9-12: Spiritual Disciplines (prayer, Scripture, fasting, worship, Sabbath, community)
-

MONTHS 4-6: TRANSFORMATION

Focus: Fighting Sin, Building Character

- Week 13-16: Repentance and Fighting Sin (confession, accountability, spiritual warfare)
 - Week 17-20: Character Formation (fruit of the Spirit, integrity, humility)
 - Week 21-24: Marriage and Family (if applicable—leading at home)
-

MONTHS 7-9: MISSION

Focus: Service, Evangelism, Stewardship

- Week 25-28: Serving Others (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the lost, the broken)
 - Week 29-32: Evangelism (sharing your story, the Gospel, inviting response)
 - Week 33-36: Stewardship (money, time, talents—generosity)
-

MONTHS 10-12: MULTIPLICATION

Focus: Making Disciples

- Week 37-40: Making Disciples (the Great Commission, how to disciple)
- Week 41-44: They BEGIN discipling someone (you coach them)
- Week 45-48: They CONTINUE discipling (you release them)

After 12 months, they're equipped and making disciples themselves.

The Warning: Multiplication vs. Addition

Here's the difference between ADDITION and MULTIPLICATION:

ADDITION (One at a Time):

What it looks like:

- You make disciples
- Each person you disciple = +1
- In 10 years, you've discipled 10 people

Result: 10 disciples

MULTIPLICATION (Reproducing Disciple-Makers):

What it looks like:

- You make disciples WHO MAKE DISCIPLES
- Each person you disciple discipled 2 others
- They disciple 2 others
- And so on...

Result (in 10 years, if each generation takes 2 years and each person discipled 2):

Year 0: YOU (1 person)

Year 2: You disciple 2 (3 total)

Year 4: They each disciple 2 (7 total)

Year 6: Those disciple 2 each (15 total)

Year 8: Those disciple 2 each (31 total)

Year 10: Those disciple 2 each (63 total)

Multiplication produces EXPONENTIAL growth.

That's the Great Commission strategy: MULTIPLY, not just add.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from consumer to reproducer)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. HAVE YOU EVER MADE A DISCIPLE?

Be BRUTALLY honest. Have you ever intentionally disciplined someone?

- ☐ Yes—I've disciplined someone (or am currently discipling)
- ☐ I've tried but didn't follow through
- ☐ No—I've never intentionally disciplined anyone

If NO, why not?

2. ARE YOU A CONSUMER OR A REPRODUCER?

Over your Christian life, have you been:

☐ A CONSUMER (receiving teaching, learning, growing—but it stops with me)

☐ A REPRODUCER (receiving AND passing it on to others)

What do your ACTIONS (not intentions) reveal?

3. WHO DISCIPLED YOU?

Who invested in YOU? Who walked with you? Who modeled faith for you?

Name(s): _____

If NO ONE disciplined you, how has that affected your growth?

If SOMEONE did, what did they do that made a difference?

SECTION 2: THE GREAT COMMISSION

4. CONVERSION OR DISCIPLESHIP?

When you think about the Great Commission, do you think:

☐ CONVERSION (getting people saved, then my job is done)

☐ DISCIPLESHIP (walking with them, teaching them, making disciple-makers)

The truth:

The Great Commission is "make DISCIPLES" not just "make converts."

Does this change how you view your responsibility?

- ☐ Yes—I need to disciple, not just evangelize
 - ☐ Somewhat—I'm processing this
 - ☐ No—I still think conversion is the main goal
-

5. FOUR GENERATIONS:

"The things which you have heard from me... entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Four generations: Paul → Timothy → Faithful men → Others

In YOUR spiritual lineage, where are you?

- ☐ Generation 1 (I'm being disciplined but not discipling anyone)
- ☐ Generation 2 (I'm discipling someone, but they're not discipling yet)
- ☐ Generation 3 (I'm discipling someone who's discipling someone else)
- ☐ Generation 4 (Multi-generational multiplication is happening)

If you're stuck at Generation 1, what needs to change?

SECTION 3: WHY YOU AVOID MAKING DISCIPLES

6. WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

What's your #1 reason for NOT making disciples?

- ☐ I don't think I'm qualified
- ☐ I've been a consumer, not a reproducer
- ☐ It's easier to focus on myself
- ☐ I'm afraid of hypocrisy (they'll see my failures)
- ☐ I don't know how
- ☐ I don't have anyone to disciple

For the reason you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

7. "I'M NOT QUALIFIED":

Do you feel unqualified to make disciples?

- ☐ Yes—I'm not perfect, I'm still learning
- ☐ Somewhat—I struggle with this
- ☐ No—I'm ready to invest

The truth:

You don't need to be PERFECT. You just need to be ONE STEP AHEAD.

Will you disciple someone anyway?

- ☐ Yes—I'm willing despite my imperfections
 - ☐ I'll pray about it
 - ☐ I'm not ready
-

SECTION 4: WHO WILL YOU DISCIPLE?

8. PRAY FOR GOD TO SHOW YOU WHO:

Have you prayed and asked God: "Who do You want me to disciple?"

- ☐ Yes—and God has shown me someone
- ☐ Not yet—but I'll pray this week
- ☐ No—I haven't thought about it

If GOD HAS SHOWN YOU SOMEONE, who is it?

Name: _____

9. CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR:

Who in your life is:

- ☐ YOUNGER in faith (or younger in age)
- ☐ HUNGRY (teachable, wants to grow)
- ☐ FAITHFUL (will show up, do the work)

List 2-3 potential people:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

10. WILL YOU INVITE THEM?

Will you INVITE someone to a discipleship relationship THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Yes—I'll text/call them and invite them to coffee
- ☐ I'll pray about it first
- ☐ I'm not ready

If YES, who will you invite?

When will you reach out?

Day: _____

What will you say?

Example: "Hey, would you be interested in meeting regularly to talk about life and faith? I'd love to invest in you if you're up for it."

SECTION 5: THE PLAN

11. WHAT RHYTHM WILL YOU COMMIT TO?

If you disciple someone, how often will you meet?

☐ Weekly (ideal)

☐ Bi-weekly

☐ Monthly

For how long will you commit?

☐ 6 months

☐ 1 year

☐ Ongoing

12. WHAT WILL YOU COVER?

What will you teach/model in your discipleship?

☐ The Gospel and identity in Christ

☐ Spiritual disciplines (prayer, Scripture, etc.)

☐ Fighting sin and building character

☐ Service, evangelism, stewardship

☐ Making disciples (so they reproduce)

☐ Use a tool (40 STRONG, a book, a plan)

What tool/resource will you use?

SECTION 6: MODELING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

13. WILL YOU SHARE YOUR LIFE?

Will you be HONEST with them about:

- ☐ Your struggles
- ☐ Your failures and how you repented
- ☐ Your victories and how God showed up
- ☐ Your real life (family, work, challenges)

Or will you try to appear PERFECT?

- ☐ I'll try to look like I have it all together (wrong approach)

Remember: "We were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives" (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NASB).

14. WILL YOU HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE?

Will you ask hard questions like:

- ☐ "How's your walk with God?"
- ☐ "Where did you struggle with sin this week?"
- ☐ "Did you do what you said you'd do?"
- ☐ "How's your marriage/family/work?"

Accountability is ESSENTIAL. Without it, they drift.

SECTION 7: MULTIPLICATION

15. WILL YOU RELEASE THEM TO MAKE DISCIPLES?

After 6-12 months, will you challenge them to disciple someone ELSE?

- ☐ Yes—that's the goal (multiplication)
- ☐ Maybe—I hadn't thought that far ahead
- ☐ No—I just want to disciple them

The truth:

The goal is not just to make THEM a disciple. It's to make them a disciple-MAKER.

"Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

16. ADDITION OR MULTIPLICATION?

What's your approach?

- ☐ ADDITION (I'll disciple people one at a time—each one I disciple = +1)
- ☐ MULTIPLICATION (I'll disciple people WHO DISCIPLE OTHERS—exponential growth)

Multiplication is the Great Commission strategy.

SECTION 8: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

17. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "I'm not qualified to make disciples"

- ☐ "Discipleship is for pastors, not regular Christians"
- ☐ "I'll disciple someone when I have it all together"
- ☐ "I don't have time for this"
- ☐ "No one would want me to disciple them"
- ☐ "Discipleship is just a program or class"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

18. THE TRUTH ABOUT MAKING DISCIPLES:

Complete this sentence:

"Making disciples is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Making disciples is not optional. It's the GREAT COMMISSION."
- "Making disciples is not for experts. It's for EVERY Christian."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Making disciples is not optional—it's the GREAT COMMISSION.

I am not just a disciple. I am a disciple-MAKER.

I don't need to be perfect to disciple someone. I just need to be one step ahead and willing.

I will not be a CONSUMER only. I will REPRODUCE what God has given me.

I will PRAY for God to show me who to disciple. I will INVITE them. I will WALK with them.

I will share not just the Gospel, but my LIFE. I will MODEL what I'm teaching.

I will hold them ACCOUNTABLE. I will CHALLENGE them to grow. I will RELEASE them to make disciples.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB).

I will GO. I will MAKE disciples. Starting now.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've been a CONSUMER, not a REPRODUCER. I've received teaching, learned, grown—but it's STOPPED with me. I've never intentionally made a disciple. I've avoided it because I felt unqualified, afraid, unsure how. I've focused on MY growth while neglecting the Great Commission. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Making disciples is not OPTIONAL. It's Your COMMAND. I don't need to be PERFECT. I just need to pass on what I've received. I need to be one step ahead and WILLING.

Show me WHO to disciple. Give me eyes to see who You're putting in my path. Give me COURAGE to invite them. Give me HUMILITY to share my life, not just information. Give me PATIENCE to walk with them through the mess. Give me WISDOM to teach, model, and hold accountable.

And remind me: I'm not the FINISH LINE. I'm a LINK in the chain. My job is to reproduce disciple-MAKERS, not just disciples.

This is the FINAL WEEK. After Day 40, the real work begins—making disciples who make disciples. Prepare me for that.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: **"Go and make disciples"**

Breathe out: **"I will reproduce"**

(Matthew 28:19)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Who am I investing in? Who am I discipling?

Brief Prayer: Father, show me who to disciple. Give me courage to invite them.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Who has invested in ME over the years (discipled me, mentored me, walked with me)?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I take a step toward making disciples today?

☐ Yes—I prayed about who to disciple

☐ Yes—I reached out to someone

☐ I thought about it but didn't act

☐ No—I avoided it

If I AVOIDED, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

Have I been a consumer or a reproducer?

What does that reveal about my heart?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for being the end of the line. Forgive me for consuming but not reproducing. Forgive me for avoiding the Great Commission.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding making disciples?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I realized I've been a _____.
(consumer/reproducer). The person God is calling me to disciple is _____.
The lie I've been believing is _____. The

truth from Scripture is _____. This week I will take the first step by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 36 ✓ - FINAL WEEK begins. Learned I'm called to MAKE disciples, not just BE one. God is calling me to disciple _____. This week I'll invite them. Pray for courage."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 37: "Mentor Younger Men - Passing the Baton"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I learned to make disciples. Tomorrow I'll learn to MENTOR younger men—passing the baton, investing in the next generation. Prepare my heart. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU'RE A LINK IN THE CHAIN

Theological Insight:

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You're not the FINISH LINE. You're a LINK in the chain.

Someone invested in YOU (maybe). Or God used other means to grow you.

You've learned SO MUCH over the years. Teaching. Sermons. Books. Experiences. Growth.

And it can't STOP with you.

You have to PASS IT ON.

The Great Commission is not "Go and make CONVERTS."

It's "Go and make DISCIPLES."

Disciples who become disciple-MAKERS.

Paul → Timothy → Faithful men → Others

Four generations. Multiplication.

Who are YOU discipling?

If the answer is "no one," you've broken the chain.

But it's not too late.

This week, PRAY: "God, who do You want me to disciple?"

Then INVITE them.

Meet with them. Share your life. Teach them. Model for them. Hold them accountable. Challenge them. Release them to make disciples.

You don't need to be PERFECT.

You just need to be one step ahead and WILLING.

So GO. Make disciples.

That's the FINAL WEEK assignment.

And it's the assignment for the REST OF YOUR LIFE.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB).

GO. MAKE DISCIPLES.

You're not alone. Jesus is WITH you.

40 STRONG - Day 36 Complete ✓

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Day 1

FINAL WEEK - 4 DAYS REMAIN

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19, NASB)

YOU'RE NOT THE FINISH LINE. YOU'RE A LINK IN THE CHAIN.

40 STRONG - DAY 37

MENTOR YOUNGER MEN - PASSING THE BATON WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers

MORNING: THE GENERATION YOU'RE IGNORING (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, today's assignment confronts something I've avoided: investing in YOUNGER MEN. And if I'm brutally honest? I don't think much about the next generation. I'm focused on MY life. MY career. MY family. MY struggles. MY growth. The younger guys? They're... there. I see them at church. I see them at work. I see them in the neighborhood. But I don't ENGAGE them. I don't invest in them. I don't mentor them. Why? Because it's EASIER to stay in my peer group. Guys my own age. We understand each other. We're at the same stage of life. We have the same references, same experiences, same challenges. But younger men? They're different. They think differently. They talk differently. They have different struggles. They listen to different music. They're into things I don't understand. And honestly, Father, I'm not sure what I have to OFFER them. I'm still figuring out my own life. I'm still fighting battles. I'm still learning. What wisdom do I have to pass on? What could I possibly teach them? But here's the deeper truth I need to confess: I see the younger generation and I'm FRUSTRATED with them. They seem entitled. Soft. Undisciplined. They don't work as hard as my generation did. They're on their phones constantly. They complain about things we just DEALT with. They want everything handed to them. So instead of INVESTING in them, I criticize them. Instead of

MENTORING them, I judge them. Instead of PASSING THE BATON, I hold onto it while complaining that "kids these days" aren't ready for it. That's sin, Father. Because while I'm criticizing them, I'm doing NOTHING to help them. While I'm judging their failures, I'm refusing to invest in their success. While I'm complaining about the next generation, I'm ABDICATING my responsibility to RAISE UP the next generation. The truth is: If the younger generation is struggling, it's because MY generation FAILED to mentor them. If they lack wisdom, it's because we didn't TEACH them. If they lack discipline, it's because we didn't MODEL it. If they lack vision, it's because we didn't CAST it. We failed them. I failed them. And the crisis of fatherlessness in our culture—both PHYSICAL and SPIRITUAL—is destroying young men. They're lost. Confused. Searching. Desperate for an older man to notice them, invest in them, BELIEVE in them. And I've walked past them. Too busy. Too focused on myself. Too critical. Too convinced I have nothing to offer. Forgive me, Father. Today, open my eyes to SEE the younger men around me. Not with CRITICISM, but with COMPASSION. Not with JUDGMENT, but with INVESTMENT. Show me that I DO have something to offer—not because I'm perfect, but because I'm AHEAD of them on the journey and can WALK WITH them. Teach me that mentoring isn't about having all the ANSWERS. It's about being AVAILABLE. Being PRESENT. Being WILLING to invest. Give me the heart of PAUL for TIMOTHY. Give me the courage to PASS THE BATON instead of holding it until I die. Give me VISION for generational impact—knowing that what I invest in a younger man today will multiply for DECADES after I'm gone. I'm 37 days into 40 STRONG. Three days remain. After Day 40, the question is: Will I hoard what I've learned?

Or REPRODUCE it? This week forces me to answer that. Help me be a MAN who invests in the next generation. Starting today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Mentoring Younger Men

Read these slowly. Let them expose your neglect of the next generation.

TITUS 2 - OLDER MEN TEACHING YOUNGER MEN:

"Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children... Likewise urge the young men to be sensible" (Titus 2:2-4, 6, NASB).

OLDER MEN are to be examples (temperate, dignified, sensible, sound).

OLDER WOMEN are to TEACH younger women.

YOUNG MEN are to be URGED toward sensibility.

The pattern: The older generation TEACHES and MODELS for the younger.

PAUL AND TIMOTHY - THE MODEL:

"For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17, NASB).

TIMOTHY = Paul's BELOVED and FAITHFUL CHILD in the Lord.

Not biological son. SPIRITUAL son.

Paul invested in him. Mentored him. Passed the baton.

PAUL'S HEART FOR TIMOTHY:

"I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy" (2 Timothy 1:3-4, NASB).

CONSTANTLY remember you in my prayers. NIGHT AND DAY.

LONGING to see you.

This is FATHERLY love. Deep investment. Genuine care.

FAN INTO FLAME THE GIFT:

"For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:6-7, NASB).

KINDLE AFRESH = fan into flame.

Paul is ENCOURAGING Timothy. Calling out his GIFTS. Building him up.

THE THINGS YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME:

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Paul → Timothy → Faithful men → Others

ENTRUST. Pass it on. Don't hoard it.

SUFFER HARDSHIP WITH ME:

"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:3, NASB).

Paul invites Timothy INTO the battle. Not to watch from afar. To FIGHT WITH him.

Mentoring = inviting them into the FIGHT.

THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (2 Timothy 4:3, NASB).

The younger generation NEEDS older men to teach them SOUND DOCTRINE.

Without it, they'll follow false teaching.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA - PASSING THE MANTLE:

"Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.' And Elisha said, 'Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me'" (2 Kings 2:8-9, NASB).

Elijah PASSED THE MANTLE to Elisha.

Elisha asked for a DOUBLE PORTION. He wanted to go FURTHER than his mentor.

That's the goal: the next generation goes FURTHER.

MOSES AND JOSHUA:

"Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance'" (Deuteronomy 31:7, NASB).

Moses PASSED LEADERSHIP to Joshua.

Publicly. Intentionally. With BLESSING and COMMISSIONING.

THE CRISIS OF FATHERLESSNESS:

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:5-6, NASB).

