

Outlive YOUR LIFE

BY LIVING OUT YOUR FAITH

STUDY GUIDE

We love great stories — epic stories. In particular, we love stories of overcoming. There is something about the drama of facing enormous odds with unwavering fortitude that does something to us. Whether the story takes place in a novel, autobiography, short homemade video or on a movie screen, there is something within us that resonates with the exuberant triumph of persevering faith. I think the reason that it resonates so much within us is because we are designed to deeply long for that sense of significance. I have never had a conversation with someone who was sincerely content to not matter, to make no impact or to not be remembered. There is a deeply engrained need for us to belong to something not only significant, but something much larger than ourselves. It is how God created us. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that, "... we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." We were created to accomplish the grandness of God's work. Not only that, each of us was created in a certain way to be a unique and integral part of God's work. As you read this, realize that God created you in a way that no one else was created. You are absolutely and unequivocally unique. Your uniqueness exists by God's design for God's wondrous, extravagant purposes. That is the part of our story that we love — the triumph and victory.

Still, there is another critical part of our individual stories with God that precedes the triumph that feels less glorious. This part of our story with God seems to take place in the tentative hours of restless nights, in the midst of transparent conversation or under the compulsion of a driving burden. This

critical moment is the moment of choosing faith. This moment occurs when we evaluate a call or sense of burden that seems too great to overcome, requiring a sacrifice of great cost in light of the greatness and faithfulness of God. In this moment, there is no one cheering a victory or celebrating an achieved goal. It is a moment of personal and resolute solemnity in which a believer chooses to be what God has called him or her to be regardless of the inherent requirements. It is within this moment that the believer echoes the declaration of Hebrews 10:39, "But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." The moment in which we choose to follow God's leading is our focus.

In the nation of Israel, we have both a positive and negative example of doing this — we'll focus primarily on the positive. Their initial arrival at the outskirts of the Promised Land recorded in Numbers 13 – 14 resulted in the Israelites assessing that the task of taking the land, which God had promised to them, was too great for them to handle. Therefore, instead of trusting God to do something in them that was greater than they could do in their own strength, they shrunk back. As a result, the nation of Israel was sent to wander in the desert for 40 years until that generation of leaders perished.

In Joshua 1:1 – 9, the people have returned to the outskirts of the Promised Land. The generation that was the nation's children upon their last visit are now its leaders. Moses' leadership is to be succeeded by that of Joshua. Once again the people of Israel are at the crossroads of faith. In these nine verses,

God speaks to Joshua about the tremendous faith step that he is to undertake. He can either believe that God will do what He has already promised to do or he can shrink back as their fathers did. As we trace through this pivotal moment, we'll be able to discern some crucial elements of taking faith steps to do great things in the power of God.

RECOGNIZE THE CONSISTENT POWER OF GOD IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

Beginning with the first verse of the book of Joshua, the element of change takes center stage. During the first two verses God acknowledges the change, but moves the people beyond the change to that which never varies — the promise of God.

“Now it came about after the death of Moses, the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ servant, saying, ‘Moses, My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.’”
Joshua 1:1 – 3

This generation of Israelites had never known a leader other than Moses. Now as they faced the formidable challenge of crossing into the Promised Land and beginning the work of taking it, which would mean countless battles with peoples that were their superiors in every perceivable physical way, that stability was gone. Joshua was their new leader — the new guy. New guys typically

do not enjoy instant credibility in the face of a daunting challenge. God quickly affirmed with Joshua that His promise was still very much intact. Moses was not the source of power for the taking of the Promised Land, God was. Moses perished, God never will. As a sign of the continuation of God's leadership through Joshua as it was with Moses, God has Joshua lead the people across the Jordan River — a sizeable body of water that would require divine intervention to cross. This was just like Moses guiding their fathers through the belly of the Red Sea on dry land.

Change affects people differently. Some people are absolutely frail in the face of change due to the upsetting of their perceived sense of stability. When that happens their resolve and clarity are devastated. The greater the change, the greater the sense of paralysis in their determined course of action. Still, other groups of people absolutely thrive on change as a catalyst for new activity with the purpose of recreating identity, processes and ways of life. Regardless of our reaction to change, though, the one thing that is not affected by change is the sovereign power of God. It is consistent. So as we exist in those moments of deliberation over whether or not to believe that God will sustain what He is calling us to do, we must remember that God's power in our lives does not waiver, regardless of the changing circumstances that swirl around us.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Describe a time when change shook you to your core. What was your perception of God then? How did you regroup?
2. Do you tend to be among the group that is devastated by change or the group that is

energized by change?

3. Read Joshua 1:5. What does that tell you about encountering change?

FOLLOWING GOD IN FAITH WILL REQUIRE SOMETHING OF YOU

After re-establishing His will for the people of Israel in light of their change in leadership, God uses the following phrase of exhortation three times in four verses: “Be strong and courageous.” Once, God even tells Joshua to be “very courageous.” God doesn't sugarcoat that following Him in leading the people of Israel will require more from Joshua than he has ever needed before. It's going to be hard. It's going to require great strength. It will find Joshua in predicaments that would seek to dismay him, frighten him or make his knees go weak. If we were to read through the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and chronicle the life of Moses as he led these people, we would see tremendous hardship, disappointment and frustration on the part of Moses. These were not easy people to lead. But we would also repeatedly see incredible demonstrations of God's power, goodness and intimacy with His people. The reward of intimacy with God far outweighed the toll of the struggle — but that doesn't mean there wasn't struggle. Like wise, God says to Joshua:

“Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous...”
Joshua 1:6 – 7a

There was glory to be witnessed. The people were finally to come into the land that had been promised to them by God decades earlier! They would have home — nomads no longer. They would ultimately dwell in peace, not facing starvation or the threat of walking through foreign lands as sojourners. But to get to that glorious place would take work.

