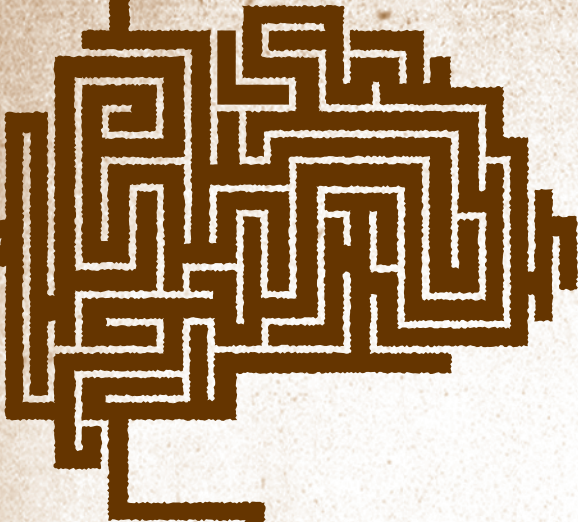




**RELENT + RESPOND**

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# RELENT + RESPOND

## INTRO::

I was in Nashville for a church conference a few years ago. The kind of conference where you get goodie bags of free posters and stickers to put on the back of your station wagon. I was waiting for the elevator on the 12th floor of my hotel with an unidentified man to my right who was holding his free goodie bag of conference stuff. When the elevator door opened we both stepped inside. He pressed the L button and we both stood there in silence hoping to gently glide to the surface of the earth. We both awkwardly smiled at each other and immediately looked up to count down from 12 while the digital floor counter stared back at us from above the door. When the number got to 10 our elevator stopped and we each retreated to our own corner to make space for new passengers. As the door opened a hip looking, older guy with dark hair walked into the elevator. He was carrying a Bible and some notes. My elevator companion immediately lit up and squealed, "ERWIN MCMANUS!" Erwin smiled and said, "Hello." Without hesitating, the man standing in the corner excitedly said, "You have no idea what your book *The Barbarian Way* has done for my life. You have changed my life! You have no idea how my whole life has changed because of that book!" Erwin then humbly asked the man what was it about the book that changed his life. Just then a stiff breeze of silence blew through the elevator shaft. Which was then followed by a heat wave of blank stares from the man. If there were crickets in the elevator their sound would have been deafening. We drifted about a hundred feet to the ground, which felt like days, while this poor guy stood frozen, unable to think of a single thought or idea from the book that was so life changing. When our elevator finally landed on the earth and the digital counter flashed the letter L, the doors opened with Erwin kindly mustering a "Well, how about you get back to me about that?" as he walked out of the elevator. The man with the goodie bag shuffled his feet into the lobby in complete shame as he shook his head because he couldn't remember one "life changing" thought.

Granted the guy I was with in the elevator may have drawn a blank because he was star-struck by a Christian celebrity [I love that term sarcastically]. But this is just one of many people that I've run in to that talk about life change but then can't remember what was so life changing. It's one thing to say that you've changed. It's a whole other thing to say that your whole life has been changed and then not be able to explain what is different. In Christian circles we love to talk about life changing books, life changing messages, life changing retreats, life changing mission trips, and on and on and on. We seem to be obsessed with it. But are we people who are living and loving so radically different than we used to?

## **Ultimately the heartbeat of humanity desires to evolve and grow. But how?**

Most of my friends enjoy the freedom they have found being spontaneous in their relationship with God. Because life with God has been sold to us in such structured boxes, many people are breathing new air as they discover new ways to be led by the Holy Spirit in their everyday life. While there are so many things right about this movement in our culture there is of course, a cause for concern. Embracing an exclusively spontaneous relationship with God has swung us to a place of "whenever I feel like it" spirituality that has mostly abandoned all intentionality.

I understand why many have walked away from being intentional about their relationship with God. The formulas for spiritual evolution seem empty. Systematic Bible studies can play a part in our spiritual development but not in the way they have been emphasized to us. After we take Bible 101, 201, and 301, what do you do next? For many who have been raised around church, the significant messages we've received about life change and spiritual growth look something like this...

### **:: Go to Church**

[though church services don't always do it for us]

### **:: Read Your Bible**

[though we get bored and don't always understand it]

### **:: Pray**

[though we typically only do it when we need something and often feel inept at hearing the voice of God]

### **:: Go on a Mission Trip**

[though these experiences are short-lived and rarely develop into a lifestyle of serving in our own city]

There is something powerful about experiencing these things in our lives. But many of us have found that we have done these things and still feel stuck. We have gone on trips and have memorized more Bible verses and still feel as though something is missing from our daily relationship with God. Certainly we need these things and we need to develop the skills to know the power behind these spiritual practices. But what if we began to see our relationship with God as something that demanded the attention of every area of our life rather than just spiritual practices?

What if you discovered that your bitterness towards your stepmom is what is keeping prayer from coming alive? What if you were able to identify that your lack of obedience to God in the area of generosity and how you spend your money was holding you back from going on a global experience?

It seems as though we've been missing a whole life approach to our spiritual growth.

For us to fully embrace the new sound of holistic formation in our relationship with God we'll need to recognize that we need the instruments of spontaneity and structure to play together side-by-side.

There is a pretty popular train of thought in business that says that you and I are to only focus on the things that we are good at, our strengths. The struggle I have found with this principle is that I don't think it works when it comes to anything that is relational. I can't imagine sitting my wife down and telling her that I have made a decision to singularly focus on what I'm good at as a husband and I will no longer be focusing on any of my weaknesses. This line of thinking has crept into our relationship with God. For many of us we've decided to do what is most comfortable and stick to a style or preference when it comes to how we connect best with God. I just don't see that being how Jesus interacted with the disciples.

In **Luke 9** Jesus does something that seems ridiculous to a first-time reader. He takes all of the power and authority that He has been given and He transfers it to the disciples so that they can make people well in every area of their life. He seems to carry with Him a holistic understanding of the power of God that changes lives in a way that doesn't leave people the same way. Later on in the narrative in the life of Jesus, He is walking with the disciples from the place they have just experienced their last meal together and he says in John 15:5 (TNIV), "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." In our community of faith we have spent an intense amount of time trying to figure out what it means to move all of who we are in to life with Jesus as the True Vine. We've discovered that most of us have been living our lives trying to embrace a personal priority system that looks something like...

**1:: God**

**2:: Family**

**3:: Job**

**4:: Friends**

But we've discovered that as Jesus becomes the True Vine of our lives, we now draw Him as the center and the source of all of who we are so that we can be both spontaneous and intentional about our original design and who God has created us to be in relationship with Him and others.