Restore the hearts of FATHERS to CHILDREN and children to fathers.

When fathers don't engage, the land is CURSED.

When older men don't invest in younger men, DEVASTATION follows.

Pause. Close your eyes.

Think about the younger men in YOUR life:

- At church
- At work
- In your family
- In your neighborhood

How many have you INVESTED in?

How many have you MENTORED?

Teaching: The Difference Between Ignoring and Investing

Here's the lie most men believe about younger men:

"The younger generation has its own struggles. They'll figure it out like I did. I don't need to get involved. They don't want an old guy telling them what to do anyway. Besides, I'm too busy with my own life. And honestly, they frustrate me—they're entitled, lazy, undisciplined. Why should I invest in them when they don't even seem to WANT wisdom?"

Translation: You've turned MENTORING into OPTIONAL and convinced yourself that IGNORING the next generation is acceptable.

And when older men refuse to invest, younger men are FATHERLESS.

Theological Insight:

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." – Greek Proverb

"The true measure of a man is not what he accumulates for himself, but what he passes on to the next generation." – Unknown

Ignoring vs. Investing: What's the Difference?

IGNORING (Generational Neglect):

What it looks like:

- You stay in your peer group (guys your own age)
- You don't engage younger men (they're "over there")
- You criticize the next generation (entitled, soft, lazy)

- You hold onto the baton (nobody's ready to take it)
- You focus on YOUR life, YOUR career, YOUR growth
- When you DO interact with younger men, you JUDGE them more than you HELP them

What it sounds like:

- "Kids these days..."
- "They don't work as hard as we did"
- "They're too entitled"
- "They'll figure it out like I did"
- "I don't have time for that"

Why it feels easier:

- No commitment required
- No vulnerability (they don't see your struggles)
- No time investment
- You stay comfortable in your peer group

The result:

- Younger men are FATHERLESS (spiritually)
- They lack WISDOM (no one's teaching them)
- They lack MODELS (no one's showing them)
- They DRIFT (no one's guiding them)
- The next generation is LOST

- Your knowledge and experience DIE WITH YOU
-

INVESTING (Generational Mentoring):

What it looks like:

- You intentionally BUILD RELATIONSHIPS with younger men
- You INVEST time in them (regularly, consistently)
- You MODEL what you're teaching (they see your real life)
- You PASS THE BATON (release them to go further)
- You see their struggles as OPPORTUNITIES to help, not reasons to criticize
- You BELIEVE in them even when they fail

What it sounds like:

- "I see potential in you"
- "Let me walk with you through this"
- "I've been where you are—here's what I learned"
- "You can do this—I believe in you"
- "Let me show you how"

Why it's costly:

- Requires TIME (significant investment)
- Requires VULNERABILITY (they see your struggles)
- Requires PATIENCE (they'll fail, disappoint, frustrate)

- Requires SACRIFICE (you give without guarantee of return)

The result:

- Younger men have SPIRITUAL FATHERS
 - They gain WISDOM (you teach them)
 - They see MODELS (you show them)
 - They're GUIDED (you walk with them)
 - The next generation is EQUIPPED
 - Your knowledge and experience MULTIPLY for generations
-

The Chart:

IGNORING

Stay in peer group

"Kids these days..."

Criticize the next generation

Hold the baton

Focus on MY life

Judge their failures

"They'll figure it out"

Knowledge dies with me

Generational neglect

INVESTING

Build cross-generational relationships

"I believe in you"

Invest in the next generation

Pass the baton

Focus on THEIR growth

Walk with them through failures

"Let me help you"

Knowledge multiplies for generations

Generational impact

IGNORING

Fatherlessness

INVESTING

Spiritual fatherhood

Which describes your ACTUAL relationship with younger men?

Most older men IGNORE. Few INVEST.

Why?

Why You Avoid Mentoring Younger Men

REASON #1: YOU'RE TOO BUSY (With Your Own Life)

The excuse: "I don't have TIME to mentor a younger guy. I'm busy with work, family, responsibilities. Maybe someday when life slows down."

The truth: Life NEVER slows down. If you wait for the "perfect time," you'll never mentor.

You MAKE time for what matters. Do younger men matter?

When you're too busy to invest in the next generation, your priorities are wrong.

REASON #2: YOU DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO OFFER

The lie: "I'm not wise enough. I'm not spiritual enough. I'm still figuring out my own life. What could I possibly teach them?"

The truth: You're AHEAD of them on the journey. You've learned things they haven't. You've experienced things they're about to face.

You don't need to be PERFECT. You need to be WILLING.

When you think you have nothing to offer, you've underestimated what you've learned.

REASON #3: YOU'RE FRUSTRATED WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The judgment: "They're entitled. Lazy. Undisciplined. They complain about everything. They don't work as hard. Why should I invest in THEM?"

The truth: EVERY older generation has said this about EVERY younger generation.

Your generation wasn't perfect either. Remember?

Instead of JUDGING them, INVEST in them. Help them become what they're NOT YET.

When you criticize instead of mentor, you're part of the problem.

REASON #4: THEY MIGHT REJECT YOU (Fear of Rejection)

The fear: "What if I reach out and they don't want my help? What if they think I'm just an old guy who doesn't understand? What if they reject me?"

The truth: Some will reject. But MOST younger men are DESPERATE for an older man to notice them.

They're waiting for YOU to initiate.

When fear of rejection keeps you from reaching out, younger men stay fatherless.

REASON #5: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW (No Model)

The struggle: "I've never been mentored myself. I don't know what mentoring LOOKS like. How do I do it?"

The truth: You can LEARN. It's simpler than you think.

Mentoring = TIME + PRESENCE + WISDOM + INVESTMENT.

Just show up. Be available. Share what you've learned.

When you don't know how, ASK. Don't stay paralyzed.

REASON #6: YOU'RE HOLDING THE BATON (Afraid They'll Surpass You)

The hidden fear: Deep down, you're afraid that if you FULLY invest in them, they'll surpass you.

They'll go further. Accomplish more. Be more successful.

And that threatens your EGO.

The truth: THAT'S THE GOAL. They SHOULD go further than you.

Elisha asked for a DOUBLE PORTION. Moses wanted Joshua to SUCCEED.

True mentoring celebrates when the next generation SURPASSES the previous.

When you're afraid they'll surpass you, you've made it about YOU, not them.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Training Doesn't Stop With Your Shift

In firefighting, veteran firefighters don't just train THEIR shift.

They train THE DEPARTMENT. Which includes the NEXT generation.

Here's the reality:

When a veteran firefighter retires, SOMEONE has to replace him.

If he didn't TRAIN the next generation, the department is WEAKER.

His knowledge—decades of experience, life-saving skills, wisdom from countless fires—DIES with him.

Unless he passes it on.

So veteran firefighters INTENTIONALLY mentor rookies:

They take them on calls and EXPLAIN what they're doing.

They DEMONSTRATE techniques.

They let rookies TRY (under supervision) and CORRECT when needed.

They SHARE stories of fires past—what worked, what didn't, lessons learned.

They INVEST time outside of calls—over meals, during downtime, in training sessions.

Because the fire service doesn't END with them. It CONTINUES.

Same with the Christian life.

Your faith doesn't END with you. It's supposed to CONTINUE through the next generation.

But that only happens if you PASS IT ON.

If you hoard what you've learned, it DIES with you.

If you MENTOR younger men, it MULTIPLIES for generations.

You're not the finish line. You're a LINK.

And your responsibility is to make sure the chain DOESN'T BREAK with you.

What Is Mentoring? (Getting Clear)

Let's define mentoring clearly:

MENTORING IS:

1. RELATIONAL

It's not a PROGRAM. It's a RELATIONSHIP.

You're not just transferring INFORMATION. You're investing in a PERSON.

"Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives"
(1 Thessalonians 2:8, NASB).

IMPART YOUR LIFE. Not just doctrine.

2. INTENTIONAL

It doesn't happen by accident.

You CHOOSE a younger man. You INVITE him. You COMMIT to meeting regularly.

"The things which you have heard from me... entrust these to faithful men" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

ENTRUST = intentional transfer.

3. GENERATIONAL

You're OLDER (in age or in faith). He's YOUNGER.

You're passing wisdom from ONE generation to the NEXT.

"Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible" (Titus 2:2, NASB).

OLDER teaching YOUNGER.

4. DEVELOPMENTAL

The goal is his GROWTH. Not your ego. Not your comfort. HIS development.

You're BUILDING HIM UP. Equipping him. Preparing him for what's ahead.

"I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6, NASB).

FAN INTO FLAME his gifts.

5. REPRODUCIBLE

You're not just making him BETTER. You're equipping him to MENTOR others.

"Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

TEACH OTHERS ALSO. Multiplication.

Who Should You Mentor? (Identifying the Right Younger Men)

Not every younger man is ready for mentoring. Here's who to look for:

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTEE:

1. FAITHFUL

He shows up. He follows through. He's reliable.

"The things which you have heard from me... entrust these to FAITHFUL men" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

FAITHFUL. Not perfect. FAITHFUL.

2. HUNGRY

He WANTS to grow. He's asking questions. He's seeking wisdom.

He's not content to stay where he is.

3. TEACHABLE

He listens. He receives correction. He's humble enough to admit he doesn't know.

He's not defensive or unteachable.

4. YOUNGER

He's younger in AGE or younger in FAITH.

You're ahead of him on the journey. You have something to OFFER.

5. AVAILABLE

He has TIME to meet. He's willing to commit to a regular rhythm.

He's not so busy that he can't invest in the relationship.

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

- Your CHURCH (young men who need investment)
- Your WORKPLACE (younger coworkers)
- Your NEIGHBORHOOD (younger neighbors)
- Your FAMILY (sons, nephews, younger relatives)
- Your COMMUNITY (volunteer organizations, sports teams, etc.)

How to Mentor a Younger Man: Practical Steps

Here's how to actually DO this:

STEP 1: PRAY AND IDENTIFY

What it looks like: Pray: "God, which younger man do You want me to mentor?"

Look around:

- Who's HUNGRY?
- Who's FAITHFUL?
- Who's TEACHABLE?
- Who needs investment?

Practical: This week, pray daily. Ask God to show you ONE younger man.

STEP 2: INITIATE

What it looks like: Don't wait for HIM to ask. YOU reach out.

"Hey [name], I've been noticing you. I see potential in you. I'd love to grab coffee and talk about life. Would you be interested in meeting regularly—like once a week or every other week? I'd love to invest in you if you're open to it."

Why this matters: Most younger men are WAITING for an older man to notice them. But they're afraid to ask.

YOU initiate.

Practical: Text or call this week. Invite him to coffee.

STEP 3: ESTABLISH A RHYTHM

What it looks like: Decide on regular meetings:

- Weekly breakfast (ideal for mentoring)
- Bi-weekly lunch
- Monthly longer hangout

Put it on the CALENDAR. Commit for at least 6-12 months.

Why this matters: Consistency builds TRUST. Sporadic meetings don't produce transformation.

Practical: Commit to meeting WEEKLY for 6-12 months minimum.

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR LIFE

What it looks like: Don't just TEACH. Let him SEE your real life.

- Invite him to your HOME (let him see your marriage, your family)
- Let him WORK with you (projects, service, real-life tasks)
- Share your STRUGGLES (where you're fighting, how you're growing)
- Share your VICTORIES (where God has shown up)

Why this matters: "The things you have learned and received and heard and **SEEN IN ME**" (Philippians 4:9, NASB).

SEEN. He needs to see your LIFE, not just hear your words.

Practical: Invite him into your REAL life. Don't keep it formal.

STEP 5: TEACH HIM WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

What to cover:

LIFE WISDOM:

- How to handle money
- How to choose a wife (if he's single)
- How to be a husband (if he's married)
- How to be a father
- How to work with integrity
- How to navigate conflict
- How to make decisions

SPIRITUAL WISDOM:

- How to pray
- How to read Scripture
- How to fight sin
- How to worship
- How to serve

- How to share the Gospel
- How to make disciples

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:

- Integrity
- Discipline
- Perseverance
- Humility
- Courage

Practical: Share what YOU'VE LEARNED. You don't need to know everything. Just share what GOD has taught YOU.

STEP 6: CALL OUT HIS POTENTIAL

What it looks like: SEE the gifts in him that he doesn't see yet.
SPEAK them over him.

"I see leadership in you." "You have a gift for teaching." "God has given you compassion for the broken." "I believe God is going to use you powerfully."

Why this matters: "I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6, NASB).

FAN INTO FLAME. Call out what God has put IN him.

Practical: Regularly AFFIRM his gifts. Speak VISION over him.

STEP 7: CHALLENGE HIM TO GROW

What it looks like: Don't just COMFORT. CHALLENGE.

- "You need to deal with this sin."
- "It's time to step up and lead."
- "God is calling you to take the next step."
- "You're capable of more than you think."

Why this matters: A FATHER challenges his son to become a MAN.

If you only COMFORT, you're a friend. If you CHALLENGE, you're a mentor.

Practical: Don't shy away from HARD conversations. Challenge him to grow.

STEP 8: WALK WITH HIM THROUGH FAILURE

What it looks like: He WILL fail. He'll disappoint you. He'll mess up.

DON'T give up on him.

Walk WITH him. Help him REPENT. Help him learn. Help him get back up.

Why this matters: That's what FATHERS do. They don't abandon when their sons fail.

Practical: When he fails, respond with GRACE and TRUTH. "Let's talk about what happened. What did you learn? How will you do it differently next time?"

STEP 9: CELEBRATE HIS WINS

What it looks like: When he SUCCEEDS, CELEBRATE.

- He overcomes a sin? Celebrate.
- He takes a courageous step? Celebrate.
- He grows spiritually? Celebrate.

Why this matters: Younger men need to know their wins MATTER to someone.

Practical: Text him when you see growth. "Proud of you, brother. I see what God is doing in you."

STEP 10: RELEASE HIM TO MENTOR OTHERS

What it looks like: After 6-12 months, challenge him:

"Now it's YOUR turn. Who are YOU going to mentor? Let's talk about who God is putting on your heart."

Why this matters: "Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

TEACH OTHERS. Multiplication.

The goal is not just to make HIM better. It's to make him a MENTOR.

Practical: At the 6-12 month mark, have the conversation: "Who will YOU invest in?"

What to Cover in Mentoring: A Suggested 12-Month Plan

MONTHS 1-3: FOUNDATION

Get to know him. Build trust. Establish rhythm.

- His story (background, family, faith journey)
- His struggles (what's he battling?)
- His dreams (what does he want to become?)
- The Gospel and identity in Christ
- Spiritual disciplines (prayer, Scripture, etc.)

MONTHS 4-6: CHARACTER & RELATIONSHIPS

Focus on building godly character and healthy relationships.

- Fighting sin and building character
- Integrity in work
- Purity (sexual integrity)
- Marriage (if applicable—how to choose a wife, how to be a husband)
- Friendships (choosing wise friends, being a good friend)
- Family (honoring parents, preparing for fatherhood if applicable)

MONTHS 7-9: MISSION & SERVICE

Focus on outward mission.

- Serving others (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria)
 - Evangelism (sharing the Gospel)
 - Stewardship (money, time, talents)
 - Work as worship (excellence, integrity)
-

MONTHS 10-12: MULTIPLICATION

Focus on him becoming a mentor.

- Making disciples (the Great Commission)
 - Mentoring younger men (passing the baton)
 - Leading spiritually (in home, in church)
 - Sustainable rhythms (how to continue growing)
 - RELEASE him to mentor someone else
-

The Crisis of Fatherlessness: Why This Matters NOW

Here's the devastating reality:

Physical fatherlessness:

- 1 in 4 children in the U.S. live without a father in the home
- Boys without fathers are more likely to struggle with identity, purpose, discipline

Spiritual fatherlessness:

- Most young men in the church have NEVER been mentored

- They lack spiritual fathers who invest in them
- They're surrounded by INFORMATION but starved for INVESTMENT

The result:

- Young men drifting
- Young men without vision
- Young men without models
- Young men repeating the failures of the previous generation

"He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:6, NASB).

When fathers (physical and spiritual) DON'T engage, the land is CURSED.

When older men DON'T mentor younger men, devastation follows.

You can change that.

By investing in ONE younger man.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from ignoring to investing)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT

1. DO YOU IGNORE OR INVEST?

When it comes to younger men, do you:

- ☐ IGNORE (stay in my peer group, don't engage the next generation)
- ☐ INVEST (intentionally build relationships, mentor younger men)
- ☐ Mix of both

What do your ACTIONS (not intentions) reveal?

2. HOW DO YOU VIEW THE YOUNGER GENERATION?

Be BRUTALLY honest. When you think about younger men, do you feel:

- ☐ Frustration ("kids these days are entitled, lazy, soft")
- ☐ Compassion ("they need investment, guidance, help")
- ☐ Indifference ("not my problem")
- ☐ Excitement ("I want to invest in them")

If you feel FRUSTRATION or INDIFFERENCE, what needs to change?

3. ARE YOU MENTORING ANYONE?

Are you currently mentoring a younger man?

- ☐ Yes—I'm actively mentoring someone
- ☐ I have in the past, but not currently
- ☐ No—I've never mentored anyone

If NO, why not?

SECTION 2: WHY YOU AVOID MENTORING

4. WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

What's your #1 reason for NOT mentoring a younger man?

- ☐ Too busy (with my own life)
- ☐ Don't think I have anything to offer
- ☐ Frustrated with the younger generation
- ☐ Fear of rejection (what if he doesn't want my help?)
- ☐ Don't know how
- ☐ Afraid he'll surpass me

For the reason you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

5. "I'M TOO BUSY":

Do you use "too busy" as an excuse to not mentor?

- ☐ Yes—I'm too busy with work, family, etc.
- ☐ Sometimes—I prioritize other things
- ☐ No—I make time for what matters

The truth:

You MAKE time for what matters. Do younger men matter?