The stories we love to read spend most of their time on the glory. In our lives, what we want the most is the joy of the arrival. But in order for us to enjoy that requires something of us. As believers, we are wired to long for God to do great things in us and through us. How we dream of the day of the realization of those great things! But it will require something of us that will be exceedingly worth the investment because God grows us in the struggle.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Would you respond more positively to someone who asked you to do something admittedly difficult or to someone who told you it was a relatively easy task, only to find out the true difficulty after you agreed? Why?
2. Describe a time in which God grew you through a struggle.
3. How does knowing the goal of difficult work help you stay on point?
4. What goal that you have achieved to date has required you to work the hardest? Was it worth it?

Steady obedience is critical to following God in faith. After reminding Joshua of the end result of his calling, God revealed to Joshua the critical

component of his success in leading the people:

“...be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.” Joshua 1:7b – 8

It was not enough for Joshua to realize the need the people had for a leader. It was not enough for Joshua to be willing to lead them. It was not even enough for Joshua to understand what the end result was to be so that he knew the direction to pursue. The critical ingredient was relentlessly following God. Following is different than knowing. Following is knowing with application. The two-part process that God gave to Joshua in verse 8 was to: 1) meditate on the law day and night and 2) to do what it said. Merely thinking about it day and night would not have accomplished the desired result. It required obeying the Word of God.

When we agree to follow God in faith, embarking on a journey that will require us to be stretched in ways God has never stretched us before, we absolutely must stay in the Bible so that we know what God would have us to do and then we can yield ourselves to applying what the Bible tells us. Failure to do so short-circuits the entire journey. We cannot avoid the essence of God’s Word in our lives and in directing our lives. It is absolutely irreplaceable. Why? Read 2 Timothy 3:16. It tells us that Scripture teaches us, reproves and corrects

us and trains us in righteousness. It keeps us on the path of godliness and serves as deterrence for when we would get off course. It makes us ready for the good works that God places before us as we pursue Him in faith.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What plan do you have for keeping Scripture as a central, consistent part of your life? Why is a plan important?
2. When you seek to apply Scripture to your life, what steps have you found to be useful?
3. How valuable would you say memorizing Scripture is to daily obedience?
4. How do you understand “meditate on it day and night”?

What if God wanted to use your life for something glorious that you couldn’t fully understand? Would you be interested? The truth of the matter is that He absolutely does want to do that. In fact, He went as far as to create you specifically for that purpose. Sadly, many believers do not embrace the idea that God has a call on their lives. Many reserve the idea of a “call” for those whom God has given a public and obviously effective ministry, like Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, the pastor at their local church, missionaries with which they are familiar with or their favorite broadcast speaker. This problem is two-fold. First, our understanding as Christians of the spectacular has become perverted. Many believers reserve the idea of a call from God for those whose lives have an aspect of the spectacular about them. They’ve had a radical shift in their life plans, they’ve moved to a remote location, they’ve undertaken a Herculean task for the glory of God and it has brought them attention. This is viewed as spectacular. Second, we have been lulled into a deception of unbiblical false humility that tells us that we are not significant enough for God to do something of that magnitude in our lives. That deception usually manifests itself in a statement similar to, “but I’m just an ordinary, run of the mill person. I’m not like them.” The tragic result of these two factors is the dismissal of the truth that God works through His people.

To begin setting our minds aright, we will look at what the call of God on a person’s life looks like in a somewhat familiar passage with an extremely familiar quote in Luke 5. Coming into Luke 5, Jesus’

earthly teaching ministry is officially underway. He has completed His forty days of temptation in the wilderness and returned to Galilee. His teaching in the synagogues of the area produced a brush fire of discussion about Jesus and His ministry. Accompanying His teaching were miraculous healings and the casting out of demons. Jesus was in great demand and the crowds of those who followed him grew exponentially. As the crowd grew, the people pressed in on Jesus as He was standing on the shores of the lake of Gennesaret, also known as the Sea of Galilee. The pressure from the crowd became so great, that Jesus moved to a boat to get some space to teach.

LIFE AS USUAL

The scene is not that hard to imagine really. We’ve all seen instances where a well-known person was swarmed by onlookers trying to get close. In our instances, the people were just celebrities. In the context of Luke 5, the people were surging to get as close as they could to the one person who could heal illnesses that had destroyed their lives for years, deliver them from the oppression of spiritual forces or speak clearly the hope of the love of God as no one had done before. What was at stake in the effort to come in contact with Jesus was freedom. In those moments, common sense goes out the window and mob mentality takes over. Luke 5:2 – 3 tell us Jesus’ response to the force of the crowd:

“and He (Jesus) saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets.

And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat."
Luke 5:2 – 3

This is the beginning of Simon's, who we will later call by his better known name, Peter, call. Simon was a professional fisherman. He knew the waters of that lake, the times of day to fish for optimum results, and how the seasons affected it all. He knew it because it was his life. In the midst of life as usual, Jesus climbs into his boat and asks Simon to take Him out. Now, Simon was cleaning his nets, which was the very last thing he did every day before quitting work. In other words, Simon was done for the day and getting ready to go home. Then Jesus enters the scene and takes Simon in a different direction with a simple request — "to put out a little way from the land." Jesus just wanted Simon to barely get Him away from the shore so He could teach from the boat without the distraction of the crowd pressing in on Him. Simon abandons his normal plans and takes Jesus out, where he is the most captive of all captive audiences, listening to Jesus teach up close and personal.