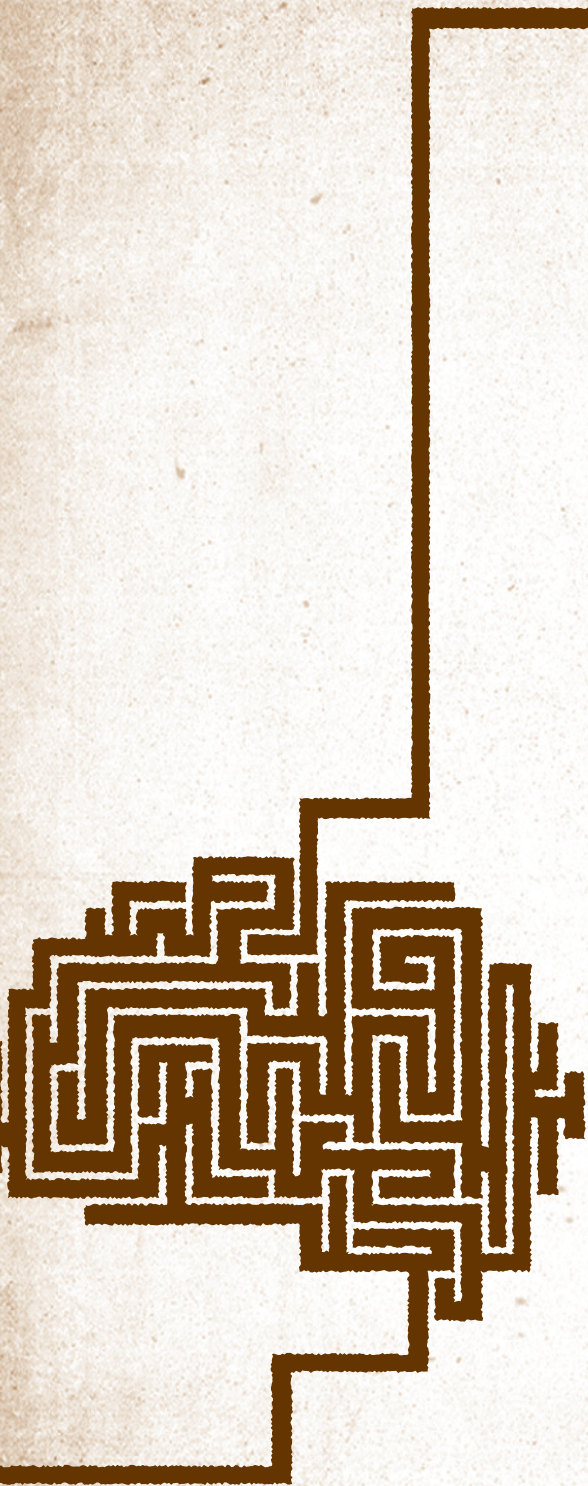
Many of us have found it really helpful to look at six specific areas of our lives that need to "move in" to life with Jesus. This focus was birthed out of a desire in my own life to dig deeper in my relationship with God in a way that surrendered to Him all of who I am. As a result, we've now developed a series of questions that are incredibly practical that we ask ourselves on an ongoing basis to help determine what we need to focus on next in our spiritual development.

The goal is then to have a person that we are sharing our life with become a person of accountability that checks in with us on how we are doing moving our whole life into life with Jesus. The dream is for every person in our community to relent and surrender every area of their life to God for the purpose of responding in obedience to what He leads us to do. As we relent and respond the hope is not that we would just become good people and have better feelings in our relationship with God. We see this as one of many ways to shake off all of the things that hinder and hold us back so that we can live missionally and generously in the world that we live in.

I can't stop thinking about this incredible idea that God had a dream when He created each of us. A dream where every aspect of who we are would reflect the image of God to the rest of the world. To do that we have to become serious about life change.

In Exodus 19 God delivers His dream for the Israelite people who are wandering in the desert and are only three months removed from slavery. His ultimate goal and desire for them isn't freedom. His ultimate goal and desire is that they would move from slavery to freedom to priesthood. What an unbelievable idea! While many of us are still just trying to get our lives back on track, God has this idea, that we would be priests representing who He is to the rest of the world.

Josh Loveless::  
STATUS Pastor



# INSTRUCTIONS

This journal is designed to provide an organic structure within which the Holy Spirit has the freedom to move you towards a healthier holistic life that is focused on Christ. Each of the six areas (Relational, Gifts & Talents, Financial, Spiritual Practices, Emotional, and Physical) are divided into two week segments with Scripture, experiences, and questions to guide your journey towards inviting Jesus into every area of your life.

The first week is designed to help you process the questions about holistic formation for that area and set goals on the areas that are specific to your life that you feel God is calling you to be more intentional about. The second week contains additional questions, journaling space, and experiences to further develop your action plan that was developed the previous week. The two weeks contain experiences for your individual work with your partner and a small group environment.

As you work through each week, you have the freedom to pick and choose which questions and experiences resonate with God's call on your life in the moment. Don't feel obligated to complete each activity, but instead view the content as a collection of opportunities where you can pick which works for you. Some weeks you may feel like each experience should be completed, while other weeks you may choose to simply journal your thoughts, skipping over the suggested exercises. Or you may come up with your own ideas that more accurately fit your journey. Be creative.

Keep in mind that this journey is NOT about perfection. This journal is designed to inspire movement in your life where you can develop a rhythm of inviting Jesus into every area of your life.

## **What to do::**

- 1:: Join a group.
- 2:: Journal the answers to the questions found at the beginning of each of the six areas entitled Questions to Relent.
- 3:: Create an intentional plan of action based on your answers.
- 4:: Ask a friend that you trust to hold you accountable to your plan.
- 5:: Continue going to your group, the worship gathering, and repeat the journal process each week.



# RELATIONAL WEEK 1

## :: Our relational life hinges on story.

Relationship comes down to the depth at which we share our own story and the way in which we respond to hearing the story of another. The questions we ask ourselves are meant to initiate a response that moves us toward interpreting the activity of God in the story that He seems to be writing in our lives.

I love watching how questions have played a role in the lives of people in Scripture. In **Genesis 16** Hagar is pursued by an angel after fleeing a dicey situation with Abram and Sarai and he says, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" The angel knew her face, called her by name, but understood that she had a story that had sent her running into the desert. In that one verse the angel is asking about her past, acknowledging her present and asking about her future. If we ever were able to look outside of **Acts 2** to understand true biblical community, we would know how to speak into one another's lives about where we are running from God. Consider the garden scene from **Genesis 3** where Adam and Eve have fled from God and he calls out to them "Where are you?" The idea that God pursues us when we are hiding behind our guilt and our shame is the picture of relationship. He calls us to come out from the places where we hide and step into the light of accountability. I'm also moved by the question Jesus asked of the blind man in **Mark 10** where he says, "What do you want me to do for you?" The idea that the blind man had to admit that he was blind in order for him to be able to see is such a powerful image. It was his vulnerability that produced the miracle of him receiving his sight. What might we learn about true relationship and community if we asked questions like these of ourselves and one another?