Will you MAKE time to mentor?

- ☐ Yes—I'll commit time
 - ☐ I need to evaluate my priorities
 - ☐ I'm not ready
-

6. "I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO OFFER":

Do you feel like you don't have wisdom to pass on?

- ☐ Yes—I'm still figuring out my own life
- ☐ Sometimes—I doubt my qualifications
- ☐ No—I know I have something to offer

The truth:

You're AHEAD of them on the journey. You've learned things they haven't.

You don't need to be PERFECT. You need to be WILLING.

Will you mentor anyway?

- ☐ Yes—I'll share what I've learned
 - ☐ I'll pray about it
 - ☐ I'm not ready
-

SECTION 3: WHO WILL YOU MENTOR?

7. PRAY FOR GOD TO SHOW YOU WHO:

Have you prayed and asked God: "Which younger man do You want me to mentor?"

- ☐ Yes—and God has shown me someone
- ☐ Not yet—but I'll pray this week
- ☐ No—I haven't thought about it

If GOD HAS SHOWN YOU SOMEONE, who is it?

Name: _____

8. CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTEE:

Who in your life is:

- ☐ FAITHFUL (shows up, follows through)
- ☐ HUNGRY (wants to grow)
- ☐ TEACHABLE (receives correction, humble)
- ☐ YOUNGER (in age or faith)
- ☐ AVAILABLE (has time to meet)

List 2-3 potential younger men:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

9. WILL YOU INITIATE?

Will you REACH OUT to a younger man THIS WEEK?

☐ Yes—I'll text/call and invite him to coffee

☐ I'll pray about it first

☐ I'm not ready

If YES, who will you reach out to?

When?

Day: _____

What will you say?

Example: "Hey [name], I see potential in you. I'd love to grab coffee and talk about investing in you. Interested?"

SECTION 4: THE PLAN

10. WHAT RHYTHM WILL YOU COMMIT TO?

If you mentor someone, how often will you meet?

☐ Weekly (ideal)

☐ Bi-weekly

☐ Monthly

For how long?

☐ 6 months

☐ 1 year

☐ Ongoing

11. WHAT WILL YOU SHARE?

What life wisdom do YOU have that a younger man needs?

☐ How to handle money

☐ How to choose a wife / be a husband

☐ How to be a father

☐ How to work with integrity

☐ How to fight sin

☐ How to pray, read Scripture, etc.

☐ Other: _____

Write out 3 lessons YOU'VE LEARNED that you can teach:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

SECTION 5: CALLING OUT POTENTIAL

12. WILL YOU SPEAK VISION?

Will you CALL OUT the gifts you see in the younger man you mentor?

- ☐ Yes—I'll affirm his gifts and speak vision
- ☐ I'm not sure what his gifts are yet
- ☐ I struggle with affirming others

Remember: "I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6, NASB).

FAN INTO FLAME his gifts. SPEAK what you see.

13. WILL YOU CHALLENGE HIM?

Will you have HARD conversations when needed?

- ☐ Yes—I'll challenge him to grow
- ☐ I'll try, but I don't like conflict
- ☐ I'd rather just be his friend (not challenge)

The truth:

A MENTOR challenges. A friend just comforts.

If you're not willing to CHALLENGE, you're not ready to MENTOR.

SECTION 6: PASSING THE BATON

14. WILL YOU RELEASE HIM?

After 6-12 months, will you challenge him to mentor someone ELSE?

- ☐ Yes—that's the goal (multiplication)

- ☐ Maybe—I hadn't thought that far
- ☐ No—I just want to mentor him

The truth:

"Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

The goal is MULTIPLICATION. He should mentor others.

15. ARE YOU HOLDING THE BATON?

Are you afraid to FULLY invest because he might surpass you?

- ☐ Yes—that threatens my ego
- ☐ Sometimes—I struggle with this
- ☐ No—I want him to go further than me

The truth:

THAT'S THE GOAL. The next generation SHOULD go further.

Elisha asked for a DOUBLE PORTION.

Will you celebrate when he surpasses you?

- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ I'll work on that
 - ☐ I struggle with this
-

SECTION 7: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

16. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "I'm too busy to mentor"
- ☐ "I don't have anything to offer"
- ☐ "The younger generation is hopeless"
- ☐ "They don't want my help"
- ☐ "I'll mentor when I have my life together"
- ☐ "Mentoring is for pastors, not me"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

17. THE TRUTH ABOUT MENTORING:

Complete this sentence:

"Mentoring younger men is not _____. It's
_____."

Examples:

- "Mentoring is not optional. It's my RESPONSIBILITY."
- "Mentoring is not for experts. It's for anyone willing to INVEST."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Mentoring younger men is not optional—it's my RESPONSIBILITY.

I will not IGNORE the next generation. I will INVEST in them.

I will not CRITICIZE them. I will MENTOR them.

I will not HOLD the baton. I will PASS it.

I am not too busy. I am not unqualified. I have something to OFFER.

I will PRAY for God to show me who to mentor. I will INITIATE. I will COMMIT.

I will share my LIFE, not just information. I will CHALLENGE them to grow.

I will call out their POTENTIAL. I will walk with them through FAILURE. I will celebrate their WINS.

I will RELEASE them to mentor others. Multiplication, not just addition.

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

I will ENTRUST. I will PASS THE BATON. Starting now.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I've IGNORED the next generation. I've stayed in my peer group. I've criticized younger men instead of investing in them. I've held the baton instead of passing it. I've been too busy with MY life to invest in THEIRS. I've convinced myself I have nothing to offer. I've been FRUSTRATED instead of COMPASSIONATE. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: Mentoring is not OPTIONAL. It's my RESPONSIBILITY. The next generation is not my PROBLEM. They're my ASSIGNMENT. I DO have something to offer—not because I'm perfect, but because I'm AHEAD of them and can WALK WITH them.

Show me WHO to mentor. Give me eyes to see the younger men around me—not with frustration, but with VISION. Show me who's FAITHFUL, HUNGRY, TEACHABLE. Give me COURAGE to reach out. Give me HUMILITY to share my life, my struggles, my failures. Give me PATIENCE to walk with them through their mess. Give me WISDOM to challenge them to grow.

And remind me: I'm not the FINISH LINE. I'm a LINK. My job is to PASS THE BATON so the chain doesn't break.

This is Day 37 of 40. Three days remain. After Day 40, the real work begins—mentoring younger men who will mentor others. Prepare me for that.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "**Entrust to faithful men**"

Breathe out: "**I will pass the baton**"

(2 Timothy 2:2)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Who am I investing in? Which younger man needs me?

Brief Prayer: Father, show me who to mentor. Give me courage to reach out.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

Who invested in ME when I was younger (mentored, believed in me, walked with me)?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I take a step toward mentoring today?

- ☐ Yes—I prayed about who to mentor
- ☐ Yes—I reached out to a younger man
- ☐ I thought about it but didn't act
- ☐ No—I avoided it

If I AVOIDED, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

Do I ignore or invest in the next generation?

What does that reveal?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for ignoring younger men. Forgive me for holding the baton. Forgive me for being too busy to invest.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding mentoring?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I realized I've been _____ (ignoring/investing in) the next generation. The younger man God is calling me to mentor is _____. The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. This week I will take the first step by _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 37 ✓ - FINAL WEEK: Day 2. Learned to MENTOR younger men, not just ignore them. God is calling me to mentor _____. This week I'll reach out. Pray for courage to pass the baton."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 38: "Lead Your Home Spiritually - Generational Impact"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I learned to mentor younger men. Tomorrow I'll learn to LEAD MY HOME spiritually—my family as my first disciples. Prepare my heart. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: PASS THE BATON

Theological Insight:

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." – Greek Proverb

Brother, here's what you need to know:

The next generation is WAITING.

Waiting for an older man to notice them.

Waiting for someone to believe in them.

Waiting for a spiritual father to invest in them.

And you're that man.

You have wisdom they need.

You have experience they lack.

You have perspective they don't have yet.

You're AHEAD of them on the journey.

And your job is to WALK WITH THEM.

Not to be perfect. Not to have all the answers.

Just to be WILLING. AVAILABLE. INVESTED.

This week, PRAY: "God, which younger man do You want me to mentor?"

Then REACH OUT.

Text him. Call him. Invite him to coffee.

Say: "I see potential in you. I'd love to invest in you. Interested?"

He'll probably say yes.

Because he's been waiting for YOU to notice him.

Then commit.

Meet weekly. Share your life. Teach him what you've learned.

Challenge him. Walk with him. Release him to mentor others.

And watch what God does.

Because when you mentor ONE younger man, and HE mentors ONE, and THEY mentor ONE...

That's MULTIPLICATION.

That's generational IMPACT.

That's the BATON being passed.

So don't hold it. PASS IT.

Three days remain in 40 STRONG.

But the work of mentoring? That's for the REST OF YOUR LIFE.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

ENTRUST. PASS IT ON.

Don't let it die with you.

40 STRONG - Day 37 Complete ✓

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Day 2

FINAL WEEK - 3 DAYS REMAIN

"Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB)

PASS THE BATON. INVEST IN THE NEXT GENERATION.

40 STRONG - DAY 38

LEAD YOUR HOME SPIRITUALLY - GENERATIONAL IMPACT WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers

MORNING: THE LEADERSHIP YOU'VE ABDICATED (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this prayer exposes the most painful failure of my life: I have ABDICATED spiritual leadership at home. And if I'm brutally honest? I lead EVERYWHERE ELSE except where it matters MOST. I'll lead at work. I'll serve at church. I'll mentor younger men. I'll volunteer in the community. But when it comes to leading my FAMILY spiritually—I'm passive. Silent. Absent. I let my WIFE carry the spiritual weight of our home. She prays with the kids. She takes them to church. She teaches them about Jesus. She initiates spiritual conversations. She's the one who makes sure we're connected to God. And me? I show up physically. I provide financially. I might even attend church WITH them. But LEAD them spiritually? Initiate prayer? Open the Bible with my family? Model what it looks like to follow Jesus? I don't do it. I've ABDICATED. And I justify it by saying: "She's better at that stuff than I am." "I'm not a spiritual guy like she is." "I don't know what to say." "The kids won't listen to me anyway." "I lead in OTHER ways—providing, protecting." But these are EXCUSES. Because God didn't call my WIFE to be the spiritual leader of our home. He called ME. **"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church"** (Ephesians 5:23). HEAD. Leader. Not dictator. Not boss. SERVANT-

LEADER. Like CHRIST. And I've failed. I've let her lead while I coast. I've let the church raise my kids spiritually while I remain passive. I've prioritized CAREER over FAMILY. SUCCESS over SPIRITUAL LEGACY. And my kids are watching. They're learning what a man looks like. What a husband looks like. What a father looks like. And what they SEE is: Dad provides money. Dad is busy. Dad is good at his job. But Dad doesn't pray. Dad doesn't read the Bible. Dad doesn't talk about Jesus. Dad doesn't lead spiritually. So they're learning: FAITH is for women. SPIRITUALITY is Mom's job. MEN don't do that. And I'm passing on SPIRITUAL PASSIVITY to the next generation. My SONS will grow up to be passive husbands and fathers like me. My DAUGHTERS will grow up expecting to carry the spiritual weight in their marriages because that's what they saw. This is generational FAILURE, Father. And it has to STOP. If I can disciple younger men, I can disciple my OWN CHILDREN. If I can mentor at church, I can lead at HOME. If I can serve the community, I can serve my FAMILY. Because JERUSALEM comes FIRST. My family is my FIRST ministry. My wife is my FIRST disciple. My children are my PRIMARY mission field. And if I fail HERE, nothing else I do matters.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). This isn't just about FINANCIAL provision. It's about SPIRITUAL provision. And I've been worse than an unbeliever. Forgive me, Father. Today, shatter my passivity at home. Convict me that spiritual leadership is not OPTIONAL—it's my God-given RESPONSIBILITY. Teach me that leading doesn't mean being PERFECT. It means being PRESENT. Being INTENTIONAL. Being the INITIATOR. Show me what it looks like to be a spiritual

leader: Not a dictator who demands obedience. But a SERVANT-LEADER who models Christ. Who prays WITH my family. Who opens the Bible WITH my family. Who talks about Jesus. Who repents when I fail. Who leads by EXAMPLE. Give me COURAGE to step into this role I've been avoiding. Give me HUMILITY to admit I've failed and START TODAY. Give me VISION for generational impact—knowing that what I do (or don't do) will affect my children, grandchildren, and generations to come. This is Day 38 of 40. Two days remain. And when 40 STRONG ends, I go back to my FAMILY. Will I lead them? Or continue abdicating? That decision starts TODAY. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Leading Your Home Spiritually

Read these slowly. Let them expose your abdication.

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27, NASB).

LOVE your wives AS Christ loved the church.

How did Christ love the church? He GAVE HIMSELF UP for her.

He SANCTIFIED her. Made her HOLY.

By the WASHING OF WATER WITH THE WORD.

That's spiritual leadership: SACRIFICIAL LOVE that leads to HOLINESS.

THE HUSBAND IS THE HEAD:

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:23-24, NASB).

HEAD = leader. Not boss. SERVANT-LEADER.

AS CHRIST is the head of the church. Christ SERVES. Christ SACRIFICES. Christ LOVES.

That's the model.

FATHERS, DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN:

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

FATHERS (not mothers primarily—though mothers disciple too).
FATHERS.

Do NOT provoke to anger (harsh, inconsistent, hypocritical leadership).

But BRING THEM UP in the DISCIPLINE and INSTRUCTION of the Lord.

DISCIPLINE = training, correction, boundaries.

INSTRUCTION = teaching them about God.

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY:

"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up"

(Deuteronomy 6:6-7, NASB).

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY. To your SONS (and daughters).

WHEN? All the time:

- When you SIT in your house
- When you WALK by the way
- When you LIE DOWN
- When you RISE UP

CONSTANT. Integrated into life. Not just formal teaching.

TELL YOUR SON IN THAT DAY:

"You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt'" (Exodus 13:8, NASB).

TELL YOUR SON. Pass on the story of what GOD HAS DONE.

Not just doctrine. YOUR STORY. God's faithfulness to YOU.

TRAIN UP A CHILD:

"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NASB).

TRAIN UP = intentional discipleship. Not passive hoping.

In the WAY he should go = God's way, not the world's.

EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD he will not depart.

Investment NOW produces fruit LATER.

IF A MAN CANNOT MANAGE HIS HOUSEHOLD, HE'S NOT QUALIFIED:

"He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4-5, NASB).

Qualification for church leadership: MANAGES HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD WELL.

If he CAN'T lead at HOME, he's NOT qualified to lead at CHURCH.

HOME comes FIRST.

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE:

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE = leading your household.

Joshua didn't just make a PERSONAL decision. He led his HOUSE.

WE will serve the LORD. Together. As a FAMILY.

THE LEGACY OF FAITH - TIMOTHY:

"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well" (2 Timothy 1:5, NASB).

SINCERE FAITH passed down through GENERATIONS.

Grandmother → Mother → Timothy.

GENERATIONAL IMPACT.

Pause. Close your eyes.

If you're married: Are you leading your wife spiritually? Or is she leading you?

If you have kids: Are you discipling them? Or abdicating to your wife and the church?

Teaching: The Difference Between Abdicating and Leading

Here's the lie most men believe about spiritual leadership at home:

"I'm not good at spiritual stuff. My wife is better at it. She prays, reads the Bible, takes the kids to church. I provide financially, protect them, fix things around the house. That's MY role. Spiritual leadership is HER strength. I lead in OTHER ways."

Translation: You've turned spiritual leadership into OPTIONAL and convinced yourself that ABDICATING is acceptable.

And when fathers abdicate, families drift.

Theological Insight:

"The spiritual temperature of a home is set by the father. If dad is on fire for God, the whole family feels the heat. If dad is lukewarm, the family freezes." – Unknown

"You can delegate a lot of things in family life, but spiritual leadership is not one of them. God gave this responsibility to husbands and fathers, and it cannot be transferred." – Voddie Baucham (paraphrase)

Abdicating vs. Leading: What's the Difference?

ABDICATING (Spiritual Passivity at Home):

What it looks like:

- Your WIFE leads spiritually (she prays with kids, initiates spiritual conversations, drives to church)

- You're PASSIVE (you show up physically but don't initiate)
- You justify it: "She's better at that" / "I'm not the spiritual one"
- You lead at WORK, CHURCH, COMMUNITY—but not at HOME
- Your kids see Mom as the spiritual one, Dad as the provider
- You've never prayed with your wife consistently
- You've never led family devotions
- You've never had spiritual conversations with your kids

What it sounds like:

- "My wife handles the spiritual stuff"
- "I'm just not good at that"
- "I don't know what to say"
- "The kids won't listen to me anyway"
- "I lead in other ways"

Why it feels easier:

- No pressure (your wife carries the weight)
- No vulnerability (you don't have to expose your spiritual life)
- No expectation (you've never done it, so no one expects it)
- You can focus on what you're GOOD at (work, providing)

The result:

- Your WIFE is exhausted carrying spiritual weight alone
- Your KIDS learn faith is for women, not men

- Your SONS will grow up to be spiritually passive like you
 - Your DAUGHTERS will expect to carry spiritual weight in their marriages
 - Your FAMILY drifts spiritually because there's no LEADER
 - You've FAILED your primary mission field
-

LEADING (Spiritual Headship as Servant-Leader):

What it looks like:

- YOU initiate spiritual things (prayer, Bible reading, spiritual conversations)
- You PRAY with your wife and kids (not perfectly, but consistently)
- You MODEL what following Jesus looks like (they see your faith in action)
- You TEACH your kids about God (integrated into daily life)
- You REPENT when you fail (modeling humility and grace)
- You lead by SERVING (like Christ), not by DICTATING
- Your family sees Dad pursuing God, not just Mom

What it sounds like:

- "Let's pray together"
- "Can I read the Bible with you?"
- "Here's what God is teaching me"

- "I messed up—will you forgive me?"
- "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"

Why it's costly:

- Requires INITIATIVE (you can't coast)
- Requires VULNERABILITY (they see your struggles)
- Requires CONSISTENCY (you can't just do it once)
- Requires GROWTH (you have to pursue God yourself first)

The result:

- Your WIFE is supported and honored
- Your KIDS see faith modeled by BOTH parents (especially Dad)
- Your SONS learn to be spiritual leaders
- Your DAUGHTERS learn to value spiritual leadership in a man
- Your FAMILY is anchored in God because you're LEADING
- You've FULFILLED your primary mission

The Chart:

ABDICATING

Wife leads spiritually

I'm passive at home

"She's better at that"

LEADING

I lead spiritually

I'm intentional at home

"God called ME to lead"

ABDICATING

LEADING

I lead elsewhere, not home HOME is my first ministry

Kids see Mom as spiritual Kids see Dad pursuing God

Never pray with family Pray with family regularly

Provide financially only Provide spiritually AND financially

"I don't know what to say" "I'll start, even imperfectly"

Wife is exhausted alone Wife is supported and honored

Kids learn passivity Kids learn to follow Jesus

Generational drift Generational impact

Which describes your ACTUAL leadership at home?