GRADUALLY GAINING UNDERSTANDING

After sitting and listening to Jesus teach the people, Simon receives another request from Jesus — this one a bit more inconvenient. "When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'" (Luke 5:4) Remember, Simon has already cleaned his nets and they are prepared

for the next day. Now, Jesus has asked Simon to fish again. Not only that, He instructed Simon to cast his nets into the deep water. The deep water is not at the shore. So, before Simon can lower his nets, knowing he will have to clean them all over again for the next day's use, he has to row his boat out to the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Simon had been on the way home before Jesus climbed in his boat, so his response demonstrates a heightened awareness of the gravity of the person he shared a boat with:

"Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.'" Luke 5:5

Simon's response contains the elements of faith. His obedience is based solely on his newly gained understanding of Jesus' unique authority, and he states as much. Simon acknowledges that he is a professional fisherman and had been at this for hours with no avail. But, because Jesus is asking him to do this, as odd as it seems, Simon responds with obedience yet again.

WHEN WE FOLLOW IN FAITH, GOD MOVES

Having been obedient in faith to a divine request that seemed ridiculous and probably a little insulting to a professional fisherman, Simon and his partners, James and John, drop their nets only once.

"When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the

other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink." Luke 5:6 – 7

For even the most skilled of fisherman, this catch was unfathomable. The strength of the nets could not endure the number of fish that filled them, when only moments ago those nets lay empty from an entire day of futile labor. But it wasn't just the nets; the fishing boats themselves were so full from the catch that they threatened to sink beneath the weight. Imagine the concern from having no dinner, shifting to the concern of having so much that you might lose your boat, all because one extraordinary man told you to put your nets down one more time and you did. If Simon had started to gain an understanding of who Christ was previously, it was quickly coming to clear focus now:

"But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon."
Luke 5:8 – 10a

Recognizing that Jesus carried with Him the agency of God, Simon recoils in humility bordering on terror. Simon had been face to face with the power of God at work and it changed his perspective immediately and completely. So what came next was something that Simon was completely open to.

THE PATTERN OF THE CALL

"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.' When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him."
Luke 5:10b – 11

Notice the flow of Simon's call to this point. At the beginning of his encounter with Jesus, Simon was merely asked to change the normal flow of his life somewhat to be obedient to what Jesus asked of him. Specifically, just get back in his boat and take Jesus out a little way from shore. Once Simon had agreed to serve in that way, he listened to Jesus teach him. He gained deeper insight from his personal encounter with Him. Then, after He finished teaching, Jesus asks Simon to do something that required more of him — a more difficult task if you will. Specifically, Simon had to row his boat out into the middle of the Sea of Galilee and fish with freshly cleaned nets. Building on what he had just learned about Jesus, Simon agreed again citing his foundation of Jesus' authority for the decision. The power of God manifested itself in such a mighty way that Simon is brought to his knees in worship and amazement, which readied him for the next level of his call — to abandon everything and follow Jesus. And he did it.

Before we miss this point, we should note that Simon had no idea what he was getting himself into. Today we read the phrase, "you will be catching men," and we get it. It referred to Simon's upcoming apostleship and preaching of the Gospel, but Simon had no way of knowing that. All he knew was that Jesus was One to be

followed and that he would give up whatever it cost to do so. If he had to leave his business, so be it. If he had to leave his home, so be it. What Simon understood was that whatever it meant to be a fisher of men, if Jesus was asking him to do it, it would be too glorious to be missed.

FOR US TODAY

Simon Peter, James and John were fishermen; you don't get any more common than that in their context. Still Jesus had a call for their lives that would transform them. We read the Bible today and we know them as Apostles. But in those boats on the Sea of Galilee on that day when Jesus climbed into Simon's boat, they were just ordinary men going about their jobs like they did every day. But God had a purpose for their lives. The way they discovered that purpose was by saying yes to the promptings of Jesus, in small ways at first.

1 Corinthians 12 is all about what it means to be a part of the Body of Christ. Paul tells us that we all have a purpose in God's plan in the world. That's not preacher talk — it's the Word of God. If you are a believer in Christ, God wants to do incredible, life-changing things in your life and then through your life. That is not a statement to be considered and agreed or disagreed with. It's truth. God has a call on your life and He wants you to know what it is. The way you find it is by beginning to say "yes" to His promptings.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. The first time God calls us personally is when we become believers. Tell your story of how you came to believe in Christ as your Savior. How did God "get your attention"? How is he

trying to get your attention now?

2. What experiences in your life have brought about especially strong views or opinions in your way of thinking? How might God want you to address that?
3. Describe a time when you were obedient to something you felt like God was moving you to do. How did God respond?
4. What do you think is the most intimidating aspect of pursuing God's purpose for your life?
5. What abilities, talents or gifts has God created you with that He might be able to use in serving others? (Don't say you don't have any, that's unbiblical – 1 Peter 4:10.)
6. How do you think your sense of fulfillment and worth would change if you were living your life according to the unique purpose God has for you?

OUTLIVE YOUR LIFE ——— SESSION 3

"Home" is a powerful concept. It connotes the idea of the place where we most belong, the place that we most intimately fit. By the time we reach adulthood, we might have had several homes. The idea of "home" has to do as much with the people and experiences involved in the core of our lives as it does an actual geographic location. Over the last several decades, as the condition of the nuclear family has undergone incredible shift, the meaning of home has also shifted to become the place where those with whom we feel the most significant connection and the greatest security are found. Every home is its own subculture with its own set of ground rules, customs and unwritten lists of do's and don'ts. Inherent in the powerful influence of our homes is the personal formation we receive in them. We learn how to act, form core values and establish a sense of what is honorable in the way we conduct our lives. In short, our homes form within us at a very early age an idea of what is most important. Depending on the health of the home and the source of ethic found in the home, that can be a good thing or a not so good thing. Home is just the beginning though. With each larger concentric circle of our origin, we find sources of influence that shape our worldview. Our neighborhood, city, state, region and country all have definite influence over how we view our lives.