As we explore the depths of our own story we discover a well of relationships, past and present, that have been both blessing and burden. We have known laughter and late night conversations with people who have inspired us and challenged us to become our true selves. But we also have known the pain of rejection, the loss of friendship and the trial of conflict that never seems to reach a verdict. While others of us, if we were honest, have really only known the names of the people around us without any meaningful connection.

God Himself reflects the nature of relationship by revealing Himself in three persons. You've most commonly heard them referred to as Father, Son and Spirit. This mysterious triune relationship serves as the foundation for our understanding that family and friendship matter.

Whether you consider relationships a strength or a weakness, we believe that God has something new to teach you about living surrendered in this area of your life. As you begin this process of evaluating your relational life in relationship to your life with God, I pray that you relent and respond in a way

# QUESTIONS TO RELENT

## :: Inviting Jesus into my RELATIONAL LIFE ::

### **Romans 12:10** (NIV)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

What is the best part and what needs to change about the following relationships?

:: what needs to change in my relationship with my spouse?

### **Proverbs 22:6** (NIV)

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

### **Mark 10:13-16** (NIV)

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

:: what needs to change in my relationship with my children?

## **Colossians 3:12-14** (NIV)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**:: what needs to change in my relationship with my (step)mom?**

**:: what needs to change in my relationship with my (step)dad?**

**:: what needs to change in my relationship with my brothers/sisters?**

**:: what needs to change in my relationship with other family members?**

**:: what needs to change in my dating relationship?**

**Proverbs 27:17** (NIV)

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

**:: what needs to change about the 1-3 closest relationships in my life?**

**Proverbs 17:17** (NIV)

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

**:: what needs to change about the 4-10 good friends in my life?**

**:: what needs to change about my relationship with everyone else?**



### **Matthew 5:14-16** (MSG)

“Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

### **Matthew 9:37-38** (NIV)

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

**:: how am I putting myself in environments that will open up relationships with people who don’t live in relationship with Jesus?**

### **2 Timothy 3:10-17** (NIV)

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**:: is there anyone I should be pursuing to mentor me?**

## **Ephesians 4:11-13** (NIV)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

**:: is there anyone I should be pursuing to mentor?**

**:: what am I most afraid of in relationships?**

**:: what do I enjoy most about relationships?**

**:: am I pursuing friends of the opposite sex in unhealthy ways?**

**:: do I need to have a DTR (Define The Relationship) conversation with people in my life?**

**:: what is your most difficult relationship with an individual, group, or type of person?**

### **James 4:11-12** (NIV)

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

### **Matthew 18:15-17** (NIV)

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

**:: how do you contribute to gossip in your circle of friends?**

**:: additional questions focused on my own story:**



## **Individual Experiences::**

Take a walk with Jesus. Talk to Him like a friend. So it may be a little weird, get weird. Imagine that He is walking there next to you. You have the freedom to talk to Him candidly about anything that comes to your mind.

## Group Experiences::

Everyone bring a dish to share and gather together over your meal with one another. Use the conversation over the meal as an opportunity to get to know each other a little better if you're a new group. If you're pretty familiar with everyone in the group, spend this meal time to get caught up on each other's lives.

**:: what are three goals that I can commit to pursuing over the next week to achieve greater relational health in my life?**

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**:: share these goals with your partner for accountability and encouragement.**



# RELATIONAL WEEK 2

:: reflect and journal about the three most important relationships in your life.


:: have you told these people lately how much they mean to you?

**:: reflect and journal about the most painful relationship you have ever experienced.**

**:: why was it so difficult?**

**:: have you dealt with the implications of the things that happened in it?**

**:: do you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from someone?**



**:: who is the one person in your relational life that you can treat with more grace than you do now? imagine how Jesus would treat that person and be aware the next time you spend time with them. take ownership of this change as you journal.**

**:: what is your relationship with Christ like these days? how would you describe your relationship with Him?**

**:: how do you see the work of the Holy Spirit in your friendships?**

**:: do the people you're in relationship with know that you're a follower of Christ? how do they know?**

### **Colossians 3:12-14** (NIV)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**Circle the portion of the Scripture above that you find the hardest to practice. Write the word or phrase on a card and put it where you will see it the most often.**

**:: who do you need to forgive? who have you wronged and need to seek forgiveness from? what is keeping you from acting?**

**:: what portion of this Scripture do you feel like you excel in?**

## **Matthew 5:14-16** (NIV)

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."

**:: how can you be relationally generous?**

## Group Experiences::

Put the names of your group members in a hat. Pull them out in groups of three. The three of you make plans for lunch or dinner sometime this week. While eating together, talk about your families, your passions and your hopes. Fight the comfortability of only talking about the weather and what you've done during the day.



## Resources::

:: Discovery Church offers a wide variety of ministries specifically focused on areas of hurt such as divorce, addictions, abuse and grief.

:: Visit [www.discoverychurch.org](http://www.discoverychurch.org) and seek out the opportunities that may further your journey under "Counseling and Support".



# GIFTS + TALENTS WEEK 1

:: Our gifts and talents are not our own.

As we grow up, we start to recognize that we are passionate about certain things. We also seem to be wired with natural ability and talent in areas that don't seem to come easily for other people. For some of us we have seen this as an indication of strength that is our own doing, that somehow we have become strong in ways that we want to take credit for. And though many of us have developed our skills and educated ourselves, we often neglect recognizing the origin of the gifts and talents that we are praised for having. **James 1:17** says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above..." We have to begin the journey of embracing the truth that God in his sovereignty has specifically handed out gifts and abilities to each of us that are ours to explore and enjoy. But every gift and talent that we have received comes with a purpose. A purpose that is bigger than the means to make money or hold down a career. A purpose that is far more significant than just using it to gain some sort of popularity. Ultimately each gift and talent has been given to us for the purpose of expanding the Kingdom of God and honoring the Giver Himself.

One of the powerful messages in the teachings of Jesus is the constant invitation to live according to the ways of the Kingdom of God. Life in the Kingdom of God seems to be backward and counter cultural to the ways that most people live their lives. This is why, for followers of Jesus, meaning and purpose are found not in the selfish use of our talent but instead, when we use the blessings that we've been given to live generously and selflessly in the world around us.

Some of you know exactly what you are good at while others of you feel as though God overlooked you when handing out specific abilities. As I have spent time with people over the years, I've discovered many people who view their abilities as common and ordinary. They feel as though there doesn't seem to be anything unique about the talent and skills they have. If this is you, I want to remind you about the story that Jesus tells in the New Testament, commonly referred to as the parable of the talents, where the master hands out several different amounts of money to three different people. In the story that Jesus tells, He says that upon returning some time later, the master checks in on what the three different people have done with what they have been given. To the ones who invested their money wisely and grew even the small amounts they had been given, they were blessed with an even greater amount from the master. To the one who did nothing with his money out of fear of losing it, his money was taken and given to the one who had done the most with his money. This parable is about a lot more than just money. It represents the way many of us have developed and grown the gifts that our Master has given to us or the ways that we have squandered the abilities that we've received from Him.