Most men ABDICATE. Few LEAD.

Why?

Why You Abdicate Spiritual Leadership at Home

REASON #1: YOUR WIFE IS MORE SPIRITUAL (Or So You Think)

The excuse: "My wife is better at spiritual stuff than I am. She's more consistent. She knows the Bible better. Why would I lead when she's stronger in this area?"

The truth: God didn't call the MOST SPIRITUAL person to lead. He called the HUSBAND.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23, NASB).

HEAD. That's YOU. Not because you're MORE spiritual. Because God ASSIGNED you this role.

When you abdicate because "she's better," you've misunderstood leadership.

REASON #2: YOU'RE INTIMIDATED (Fear of Failure)

The fear: "What if I pray and stumble over my words? What if I open the Bible and don't know what to say? What if my kids ask questions I can't answer? I'll look foolish."

The truth: Your family doesn't need you to be PERFECT. They need you to be PRESENT.

Stumbling through a prayer with your kids is BETTER than perfect silence.

When fear of failure keeps you from leading, your family suffers.

REASON #3: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW (No Model)

The struggle: "My dad never led spiritually. I don't know what this LOOKS like. I've never seen it modeled."

The truth: You can LEARN. And you can BREAK the generational pattern.

Just because your dad didn't lead doesn't mean YOU can't.

When you don't know how, ASK. Find a mentor. Read a book. START SOMEWHERE.

REASON #4: YOU'RE TOO BUSY (Career Takes Priority)

The reality: You work long hours. You're exhausted when you get home. You're climbing the ladder, building your career.

And your FAMILY gets the leftovers.

The truth: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

This isn't just FINANCIAL provision. It's SPIRITUAL provision.

If you provide money but not SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, you've failed.

When your career takes priority over your family, you've disordered your life.

REASON #5: YOU'RE SPIRITUALLY DRY YOURSELF

The honest struggle: "How can I lead my family spiritually when I'm barely hanging on myself? I'm not reading the Bible. I'm not praying. I'm dry."

The truth: Leading your family will FORCE you to pursue God yourself.

You can't give what you don't HAVE. So pursuing God YOURSELF becomes essential.

When you're spiritually dry, leading your family is both the PROBLEM and the SOLUTION.

REASON #6: YOU THINK CHURCH/PROGRAMS WILL DO IT

The abdication: "We go to church every week. The kids are in youth group. My wife does devotions with them. That's enough, right?"

The truth: Church is SUPPLEMENT, not SUBSTITUTE.

YOU are the primary spiritual influence. Not the youth pastor. Not the church. YOU.

"You shall teach them diligently to your sons" (Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

YOU. Not the church.

When you outsource spiritual leadership to the church, you've abdicated.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Your House Is On Fire—Who Responds?

Here's a scenario:

Your HOUSE is on fire. Flames. Smoke. Your FAMILY is inside.

Who responds?

- ☐ You wait for the fire department ☐ You call your WIFE to handle it
- ☐ YOU run in and get your family out

Obviously, YOU run in.

Because your family is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

You don't DELEGATE. You don't OUTSOURCE. You ACT.

Same with spiritual leadership.

Your family is under SPIRITUAL ATTACK every day:

- Culture pulling them away from God
- Lies about identity, sexuality, purpose
- Distractions, entertainment, emptiness
- The enemy prowling like a roaring lion

Who's protecting them spiritually?

Is it your WIFE carrying the weight alone?

Is it the CHURCH?

Or is it YOU—leading, protecting, guiding?

You wouldn't delegate physical protection. Don't delegate SPIRITUAL protection.

YOUR house. YOUR family. YOUR responsibility.

What Does Spiritual Leadership Look Like? (Getting Practical)

Here's what leading your home spiritually actually LOOKS like:

1. LEAD YOURSELF FIRST (You Can't Give What You Don't Have)

The foundation: Before you can lead your FAMILY, you must lead YOURSELF.

What it looks like:

- YOU pursue God daily (prayer, Scripture, worship)
- YOU fight your sin
- YOU model repentance
- YOU grow

Why it matters: "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5, NASB).

Fix YOUR walk with God FIRST. Then lead your family.

Practical: Establish YOUR daily rhythm with God (15-30 minutes minimum). Let your family SEE you pursuing God.

2. PRAY WITH YOUR WIFE (Regularly and Consistently)

The practice: Pray WITH your wife. Not just FOR her. WITH her.

What it looks like:

- Daily (even 2-3 minutes)
- Before bed, or first thing in the morning
- Out loud, together
- Pray for each other, your marriage, your kids, your family

Why it matters: Praying together UNITES you spiritually. Builds intimacy. Aligns your hearts.

Practical: Start THIS WEEK. "Honey, can we pray together before bed? Just a few minutes."

3. PRAY WITH YOUR KIDS (Model Prayer for Them)

The practice: Pray WITH your kids. Regularly.

What it looks like:

- Pray at meals (you lead, not always your wife)
- Pray at bedtime (tuck them in, pray over them)
- Pray when they're struggling (afraid, sad, anxious)
- Pray when they succeed (thank God together)

Why it matters: They LEARN to pray by watching YOU pray.

If they only see MOM pray, they learn prayer is for women.

Practical: Tonight, pray with your kids at bedtime. Even if you've never done it before. START.

4. READ THE BIBLE WITH YOUR FAMILY (Family Devotions)

The practice: Open the Bible together as a family.

What it looks like:

- 10-15 minutes (keep it SHORT so it's sustainable)
- Read a passage together

- Ask: "What does this teach us about God? About us?"
- Pray together

Frequency:

- Daily (ideal)
- 3-4x per week (realistic for most)
- Weekly (minimum)

Why it matters: "You shall teach them diligently to your sons"
(Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

TEACH them. The Bible. God's Word.

Practical: Pick a time (breakfast? dinner? bedtime?). Start this week. Use a simple plan (Gospel of Mark, Proverbs, Psalms).

5. HAVE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS (Integrate Faith Into Life)

The practice: Talk about God in EVERYDAY life. Not just formal times.

What it looks like: "When you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up"
(Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

- Driving in the car: "Look at that sunset—God made that"
- At dinner: "What's something you're grateful for today?"
- Watching a movie: "What did that character learn about sacrifice?"

- When they struggle: "Let's talk about what God says about this"

Why it matters: Faith is not COMPARTMENTALIZED. It's integrated into ALL of life.

Practical: This week, initiate ONE spiritual conversation with your kids in a normal moment.

6. TAKE THEM TO CHURCH (And Participate Yourself)

The practice: YOU lead the family to church. Not just attend. LEAD.

What it looks like:

- YOU initiate getting ready for church
- YOU engage at church (don't just show up)
- YOU talk about the sermon with your family afterward
- YOU serve at church (model service)

Why it matters: Your kids are watching. If DAD doesn't care about church, why should they?

Practical: Don't make your wife nag you to get to church. YOU lead.

7. MODEL REPENTANCE (When You Fail, Admit It)

The practice: When you sin, REPENT in front of your family.

What it looks like:

- "I yelled at you in anger. That was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

- "I've been distant this week. I'm sorry. I'm going to be more present."
- "I messed up. I need to ask God for forgiveness."

Why it matters: Your kids need to see that CHRISTIANS aren't perfect. Christians REPENT.

If you never admit failure, they'll think faith is about PERFECTION, not GRACE.

Practical: Next time you fail at home, ADMIT IT. Apologize. Model repentance.

8. DISCIPLE YOUR KIDS INDIVIDUALLY (One-on-One Time)

The practice: Spend INDIVIDUAL time with each child. Not just family time. ONE-ON-ONE.

What it looks like:

- Weekly breakfast/lunch with each kid (rotating)
- Ask about their life, struggles, dreams
- Teach them about God
- Speak VISION over them
- Pray with them

Why it matters: They need YOU. Individually. Not just as part of the family unit.

Practical: This month, take each child out individually. Ask: "How are you really doing? What are you learning about God?"

9. PROTECT YOUR FAMILY SPIRITUALLY (Set Boundaries)

The practice: GUARD your family from spiritual harm.

What it looks like:

- Monitor what they watch, listen to, consume (media, entertainment)
- Set boundaries on technology (phones, social media)
- Protect them from toxic influences
- Model healthy boundaries yourself

Why it matters: "Fathers... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

DISCIPLINE = boundaries, training, protection.

Practical: Evaluate: What are your kids consuming that's pulling them AWAY from God? Set a boundary.

10. CAST VISION FOR YOUR FAMILY (Where Are You Leading Them?)

The practice: LEAD your family toward a God-honoring vision.

What it looks like:

- "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15)
- Define your family VALUES (what do we believe? what do we prioritize?)

- Cast VISION (where is God leading our family?)
- Make decisions TOGETHER that align with God's will

Why it matters: Without vision, families DRIFT.

Practical: This month, have a conversation with your wife: "What's God calling our family to? What values do we want to pass on?"

For Single Men / Men Without Kids: You're Still Called to Lead

If you're SINGLE:

- Lead yourself spiritually (establish disciplines NOW)
- Prepare for future leadership (you'll be a husband/father one day—prepare NOW)
- Mentor younger men (practice spiritual leadership)

If you're MARRIED without kids:

- Lead your WIFE spiritually (pray with her, disciple her)
- Prepare for fatherhood (if kids are in your future)
- Invest in other families (mentor younger couples)

If you have ADULT children:

- Continue leading (your leadership doesn't END when they leave home)
 - Model faith for GRANDCHILDREN
 - Invest in your adult children's spiritual lives
-

The Generational Impact: What You Pass On

Here's the POWER of leading your home spiritually:

If you lead well:

- Your KIDS will follow Jesus
- Your SONS will lead their families spiritually
- Your DAUGHTERS will marry men who lead spiritually
- Your GRANDCHILDREN will be raised in godly homes
- Your GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN will know the Lord
- GENERATIONS blessed because YOU led

If you abdicate:

- Your KIDS may drift from faith
- Your SONS will be spiritually passive like you
- Your DAUGHTERS will carry spiritual weight alone
- Your GRANDCHILDREN may not know the Lord
- GENERATIONS lost because you FAILED to lead

The stakes are THAT HIGH.

"The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:5, paraphrase).

But also: **"To a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments"** (Exodus 20:6, paraphrase).

Your leadership (or abdication) affects GENERATIONS.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from abdicating to leading)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT (For Married Men)

1. DO YOU ABDICATE OR LEAD?

Be BRUTALLY honest. At home, do you:

- ☐ ABDICATE (wife leads spiritually, I'm passive)
- ☐ LEAD (I initiate spiritual things, I'm the primary spiritual leader)
- ☐ Mix of both

What do your ACTIONS (not intentions) reveal?

2. WHO LEADS SPIRITUALLY AT HOME?

Who initiates spiritual things in your home?

- ☐ My wife (she prays with kids, initiates church, etc.)
- ☐ Me (I initiate prayer, Bible reading, spiritual conversations)
- ☐ We both share it equally

If your WIFE is carrying the weight, how does that make you feel?

3. WHAT DO YOUR KIDS SEE?

When your kids think about "spiritual people," who do they think of?

- ☐ Mom (she's the spiritual one)
- ☐ Dad (he pursues God, leads us)
- ☐ Both equally

If they see MOM as the spiritual one, what does that teach them about men and faith?

SECTION 2: PRAYER

4. DO YOU PRAY WITH YOUR WIFE?

Do you pray WITH your wife regularly (not just silently for her)?

- ☐ Yes—we pray together daily
- ☐ Sometimes—we pray together occasionally
- ☐ Rarely—we almost never pray together
- ☐ No—we've never prayed together (or it's been years)

If NO or RARELY, why not?

5. DO YOU PRAY WITH YOUR KIDS?

Do you pray WITH your kids?

- ☐ Yes—I pray with them regularly (meals, bedtime, etc.)
- ☐ Sometimes—I pray with them occasionally

☐ Rarely—my wife prays with them, not me

☐ No—I've never prayed with them

If NO or RARELY, what's stopping you?

6. WILL YOU START PRAYING WITH YOUR FAMILY?

Will you pray with your family THIS WEEK?

☐ Yes—I'll pray with my wife tonight

☐ Yes—I'll pray with my kids at bedtime

☐ Yes—I'll pray at dinner

☐ I'll try

☐ I'm not ready

If you're hesitant, what are you afraid of?

SECTION 3: THE BIBLE

7. DO YOU READ THE BIBLE WITH YOUR FAMILY?

Do you lead family devotions or Bible reading?

☐ Yes—we read the Bible together regularly

☐ Sometimes—we try but aren't consistent

☐ Rarely—my wife does this, not me

☐ No—we don't do family Bible reading

If NO, why not?

8. WILL YOU START FAMILY DEVOTIONS?

Will you start reading the Bible with your family THIS WEEK?

☐ Yes—I'll pick a time and start (even 10 minutes)

☐ I'll talk to my wife about it first

☐ I'll try

☐ I don't know how

If you don't know how, will you LEARN?

☐ Yes—I'll find a simple family devotional plan

☐ I'll ask someone for help

☐ I'm not ready

SECTION 4: SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

9. DO YOU TALK ABOUT GOD AT HOME?

Do you have spiritual conversations with your kids in everyday life?

☐ Yes—I integrate faith into normal moments

☐ Sometimes—I try but it feels awkward

☐ Rarely—my wife does this

☐ No—I don't know how

The truth:

"You shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way" (Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

TALK of them. Constantly. In everyday moments.

10. WILL YOU INITIATE ONE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION THIS WEEK?

Will you initiate ONE spiritual conversation with your kids this week?

☐ Yes—I'll talk about God in a normal moment

☐ I'll try

☐ I don't know what to say

Example: At dinner, ask "What's something you're grateful for today?" or "What's one thing you learned about God this week?"

SECTION 5: CHURCH

11. DO YOU LEAD YOUR FAMILY TO CHURCH?

Who leads the family to church?

☐ I do (I initiate getting ready, engage at church)

☐ My wife does (she has to nag me to get ready)

☐ We both share it

If your WIFE has to nag, you're not LEADING.

12. DO YOU ENGAGE AT CHURCH?

When you go to church, do you:

- ☐ Engage (participate, serve, talk about the sermon afterward)
- ☐ Just show up (physically present, spiritually checked out)
- ☐ Resist going (my wife makes me go)

Your kids are WATCHING. If Dad doesn't care, why should they?

SECTION 6: REPENTANCE

13. DO YOU MODEL REPENTANCE AT HOME?

When you fail at home, do you:

- ☐ Admit it and ask forgiveness (model repentance)
- ☐ Sometimes—but it's hard
- ☐ Rarely—I struggle to admit failure
- ☐ Never—I justify or hide my failures

The truth:

Your kids need to see you REPENT. It models that Christians aren't PERFECT—we're FORGIVEN.

14. WILL YOU REPENT THE NEXT TIME YOU FAIL?

Next time you sin at home (yell, lose patience, etc.), will you:

☐ Yes—I'll admit it and ask forgiveness

☐ I'll try

☐ That's too vulnerable

Remember: Modeling repentance is POWERFUL spiritual leadership.

SECTION 7: ONE-ON-ONE TIME

15. DO YOU SPEND INDIVIDUAL TIME WITH EACH CHILD?

Do you have regular one-on-one time with each child?

☐ Yes—weekly or monthly individual time

☐ Sometimes—but not consistent

☐ Rarely—we're together as a family but not individually

☐ No—I don't do this

If NO, will you START?

☐ Yes—I'll take each child out this month

☐ I'll try

☐ I don't have time

SECTION 8: WHY YOU ABDICATE

16. WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?

Why do you abdicate spiritual leadership?

- ☐ My wife is more spiritual
- ☐ I'm intimidated / afraid of failure
- ☐ I don't know how (no model)
- ☐ I'm too busy (career takes priority)
- ☐ I'm spiritually dry myself
- ☐ I think church/programs will do it

For the reason you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

17. "MY WIFE IS MORE SPIRITUAL":

Do you use this as an excuse?

- ☐ Yes—she's better at it than I am
- ☐ Sometimes—I feel inadequate
- ☐ No—I know God called ME to lead

The truth:

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23, NASB).

HEAD. That's YOU. Not because you're more spiritual. Because God ASSIGNED this role.

SECTION 9: GENERATIONAL IMPACT

18. WHAT ARE YOU PASSING ON?

What are your kids learning about faith from watching YOU?

- ☐ Faith is important (Dad pursues God, leads us)
- ☐ Faith is for women (Mom is spiritual, not Dad)
- ☐ Faith is optional (Dad provides but doesn't lead spiritually)
- ☐ Faith is hypocrisy (Dad says he's a Christian but doesn't live it)

Be HONEST. What are they ACTUALLY learning?

19. WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE?

When your kids are grown, what do you want them to say about you?

- ☐ "Dad led us spiritually. He prayed with us, taught us about God, modeled faith."
- ☐ "Dad was a good provider, but Mom was the spiritual one."

If your CURRENT trajectory continues, which will they say?

SECTION 10: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

20. ONE STEP YOU'LL TAKE THIS WEEK:

What's ONE STEP you'll take to lead spiritually THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Pray with my wife tonight

- ☐ Pray with my kids at bedtime
- ☐ Start family devotions (even 10 minutes)
- ☐ Have one spiritual conversation with my kids
- ☐ Initiate getting ready for church
- ☐ Repent for abdicating and ask my wife's forgiveness
- ☐ Take one child out individually

When will you do it?

Day: _____ Time: _____

SECTION 11: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

21. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "My wife is better at spiritual stuff"
- ☐ "I don't know what to say"
- ☐ "The kids won't listen to me"
- ☐ "Church/programs will handle it"
- ☐ "I'm too busy"
- ☐ "I'll start when I'm more spiritual"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

22. THE TRUTH ABOUT SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP:

Complete this sentence:

"Leading my home spiritually is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Leading my home is not optional. It's my God-given RESPONSIBILITY."
- "Leading my home is not about perfection. It's about PRESENCE."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Leading my home spiritually is not optional—it's my God-given RESPONSIBILITY.

I am the HEAD of my home. Not dictator. SERVANT-LEADER. Like Christ.

I will not ABDICATE. I will LEAD.

I will not let my wife carry the spiritual weight alone. I will INITIATE.

I will PRAY with my wife and kids. I will READ THE BIBLE with my family.

I will have SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS integrated into life.

I will MODEL repentance when I fail. I will PROTECT my family spiritually.

I will DISCIPLE my children. They are my PRIMARY mission field.

My family is my FIRST ministry. JERUSALEM comes first.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

I will LEAD my house to serve the Lord. Starting today.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I have ABDICATED spiritual leadership at home. I've let my wife carry the weight while I stayed passive. I've led everywhere EXCEPT where it matters most. I've provided financially but not spiritually. I've let the church raise my kids while I remained silent. And my children are learning that faith is for WOMEN, not MEN. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: You called ME to be the spiritual leader of my home. Not because I'm perfect. Not because I'm the most spiritual. But because I'm the HUSBAND and FATHER. Leading doesn't mean DICTATING. It means SERVING. Like Christ.

Give me COURAGE to step into this role I've been avoiding. Give me HUMILITY to start even when I don't know what I'm doing. Teach me

to PRAY with my wife and kids. Teach me to READ THE BIBLE with them. Teach me to have spiritual conversations in everyday moments. Teach me to MODEL repentance when I fail.

And remind me: My family is my FIRST ministry. If I can't lead at HOME, I'm not qualified to lead anywhere else. JERUSALEM comes first.

This is Day 38 of 40. Two days remain. When 40 STRONG ends, I go back to my FAMILY. Help me lead them well. Starting TODAY.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: **"As for me and my house"**

Breathe out: **"We will serve the LORD"**

(Joshua 24:15)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Am I leading my home spiritually today?

Brief Prayer: Father, help me lead my family to You. Give me courage to pray with them tonight.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What did God teach me about spiritual leadership today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I lead my family spiritually today?

- ☐ Yes—I prayed with them, initiated spiritual conversation
- ☐ Somewhat—I tried but was inconsistent
- ☐ No—I abdicated again

If I ABDICATED, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

What does my wife carry spiritually that I should be leading?

How does that make her feel?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for abdicating spiritual leadership. Forgive me for letting my wife carry the weight alone. Forgive me for being passive at home.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding leading my home?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I realized I've been _____ (abdicating/leading) spiritually at home. The one step I'll take this week is _____. The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. For my kids' sake and for God's glory, I will _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 38 ✓ - FINAL WEEK: Day 3. Learned to LEAD my home spiritually, not abdicate. This week I'll pray with my family and start _____. Pray I have courage to lead. ONE DAY REMAINS."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 39: "Plan Your Next 40 Days - Sustainable Rhythms"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I learned to lead my home spiritually. Tomorrow I'll plan my NEXT 40 days—sustainable rhythms beyond Day 40. Help me plan well. ONE DAY REMAINS before the final gathering. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOUR HOUSE IS YOUR FIRST MISSION

Theological Insight:

"If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5, NASB)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You can disciple younger men.

You can mentor at church.

You can serve the community.

But if you're not leading your HOME spiritually, you've failed.

Your family is your FIRST ministry.

JERUSALEM comes before Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Your wife needs you to LEAD.

Not dictate. Not boss her around. SERVE her. Like Christ.

Pray WITH her. Pursue God WITH her. Carry the spiritual weight TOGETHER.

Your kids are WATCHING.

They're learning what a man looks like.

What a Christian looks like.

What faith looks like.

And right now, if you're ABDICATING, they're learning:

- Faith is for women
- Men don't pray
- Spiritual stuff is Mom's job

And they'll reproduce that in the NEXT generation.

Your sons will be passive like you.

Your daughters will carry the weight alone like your wife.

But you can BREAK that pattern.

Starting TODAY.

Tonight, pray with your wife.

"Honey, I've been abdicating spiritual leadership. I'm sorry. Can we pray together? Just a few minutes."

Tonight, pray with your kids.

Tuck them in. Pray over them. Even if you stumble. Even if it's awkward.

This week, start family devotions.

10 minutes. Read a passage. Talk about it. Pray.

Just START.

You don't need to be PERFECT. You need to be PRESENT.

Your family is your FIRST mission.

Lead them well.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE.

Not just me. MY HOUSE.

Lead them.

40 STRONG - Day 38 Complete ✓

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Day 3

FINAL WEEK - 2 DAYS REMAIN

"Fathers... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB)

YOUR HOME IS YOUR FIRST MINISTRY. LEAD IT.

40 STRONG - DAY 38

LEAD YOUR HOME SPIRITUALLY - GENERATIONAL IMPACT WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers

MORNING: THE LEADERSHIP YOU'VE ABDICATED (15-20 minutes)

Opening Prayer

Father, this prayer exposes the most painful failure of my life: I have ABDICATED spiritual leadership at home. And if I'm brutally honest? I lead EVERYWHERE ELSE except where it matters MOST. I'll lead at work. I'll serve at church. I'll mentor younger men. I'll volunteer in the community. But when it comes to leading my FAMILY spiritually—I'm passive. Silent. Absent. I let my WIFE carry the spiritual weight of our home. She prays with the kids. She takes them to church. She teaches them about Jesus. She initiates spiritual conversations. She's the one who makes sure we're connected to God. And me? I show up physically. I provide financially. I might even attend church WITH them. But LEAD them spiritually? Initiate prayer? Open the Bible with my family? Model what it looks like to follow Jesus? I don't do it. I've ABDICATED. And I justify it by saying: "She's better at that stuff than I am." "I'm not a spiritual guy like she is." "I don't know what to say." "The kids won't listen to me anyway." "I lead in OTHER ways—providing, protecting." But these are EXCUSES. Because God didn't call my WIFE to be the spiritual leader of our home. He called ME. **"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church"** (Ephesians 5:23). HEAD. Leader. Not dictator. Not boss. SERVANT-

LEADER. Like CHRIST. And I've failed. I've let her lead while I coast. I've let the church raise my kids spiritually while I remain passive. I've prioritized CAREER over FAMILY. SUCCESS over SPIRITUAL LEGACY. And my kids are watching. They're learning what a man looks like. What a husband looks like. What a father looks like. And what they SEE is: Dad provides money. Dad is busy. Dad is good at his job. But Dad doesn't pray. Dad doesn't read the Bible. Dad doesn't talk about Jesus. Dad doesn't lead spiritually. So they're learning: FAITH is for women. SPIRITUALITY is Mom's job. MEN don't do that. And I'm passing on SPIRITUAL PASSIVITY to the next generation. My SONS will grow up to be passive husbands and fathers like me. My DAUGHTERS will grow up expecting to carry the spiritual weight in their marriages because that's what they saw. This is generational FAILURE, Father. And it has to STOP. If I can disciple younger men, I can disciple my OWN CHILDREN. If I can mentor at church, I can lead at HOME. If I can serve the community, I can serve my FAMILY. Because JERUSALEM comes FIRST. My family is my FIRST ministry. My wife is my FIRST disciple. My children are my PRIMARY mission field. And if I fail HERE, nothing else I do matters. **"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"** (1 Timothy 5:8). This isn't just about FINANCIAL provision. It's about SPIRITUAL provision. And I've been worse than an unbeliever. Forgive me, Father. Today, shatter my passivity at home. Convict me that spiritual leadership is not OPTIONAL—it's my God-given RESPONSIBILITY. Teach me that leading doesn't mean being PERFECT. It means being PRESENT. Being INTENTIONAL. Being the INITIATOR. Show me what it looks like to be a spiritual

leader: Not a dictator who demands obedience. But a SERVANT-LEADER who models Christ. Who prays WITH my family. Who opens the Bible WITH my family. Who talks about Jesus. Who repents when I fail. Who leads by EXAMPLE. Give me COURAGE to step into this role I've been avoiding. Give me HUMILITY to admit I've failed and START TODAY. Give me VISION for generational impact—knowing that what I do (or don't do) will affect my children, grandchildren, and generations to come. This is Day 38 of 40. Two days remain. And when 40 STRONG ends, I go back to my FAMILY. Will I lead them? Or continue abdicating? That decision starts TODAY. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: The Foundation of Leading Your Home Spiritually

Read these slowly. Let them expose your abdication.

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27, NASB).

LOVE your wives AS Christ loved the church.

How did Christ love the church? He GAVE HIMSELF UP for her.

He SANCTIFIED her. Made her HOLY.

By the WASHING OF WATER WITH THE WORD.

That's spiritual leadership: SACRIFICIAL LOVE that leads to HOLINESS.

THE HUSBAND IS THE HEAD:

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:23-24, NASB).

HEAD = leader. Not boss. SERVANT-LEADER.

AS CHRIST is the head of the church. Christ SERVES. Christ SACRIFICES. Christ LOVES.

That's the model.

FATHERS, DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN:

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

FATHERS (not mothers primarily—though mothers disciple too).
FATHERS.

Do NOT provoke to anger (harsh, inconsistent, hypocritical leadership).

But BRING THEM UP in the DISCIPLINE and INSTRUCTION of the Lord.

DISCIPLINE = training, correction, boundaries.

INSTRUCTION = teaching them about God.

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY:

"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up"

(Deuteronomy 6:6-7, NASB).

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY. To your SONS (and daughters).

WHEN? All the time:

- When you SIT in your house
- When you WALK by the way
- When you LIE DOWN
- When you RISE UP

CONSTANT. Integrated into life. Not just formal teaching.

TELL YOUR SON IN THAT DAY:

"You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt'" (Exodus 13:8, NASB).

TELL YOUR SON. Pass on the story of what GOD HAS DONE.

Not just doctrine. YOUR STORY. God's faithfulness to YOU.

TRAIN UP A CHILD:

"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NASB).

TRAIN UP = intentional discipleship. Not passive hoping.

In the WAY he should go = God's way, not the world's.

EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD he will not depart.

Investment NOW produces fruit LATER.

IF A MAN CANNOT MANAGE HIS HOUSEHOLD, HE'S NOT QUALIFIED:

"He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4-5, NASB).

Qualification for church leadership: MANAGES HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD WELL.

If he CAN'T lead at HOME, he's NOT qualified to lead at CHURCH.

HOME comes FIRST.

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE:

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE = leading your household.

Joshua didn't just make a PERSONAL decision. He led his HOUSE.

WE will serve the LORD. Together. As a FAMILY.

THE LEGACY OF FAITH - TIMOTHY:

"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well" (2 Timothy 1:5, NASB).

SINCERE FAITH passed down through GENERATIONS.

Grandmother → Mother → Timothy.

GENERATIONAL IMPACT.

Pause. Close your eyes.

If you're married: Are you leading your wife spiritually? Or is she leading you?

If you have kids: Are you discipling them? Or abdicating to your wife and the church?

Teaching: The Difference Between Abdicating and Leading

Here's the lie most men believe about spiritual leadership at home:

"I'm not good at spiritual stuff. My wife is better at it. She prays, reads the Bible, takes the kids to church. I provide financially, protect them, fix things around the house. That's MY role. Spiritual leadership is HER strength. I lead in OTHER ways."

Translation: You've turned spiritual leadership into OPTIONAL and convinced yourself that ABDICATING is acceptable.

And when fathers abdicate, families drift.

Theological Insight:

"The spiritual temperature of a home is set by the father. If dad is on fire for God, the whole family feels the heat. If dad is lukewarm, the family freezes." – Unknown

"You can delegate a lot of things in family life, but spiritual leadership is not one of them. God gave this responsibility to husbands and fathers, and it cannot be transferred." – Voddie Baucham (paraphrase)

Abdicating vs. Leading: What's the Difference?

ABDICATING (Spiritual Passivity at Home):

What it looks like:

- Your WIFE leads spiritually (she prays with kids, initiates spiritual conversations, drives to church)

- You're PASSIVE (you show up physically but don't initiate)
- You justify it: "She's better at that" / "I'm not the spiritual one"
- You lead at WORK, CHURCH, COMMUNITY—but not at HOME
- Your kids see Mom as the spiritual one, Dad as the provider
- You've never prayed with your wife consistently
- You've never led family devotions
- You've never had spiritual conversations with your kids

What it sounds like:

- "My wife handles the spiritual stuff"
- "I'm just not good at that"
- "I don't know what to say"
- "The kids won't listen to me anyway"
- "I lead in other ways"

Why it feels easier:

- No pressure (your wife carries the weight)
- No vulnerability (you don't have to expose your spiritual life)
- No expectation (you've never done it, so no one expects it)
- You can focus on what you're GOOD at (work, providing)

The result:

- Your WIFE is exhausted carrying spiritual weight alone
- Your KIDS learn faith is for women, not men

- Your SONS will grow up to be spiritually passive like you
 - Your DAUGHTERS will expect to carry spiritual weight in their marriages
 - Your FAMILY drifts spiritually because there's no LEADER
 - You've FAILED your primary mission field
-

LEADING (Spiritual Headship as Servant-Leader):

What it looks like:

- YOU initiate spiritual things (prayer, Bible reading, spiritual conversations)
- You PRAY with your wife and kids (not perfectly, but consistently)
- You MODEL what following Jesus looks like (they see your faith in action)
- You TEACH your kids about God (integrated into daily life)
- You REPENT when you fail (modeling humility and grace)
- You lead by SERVING (like Christ), not by DICTATING
- Your family sees Dad pursuing God, not just Mom

What it sounds like:

- "Let's pray together"
- "Can I read the Bible with you?"
- "Here's what God is teaching me"

- "I messed up—will you forgive me?"
- "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"

Why it's costly:

- Requires INITIATIVE (you can't coast)
- Requires VULNERABILITY (they see your struggles)
- Requires CONSISTENCY (you can't just do it once)
- Requires GROWTH (you have to pursue God yourself first)

The result:

- Your WIFE is supported and honored
- Your KIDS see faith modeled by BOTH parents (especially Dad)
- Your SONS learn to be spiritual leaders
- Your DAUGHTERS learn to value spiritual leadership in a man
- Your FAMILY is anchored in God because you're LEADING
- You've FULFILLED your primary mission

The Chart:

ABDICATING

Wife leads spiritually

I'm passive at home

"She's better at that"

LEADING

I lead spiritually

I'm intentional at home

"God called ME to lead"

ABDICATING

LEADING

I lead elsewhere, not home HOME is my first ministry

Kids see Mom as spiritual Kids see Dad pursuing God

Never pray with family Pray with family regularly

Provide financially only Provide spiritually AND financially

"I don't know what to say" "I'll start, even imperfectly"

Wife is exhausted alone Wife is supported and honored

Kids learn passivity Kids learn to follow Jesus

Generational drift Generational impact

Which describes your ACTUAL leadership at home?

Most men ABDICATE. Few LEAD.

Why?

Why You Abdicate Spiritual Leadership at Home

REASON #1: YOUR WIFE IS MORE SPIRITUAL (Or So You Think)

The excuse: "My wife is better at spiritual stuff than I am. She's more consistent. She knows the Bible better. Why would I lead when she's stronger in this area?"

The truth: God didn't call the MOST SPIRITUAL person to lead. He called the HUSBAND.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23, NASB).

HEAD. That's YOU. Not because you're MORE spiritual. Because God ASSIGNED you this role.

When you abdicate because "she's better," you've misunderstood leadership.

REASON #2: YOU'RE INTIMIDATED (Fear of Failure)

The fear: "What if I pray and stumble over my words? What if I open the Bible and don't know what to say? What if my kids ask questions I can't answer? I'll look foolish."

The truth: Your family doesn't need you to be PERFECT. They need you to be PRESENT.

Stumbling through a prayer with your kids is BETTER than perfect silence.

When fear of failure keeps you from leading, your family suffers.

REASON #3: YOU DON'T KNOW HOW (No Model)

The struggle: "My dad never led spiritually. I don't know what this LOOKS like. I've never seen it modeled."

The truth: You can LEARN. And you can BREAK the generational pattern.

Just because your dad didn't lead doesn't mean YOU can't.

When you don't know how, ASK. Find a mentor. Read a book. START SOMEWHERE.

REASON #4: YOU'RE TOO BUSY (Career Takes Priority)

The reality: You work long hours. You're exhausted when you get home. You're climbing the ladder, building your career.

And your FAMILY gets the leftovers.

The truth: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB).