Why all this business about what "home" means? Because believers in Jesus Christ must undergo a home reorientation. Our home is not here, but in eternity with Christ. That means our entire understanding of our lives has to change. The

ethics by which we live have to change. What we most value prior to salvation has to change once we accept Christ as our Savior. It sounds odd, doesn't it? How do we reorient ourselves to the "house rules" of a home we've never been to? If you think it is difficult, you're not alone. The Philippians thought it was hard too. In fact, as Americans, we share a great deal in common with the people in Philippi, and because of that, we need to carefully heed the words of Paul in Philippians 3.

I'M PROUD TO BE A PHILIPPIAN

Imagine Lee Greenwood singing the line, "I'm proud to be a Phillipian..." The syllables actually fit nicely. For the Philippians, this was extremely true. The city of Philippi was a colony and military outpost for the Roman Empire during the days of Paul. It was a commercial and agricultural metropolis, which made the city extremely important to its area. In addition, because it was used by the Roman government as an outpost for retired Roman soldiers, its citizens enjoyed Roman citizenship even though Philippi was in Greece. Roman citizenship was a source of great pride, not only because it afforded its bearers exclusive rights and protected them from certain types of punishments and legal prosecutions, but also because in that day to be able to say that one was a Roman citizen carried elitist clout. It meant, in the world's eyes, that you were better than everyone else. Patriotism and nationalism in Philippi were extremely powerful and influential forces. (Sound like any nation you know?)

In Paul's day the Philippian congregation, much like the city itself, was composed of both Greeks and Romans. There were also multiple different socio-economic backgrounds represented in the church. It was something of a mosaic. The one thing they all agreed upon, though, was that they cherished their Roman citizenship and the feeling of entitlement that came with it.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

Philippians 3 is a crucial chapter for understanding how a relationship with Christ changes our worldview. In verses 1 – 16, Paul unfolded the example of his own life as the example the Philippians should follow. This was a fitting comparison for his purposes because Paul also came from a proud people. As you probably know, Paul was a Pharisee, which would have put him in the most religious and righteous category of Jewish men. Being a Jew meant that he was a part of God's chosen people. In fact, in the first six verses of Philippians 3, Paul listed that which laid claim to achievement and honor in the sight of the men of a proud people. Paul was the man all other Jews aspired to be like. He was a winner. Classifying himself as "a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless," Paul asserted to the Philippians that he was the elite of the elite — blameless, zealous and righteous. This would have been the exact kind of language the Philippians would have been accustomed to in their own land; they used it all the time. Then something curious and foreign to the mentality of Philippi happened:

"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, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." Philippians 3:7 – 11

Paul relinquishes it all — despises it really. The word for rubbish cannot be translated strongly enough. Paul regarded whatever earthly acclaim he had earned as a detriment to his knowing Christ. It affirmed the accomplishments wrought in his own power, not that which was gained through the surpassing grace of Christ. His elitism was a threat to his relationship. His privilege served as a trap. His public image and reputation were temporal and worthless. In other words, his priorities changed because his worldview changed at the point of his salvation. The righteousness he desired was one that he could not earn, but must be gracefully granted by God.

A NEW DESIRE

Paul continued in verses 12 – 14 acknowledging that even in spite of all the miraculous things God had done in and through his life and ministry, he had not attained perfection. However, his determination and resolve were unwavering:

"but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12 – 14

That which Paul had yet to lay hold of was perfection. Indeed, achieving perfection is impossible this side of eternity. That fact, however, did not stop Paul from pressing forward for it with all that was in him. He did so at the cost of everything that was behind — past entitlement, reputation, status, all of it. In fact, reading through Paul's letters will show that pressing on toward perfection meant imprisonment, beatings, hunger and multiple other forms of persecution. How could he endure? He could endure because he kept his eye on the prize, which was the upward call of God. That means what kept Paul going was his desire to finally know Christ fully in eternity.

OUR REAL HOME

In closing chapter 3, Paul draws a distinction between two groups of people. Not surprisingly for the Philippian congregation, that which delineates between the two groups is citizenship. In verses 18 – 19, Paul describes those that are enemies of the cross. Their focus is on earthly things, temporal pleasure, and taking pride in those things in which they should be shamed. Their interests and perceived home is the world. The second group in verses 20 – 21, however, is the group to which Paul himself belonged.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Philippians 3:20 – 21

The realization of our true home has implications both now and in eternity. Obviously in eternity the implication is that we will be with Christ forever. Many believers stop their understanding at the future implications. For Paul, however, the implications transformed the goals of his entire life. He worked to please God and to know Him more fully in everything that he did. It reframed the way he thought of his purpose. If it is true that our home determines our core values, then recognizing that our true home is in heaven has as its natural outflow a revision of our core values — those things that we absolutely must do.

Understandably, when we grasp hold of the fact that heaven is our home — our eternal destination — it changes our behavior. This is not a transformation that we can bring about in our own doing, but one that happens under the direction of the Holy Spirit. When that happens, honestly, some onlookers are not going to understand it. Living in such a way that disregards the temporal glories of this world in favor of the eternal reward promised by Jesus will be distinctive in our culture. But, knowing what lies beyond this world, that heaven awaits those in Christ, the believer can do no other.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Describe the American dream in your own words. What characterizes it?
2. What were some of the core values in your home growing up? How were they enforced or communicated?
3. What was the most significant reward you have received? How did it affect your life a year later?
4. Part of reorienting our thinking about where our true home is lies in understanding our salvation. What is your story of your journey with Christ? How did you become a believer?
5. When we think about what Paul describes as considering as loss in verses 4–6 (social status, wealth, vocational prominence), which one do you think would be the most challenging for you to give up?
6. Why do you think putting confidence in the flesh is dangerous and appealing?
7. Understanding that this life is temporary, how does that shape your view of going, growing and giving, as alluded to this morning?
8. How do our conversations need to change as we press on to become like Christ?