Whether you are clear about your passions and abilities or not, we believe that God has something new to teach you about living surrendered in this area of your life. As you begin this process of evaluating your gifts and talents in relationship to your life with God, I pray that you relent and respond in a way that becomes a blessing to the world around you.

# QUESTIONS TO RELENT

## :: Inviting Jesus into my GIFTS + TALENTS ::

### **Ephesians 4:11-16** (NIV)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

### **1 Peter 4:10** (NIV)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

**:: do I know my spiritual gifts and/or my core strengths?**

### **1 Peter 4: 10** (NIV)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

**:: what spiritual gifts and/or core strengths are not being used?**

**Proverbs 16:3** (NIV)

Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

**Psalm 37:4** (NIV)

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

**:: what am I passionate about?**

**:: am I deeply passionate about the things I'm giving my time to?**

**:: am I using my time and talents to invest into the lives of people or mostly for selfish gain?**

## **1 Peter 5:8** (NIV)

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

**:: what is my biggest distraction in applying my gifts and talents?**

**:: how do I need to further my understanding/development of my gifts and talents?**

**:: what do I want my gifts and talents to be? what gifts and talents has God given me? are these the same?**

**:: ask your closest friends what your strengths and weaknesses are.**

**:: additional questions focused on my own story:**

**:: what are three goals that I can commit to pursuing over the next week to achieve greater awareness of my gifts and contribution to the Kingdom?**

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**2::**

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**3::**

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**:: share these goals with your partner for accountability and encouragement.**



## **Group Experiences::**

### **Two things to do in your group this week::**

First, talk about your gifts and how you're currently using them. Pray for each group member as he or she reveals their gifts.

Secondly, talent show. Come ready to show off your talents. Regardless of what they are. If you're a talented plumber, bring some pipe and tools and show the group why you love plumbing. If you're a talented writer, write something new, print out copies for everyone, and let them read it. Then spend time talking about the literary devices you utilized in your writing. Also, try to find at least one spiritual metaphor in the process of applying your talent. For example, the plumber might find parallels in his ability to fix what is broken or the writer might find inspiration in the ability to create something from nothing. This should be a week of passion and excitement as you get creative with your talents and share them together. No talent is more valuable than another. Rejoice in your talent, and live it well.

## Individual Experiences::

It's easy to deceive ourselves when it comes to our gifts and talents. Often times we miss out on applying our true gifts and talents because we are giving our time to something else. So, the first thing to do is to ask someone to assess the caliber of the things you consider your gifts and talents. It can be your two closest friends or even an expert or professional related to that field. Ask them to be brutally honest. Hopefully they give you positive feedback, but if they don't, DO NOT ignore them. DO NOT write them off. You must prayerfully assess their words.

If you need help reassessing your gifts and talents, get it. The goal of this entire movement is to surrender all the aspects of your life to God to become more effective in advancing the kingdom.

Now, take what you're good at, what you've been gifted to do, and use it specifically. Apply it in a new way to advance the kingdom. Be creative.

Text five of your friends and let them know the gifts and talents you see in them.

Set aside some time to be alone and silent. Ask the Holy Spirit in prayer what areas of your life you can further surrender.

## **Ephesians 4:11-16** (NIV)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

## **Group Experiences::**

Journal and pray through the following questions and discuss them as a group::

**:: where do you believe your gifts and talents fit in the full function of the body of Christ?**

**:: how many times a week are you able to use your talents? where else could you be applying your talents?**

**:: when was the last time you felt overwhelmingly passionate about what you were doing? what was it? is that something you should rediscover?**



## Resources::

:: It's difficult to provide resources that truly speak to the uniqueness of your own story because of the diversity of Gifts & Talents. Like the Individual Experience from the beginning of week 2 (page 40), your best resource is the relationships that you're in where someone who knows you well can speak with love and truth into what they see in you.



# FINANCIAL WEEK 1

**:: Our financial life has been built on pursuing the American dream.**

It seems the older we get, the larger our appetite grows to own things. On the surface it seems that we've been hard wired and made to make as much money as possible to live the most comfortable and easy life we can afford [or put on credit]. But the tension for us as followers of Jesus remains whether the American dream of buying stuff to feed our lust for something new should be our pursuit at all.

As we look at how we view money and finances it is critical that we first begin by allowing the Spirit to teach us and lead us in the direction of how to live between prosperity and poverty. Scripture is clear that the love of money is the root of all evil. With the important point being that money itself is not evil but our obsession and all out pursuit of it can be. Some of the wealthiest people in the Bible who passionately followed after God were kings, landowners and farmers. It is possible to have a lot of money and to love God. But the teachings of Jesus on this issue are clear that money isn't the point. As you read the New Testament you'll discover the teachings of Jesus constantly pointing people towards, among other things, the stewardship of their resources and sacrificial surrender to the ways of God.

Because we need transportation, clothing, housing, food, etc. we can easily justify many of the financial decisions that we make. For many people in the world who make \$80,000 a year, having a \$500 a month car payment is a normal thing. But someone who is living surrendered to the voice of God in the area of their money first considers whether the car they are looking at buying is a status symbol of self importance. If they feel that it is, then they might feel led to get a cheaper car while they work through their identity issues of wanting to be perceived as successful because of the car they drive.

We must evaluate how money controls and dictates our heart. Our heart is the chamber that God is constantly after. He longs to exclusively hold our allegiance over anything, especially money. Someone living a fully surrendered financial life is able to know life with God at such a deep and intimate level. Because this area has been such a challenge to turn over to God for so many people, I've found that those who live out the values of the Kingdom like stewardship, selflessness and generosity are some of the most inspiring disciples of our time.

Whether you feel like you have an obedient, apathetic or greedy spirit, we believe that God has something new to teach you about living surrendered in this area of your life. As you begin this process of evaluating your financial life in relationship to your life with God, I pray that you relent and respond by holding nothing back.

# QUESTIONS TO RELENT

## :: Inviting Jesus into my FINANCIAL LIFE ::

### **2 Corinthians 9:7** (NIV)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

:: am I being obedient to the tithe?

### **1 Timothy 6:17-18** (NIV)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

:: how am I allowing the Spirit to influence the allocation of every dollar that I earn?

### **Romans 13:7-8** (NIV)

Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

:: what am I doing about paying down debt and/or staying out of further debt?

:: do I need to create a budget or change the one I have?

:: am I consistently paying my bills on time?

**:: do I know my current credit score and do I need help seeing that it gets repaired?**

**:: what do I need to spend less on?**

**:: is there something I should be spending more on?**

### **1 Timothy 6:10** (NIV)

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

**:: how does money control me?**

**:: have you kept your financial struggles secret?**

### **Proverbs 11:25** (NIV)

A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

**:: how can I better practice generosity?**











**1 Timothy 6:17-18** (NIV)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

**:: what are three goals that I can commit to pursuing over the next week to achieve greater financial health for my life?**

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**:: share these goals with your partner for accountability and encouragement.**



## Group Experiences::

For some reason, our culture has made talking about our financial lives taboo. Get over it. Talk about your blessings and your struggles. Ask for help where you need help and pray over each other's financial lives.