This isn't just FINANCIAL provision. It's SPIRITUAL provision.

If you provide money but not SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, you've failed.

When your career takes priority over your family, you've disordered your life.

REASON #5: YOU'RE SPIRITUALLY DRY YOURSELF

The honest struggle: "How can I lead my family spiritually when I'm barely hanging on myself? I'm not reading the Bible. I'm not praying. I'm dry."

The truth: Leading your family will FORCE you to pursue God yourself.

You can't give what you don't HAVE. So pursuing God YOURSELF becomes essential.

When you're spiritually dry, leading your family is both the PROBLEM and the SOLUTION.

REASON #6: YOU THINK CHURCH/PROGRAMS WILL DO IT

The abdication: "We go to church every week. The kids are in youth group. My wife does devotions with them. That's enough, right?"

The truth: Church is SUPPLEMENT, not SUBSTITUTE.

YOU are the primary spiritual influence. Not the youth pastor. Not the church. YOU.

"You shall teach them diligently to your sons" (Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

YOU. Not the church.

When you outsource spiritual leadership to the church, you've abdicated.

The Firefighter's Perspective: Your House Is On Fire—Who Responds?

Here's a scenario:

Your HOUSE is on fire. Flames. Smoke. Your FAMILY is inside.

Who responds?

- ☐ You wait for the fire department ☐ You call your WIFE to handle it
- ☐ YOU run in and get your family out

Obviously, YOU run in.

Because your family is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

You don't DELEGATE. You don't OUTSOURCE. You ACT.

Same with spiritual leadership.

Your family is under SPIRITUAL ATTACK every day:

- Culture pulling them away from God
- Lies about identity, sexuality, purpose
- Distractions, entertainment, emptiness
- The enemy prowling like a roaring lion

Who's protecting them spiritually?

Is it your WIFE carrying the weight alone?

Is it the CHURCH?

Or is it YOU—leading, protecting, guiding?

You wouldn't delegate physical protection. Don't delegate SPIRITUAL protection.

YOUR house. YOUR family. YOUR responsibility.

What Does Spiritual Leadership Look Like? (Getting Practical)

Here's what leading your home spiritually actually LOOKS like:

1. LEAD YOURSELF FIRST (You Can't Give What You Don't Have)

The foundation: Before you can lead your FAMILY, you must lead YOURSELF.

What it looks like:

- YOU pursue God daily (prayer, Scripture, worship)
- YOU fight your sin
- YOU model repentance
- YOU grow

Why it matters: "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5, NASB).

Fix YOUR walk with God FIRST. Then lead your family.

Practical: Establish YOUR daily rhythm with God (15-30 minutes minimum). Let your family SEE you pursuing God.

2. PRAY WITH YOUR WIFE (Regularly and Consistently)

The practice: Pray WITH your wife. Not just FOR her. WITH her.

What it looks like:

- Daily (even 2-3 minutes)
- Before bed, or first thing in the morning
- Out loud, together
- Pray for each other, your marriage, your kids, your family

Why it matters: Praying together UNITES you spiritually. Builds intimacy. Aligns your hearts.

Practical: Start THIS WEEK. "Honey, can we pray together before bed? Just a few minutes."

3. PRAY WITH YOUR KIDS (Model Prayer for Them)

The practice: Pray WITH your kids. Regularly.

What it looks like:

- Pray at meals (you lead, not always your wife)
- Pray at bedtime (tuck them in, pray over them)
- Pray when they're struggling (afraid, sad, anxious)
- Pray when they succeed (thank God together)

Why it matters: They LEARN to pray by watching YOU pray.

If they only see MOM pray, they learn prayer is for women.

Practical: Tonight, pray with your kids at bedtime. Even if you've never done it before. START.

4. READ THE BIBLE WITH YOUR FAMILY (Family Devotions)

The practice: Open the Bible together as a family.

What it looks like:

- 10-15 minutes (keep it SHORT so it's sustainable)
- Read a passage together

- Ask: "What does this teach us about God? About us?"
- Pray together

Frequency:

- Daily (ideal)
- 3-4x per week (realistic for most)
- Weekly (minimum)

Why it matters: "You shall teach them diligently to your sons"
(Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

TEACH them. The Bible. God's Word.

Practical: Pick a time (breakfast? dinner? bedtime?). Start this week. Use a simple plan (Gospel of Mark, Proverbs, Psalms).

5. HAVE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS (Integrate Faith Into Life)

The practice: Talk about God in EVERYDAY life. Not just formal times.

What it looks like: "When you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up"
(Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

- Driving in the car: "Look at that sunset—God made that"
- At dinner: "What's something you're grateful for today?"
- Watching a movie: "What did that character learn about sacrifice?"

- When they struggle: "Let's talk about what God says about this"

Why it matters: Faith is not COMPARTMENTALIZED. It's integrated into ALL of life.

Practical: This week, initiate ONE spiritual conversation with your kids in a normal moment.

6. TAKE THEM TO CHURCH (And Participate Yourself)

The practice: YOU lead the family to church. Not just attend. LEAD.

What it looks like:

- YOU initiate getting ready for church
- YOU engage at church (don't just show up)
- YOU talk about the sermon with your family afterward
- YOU serve at church (model service)

Why it matters: Your kids are watching. If DAD doesn't care about church, why should they?

Practical: Don't make your wife nag you to get to church. YOU lead.

7. MODEL REPENTANCE (When You Fail, Admit It)

The practice: When you sin, REPENT in front of your family.

What it looks like:

- "I yelled at you in anger. That was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

- "I've been distant this week. I'm sorry. I'm going to be more present."
- "I messed up. I need to ask God for forgiveness."

Why it matters: Your kids need to see that CHRISTIANS aren't perfect. Christians REPENT.

If you never admit failure, they'll think faith is about PERFECTION, not GRACE.

Practical: Next time you fail at home, ADMIT IT. Apologize. Model repentance.

8. DISCIPLE YOUR KIDS INDIVIDUALLY (One-on-One Time)

The practice: Spend INDIVIDUAL time with each child. Not just family time. ONE-ON-ONE.

What it looks like:

- Weekly breakfast/lunch with each kid (rotating)
- Ask about their life, struggles, dreams
- Teach them about God
- Speak VISION over them
- Pray with them

Why it matters: They need YOU. Individually. Not just as part of the family unit.

Practical: This month, take each child out individually. Ask: "How are you really doing? What are you learning about God?"

9. PROTECT YOUR FAMILY SPIRITUALLY (Set Boundaries)

The practice: GUARD your family from spiritual harm.

What it looks like:

- Monitor what they watch, listen to, consume (media, entertainment)
- Set boundaries on technology (phones, social media)
- Protect them from toxic influences
- Model healthy boundaries yourself

Why it matters: "Fathers... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB).

DISCIPLINE = boundaries, training, protection.

Practical: Evaluate: What are your kids consuming that's pulling them AWAY from God? Set a boundary.

10. CAST VISION FOR YOUR FAMILY (Where Are You Leading Them?)

The practice: LEAD your family toward a God-honoring vision.

What it looks like:

- "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15)
- Define your family VALUES (what do we believe? what do we prioritize?)

- Cast VISION (where is God leading our family?)
- Make decisions TOGETHER that align with God's will

Why it matters: Without vision, families DRIFT.

Practical: This month, have a conversation with your wife: "What's God calling our family to? What values do we want to pass on?"

For Single Men / Men Without Kids: You're Still Called to Lead

If you're SINGLE:

- Lead yourself spiritually (establish disciplines NOW)
- Prepare for future leadership (you'll be a husband/father one day—prepare NOW)
- Mentor younger men (practice spiritual leadership)

If you're MARRIED without kids:

- Lead your WIFE spiritually (pray with her, disciple her)
- Prepare for fatherhood (if kids are in your future)
- Invest in other families (mentor younger couples)

If you have ADULT children:

- Continue leading (your leadership doesn't END when they leave home)
 - Model faith for GRANDCHILDREN
 - Invest in your adult children's spiritual lives
-

The Generational Impact: What You Pass On

Here's the POWER of leading your home spiritually:

If you lead well:

- Your KIDS will follow Jesus
- Your SONS will lead their families spiritually
- Your DAUGHTERS will marry men who lead spiritually
- Your GRANDCHILDREN will be raised in godly homes
- Your GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN will know the Lord
- GENERATIONS blessed because YOU led

If you abdicate:

- Your KIDS may drift from faith
- Your SONS will be spiritually passive like you
- Your DAUGHTERS will carry spiritual weight alone
- Your GRANDCHILDREN may not know the Lord
- GENERATIONS lost because you FAILED to lead

The stakes are THAT HIGH.

"The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:5, paraphrase).

But also: **"To a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments"** (Exodus 20:6, paraphrase).

Your leadership (or abdication) affects GENERATIONS.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Moving from abdicating to leading)

SECTION 1: HONEST ASSESSMENT (For Married Men)

1. DO YOU ABDICATE OR LEAD?

Be BRUTALLY honest. At home, do you:

- ☐ ABDICATE (wife leads spiritually, I'm passive)
- ☐ LEAD (I initiate spiritual things, I'm the primary spiritual leader)
- ☐ Mix of both

What do your ACTIONS (not intentions) reveal?

2. WHO LEADS SPIRITUALLY AT HOME?

Who initiates spiritual things in your home?

- ☐ My wife (she prays with kids, initiates church, etc.)
- ☐ Me (I initiate prayer, Bible reading, spiritual conversations)
- ☐ We both share it equally

If your WIFE is carrying the weight, how does that make you feel?

3. WHAT DO YOUR KIDS SEE?

When your kids think about "spiritual people," who do they think of?

- ☐ Mom (she's the spiritual one)
- ☐ Dad (he pursues God, leads us)
- ☐ Both equally

If they see MOM as the spiritual one, what does that teach them about men and faith?

SECTION 2: PRAYER

4. DO YOU PRAY WITH YOUR WIFE?

Do you pray WITH your wife regularly (not just silently for her)?

- ☐ Yes—we pray together daily
- ☐ Sometimes—we pray together occasionally
- ☐ Rarely—we almost never pray together
- ☐ No—we've never prayed together (or it's been years)

If NO or RARELY, why not?

5. DO YOU PRAY WITH YOUR KIDS?

Do you pray WITH your kids?

- ☐ Yes—I pray with them regularly (meals, bedtime, etc.)
- ☐ Sometimes—I pray with them occasionally

☐ Rarely—my wife prays with them, not me

☐ No—I've never prayed with them

If NO or RARELY, what's stopping you?

6. WILL YOU START PRAYING WITH YOUR FAMILY?

Will you pray with your family THIS WEEK?

☐ Yes—I'll pray with my wife tonight

☐ Yes—I'll pray with my kids at bedtime

☐ Yes—I'll pray at dinner

☐ I'll try

☐ I'm not ready

If you're hesitant, what are you afraid of?

SECTION 3: THE BIBLE

7. DO YOU READ THE BIBLE WITH YOUR FAMILY?

Do you lead family devotions or Bible reading?

☐ Yes—we read the Bible together regularly

☐ Sometimes—we try but aren't consistent

☐ Rarely—my wife does this, not me

☐ No—we don't do family Bible reading

If NO, why not?

8. WILL YOU START FAMILY DEVOTIONS?

Will you start reading the Bible with your family THIS WEEK?

☐ Yes—I'll pick a time and start (even 10 minutes)

☐ I'll talk to my wife about it first

☐ I'll try

☐ I don't know how

If you don't know how, will you LEARN?

☐ Yes—I'll find a simple family devotional plan

☐ I'll ask someone for help

☐ I'm not ready

SECTION 4: SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

9. DO YOU TALK ABOUT GOD AT HOME?

Do you have spiritual conversations with your kids in everyday life?

☐ Yes—I integrate faith into normal moments

☐ Sometimes—I try but it feels awkward

☐ Rarely—my wife does this

☐ No—I don't know how

The truth:

"You shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way" (Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).

TALK of them. Constantly. In everyday moments.

10. WILL YOU INITIATE ONE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION THIS WEEK?

Will you initiate ONE spiritual conversation with your kids this week?

☐ Yes—I'll talk about God in a normal moment

☐ I'll try

☐ I don't know what to say

Example: At dinner, ask "What's something you're grateful for today?" or "What's one thing you learned about God this week?"

SECTION 5: CHURCH

11. DO YOU LEAD YOUR FAMILY TO CHURCH?

Who leads the family to church?

☐ I do (I initiate getting ready, engage at church)

☐ My wife does (she has to nag me to get ready)

☐ We both share it

If your WIFE has to nag, you're not LEADING.

12. DO YOU ENGAGE AT CHURCH?

When you go to church, do you:

- ☐ Engage (participate, serve, talk about the sermon afterward)
- ☐ Just show up (physically present, spiritually checked out)
- ☐ Resist going (my wife makes me go)

Your kids are WATCHING. If Dad doesn't care, why should they?

SECTION 6: REPENTANCE

13. DO YOU MODEL REPENTANCE AT HOME?

When you fail at home, do you:

- ☐ Admit it and ask forgiveness (model repentance)
- ☐ Sometimes—but it's hard
- ☐ Rarely—I struggle to admit failure
- ☐ Never—I justify or hide my failures

The truth:

Your kids need to see you REPENT. It models that Christians aren't PERFECT—we're FORGIVEN.

14. WILL YOU REPENT THE NEXT TIME YOU FAIL?

Next time you sin at home (yell, lose patience, etc.), will you:

☐ Yes—I'll admit it and ask forgiveness

☐ I'll try

☐ That's too vulnerable

Remember: Modeling repentance is POWERFUL spiritual leadership.

SECTION 7: ONE-ON-ONE TIME

15. DO YOU SPEND INDIVIDUAL TIME WITH EACH CHILD?

Do you have regular one-on-one time with each child?

☐ Yes—weekly or monthly individual time

☐ Sometimes—but not consistent

☐ Rarely—we're together as a family but not individually

☐ No—I don't do this

If NO, will you START?

☐ Yes—I'll take each child out this month

☐ I'll try

☐ I don't have time

SECTION 8: WHY YOU ABDICATE

16. WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?

Why do you abdicate spiritual leadership?

- ☐ My wife is more spiritual
- ☐ I'm intimidated / afraid of failure
- ☐ I don't know how (no model)
- ☐ I'm too busy (career takes priority)
- ☐ I'm spiritually dry myself
- ☐ I think church/programs will do it

For the reason you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

17. "MY WIFE IS MORE SPIRITUAL":

Do you use this as an excuse?

- ☐ Yes—she's better at it than I am
- ☐ Sometimes—I feel inadequate
- ☐ No—I know God called ME to lead

The truth:

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23, NASB).

HEAD. That's YOU. Not because you're more spiritual. Because God ASSIGNED this role.

SECTION 9: GENERATIONAL IMPACT

18. WHAT ARE YOU PASSING ON?

What are your kids learning about faith from watching YOU?

- ☐ Faith is important (Dad pursues God, leads us)
- ☐ Faith is for women (Mom is spiritual, not Dad)
- ☐ Faith is optional (Dad provides but doesn't lead spiritually)
- ☐ Faith is hypocrisy (Dad says he's a Christian but doesn't live it)

Be HONEST. What are they ACTUALLY learning?

19. WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE?

When your kids are grown, what do you want them to say about you?

- ☐ "Dad led us spiritually. He prayed with us, taught us about God, modeled faith."
- ☐ "Dad was a good provider, but Mom was the spiritual one."

If your CURRENT trajectory continues, which will they say?

SECTION 10: TODAY'S ACTION PLAN

20. ONE STEP YOU'LL TAKE THIS WEEK:

What's ONE STEP you'll take to lead spiritually THIS WEEK?

- ☐ Pray with my wife tonight

- ☐ Pray with my kids at bedtime
- ☐ Start family devotions (even 10 minutes)
- ☐ Have one spiritual conversation with my kids
- ☐ Initiate getting ready for church
- ☐ Repent for abdicating and ask my wife's forgiveness
- ☐ Take one child out individually

When will you do it?

Day: _____ Time: _____

SECTION 11: THE LIES YOU'RE BELIEVING

21. WHICH LIE ARE YOU BELIEVING?

- ☐ "My wife is better at spiritual stuff"
- ☐ "I don't know what to say"
- ☐ "The kids won't listen to me"
- ☐ "Church/programs will handle it"
- ☐ "I'm too busy"
- ☐ "I'll start when I'm more spiritual"

For each lie you checked, write the TRUTH from Scripture:

22. THE TRUTH ABOUT SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP:

Complete this sentence:

"Leading my home spiritually is not _____. It's _____."

Examples:

- "Leading my home is not optional. It's my God-given RESPONSIBILITY."
- "Leading my home is not about perfection. It's about PRESENCE."

Your turn:

IDENTITY DECLARATION (Read out loud daily)

Today, I declare:

Leading my home spiritually is not optional—it's my God-given RESPONSIBILITY.

I am the HEAD of my home. Not dictator. SERVANT-LEADER. Like Christ.

I will not ABDICATE. I will LEAD.

I will not let my wife carry the spiritual weight alone. I will INITIATE.

I will PRAY with my wife and kids. I will READ THE BIBLE with my family.

I will have SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS integrated into life.

I will MODEL repentance when I fail. I will PROTECT my family spiritually.

I will DISCIPLE my children. They are my PRIMARY mission field.

My family is my FIRST ministry. JERUSALEM comes first.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

I will LEAD my house to serve the Lord. Starting today.

MORNING PRAYER FOCUS

Father, I confess: I have ABDICATED spiritual leadership at home. I've let my wife carry the weight while I stayed passive. I've led everywhere EXCEPT where it matters most. I've provided financially but not spiritually. I've let the church raise my kids while I remained silent. And my children are learning that faith is for WOMEN, not MEN. Forgive me.