OUTLIVE YOUR LIFE ——— SESSION 4

In his book, “The Barbarian Way,” Erwin McManus tells one of my favorite stories. McManus had accepted Christ as his Savior while he was in college. After becoming a believer, he immersed himself in the things of Christianity — mainly because he didn’t know anything about being a Christian and he figured that was the best place to learn. He “went to Catholic Mass, to a Baptist church, to a charismatic fellowship, to an interdenominational Bible study, and worked on a project with the Church of Christ.” He was filling his life with any and everything he could find that had anything to do with Jesus because he just wanted more. In one of the groups, he met a girl named Beth who helped to lead worship. After one meeting in particular, Beth began to pour out the frustration in her heart that culminated in the confession that she was returning to her old way of life before Christ because she didn’t feel God any more. Because she didn’t feel God as much as she had when she was a brand new Christian, she concluded that He didn’t love her any more. Part of Beth’s previous life included drug abuse, so basing the presence of outside influence on a feeling was second nature. Unfortunately, her perception was based on the incorrect notion that God is there to make her feel good all the time.

McManus, being a new believer and not knowing answers to difficult questions, was grasping at straws to reassure Beth that God’s love for her did not falter even the slightest, regardless of her feeling. At this point in their conversation, McManus writes this:

“So when Beth accused God of not loving her, I turned to her and assured her that if there was anything God could do to prove His love to her, He would do it. I know better than to say that now, but I didn’t know any better then. For some bizarre reason she immediately responded by saying, ‘Well, then I want it to snow.’”

Snow? It was Southern California for crying out loud! In light of her request, McManus blurted out the only thing that came to mind. “God is going to make it snow for you... within twenty-four hours.” As Beth left expectantly, McManus realized not only what he had done, but what was at stake. He returned to his dorm, pulled the shades, began to pray fervently. He describes the moment this way:

“I obviously don’t remember everything I prayed that day, but part of it went something like this: ‘God, I don’t know why I said that. I actually thought You said it, but if it wasn’t You, could You sort of adopt the idea and take this project on?’ I was crying out to God, praying desperately. I was out of my mind, and I fell asleep in the midst of my exhaustion. Several hours went by before my roommate, Mark, came back and awakened me.... To my surprise, the first words out of his mouth were, ‘Have you looked outside?’”

The ground was covered in snow. Beautiful, white, rare, Southern California snow. Honestly, as wonderful as stories like these are, we sometimes find them confounding. God shatters

our perceptions of what He is and isn't supposed to do. He boldly erupts beyond the boundaries of the box in which we figuratively keep Him. In doing so, we are pulled back to a posture of wonder and amazement at a God so powerful, so beyond us that we tremble. And you know what? We should.

As we think about outliving our lives, stretching in our faith as we've never done before, it is absolutely vital that we understand this. Without doubt, adversity will find us when we begin to obey and follow Christ with boldness. However, in the midst of following in obedience, the power of God astounds. Such a brush with the Almighty draws us to new levels of intimacy and worship of God. Look at Luke 8:22 – 25.

ADVERSITY CAN COME WHILE FOLLOWING JESUS

At the beginning of our passage, the account begins seemingly uneventful enough. Actually, considering Luke is the author, it is surprisingly vague. Luke was a stickler for detail and documentation, but in our passage we are only told that it was one of those days. It is strangely nonchalant. Jesus and His disciples got into a boat and Jesus instructed His disciples to go across to the other side. So they did exactly what Jesus instructed. This would prove to be the end of their nonchalant day.

“But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.” Luke 8:23

The disciples are in a boat crossing the Lake of Gennesaret, which as we mentioned earlier, was also called the Sea of Galilee. Due to the geography of the area, specifically that the lake was below sea level and sat within the bowl of surrounding mountains, it was not uncommon at all that there were storms on the sea. Winds would frequently blow in and raise havoc on the body of water and then have no way to escape because of the surrounding hills. However, there is perceptibly something different about this storm. It blew up so quickly and violently that the boat that carried Jesus and His disciples began to fill with water. This suddenly became a life-threatening situation.

IN NEED OF GREATER POWER

Several of the disciples were fishermen who made their living on the Sea of Galilee. They were extremely familiar with the distinctives of that body of water, including weather patterns. Most likely they had been through dozens of storms during their careers. This one was different in some manner. It was powerful enough that it sent them running to where Jesus slept to wake Him. They were dreadfully aware that left to their own devices, they would perish. They told Jesus as much in verse 24. While it is uncertain what they expected Jesus to do in response to their pleas, it is quite certain that they did not expect what really happened:

“They came to Jesus and woke him up, saying ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.”

The wording used in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in recording this account imply that there were evil forces stirring this storm. It was the equivalent of a spiritual sucker punch for Jesus' followers, which is probably why the storm didn't blow up until after Jesus went to sleep. Regardless of their mindset, they awakened Jesus, calling Him "Master." At the end of the passage, Luke will show that they still do not grasp who He is, so this is simply an acknowledgement that He is the authority in their situation. Jesus' response to their pleas is to rebuke the storm, as He had done to so many unclean spirits before this moment. A brief display of His power and authority, then all was quiet, order was restored and peace replaced the panic.