# FINANCIAL WEEK 2

**:: what are some areas of my life where I am spending money outside of God's will?**

**:: where should I redirect some of my funds to align my life closer to God's heart?**

## **Malachi 3:10** (NIV)

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

## 1 Timothy 6:10 (NIV)

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

**:: where does money fall in your priorities and does that need to change?**



## Group Experiences::

In your group meeting this week, talk about how you've assessed your spending habits over the last two weeks.

## Resources::

:: Manage your money by creating a budget and then utilizing online and text-messaging tools to help you keep that budget:: [www.mint.com](http://www.mint.com)

:: Get a free credit report once a year:: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

:: Financial Resources:: [www.finweb.com](http://www.finweb.com)

:: **Financial Peace University** available through Discovery Church::  
[fpu@discoverychurch.org](mailto:fpu@discoverychurch.org). See Tom or Jenn for details::  
[community@whatsyourstatus.com](mailto:community@whatsyourstatus.com)

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICES WEEK 1

**:: Our spiritual practices are intentional rhythms of connection with God.**

For centuries, men and women have found profound ways to connect intimately with God. Spiritual practices represent specific disciplines that we are to use to enhance this connection. Unfortunately, many of us have lost the passion and understanding needed to develop these practices as a way of life. All we have to do is look to the life of Jesus to see the enormous value He placed on fasting from food, prayer and in depth study of the Torah [the first five books of the Bible]. If we are to look to Jesus as our example of how to live our lives then we must pay attention to how these practices are meant to enhance our relationship with God.

If we were honest, there are many of us who have neglected the study of Scripture and other practices out of laziness and an apathetic attitude. We've found ourselves too busy to create the space and time to engage in spiritual rhythms. Whether it was because we were never taught how to enjoy doing these things or we never cared to explore their significance, this is a new invitation for us to take another look at what these practices can do to lead us to deeper places of love towards God.

There are others of us who have used different methods and practices like Scripture and fasting and have elevated their importance above God himself. As an example, we might find new humility in recognizing and acknowledging that having a relationship with the knowledge of the Bible is still different than having a relationship with God himself. The Bible was given to us as a means to an end. As a means for relationship with God rather than the sum of our relationship with Him. An example of this would be like me taking the beautiful and valuable letters that my wife has written me over the years and studying her words and her feelings towards me in a way where I used her letters to replace real conversation and life with her. The study of Scripture, as well as other practices, hold incredible value and importance in our relationship with God when we understand how they are meant to point us to a daily communion with Him.

Whether you have spent a lifetime engaged in spiritual practices or this is a brand new endeavor for you, we believe that God has something new to teach you about living surrendered in this area of your life. As you begin this process of evaluating your spiritual practices in relationship to your life with God, I pray that you relent and respond in a way that draws you closer to an intimate friendship with the Trinity.

# QUESTIONS TO RELENT

:: Inviting Jesus into my SPIRITUAL PRACTICES ::

**1 Chronicles 16:11** (NASB)

Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually.

**1 Peter 4:11** (NASB)

Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

:: what should I be doing about serving locally?

**Romans 12:11** (NIV)

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

**Acts 1:8** (NIV)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

:: what should I be doing about serving globally?

## **Colossians 1:10** (NIV)

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

**:: what should I be doing about studying Scripture?**

## **Psalms 46:10** (NIV)

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

## **Luke 5:16** (MSG)

As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.

## **1 Peter 3:4** (NIV)

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

**:: what should I be doing about solitude?**

## **Matthew 6:16-18** (NASB)

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.

**:: what should I be doing about fasting?**

### **Psalm 77:11-12** (NIV)

I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

**:: what should I be doing about journaling?**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:17** (NIV)

Pray continually.

### **Colossians 4:2** (NIV)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

### **Matthew 6:8-13** (NIV)

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

**:: what should I be doing about prayer?**

### **Mark 12:42-44** (MSG)

Sitting across from the offering box, he was observing how the crowd tossed money in for the collection. Many of the rich were making large contributions. One poor widow came up and put in two small coins—a measly two cents. Jesus called his disciples over and said, “The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they’ll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn’t afford—she gave her all.

### **Proverbs 3:9-10** (NIV)

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

### **2 Corinthians 9:7** (NIV)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

**:: what should I be doing about tithes & offerings?**

### **1 Peter 3:15** (NIV)

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

**:: what should I be doing about evangelism?**

### **Proverbs 16:16** (NIV)

How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver.

**:: what should I be doing about book reading?**

**:: additional questions focused on my own story:**

**:: what are three goals that I can commit to pursuing over the next 2 weeks to achieve greater intimacy with God through spiritual practices?**

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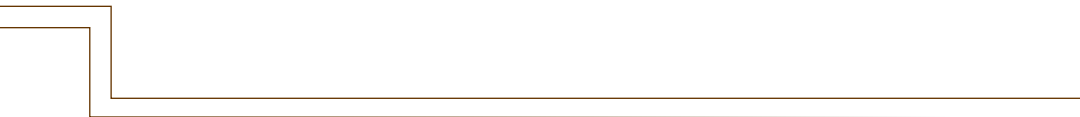
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**:: share these goals with your partner for accountability and encouragement.**



This week, as you answer the question, “which spiritual practice is most difficult for me?” or, “which spiritual practice do I know least about?” Think about how you can engage in it. Perhaps there are several answers to that question. If so, maybe you can focus on one of these practices for the first week and another on the second week. Here are some ideas to help you get started::

## **:: Personal Practices ::**

### **Serving Locally::**

There are dozens of organizations in the area that can help you start serving. They offer insight into people groups and needs. Sometimes, it’s more beneficial to partner with a group than to just do it on your own. Investigate some of these groups. Write about why you care about what they do and what good things you see them do. If you were to sit down with their director, what would you ask? Other times, you can see a need and meet it. From buying someone a meal to picking up trash, there are always needs. Just keep your eyes open and notice what you see.

### **Serving Globally::**

Have you ever been on a global serving opportunity? What was it like? What do you remember having the most impact on the lives of the people you came in contact with? What had the most impact on your life? Whether you’ve been on a global experience or not, investigate some global organizations that you have heard of. What are they doing? What is it about what they do resonates with your spirit? How can you arrange your life to be involved with a global experience in the next year? What sacrifices will it take? Pray about what it might look like.

### **Studying Scripture::**

If your goal is to study Scripture this week, the discipline will be focused around consistency and depth. To make it simple, pick one book of the Bible, and read a chapter a day. Don’t just skim over it. Read it slowly. Grasp the meaning of every word, every sentence. One day, write down only the verbs from the Scripture into your journal. As you read them, what does it say to you? Try adjectives on another day. Read actively and write down the things that might be new ideas or the things that inspire you toward living for the Kingdom.