Today, I receive the truth: You called ME to be the spiritual leader of my home. Not because I'm perfect. Not because I'm the most spiritual. But because I'm the HUSBAND and FATHER. Leading doesn't mean DICTATING. It means SERVING. Like Christ.

Give me COURAGE to step into this role I've been avoiding. Give me HUMILITY to start even when I don't know what I'm doing. Teach me

to PRAY with my wife and kids. Teach me to READ THE BIBLE with them. Teach me to have spiritual conversations in everyday moments. Teach me to MODEL repentance when I fail.

And remind me: My family is my FIRST ministry. If I can't lead at HOME, I'm not qualified to lead anywhere else. JERUSALEM comes first.

This is Day 38 of 40. Two days remain. When 40 STRONG ends, I go back to my FAMILY. Help me lead them well. Starting TODAY.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MIDDAY: BREATH PRAYER (2 minutes)

Set alarm. Stop. Breathe.

Breathe in: "**As for me and my house**"

Breathe out: "**We will serve the LORD**"

(Joshua 24:15)

Repeat 5-10 times.

Reality Check: Am I leading my home spiritually today?

Brief Prayer: Father, help me lead my family to You. Give me courage to pray with them tonight.

EVENING: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (10-15 minutes)

The Daily Examen

STEP 1: GRATITUDE

What did God teach me about spiritual leadership today?

STEP 2: AWARENESS

Did I lead my family spiritually today?

- ☐ Yes—I prayed with them, initiated spiritual conversation
- ☐ Somewhat—I tried but was inconsistent
- ☐ No—I abdicated again

If I ABDICATED, why?

STEP 3: HONESTY

What does my wife carry spiritually that I should be leading?

How does that make her feel?

STEP 4: REPENTANCE

Father, forgive me for abdicating spiritual leadership. Forgive me for letting my wife carry the weight alone. Forgive me for being passive at home.

STEP 5: GRACE

What is God inviting me into tomorrow regarding leading my home?

JOURNALING PROMPT (3-5 sentences minimum)

Complete this:

"Today I realized I've been _____ (abdicating/leading) spiritually at home. The one step I'll take this week is _____. The lie I've been believing is _____. The truth from Scripture is _____. For my kids' sake and for God's glory, I will _____."

ACCOUNTABILITY TEXT

"Day 38 ✓ - FINAL WEEK: Day 3. Learned to LEAD my home spiritually, not abdicate. This week I'll pray with my family and start _____. Pray I have courage to lead. ONE DAY REMAINS."

TOMORROW PREP (2 minutes)

Read Day 39: "Plan Your Next 40 Days - Sustainable Rhythms"

Brief Prayer:

Father, today I learned to lead my home spiritually. Tomorrow I'll plan my NEXT 40 days—sustainable rhythms beyond Day 40. Help me plan well. ONE DAY REMAINS before the final gathering. Amen.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOUR HOUSE IS YOUR FIRST MISSION

Theological Insight:

"If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5, NASB)

Brother, here's what you need to know:

You can disciple younger men.

You can mentor at church.

You can serve the community.

But if you're not leading your HOME spiritually, you've failed.

Your family is your FIRST ministry.

JERUSALEM comes before Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Your wife needs you to LEAD.

Not dictate. Not boss her around. SERVE her. Like Christ.

Pray WITH her. Pursue God WITH her. Carry the spiritual weight TOGETHER.

Your kids are WATCHING.

They're learning what a man looks like.

What a Christian looks like.

What faith looks like.

And right now, if you're ABDICATING, they're learning:

- Faith is for women
- Men don't pray
- Spiritual stuff is Mom's job

And they'll reproduce that in the NEXT generation.

Your sons will be passive like you.

Your daughters will carry the weight alone like your wife.

But you can BREAK that pattern.

Starting TODAY.

Tonight, pray with your wife.

"Honey, I've been abdicating spiritual leadership. I'm sorry. Can we pray together? Just a few minutes."

Tonight, pray with your kids.

Tuck them in. Pray over them. Even if you stumble. Even if it's awkward.

This week, start family devotions.

10 minutes. Read a passage. Talk about it. Pray.

Just START.

You don't need to be PERFECT. You need to be PRESENT.

Your family is your FIRST mission.

Lead them well.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE.

Not just me. MY HOUSE.

Lead them.

40 STRONG - Day 38 Complete ✓

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Day 3

FINAL WEEK - 2 DAYS REMAIN

"Fathers... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NASB)

YOUR HOME IS YOUR FIRST MINISTRY. LEAD IT.

40 STRONG - DAY 40

FINAL COMMISSIONING GATHERING: You Are Sent WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING - Sent as Disciple-Makers

MORNING: PERSONAL PREPARATION (Before the final gathering)

Opening Prayer

Father, this is it. Day 40. The FINAL day of 40 STRONG. Forty days ago, I was passive on the ridge—armed but not engaging. Awakened but not acting. And You met me there. You didn't leave me where I was. Week 1: You AWAKENED me from passivity. You showed me the cost of my coasting. Week 2: You brought me to my knees in REPENTANCE. I confessed secret sins I'd hidden for years. The weight lifted. Week 3: You RENEWED my identity. I learned who I am in Christ—not what I DO, but who I AM. Son. Accepted. Forgiven. Empowered. Sent. Beloved. Week 4: You EQUIPPED me with spiritual disciplines. Prayer, Scripture, fasting, worship, Sabbath, community. Weapons I'd neglected. Week 5: You ENGAGED me in service. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. Family, workplace, the different, the lost, the broken. Generosity. Week 6: You've been COMMISSIONING me as a disciple-maker. To make disciples, mentor younger men, lead my home, plan sustainable rhythms. And now it's Day 40. The day I thought would be the FINISH LINE. But You've shown me: it's the STARTING LINE. These 40 days were boot camp. Training. Foundation. The REAL WORK begins tomorrow. Day 41. When there's no devotional waiting for me. When the structure ends. When it's just me, You, and the rhythms I've established. I'm ready, Father. And I'm terrified. Because I know my tendency to

DRIFT. To start strong and fade. To be inspired but not transformed. But You didn't bring me through 40 days just to let me coast on Day 41. You've been PREPARING me. Equipping me. Transforming me. Not for a 40-day sprint, but for a LIFELONG MARATHON. Tonight, I gather with my brothers for the FINAL TIME in this season. We'll worship. We'll testify. We'll be COMMISSIONED. We'll take COMMUNION. And we'll be SENT. Sent as disciple-makers. Sent as mentors. Sent as spiritual leaders. Sent as men who reproduce what You've done in us. I don't have it all figured out, Father. I'm still learning. Still growing. Still fighting battles. But I'm not the same man I was 40 days ago. And for that, I'm grateful. Thank You for these 40 days. Thank You for my brothers who walked with me. Thank You for conviction, transformation, vision, hope. Tonight, commission me. Send me. And give me ENDURANCE for the race ahead. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRE-GATHERING REFLECTION (30-45 minutes alone)

Before you arrive tonight, spend time reviewing your ENTIRE 40-day journey.

This is your final personal reflection before being commissioned.

THE 40-DAY JOURNEY: WHAT GOD HAS DONE

WEEK 1: AWAKENING (Days 1-7)

Theme: Waking Up from Passivity

Key Days:

- Day 1: The Man on the Ridge
- Day 2: The Cost of Passivity
- Day 3: Counterfeit Masculinity
- Day 4: God's Design for Men
- Day 5: Break Agreement with Passivity
- Day 6: The Weapons You've Neglected
- Day 7: First Sabbath Gathering - Awakening Commitments

What did God do in Week 1?

What changed in you?

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE (Days 8-14)

Theme: Confessing Hidden Sin

Key Days:

- Day 8: The Sin You're Hiding
- Day 9: Pornography and Lust
- Day 10: Anger and Rage
- Day 11: Pride and Arrogance
- Day 12: Greed and Materialism

- Day 13: Relational Failures
- Day 14: Second Sabbath Gathering - Corporate Confession

What sin did you confess in Week 2?

How did confession bring freedom?

WEEK 3: RENEWAL (Days 15-21)

Theme: Rebuilt Identity in Christ

Key Days:

- Day 15: Son, Not Slave
- Day 16: Accepted, Not Performing
- Day 17: Forgiven, Not Condemned
- Day 18: Empowered, Not Powerless
- Day 19: Sent, Not Sitting
- Day 20: Beloved, Not Tolerated
- Day 21: Third Sabbath Gathering - Halftime Celebration

Which identity truth impacted you most?

How has your identity shifted?

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING (Days 22-28)

Theme: Spiritual Disciplines as Weapons

Key Days:

- Day 22: Prayer - Conversation, Not Performance
- Day 23: Scripture - Living Word, Not Textbook
- Day 24: Fasting - Hunger for God, Not Manipulation
- Day 25: Worship - Declaring Worth, Not Musical Performance
- Day 26: Sabbath - Trust, Not Laziness
- Day 27: Community - You Can't Do This Alone
- Day 28: Fourth Sabbath Gathering - Equipping Celebration

Which discipline have you established?

What weapons are you now carrying?

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT (Days 29-35)

Theme: Serving Others

Key Days:

- Day 29: Serve Your Family - Jerusalem
- Day 30: Serve Your Workplace/Neighborhood - Judea

- Day 31: Serve the Different/Outcast - Samaria
- Day 32: Serve the Lost - Evangelism
- Day 33: Serve the Broken - Compassion Ministry
- Day 34: Steward Your Resources - Generosity
- Day 35: Fifth Sabbath Gathering - Engagement Celebration

Who did you serve in Week 5?

How did engagement change you?

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING (Days 36-40)

Theme: Sent as Disciple-Makers

Key Days:

- Day 36: Make Disciples - The Great Commission
- Day 37: Mentor Younger Men - Passing the Baton
- Day 38: Lead Your Home Spiritually - Generational Impact
- Day 39: Plan Your Next 40 Days - Sustainable Rhythms
- Day 40: Final Commissioning Gathering - You Are Sent

Who will you disciple/mentor?

What's your plan for Days 41-80?

OVERALL TRANSFORMATION: BEFORE AND AFTER

DAY 1 (Who I Was):

40 days ago, I was:

DAY 40 (Who I Am Now):

Today, I am:

WHAT GOD HAS DONE:

The biggest change God has made in me is:

YOUR TESTIMONY (Prepare to Share Tonight)

If you're asked to share for 2-3 minutes tonight, what will you say?

Template:

"40 days ago, I was _____. God convicted me of _____. The biggest breakthrough was _____. Now I'm _____. Moving forward, I'm committed to _____."

Write your testimony:

YOUR COVENANT COMMITMENTS (What You're Taking Forward)

Tonight you'll make COVENANT COMMITMENTS for your life after Day 40.

What will you commit to?

I COMMIT TO:

- ☐ Daily time with God (___ minutes)
- ☐ Prayer with my family (wife/kids)
- ☐ Leading my home spiritually
- ☐ Serving consistently (___ hours/week)

- ☐ Discipling _____ (name)
- ☐ Mentoring _____ (name)
- ☐ Accountability with _____ (name)
- ☐ Tithing and generous giving
- ☐ Other: _____

Write out your COVENANT:

GATHERING FORMAT (3 hours total - Final Gathering)

ARRIVAL & FINAL FELLOWSHIP (20 minutes)

6:00 PM - 6:20 PM

Tonight's Atmosphere:

This is DIFFERENT from all previous gatherings.

- **Day 7:** Awakening - preparing for the journey
- **Day 14:** Repentance - heavy, confessional, sacred
- **Day 21:** Halftime - celebratory momentum
- **Day 28:** Equipping - transitioning to action
- **Day 35:** Engagement - testimonial, anticipating final week

- **Day 40: COMMISSIONING AND SENDING** - celebratory, sobering, hopeful, deployment

As men arrive:

- Final fellowship with brothers
- Coffee, meal, snacks available
- Energy of COMPLETION and BEGINNING simultaneously
- Conversations about the journey, what God has done, what's next
- Anticipation and reverence
- Victory music (we've FINISHED, but we're also BEING SENT)

Setup:

- Central commissioning area (front of room)
- Communion table prepared
- Covenant commitment cards ready
- Atmosphere of honor and gravity

Facilitator role:

- Welcome each man warmly
- "This is it, brothers. Day 40. You've walked 40 days. You've shown up. You've been transformed. Tonight you're COMMISSIONED and SENT."
- Create atmosphere of celebration AND deployment
- Remind them this is FINAL gathering (emotional weight)

Theological Insight:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB).

GO. You are SENT.

OPENING: WORSHIP AS COMMISSIONED MEN (25 minutes)

6:20 PM - 6:45 PM

Tonight's worship theme: SENT MEN

Not just disciples. Disciple-MAKERS.

Not just learners. SENT ONES.

Suggested songs:

- "Build My Life"
- "Here I Am to Worship"
- "I Surrender All"
- "Jesus Paid It All"
- "The Heart of Worship"
- "O Come to the Altar"
- "Goodness of God"
- "Great Are You Lord"

Encourage:

- Worship as GRATITUDE for 40 days of transformation
- Worship as SURRENDER (being sent)
- Worship as DECLARATION (we are His, we are sent)

Between songs, read these declarations (all men read together from screen):

After song 1:

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1, NASB).

[All respond loudly:] "We have laid aside sin! We will run with ENDURANCE!"

After song 2:

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

[All respond:] "We will ENTRUST what we've learned! We will make DISCIPLES!"

After song 3:

"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

[All respond:] "We will LEAD our homes! Our families will serve the LORD!"

After song 4:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19, NASB).

[All respond:] "We will GO! We will make DISCIPLES! We are SENT!"

Closing worship with this declaration (all men, loudly):

"We are sons of God. Awakened from passivity. Cleansed by confession. Renewed in identity. Equipped with spiritual weapons. Engaged in service. Commissioned as disciple-makers. We are 40 STRONG. And we are SENT!"

[All shout:] "40 STRONG!"

[All shout:] "WE ARE SENT!"

TEACHING: FROM TRAINING TO MISSION (30 minutes)

6:45 PM - 7:15 PM

Facilitator teaches:

"You Are Sent: From Boot Camp to Battle"

Brothers, this is Day 40.

Forty days ago, you were passive on the ridge.

Armed but not engaging.

Awakened but not acting.

Today, you're different.

Let me show you the journey.

THE 40-DAY PROGRESSION (Quick Recap)

WEEK 1: AWAKENING

You woke up.

You saw the cost of passivity.

You broke agreement with coasting.

You remembered the weapons you'd neglected.

WEEK 2: REPENTANCE

The hardest week of your life.

You confessed secret sins.

Pornography. Anger. Pride. Greed. Relational failures.

On Day 14, you spoke them OUT LOUD in this room.

The shame broke. The power of secrecy shattered.

WEEK 3: RENEWAL

After confession, you were rebuilt.

Your identity was anchored in TRUTH:

- Son, not slave
 - Accepted, not performing
 - Forgiven, not condemned
 - Empowered, not powerless
 - Sent, not sitting
 - Beloved, not tolerated
-

WEEK 4: EQUIPPING

You were equipped with spiritual disciplines:

- Prayer (conversation with God)
- Scripture (God's voice)
- Fasting (hunger for God)
- Worship (declaring His worth)
- Sabbath (rest and trust)
- Community (you can't do this alone)

You had the WEAPONS. Now you needed to USE them.

WEEK 5: ENGAGEMENT

The shift from INTERNAL to EXTERNAL.

From learning to DOING.

You served:

- Your family (Jerusalem)
- Your workplace and neighborhood (Judea)
- The different and outcast (Samaria)
- The lost (evangelism)
- The broken (compassion)

You opened your hand and gave generously.

You ENGAGED.

WEEK 6: COMMISSIONING

This final week.

You learned to MAKE DISCIPLES.

You learned to MENTOR younger men.

You learned to LEAD your home spiritually.

You PLANNED sustainable rhythms for the rest of your life.

And now, tonight, you're COMMISSIONED.

THE SHIFT: FROM BOOT CAMP TO BATTLE

Here's what just happened:

The last 40 days were BOOT CAMP.

Intense. Demanding. Structured. Guided.

You had:

- Daily devotionals
- Clear teaching
- Structure and accountability
- Brothers walking with you

But tonight, boot camp ENDS.

Tomorrow—Day 41—you're DEPLOYED.

Into the REAL WORLD.

Into your FAMILY.

Into your WORKPLACE.

Into your COMMUNITY.

And there's no devotional waiting for you.

No structure (unless you built it).

No accountability (unless you established it).

Just YOU. And GOD. And the RHYTHMS you've established.

The question is: Are you ready?

WHAT YOU'RE TAKING WITH YOU

Brothers, you're not going out UNPREPARED.

Here's what you're taking:

1. YOUR IDENTITY

You know WHO YOU ARE:

- Son of God
- Accepted by grace
- Forgiven completely
- Empowered by the Spirit
- Sent on mission
- Beloved

This is your FOUNDATION.

When you're tempted to go back to PERFORMANCE, remember:
You're ACCEPTED.

When you're tempted to believe you're CONDEMNED, remember:
You're FORGIVEN.

When you feel POWERLESS, remember: You're EMPOWERED.

2. YOUR WEAPONS

You have spiritual disciplines:

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Fasting
- Worship

- Sabbath
- Community

These aren't OPTIONAL. They're ESSENTIAL.

If you STOP practicing them on Day 41, you'll DRIFT.

3. YOUR MISSION

You're not just a DISCIPLE. You're a disciple-MAKER.

Your mission:

- Make disciples
- Mentor younger men
- Lead your home spiritually
- Serve your community
- Reproduce what God has done in you

You're not the FINISH LINE. You're a LINK in the chain.

4. YOUR BROTHERS

You're not ALONE.

The men in this room have walked with you for 40 days.

Don't LOSE that.

Stay connected. Stay accountable. Keep meeting.

"Two are better than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

5. YOUR GOD

Most importantly, you have GOD.

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, NASB).