AWE AND PERSPECTIVE

Having vanquished the storm, Jesus asks one convicting question. "Where is your faith?" Only a few moments before this account, Jesus had explained the meaning of the parable of the soils (Luke 8:11 – 15), in which Jesus classifies the response to the Gospel into four categories:

- Those who hear but do not believe
- Those who receive the word with joy but fall away later in the face of temptation
- Those who hear the word, but are consumed with the worries, pleasures, and riches of this world
- Those who receive the word and cling to it, bearing fruit through perseverance

Jesus' question to them takes them immediately back to the explanation of His parable. The disciples are absolutely astonished at what has just happened. Not only that, but in their amazement,

they realize that while Jesus may look like them, eat like them and talk with them, He is definitely something much different than them. His power and wisdom exceed their ability to explain or comprehend. They are left grasping for answers to this question that, in truth, we all must answer:

“...Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?” Luke 8:25b

AS WE GROW, GO AND GIVE

Why is this particular passage of Scripture important for us as we consider how we are called to outlive our lives? I think there are three reasons. First, I believe that in order for us to outlive our lives and think in terms of what God might want to do through our individual lives, we need to become reacquainted with the magnitude of the power of God. Bluntly stated, when life is going well, we lose sight of the power of God all around us because we do not particularly sense a need for it. However, if in the next two years God is going to accomplish in and through each of us what He desires to accomplish, it will require nothing short of His power.

Second, when we begin obeying God and seeking to live our lives for eternal purposes instead of our own purposes, we will likely run into situations that require us to lean on His power in faith. Jesus calmed a storm in a moment that had fully grown, life-seasoned fishermen running for their lives. Jesus does not change. The same power that calmed that storm is the same power that dwells in us and is available to us to weather whatever comes our way in the name of obedience. Internalizing that truth helps us be able to trust

in His faithfulness when our own faithfulness is challenged by circumstances, unpopular decisions or fear.

Third, as we prayerfully consider what God is calling each of us to do over the next two years as a part of *Outlive Your Life*, we need to understand the power of the One who will take what we offer to Him, multiply it for His purposes, and continue the work for His glory. If at any point we lose sight of the fact that we are partnering with God and that His power will be what blesses and sustains our sacrificial commitment to Him, our resolve fades. Our willingness to sacrifice wanes. Our sense of purpose for why we are doing it in the first place goes adrift. Most importantly, though, if we lose sight of the power of God, our whole-life worship goes awry ... and that is what God is most interested in.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Describe a time in your life when you became reintroduced to the power of God.
2. When the storm came upon the boat, the disciples were filled with fear and panic. How do you handle it when unexpected distress enters your life?
3. When you are faced with a situation that requires exercising faith, whether it be a big dream, a challenge or a difficult decision that has to be made, how does remembering the ways in which God has demonstrated His power in your life previously impact your mindset?
4. What other passages of Scripture are helpful in reminding you of God's power?
5. Do you have a "Southern California snow" type moment where God demonstrated His

provision to you in a tangible/personal way? What if you could be that tangible/personal way for others to meet God through *Outlive Your Life*?

6. Consider Jesus' question to the disciples, "Where is your faith?" In thinking about the parable of the soils, how would you answer? Why?
7. Read and respond to Ephesians 3:20 – 21.

OUTLIVE YOUR LIFE ——— SESSION 5

Certainly in recent cinematic history, and perhaps in the sum of cinematic history, there is not a scene quite so poignant and memorable as the closing of "Schindler's List." The movie tells the story of Oskar Schindler and his heroic act of saving over 1,000 Jews from execution during the Jewish Holocaust in World War II. Even now as the movie edges close to its 20th anniversary, the closing lament of, "I could have gotten more" brings the legacy of Oskar Schindler rushing back to one's memory.

Schindler was an ethnic German born in Moravia, now the Czech Republic. As an adult he was a savvy and successful businessman, characterized by his opportunistic ventures. He was also a member of the Nazi party. Seeking to profit from the Nazi invasion in Poland, Schindler purchased an enamelware factory from bankruptcy and staffed it with cheap, forced Jewish labor. It was this experience that was to serve as the catalyst for his life change. Initially shielding his workers from Nazi imprisonment for financial reasons, Schindler began to spend his own fortune to protect them from the atrocities of his own political party. He constantly invented new ways to buy Jews from prison camps to fill his factories, classifying even the most unskilled laborer as an essential worker to the success of his industry.

Oskar Schindler spent the years of World War II meticulously walking a tightrope between treason and political persuasion for the sake of guaranteeing the safety of his workers. He was

arrested repeatedly for suspicion of black market sales and embezzlement, but never wavered in his quest. By the end of the war, his fortune was completely spent on the purchase of Jewish prisoners, political bribes to keep his factories from being investigated by the SS and the supplies needed to care for the 1,100 Jews in his care.

At the close of the movie, the Schindler Jews forge a ring for their savior out of the gold in their dental work and other items as a monumental token of gratitude. In the face of such an honor, Schindler can only weep and lament how he could have gotten one more Jew if only he hadn't wasted so much money. After his death in 1974 (he died penniless), he was buried in Jerusalem. As the movie closes, the credits reveal that the number of descendants of the Schindler Jews number in excess of 6,000 at the movie's release in 1993. His sacrifice continues to multiply itself exponentially with each subsequent generation from the Schindler Jews.

We remember that story, not solely because of the beautiful nobility of a sacrificial life, but also because as believers in Jesus Christ, that sense of sacrifice is at the heart of our identity. Indeed, the entire fact that we can have a relationship with God at all is because of the unfathomable sacrifice that Christ made for us on the cross. As sons and daughters of God, we are called to live lives that grow increasingly similar to the example that Jesus gave for us. In fact, it is vital enough

to our faith that Paul uses it as the first point of application in Romans 12:1 – 2.

THEREFORE

Romans 12 begins with a powerful connecting word, “Therefore.” It marks the transition between the theological and doctrinal portion of Paul’s letter to the Romans and the instruction of how to practically apply the theological premises that Paul just finished covering in the previous 11 chapters. The church in Rome, which was a network of various house churches, had no apostolic foundation, which means that unlike many of the other churches in the New Testament, it was not founded by one of the Apostles. One of the results of their unique origin was that the believers in Rome had a widely varying belief system, with as many different nuances as there were house churches in Rome. They had not been privy to the basic foundational truths of the Gospel. To that end, Paul writes this incredibly eloquent letter to a group of believers he has never personally met for the purpose of bestowing upon them the essential, core beliefs of Christianity.