**Solitude::**

If you have trouble spending time alone, why? What does it say about your relationship with people? What does it say about you? Perhaps, the only way to experience a powerful moment of solitude is to spend purposed time alone. Take a Sabbath. Walk away from the bustle of life for at least one day. Drive to the beach. Go to the woods. Sit in a hammock in your back yard. Lock yourself in your bedroom. And listen. Go with a heart of observation and listening. What do the things you see and hear say to you about the nature of God? What does God desire to speak into your life? Do a keyword search to study in Scripture while you're alone.

**Fasting::**

Investigate the practice of fasting and fast for a 24-hour period. Use the times when you would normally eat to pray and journal. When fasting, don't announce it. Let it be a quiet act. When you feel hungry, remember Christ.

**Journaling::**

The practice of journaling is to help you reflect upon and remember the things you experience. So, make your journal as present as possible. Carry it with you. As you go throughout your day, notice how things speak of the nature of God. Write it down. When you get home at night, respond in your journal. Maybe you can more thoroughly write through the ideas you have collected throughout the day. Or maybe you need to search Scripture to get clarity on something you noticed. There are lots of creative things you can do with a journal. Don't be bound by words.

**Prayer::**

There are so many examples of prayer in Scripture. If you have trouble praying, start there. As you read through some of these prayers, speak the words that resonate with you out to God. What do you notice about these people's prayers? Maybe it will help you to think of prayer as a text message or a status update. As you're moving through your day, look for opportunities to have a short conversation with God—even in the small things—whether it's a prayer of thanks as you check out at the grocery store or a prayer of help as you become impatient in traffic. If you need a reminder to do this, set an alarm on your phone or make a note on your hand.

### **Tithes + Offerings::**

What prevents you from continuously engaging in this spiritual practice? What can you do to change that? What value do you see in it? Do you have cynicism toward tithing? What are your fears in tithing? The action is to do it. Bring 10 percent of your paycheck for the next two weeks, and make this a spiritual practice. Don't just drop your money in a basket as you walk by, make it a spiritual practice. Meditate on the idea of generosity. Go beyond tithing and give from a heart of offering. Practice generosity during the week. Tip double. Walk up to someone in need, and hand them a twenty without expectation of anything in return. And don't only think in terms of money. How can you offer your gifts generously? Do it.

### **Evangelism::**

Relisten or rewatch Trent Sheppard's message from The Church = X Series #13 from 1.11.09 (search for STATUS podcast or STATUS video podcast on iTunes). Think about the idea that Jesus is enough—the idea that Jesus isn't another option in the array of religions, but that He is a new way of living. And then, pray for boldness. Let this question be part of your conversations this week, "What do you say about Jesus?"

### **Book Reading::**

Reading the thoughts of others is a great way to stimulate thoughts of your own. For some, it is a joy. For others, it's a chore. If it's a chore for you, it might be more than the fact that you don't enjoy reading. Perhaps you haven't found the right writing style or subject matter. There are tens of thousands of books that cover almost any topic imaginable. Talk to your friends about what books they have read that have been significant in their story. After researching for a few days, pick a book, and be committed to reading it. Read it well. Don't skim. Get into it. Write in the margins. Take notes. Think about it. Have conversations. Pray through it. And when you've finished, tell someone, and rejoice!



## Individual Exercises::

- :: serving locally
- :: serving globally
- :: studying Scripture
- :: solitude
- :: fasting
- :: journaling
- :: prayer
- :: tithes + offerings
- :: evangelism
- :: book reading

**:: which of the these are easy/difficult for me?**

**:: most meaningful for me?**

**:: i know the least about?**

**:: why?**

## Group Experiences::

As you meet with your group this week, discuss what you've done/will do this week around the spiritual practice that is most difficult for you. After each person shares, spend time praying over that person. Make a tally of each spiritual practice voiced by the members of the group. Which is the most prevalent? Why? Practice it together right now. Something like serving globally, might be difficult in the moment, but be creative. Maybe you can't fly to Uganda right now (or maybe you can), but you can all do something to raise awareness of an issue. Pray through what you should do, and do it.









**Colossians 1:10 (NIV)**

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

**:: what can you be doing daily to grow further in your knowledge of God?**

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**:: why are you not doing that now?**

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## **Group Experiences::**

If a member of your group has experience and knowledge in a specific spiritual practice, have them share about how they practice it for 10 minutes.

Bring a pack of note cards to your next meeting. Have everyone write out their five favorite Scriptures. Mix them all up and have each member of the group draw five Scriptures to carry with them or place around their home for the next few weeks. Memorize the Scripture that is most relevant to your journey with Christ right now.

## Resources::

- :: *A Celebration of Disciplines* by Richard Foster
- :: [www.reonvare.com](http://www.reonvare.com) :: Richard Foster's ministry based around the *Spiritual Disciplines*
- :: *The Sacred Way* by Tony Jones
- :: *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard
- :: Suggested Listening :: **Podcasts**
  - :: **Woodland Hills Church** :: Greg Boyd
  - :: **Menlo Park Presbyterian Church** :: John Ortberg
  - :: **Mosaic** :: Erwin McManus
  - :: **Cornerstone Church** :: Frances Chan
  - :: **STATUS** :: Spiritual Formation Sessions
    - :: **Solitude + Silence** :: 1.25.09
    - :: **Worship** :: 11.16.08
    - :: **Study** :: 10.26.08
    - :: **Prayer** :: 10.19.08

# EMOTIONAL LIFE WEEK 1

**:: The events of our lives are the bricks with which God uses to build His Story.**

Biblical icons like Abraham, Moses, Esther, Deborah and Paul are deserving of respect for the way in which they interacted with God and others, yet they are nonetheless human like we are. They had families and friends and jobs and secret sinful areas of their lives, just like we do. But they chose to see the events of their lives as mysterious ways in which God was communicating with them and the world, "I long for intimacy with you... will you choose me?" I believe that as our stories unfold we have the option of seeing them as random events that occur or happenings where God delights in using them to draw us into intimacy with Him and others.

God is omniscient [knows all]. He knows what's going to happen and He knows the truth of all that has occurred. But God is also deeply emotional and Scripture tells us that His heart can and is often moved by us, even to the point of changing His plans for the sake of relationship. Though we don't want to be ruled by our emotions, it is not a liability to view life from an emotional perspective. We are made in the image of God but I feel as though somehow we have valued intellect far more than emotion. Is God ruled by what he knows or how he feels? The answer is both. He is the perfect balance of the power of intellect and the force of raw emotion.