ALWAYS. Not just during 40 STRONG. ALWAYS.

He will SUSTAIN you. He will STRENGTHEN you. He will FINISH what He started.

"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NASB).

THE CHARGE: FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED

Brothers, here's my charge to you:

DON'T DRIFT.

Don't let Day 41 be the beginning of the slide back.

Don't let six months from now look like Day 0 looked.

You've come too far. God has done too much.

SUSTAIN what you've established:

- Daily time with God
- Prayer with your family
- Leading your home
- Serving your community

- Discipling younger men
- Staying accountable

ENDURE:

This is not a SPRINT. It's a MARATHON.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"

(Hebrews 12:1, NASB).

ENDURANCE. For LIFE.

REPRODUCE:

Don't hoard what God gave you.

PASS IT ON.

Make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

MULTIPLICATION.

THE WARNING: THE ENEMY ATTACKS AFTER VICTORIES

Here's what you need to know:

The enemy WILL attack.

Not during the 40 days (though he tried).

But AFTER.

After the VICTORY. After the BREAKTHROUGH. After the TRANSFORMATION.

He'll attack with:

- TEMPTATION (old sins will resurface)

- DISCOURAGEMENT ("You haven't changed that much")
- DISTRACTION (busyness, life pressures)
- DIVISION (conflicts with wife, brothers, church)
- DRIFT (slow, subtle slide back to old patterns)

Expect it. And FIGHT.

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong"
(1 Corinthians 16:13, NASB).

BE ON THE ALERT. The battle is NOT over.

THE PROMISE: GOD WILL SUSTAIN YOU

But here's the GOOD NEWS:

You're not sustaining this in your own STRENGTH.

GOD is at work in you.

"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13, NASB).

GOD is at work. He WILL sustain you.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy" (Jude 1:24, NASB).

He is ABLE to keep you from stumbling.

TRUST HIM.

Closing Teaching:

Brothers, in a few moments, you'll be COMMISSIONED.

You'll take COMMUNION.

You'll make COVENANT COMMITMENTS.

And you'll be SENT.

Sent as disciple-makers.

Sent as mentors.

Sent as spiritual leaders.

Sent as men who REPRODUCE what God has done.

You're ready.

Not because you're PERFECT.

But because you're EQUIPPED.

Now—let's hear what God has done.

TESTIMONY TIME (45-60 minutes)

7:15 PM - 8:15 PM

Facilitator:

"We're going to spend the next hour hearing STORIES. What did God do in YOUR 40-day journey? What changed? What breakthrough happened? Where are you now compared to Day 1?"

Format:

- 2-3 minutes per person

- Volunteers can share
- Focus on TRANSFORMATION, not just lessons learned
- Celebrate what God has DONE

Template (optional):

"40 days ago, I was _____. God convicted me of _____. The biggest breakthrough was _____. Now I'm _____. Moving forward, I'm committed to _____."

Facilitator opens:

"Who wants to share? What did God do in your 40-day journey?"

[Allow silence. Someone will speak.]

After Each Testimony:

"Thank you, brother. We celebrate what God has done in you."

[Brief applause/affirmation]

Types of Testimonies to Expect:

AWAKENING STORIES:

- "I was passive for years. Week 1 woke me up. I'm done coasting."

REPENTANCE STORIES:

- "I confessed pornography for the first time. The shame broke. I'm walking in freedom."
- "I've struggled with anger for decades. I finally dealt with it. My family has noticed."

IDENTITY STORIES:

- "I've been trying to EARN God's love. Week 3 changed everything. I'm ACCEPTED."

DISCIPLINE STORIES:

- "I've never been consistent in prayer or Scripture. I've established rhythms I'm sustaining."

ENGAGEMENT STORIES:

- "I served my wife for the first time in years. I'm leading my home now."
- "I shared the Gospel with a coworker. I've never done that before."

COMMISSIONING STORIES:

- "I'm discipling a younger man starting next week."
- "I'm mentoring someone for the first time in my life."

Facilitator Throughout:

- Keep time (gently redirect if over 3 minutes)
- Celebrate EVERY testimony (victories AND struggles)
- Watch for men who want to share but are hesitating

- Model vulnerability if needed
-

Closing Testimony Time:

"Brothers, these stories are PROOF that God is ALIVE and WORKING. You're not the same men you were 40 days ago. And that's just the BEGINNING. Now—it's time for COMMUNION. Time to remember WHY any of this is possible."

COMMUNION: REMEMBERING THE CROSS (20 minutes)

8:15 PM - 8:35 PM

Facilitator:

"Everything you've experienced in the last 40 days—every awakening, every confession, every identity shift, every discipline established, every act of service—ALL OF IT is possible because of ONE thing:"

"JESUS."

"He didn't just TEACH you how to live. He DIED so you could live."

"Before you were awakened, He awakened you."

"Before you confessed, He forgave you."

"Before you were empowered, He sent the Spirit."

"Before you served anyone, He served YOU."

"So before we commission you, we take communion. We remember the CROSS. We remember that EVERYTHING flows from what HE did."

Scripture Reading:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me'"
(1 Corinthians 11:23-26, NASB).

THE BREAD:

"Come forward and take the bread. This is Jesus' body—broken for YOU. Broken so you could be AWAKENED. Broken so you could be FORGIVEN. Broken so you could be RENEWED. Broken so you could be EQUIPPED. Broken so you could be SENT. Everything you are now is because of THIS."

[Men come forward, take bread, return to seats.]

After all have taken bread:

"Together, we eat and remember."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your body was broken for us. Thank You that we are awakened, forgiven, renewed, equipped, sent—all because of the CROSS. We receive Your life. Amen."

[All eat.]

THE CUP:

"Now come forward and take the cup. This is Jesus' blood—the new covenant. The PROMISE that you are His. That you are SENT. That He is WITH you. Always. Even after Day 40. Even on Day 41, Day 100, Day 1000. He is WITH you."

[Men come forward, take cup, return to seats.]

After all have taken cup:

"Together, we drink and declare: We are His. We are sent. He is with us."

Prayer:

"Jesus, thank You that Your blood was poured out for us. We are YOURS. We are SENT. You are WITH us. Always. Amen."

[All drink.]

After Communion:

"You've remembered the cross. Now you're going to be COMMISSIONED. Stand up. It's time."

THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY (30 minutes)

8:35 PM - 9:05 PM

[All men stand]

Facilitator:

"Brothers, you've walked 40 days. You've shown up. You've been honest. You've repented. You've been transformed. Tonight, you're COMMISSIONED. You're being sent as disciple-makers. As mentors. As spiritual leaders. As men who reproduce what God has done. This is a SACRED moment. Receive it."

THE RECITATION OF THE JOURNEY

Facilitator reads, all men respond after each section:

"WEEK 1: We were awakened from passivity."

[All repeat loudly]

"WEEK 2: We confessed our hidden sins."

[All repeat]

"WEEK 3: We were renewed in our identity in Christ."

[All repeat]

"WEEK 4: We were equipped with spiritual disciplines."

[All repeat]

"WEEK 5: We engaged in service to others."

[All repeat]

"WEEK 6: We have been commissioned as disciple-makers."

[All repeat]

"We are 40 STRONG."

[All shout: "40 STRONG!"]

THE COMMISSIONING CHARGE

Facilitator reads, all men repeat line by line:

"I am a son of God, not a slave."

[All repeat]

"I am accepted by grace, not by performance."

[All repeat]

"I am forgiven completely, not condemned."

[All repeat]

"I am empowered by the Spirit, not powerless."

[All repeat]

"I am sent on mission, not sitting idle."

[All repeat]

"I am beloved by God, not tolerated."

[All repeat]

"I am a disciple-maker, not just a disciple."

[All repeat]

"I will make disciples of all nations."

[All repeat]

"I will mentor younger men."

[All repeat]

"I will lead my home spiritually."

[All repeat]

"I will run with endurance the race set before me."

[All repeat]

"I will not drift. I will not quit. I will ENDURE."

[All repeat]

"I am 40 STRONG. And I am SENT."

[All shout together: "40 STRONG! WE ARE SENT!"]

THE COVENANT COMMITMENTS

Facilitator:

"Now you're going to make COVENANT COMMITMENTS. Not to a program. Not to a group. To GOD. These are the rhythms you'll sustain. The commitments you'll keep. For LIFE."

[Hand out covenant cards or have men write on their own paper]

Facilitator:

"Write down your COVENANT COMMITMENTS. What will you SUSTAIN after Day 40? Be SPECIFIC. Be REALISTIC. Be HONEST."

Categories to consider:

- Daily time with God
- Prayer with family
- Leading home spiritually
- Serving
- Discipling/mentoring
- Accountability
- Generosity

[Allow 5 minutes for men to write]

After men have written:

Facilitator:

"Now stand. Hold your covenant in your hand. We're going to pray over these commitments together."

[All men stand, holding their written covenant]

Prayer (Facilitator leads, all men pray together):

"Father, these are our COVENANT COMMITMENTS. Not to impress You. Not to earn Your love. But in GRATITUDE for what You've done. We commit to SUSTAIN what we've established. We commit to RUN WITH ENDURANCE. We commit to MAKE DISCIPLES. We commit to FINISH WELL. Hold us to these commitments. Give us Your strength. And when we fail—because we WILL—give us grace to get

back up and CONTINUE. We are YOURS. We are SENT. In Jesus' name, Amen."

[All: "Amen!"]

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS (Optional, if group is small enough)

If the group is small (10-20 men):

Each man comes forward. The group lays hands on him and prays a BLESSING over him.

Prayer over each man:

"[Name], you are a son of God. You are SENT. Go and make disciples. Lead your home. Mentor younger men. We bless you. God is WITH you."

If the group is large:

Men form groups of 3-4 and pray over each other with laying on of hands.

THE BENEDICTION AND SENDING

Facilitator (or pastor/leader if present):

"Brothers, you are COMMISSIONED. You are SENT. Receive this benediction:"

[Read over the men]:

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him

be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21, NASB).

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, NASB).

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26, NASB).

[All respond: "Amen!"]

Facilitator:

"You are BLESSED. You are SENT. Now GO."

"GO and make disciples."

"GO and mentor younger men."

"GO and lead your homes."

"GO and serve your communities."

"GO and reproduce what God has done in you."

"You are 40 STRONG. And you are SENT."

[All shout together: "40 STRONG! WE ARE SENT!"]

FINAL DECLARATION AND DISMISSAL (10 minutes)

9:05 PM - 9:15 PM

Facilitator:

"Before you leave, we're going to declare together WHO WE ARE and WHAT WE'RE DOING."

All men stand. Shout these declarations together:

"WE ARE SONS OF GOD!"

"WE ARE AWAKENED!"

"WE ARE FORGIVEN!"

"WE ARE EQUIPPED!"

"WE ARE SENT!"

"WE WILL MAKE DISCIPLES!"

"WE WILL LEAD OUR HOMES!"

"WE WILL RUN WITH ENDURANCE!"

"WE ARE 40 STRONG!"

[All shout: "40 STRONG!"]

Closing Prayer (all men pray together):

"Father, thank You for these 40 days. Thank You for awakening us, forgiving us, renewing us, equipping us, sending us. We are not the same men we were. And we will NOT go back. We are COMMISSIONED. We are SENT. We will make disciples. We will lead our homes. We will finish well. Give us ENDURANCE for the race ahead. We are YOURS. We are 40 STRONG. In Jesus' name, Amen."

[All: "AMEN!"]

Facilitator:

"Brothers, Day 40 is complete. 40 STRONG is finished. But the RACE has just begun. Go. Be faithful. Endure. And remember: Day 41 is the STARTING LINE. We'll see you in the KINGDOM. You are DISMISSED. You are SENT."

[Final shout together: "40 STRONG!"]

FELLOWSHIP & CLOSING (15-30 minutes)

9:15 PM - 9:45 PM

Encourage:

- Men praying for each other
- Exchanging contact info (if haven't already)
- Making plans to continue meeting
- Celebrating together
- Taking photos (commemorate the moment)
- Honoring the journey

Provide:

- Information on ongoing groups (if available)
- Resources for continued growth
- Encouragement to stay connected

Don't rush this. Let men linger. This is the FINAL gathering.

AFTER THE GATHERING: PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you get home tonight, spend time in reflection.

WHAT GOD DID TONIGHT:

What stood out from the final gathering?

How did I feel during communion?

What did I experience during the commissioning?

MY COVENANT COMMITMENTS:

What did I commit to?

Am I ready to SUSTAIN these?

- ☐ Yes—I'm committed
 - ☐ Somewhat—I'm nervous
 - ☐ I need to adjust my commitments
-

LOOKING AHEAD TO DAY 41:

Tomorrow is Day 41. The STARTING LINE.

What will I do TOMORROW MORNING?

Time: _____

What: _____

Where: _____

PLAN IT NOW.

Brief Prayer:

Father, Day 40 is complete. 40 STRONG is finished. But the race has just begun. Tomorrow is Day 41. Give me ENDURANCE for what's ahead. I am YOURS. I am SENT. Help me be faithful. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FACILITATOR NOTES (For Leaders Running the Gathering)

Pre-Gathering Preparation:

1. ENVIRONMENT:

- Sacred, celebratory, commissioning atmosphere

- Communion table prepared
- Covenant commitment cards printed
- Space for laying on of hands (if doing that)
- Celebratory yet reverent music

2. MATERIALS:

- Communion elements
- Covenant cards/paper
- Pens
- Tissues (emotional night)
- Resource lists for ongoing growth

3. EMOTIONAL PREPARATION:

- This is the FINAL gathering—expect emotion
- Men will feel completion AND loss (the structure is ending)
- Hold space for both celebration AND sending
- Don't rush—this is SACRED

During Gathering:

TONE:

- Celebratory (look what God has done!)
- Sobering (the real work begins now)
- Commissioning (you're being sent)

- Hopeful (God will sustain you)

KEY MOMENTS:

- Testimony time (let it breathe—don't rush)
 - Communion (sacred, slow, reverent)
 - Commissioning ceremony (this is THE moment—make it powerful)
 - Covenant commitments (serious, binding)
 - Sending (bold, declarative)
-

After Gathering:

Within 24-48 hours:

1. **Follow-up:** Text every man personally thanking them for completing 40 STRONG
 2. **Resources:** Send resources for ongoing growth
 3. **Ongoing groups:** If forming ongoing groups, send info
 4. **Pray:** Pray for each man by name for Day 41 and beyond
 5. **Celebrate:** Honor what God has done
-

DAY 41 AND BEYOND: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

DAY 41: THE STARTING LINE

Tomorrow morning, when you wake up:

There will be NO devotional waiting for you.

No structure (unless you built it).

No group meeting (unless you scheduled it).

It's just you and God and the rhythms you've established.

This is the REAL TEST.

What you'll do on Day 41:

- ☐ Wake up at your normal time
 - ☐ Spend ____ minutes with God (prayer + Scripture)
 - ☐ Pray with your family
 - ☐ Go to work/daily life with INTENTION
 - ☐ Check in with accountability partner
 - ☐ Continue the rhythms you established
-

DAYS 41-80: YOUR NEXT 40 DAYS

You have a PLAN (from Day 39).

FOLLOW IT.

Your rhythms:

- Daily time with God
- Prayer with family
- Leading home spiritually

- Serving
- Discipling/mentoring
- Accountability

SUSTAIN these.

WHEN YOU DRIFT (Because You Will):

You WILL miss days.

You'll sleep through your alarm. Life will get busy. You'll struggle.

When that happens:

DON'T QUIT.

ADJUST. Get back up. Continue.

"The righteous falls seven times and rises again" (Proverbs 24:16, NASB).

STAY CONNECTED:

Don't lose your brothers.

The men you walked with for 40 days—STAY CONNECTED.

- Meet regularly (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly)
- Text daily accountability
- Pray for each other
- Do life together

"Two are better than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, NASB).

REPRODUCE:

Don't hoard what God gave you.

PASS IT ON.

- Disciple someone
- Mentor a younger man
- Lead a small group through 40 STRONG
- Reproduce

That's multiplication.

CLOSING THOUGHT: YOU ARE SENT

Theological Insight:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB)

Brother, this is it.

Day 40.

You've walked 40 days.

You've shown up.

You've been awakened.

You've confessed.

You've been renewed.

You've been equipped.

You've engaged.

You've been commissioned.

And now you're SENT.

Not as the same man you were on Day 1.

But as a man who:

- Knows his identity
- Carries spiritual weapons
- Serves sacrificially
- Makes disciples
- Leads his home
- Runs with endurance

You're ready.

Tomorrow, Day 41, the REAL WORK begins.

No devotional. No structure. No group meeting.

Just YOU. And GOD. And the rhythms you've established.

Will you drift? Or will you ENDURE?

That's up to you.

But here's what I know:

God didn't bring you through 40 days just to let you coast on Day 41.

He WILL sustain you.

He WILL strengthen you.

He WILL finish what He started.

"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NASB).

So GO.

Go make disciples.

Go mentor younger men.

Go lead your home.

Go serve your community.

Go reproduce what God has done in you.

You are 40 STRONG.

And you are SENT.

FINAL SCRIPTURE

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NASB)

BE STEADFAST.

BE IMMOVABLE.

ALWAYS ABOUNDING.

Your toil is NOT IN VAIN.

40 STRONG - Day 40 Complete ✓

FINAL DAY - YOU ARE COMMISSIONED

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19, NASB)

YOU ARE SENT.

THE JOURNEY IS COMPLETE. THE RACE HAS BEGUN.

40 days: ✓ Complete

Awakened: ✓

Forgiven: ✓

Renewed: ✓

Equipped: ✓

Engaged: ✓

Commissioned: ✓

SENT: ✓

TOMORROW: DAY 41 - THE STARTING LINE

The real work begins.

Run with endurance.

You are 40 STRONG.

You are SENT.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.