The first 11 chapters of Romans cover doctrinal understanding and teaching on such topics as the security of salvation, the consequences of unbelief, the absence of distinction among believers in the sight of God, the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant of grace through Jesus Christ, freedom from sin, how to handle and endure persecution, the believer’s identity in Christ, and the surpassing, all-powerful grace and faithfulness of God. Within those chapters lie some of the most challenging verses in Scripture. At the end of his instruction of Theology 101, Paul makes the pivotal shift from

belief to practice. So, this “therefore” that begins chapter 12 means that as we understand and are mindful of everything the first 11 chapters contain — the grace of God, how much He loves us, the sacrifice Christ made for us, and so on — then the way we apply those things, the way those truths change our lives is this:

*“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*

This is a familiar verse to many believers, which is both good and bad. It is good because that means there is familiarity with the Word of God. It is bad, though, when our familiarity with a text robs us of being bothered by the text. Yes, bothered — particularly by seemingly odd concepts that Paul must have obviously meant. What does it mean for my body to be a living and holy sacrifice? It means that, because of the mercies of God extended to me, my response is to give myself in a volitional way to a life of sacrificially serving God. “Living and holy” carry two important qualifiers. First, this is a sacrifice to be offered upon realization of new life. That means when I accept Christ as my Savior, receiving eternal life, my appropriate response is living sacrificially for the things of God. Second, “holy” means that the character of my life must be consistently growing Godward. In other words, I must become more like Christ, whose life was characterized by sacrifice.

My “spiritual service of worship” then is daily laying aside my selfish wants, desires, plans and interests in favor of what God is calling me to

do. Following in obedience to Christ is what the Christian life must be about. The weight of that calling on the life of a believer makes this next verse all the more needed.

BE CHANGED

Completing the thought of presenting ourselves and our lives as sacrifices before God, Paul continues by acknowledging the uniqueness of our calling:

“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

Paul brings to the forefront that some force will tremendously shape our lives. Honestly, the one that we most strongly feel the pressure of is becoming conformed to the world’s standard of living, which is a hollow and self-serving vision for life. But it is also all around us, pressing in on every side. The better thing, though, is that we pursue God and, in so doing, allow God to transform us by renewing our minds. This is much deeper than just doing right things or by not doing wrong things. God desires that our “want” be fixed, so that we no longer desire the things of the world, but instead long for the things of God.

It is not difficult to pick out people whose minds are renewed by God. They’re different to be sure. The things that seem to create insecurity and anxiety in others seem to have little to no effect on them. They look to give instead of gain for themselves. Causes that are calloused to others seem to break their hearts more easily. Nevertheless, they are

joyful and radiate peace. Their difference is one of a renewed mind, whose concerns are freed from the expectations of the world and consumed with the concerns of God.

As a result of obediently following the example of Christ in sacrificing, we gain discernment of God’s will for our lives. One of the issues that paralyzes believers the most is uncertainty over what God’s will for their lives is. According to Paul’s passage here, we have that backwards. The avenue for a clearer understanding of God’s will is not sitting and waiting until we are sure before doing something. Instead, the way to clarity of God’s will is by acting in sacrificial obedience to the promptings God places within the heart of a believer. As we are conformed to the image of God, we can better understand what His will is, which serves to spur us on in our life characterized by sacrifice.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THIS?

There is not a long list of topics more unpopular in our society than living sacrificially. It is difficult to imagine anything more counter cultural. Those conformed to this world measure themselves by what they have, how they spend it, where they go, who they know, etc. The ironic thing is that regardless of where they land on that measurement, there seems to never be enough. God calls us to live differently, sacrificially and give of ourselves to do His work in this world.

As we learn more about outliving our lives and how to go about that, begin earnestly praying that God would prompt your heart as to how you should respond. How do you need to grow and what is it going to take for that to happen?

How is God calling you to give of yourself to impact the lives of the people around you, some of whom may never know your name? Where is God leading you to go? As you consider those things, also ask yourself what conventional barriers present themselves. Then ask what type of sacrifice would be necessary for you to be obedient. Resist the urge to consider what you could do without impacting your normal way of living — that is exactly the type of thinking that conventional barriers lead us to. Instead, ask God how He wants to change the world through you and then act upon it sacrificially. In doing so, God will change the world through you, but He will also radically change you in the process — and that is truly glorious.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which do you think makes a greater impact, the effects of a sacrifice or the person's sacrificial life itself?
2. When you think about living sacrificially, what are your initial reactions?
3. Whose sacrifice that you know of have you personally benefitted from the most?
4. Read Philippians 2:5 – 11. What reward do you see in Jesus' sacrificial life?
5. What pressures of conforming to the world's expectations have the most influence on you?
6. Reflect over your life as a believer. What evidences do you see that God is already at work renewing your mind?
7. How often do you wish you knew God's will for your life more clearly? What do these verses lead you to do about that?
8. When you consider sacrificially growing, giving and going, what excites you the most?
9. When you are challenged to live sacrificially,

do you feel more excited about the challenge or concerned about how you'll make it if you sacrifice? How do you feel about your response?

10. When was the first time you sensed God working through an act of service you performed for someone else? How did that experience change you?

Life is full of rites of passage — those life-stage specific events that signify our transition to a new level of maturity or arrival. Some of them are wonderful and some of them are dreaded, but a handful of them fit into both of those categories. For instance, I'll never forget the day I sat at a conference table at a law firm to finalize the purchase of my first home. Sitting at that table, I realized a new weight of responsibility financially as the provider for my family. But I also welcomed the sense of what this new stage in life implied for us as a family, and as adults for that matter. However, even considering the importance of those sentiments, the thing I will remember most is signing my name approximately 200 times, pledging my fiduciary faithfulness to every banking institution created since the founding of our great nation. I couldn't straighten out my fingers for two days after the closing. But, that was what was necessary to make all of the formal agreements to transfer ownership of the house official.