So, how do the events of our lives interact with our emotions? It depends. Many of us have chosen to isolate our circumstances from our emotions because it is just too painful to absorb the full force of the feelings that our experiences have provoked. Some of us have wallowed in pity and found ourselves in a perpetual cycle of grief and remorse over the cards we have been dealt. Neither way gives permission for God to redeem, restore, resurrect or reconcile.

Whether you have found the beauty that comes from reflecting the emotions of God in a healthy way or you have felt cut off from your emotional design, we believe that God has something new to teach you about living surrendered in this area of your life. As you begin this process of evaluating your emotional life in relationship to your life with God, I pray that you relent and respond in a way that moves you to a new place of freedom.

# QUESTIONS TO RELENT

**:: Inviting Jesus into my EMOTIONAL LIFE ::**

**:: how do I need to further my journey of understanding the value of my heart and emotions?**

**Ephesians 2:10** (NIV)

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

**:: where is my identity as a person coming from?**

**Romans 7:20** (MSG)

My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

**:: am I pursuing the answer to the question, "why do I do what I do?"**

**Romans 6:6** (NIV)

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

**:: what wounds and root issues remain unresolved in my life?**

**:: what envy and jealousy issues do I have?**

**:: what fears are holding me back in who I'm becoming and what I'm doing with my life?**

**Proverbs 10:12** (NIV)

Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

**:: where is there unresolved anger or bitterness in your life?**

**James 4:10** (NIV)

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

**:: what is an area of pride and arrogance in your life?**



## **Matthew 9:36** (NIV)

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

**:: how am I moved by the pain of others?**

**:: what emotions do I experience most often?**

**:: most rarely? (do I practice the full spectrum of emotion?)**

**:: am I over- or under-emotional?**

**:: am I afraid of emotion?**

**:: do I allow my emotions to control me?**

**:: how do emotions prevent me from being effective?**

**:: how are you embracing joy in your life?**



## Individual Experiences::

In **Romans 7**, Paul writes a beautiful confession of defeated will that surely echoes in all of us. Why do we do what we don't want to do?

### **Romans 7:14-25** (MSG)

[14-16] I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

[17-20] But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

[21-23] It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

[24] I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

[25] The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

Based on this Scripture, write your own confession of defeated will. Where do you lack motivation to do what is right and improve? What are you afraid to confront, both in you and with others? Now journal about the times when God gave you the strength to defeat sin in a moment. Pray and thank God for his provision by rescuing you in your time of need.

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**:: what are three areas in your emotional life that require movement towards health that you can focus on for the next 2 weeks?**

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**:: share these with your partner for accountability and encouragement.**

## **Group Experiences::**

Break up into groups of 3 and discuss the following questions::

**:: what emotions do I experience often?**

**:: what emotions do I never seem to experience?**

**:: discuss what it means to experience the full spectrum of emotion and share how emotions (or lack of emotions) have played out in your story.**



## Individual Experiences::

The word *passion* is from the Latin root meaning *suffering*. If passion moves us, our motivation is possibly stemmed from a wound or source of pain.

What has come of your suffering? How has it encouraged/energized your passion? Do you need to go back and reprocess this memory to free your passion? If so, seek out a friend you trust or a counselor to help you with this process.

“The present is not meant primarily to be resolved, or even learned from, but to be written in a way that allows us to reveal God to others and to let him reveal himself to us.” (Dr. Dan Allender)



## Group Experiences::

This world has been given to us, created by God. Our combined stories—of faith, shame, rebellion, fear, redemption—surrendered to God, will bring a Kingdom that is beautifully restored. Identify and think on the circumstances where God has redeemed and restored your story. Share your appreciation with the group and spend time in prayer together thanking God for His provision in caring for each of you through your stories.

**What areas of your life is fear holding you back?** Share this with the group and pray over one another for freedom from these fears and lies from the enemy. Encourage one another in your journeys and rely on your community to carry each other's burdens.

### **Galatians 6:2** (NIV)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Recognize that you too are a part of someone else's story. Are you contributing to their pain or their joy? If pain, "Work now to create glory and beauty out of the ashes of the Fall". (Dr. Dan Allender)

**Psalm 55:12-14** (ESV)

It is not an enemy who taunts me –  
I could bear that.

It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me –  
I could have hidden from them.

Instead, it is you – my equal, my companion and close friend.  
What good fellowship we enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God.

## Resources::

As you continue in your journey of answering the question why do you do what you do, consider investing in professional counseling:

### :: **Aaron Moore**

Heartspoken@cfl.rr.com  
407.522.9919

### :: **MaryBeth Griffis**

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### :: **Books**

- :: *To Be Told* by Dr. Dan B. Allender
- :: *Total Forgiveness* by R.T. Kendall
- :: *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goldman

### :: **STATUS Solarium #64:: 1.28.09**

[search STATUS Solarium in iTunes]

### :: **Counseling + Support Groups**

:: [www.discoverychurch.org](http://www.discoverychurch.org)



# PHYSICAL LIFE WEEK 1

**:: Our physical life walks a tight rope between neglect and obsession.**

When you read the creation account in the book of Genesis you can look at it one of two ways. The first way most of us have read it is by cruising through it, knowing that this is a story that we've heard before and reciting the events that we know in our head even before we get to the passages that describe the detail of God's artistic magnificence. The second way is by taking our time and recognizing the significance of God making Adam in his own image, from the dust of the ground and breathing life into his lifeless body. Once we grasp the power of that moment we start to see the meaning attached to these bodies that God himself has created for us to enjoy.

Everyday, each of us are being given the keys to this incredible machine, hand-crafted by the Creator himself, with the power to use it to bring honor to the one who made us and the power to abuse the gift of our humanity. Scripture is full of reminders of being "knit" and "formed" in our mother's womb. It reminds us that our Maker knows the number of hairs on our head. It's as if God has specifically designed us with an incredible attention to detail and care.

Unfortunately, most of us live carelessly with our bodies in a way that does not reflect the care that the Creator has taken in putting us together. We either have forgotten or neglected to see the spiritual significance of stewarding our bodies in a way that is a reflection back to God that we are grateful.

As we live our lives in fast food drive thru's and brag about living on five hours of sleep we are missing out on our original design. As we feel the weight of our pending personal to do list's we are stressed in a way that holds us down from living free and uninhibited. Dr. Ben Lerner says, "And stress, we're learning, may be even more dangerous than poor nutrition and bad fitness, because if you're stressed, you increase your production of the stress hormones that create obesity and that cause high cholesterol and high blood pressure. This is the scientific side. But on the spiritual side, when you feel overpowered by your stress, like there's nothing you could do about it and like it won't go away, then spiritually that's a problem because it means you don't have hope-which indicates a separation from faith and God."

Whether you have neglected the care of your physical self or your physical appearance has become a harmful obsession or you live somewhere in between, we believe that God has something new to teach you about living surrendered in this area of your life. As you begin this process of evaluating your physical life in relationship to your life with God, I pray that you relent and respond in a way that honors the care and affection with which your Creator has given you life.

# QUESTIONS TO RELENT

## :: Inviting Jesus into my PHYSICAL LIFE ::

### **Romans 12:1** (MSG)

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

**:: what are the things on my pending personal to do list?**

**:: what is my motivation behind my eating patterns?**

**:: how might I need to change my exercise plan?**

## **Psalm 4:8** (NIV)

I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

**:: how might I need to change my sleep patterns?**

## **1 Corinthians 6:12** (NIV)

Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

**:: what addictions have I developed that I need to stop?**

## **1 Corinthians 6:18-20** (NIV)

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

**:: what needs to change about my sex life?**

**:: how does my physical life limit my potential or my interaction with people?**

**Psalm 139:14** (NIV)

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

**:: how is my identity attached to my physical appearance?**

**:: what ways do I need to reevaluate my time management?**

**:: additional questions focused on my own story:**





## Individual Experiences::

Use this journal to document several things about your physical life as an assessment. Write down everything that you eat for several days as well as the physical activity you participate in throughout the day. Go over this assessment with your partner and discuss ways you are excelling in caring for yourself physically and ways you should strive for improvement.

As you go about your normal day, make note of the time you spend on the different activities you take part in. Spend some time evaluating how you spend your time and recognize the priority of some activities over others. When you have done that, spend the next day free of the activities that you recognize take away from your priorities. Journal or talk with your partner/group about what you deem a high priority and low priority.

Are you a physically unhealthy person? What patterns are keeping you unhealthy? Spend time in prayer and meditation about what areas of your physical life you want to invite the Holy Spirit into. Journal about the experience. **Take action.**

**:: in what ways has our culture dictated how you view yourself?**

**:: in what ways does our culture try and dictate how we should embrace our physical lives?**



## Group Experiences::

Why did Jesus spend so much time healing the physical abnormalities of those that came to see him? Spend some time journaling separately about the the nature of Christ's care for the physical bodies of those around him. Discuss what you wrote.

**:: what are three goals in your physical life that you can focus on over the next 2 weeks?**

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2::

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3::

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**:: share these goals with your partner for accountability and encouragement.**



## Romans 12:1 (MSG)

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.



## **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** (NIV)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

**:: in what way can you honor God with your body?**

## **1 Corinthians 6:18-20** (NIV)

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

**:: are you wrestling with sexual sin that has become so severe that you refuse to confess it to the Lord?**

**:: how long has it been going on?**

**:: has it paralyzed your movement towards submitting your whole life to Christ? what is it?**

**:: is there a sexual addiction you have or an experience that you have had that you need to sit with a close friend and share and receive prayer about?**

## Group Experiences::

Discuss the Questions to Relent and talk about your experiment in identity from page 113 where you dressed differently.

Discuss a time where you have judged someone completely based around their physical appearance. What opportunities do we have in our day to day lives to reject the idea of preferential treatment based on outward appearance and love everyone deeply and equally. Read **James 2:1-12** together.

## Resources::

- :: There are a lot of online fitness and health tools to help you track the progress of whatever goal you set for yourself.  
Try [www.onlinefitnesslog.com](http://www.onlinefitnesslog.com)
- :: Make use of the calendar in your email program on your computer like **Outlook**, **iCal**, or **Entourage**. Or use a free one online like **Google** calendar.
- :: Learn about different types of addictions and join a support group to help you out of them. Drug, alcohol, and other addiction groups meet on a regular basis at Discovery Church. Talk to Tom or Jenn for information.  
:: [community@whatsyourstatus.com](mailto:community@whatsyourstatus.com)



# PROLOGUE

So now you can say that you've completed your journey through six areas of holistic surrender. I have to believe that if you've made it this far that God has revealed Himself to you in new ways that are leaving you overwhelmed at the territory that you've covered.

## **But what do you do now?**

Our hope and desire is that you would spend some time reflecting on all that you have learned about yourself, your relationship with others and your relationship with God. This is a time where you need to celebrate the new epiphanies and revelations. This is the moment where you need to affirm the growth that has taken place in your life as a result of the way that you have obediently responded to the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life. Though there is so much more for you to discover and experience, it is incredibly valuable for you to process how far you have come. I've been thinking these days about how most of us continue to try to measure our growth like a person who is sailing towards the horizon and measuring their progress based on how close they feel they are getting to it. If you've been on a boat before, you know how futile it would be to sail for weeks and months in the direction of the horizon while trying to determine with your own eyes if you were getting any closer. Instead, I'm thinking more about how we might be able to measure our progress from our last destination rather than the ambiguous journey towards the horizon in front of us. This way you will be able to move forward while living in gratitude towards God about how far he has brought you.

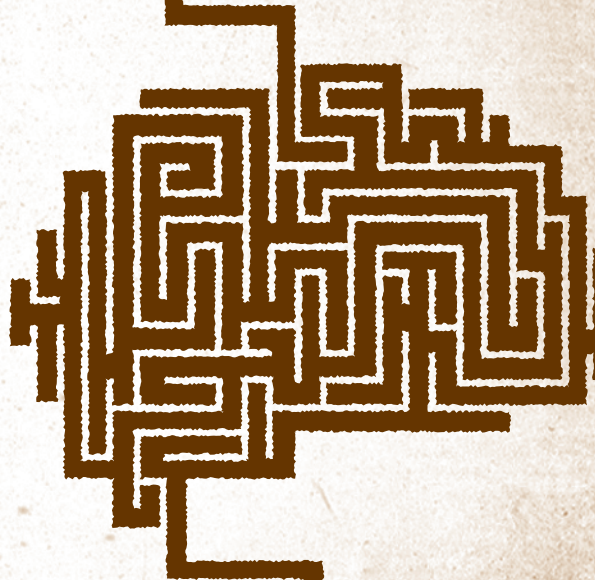
This journal now represents the progress of where you have been and what God has been doing in your life. The question for you moving forward is if this journal will be your last known destination or if you will continue to mark the growth and development of your relationship with God with other seasons where you relent and respond. This journal is simply meant to be one of many ways for you to surrender all of who you are to the voice of God for the purpose of responding in obedience to what He says.

Because our lives are divided into seasons with the different variables constantly changing like our time, resources, relationships, pain, growth, etc, our hope is that you would consider starting this process again with another journal soon. We believe that each time we evaluate our whole lives through the lens of the Holy Spirit that God will reveal new things to us that we didn't see before. Though you might be asking some of the same questions again, I think you'll find, as we have, that the answers will continue to change. And as your answers change, you will find new ways to live out an obedient life that honors your design and who God has created you to be. The most profound hope behind this journal is that it would become an on ramp to a lifestyle of holistic submission rather than something you did for a few weeks.

Feel free to email us and let us know about your experience so that we can celebrate with you what God is doing in your life.

:: [community@whatsyourstatus.com](mailto:community@whatsyourstatus.com)

**Rather than reaching the end, you've only just begun.**



مصنوعات

مسائل