The ways in which various cultures make such agreements is interesting. Most readily we think of the honored tradition of days gone by where a handshake was all that it took to solidify the gravest of business transactions. In other cultures, those entering into a business partnership would cement the terms by exchanging some highly-valued token to symbolize their new relationship. In more primitive cultures, to enter into such a covenantal relationship meant that the daughter of one party would be pledged to marry the son of the other party.

In Biblical days, though, the most sacred of agreements were secured in a highly formal covenantal ceremony that was binding until the death of either party. During the course of such a ceremony, animals were prepared for sacrifice (that means killed) and the heads of the two parties would walk together between the pieces of the sacrifice. The idea was that the two men were agreeing that the same thing should be done to them as was the fate of those sacrificial animals if they were to break the tenants of the covenant into which they were entering. At times, in lieu of animals, an altar was used to commemorate the oaths sworn between the parties so that whenever the altar was seen, they would be reminded of their agreement. We find such a covenantal scene in Joshua 24.

CELEBRATING THE GOODNESS OF GOD

The book of Joshua chronicles the nation of Israel following the leading and strength of God in taking the Promised Land, also called Canaan. In order to do so, they had to defeat numerous different nations that currently populated the land that were much larger and stronger than they were. The people of Israel continually saw the power of God intervene on their behalf, giving them victory in ways that could only be explained by His favor and promise. After God had given them the land, Joshua divided the land up among the tribes of Israel and each tribe settled in the land of its inheritance. Then, the Israelites enjoyed peace for many years.

Finally, Joshua became advanced in age and was preparing to die. In chapters 23 and 24, the writer records two summits called by Joshua. During chapter 24, Joshua is addressing the leaders of the tribes and the governmental leadership for the last time. For the first 13 verses, Joshua recounts the history between God and Israel, beginning with their ancestral father, Abraham. He retraced the many times that God had delivered them and preserved them from eradication. Joshua was sure to remind them of God's faithful provision and care for them before leading them to renew their covenant with God.

Read Joshua 24:1 – 13. Note all of the instances in which God had sustained the people of Israel.

Joshua, under God's leadership, was drawing Israel into a realization that they had much to be grateful for and much to celebrate at the good hand of God. Of all the people groups in the world, He had chosen them to be His covenant people. Not only that, He provided a bountiful land for them to call their home so that their lives would be rich and fruitful as they dwelt in a faithful relationship with God. Celebrating God would put the people in the right posture to recommit to their covenant with God.

THE CHOICE TO BE MADE

Having reminded the people of God's miraculous faithfulness to them, Joshua challenges them with the following verses:

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 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 24:14 – 15

The people, having been reminded of God's faithfulness to them, are now also reminded of their fathers' history of unfaithfulness to God. Having seen first hand in their recent history the power of God, the decision the people must make is whether or not they will be faithful in serving God. Joshua announces his clear decision in the hearing of the people — which is an important point. Joshua could only decide for himself whom he would serve. Each family in each tribe had to decide where their allegiance would lie. Would they follow God and God alone? Would they renew their commitment to be His people?

ANSWER CAREFULLY

The people entered into a dialogue with Joshua after his challenge in verses 16 – 24, but it is a strange sounding dialogue. At first, the people responded using many of Joshua's exact words in remembering God's faithfulness to them, ultimately landing on this decision:

"The people answered and said, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; ...We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.'" Joshua 24:16, 18

One would expect the next words from Joshua to be words of commendation, celebration or even relieved agreement. However, that is not Joshua's

response. Joshua actually seems to attempt to talk the people out of agreeing with their covenant with God. Joshua reminds them that He is holy and jealous and that transgression due to the treachery of idolatry would result in severe punishment for the people. Nevertheless, the people would not relent. Why would Joshua speak to them in such a manner after reminding them of the goodness of God? Because Joshua wanted them to understand with accuracy and precision the gravity of the covenant they were about to make. They weren't buying a home, a used car or even agreeing to raise a child. They were entering into a covenant of mutual faithfulness with the one true God. Such should not be entered into thoughtlessly or because it seemed like the thing to do at the time. The people were adamant:

"The people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice.'" Joshua 24:24

DRIVING DOWN A MARKER

Having heard the people vigilantly confess their pledge for worshiping and serving God alone, Joshua makes a covenant between the people and God. Most likely, given the context, the substance of the covenant was a re-affirming of the ethical standards already in effect between God and the people, particularly as it pertained to their worship of God and to the exclusive nature of the relationship between God and the Hebrews. This was an incredibly solemn and holy moment for the people.

"And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was

by the sanctuary of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.'" Joshua 24:26 – 27

Having celebrated their journey with God to this point and prayerfully desiring to reaffirm their covenant with God, the covenant is made tangible with the use of a large stone to serve as a witness. That to which the people are agreeing is written down in an official capacity, then the large stone is used to commemorate the event so that whenever the stone is seen, the people will be reminded of what they promised to God in the presence of God.

OUTLIVING OUR LIVES

We find ourselves much in the same place as the Israelites hearing Joshua's final address. We stand on the precipice of being able to make a new commitment to God, starting a new chapter in our relationship with Him. As a church, we stand at the beginning of the next chapter in our church's ministry. But being a part of that next chapter, just like Joshua's challenge to the people, means that each of us must make our own decision to grow, go and give. Make no mistake, despite the fact that there are some physical goals for this chapter, it is a completely spiritual issue. Prayerfully, it is our great desire for the world to be changed because the hearts of our people are changed first.

Because the commitment we are asking everyone to make, it should not be entered into lightly. Your part should be thoroughly examined in prayer

followed by obedience. The commitment card that you turn in will serve as the writing down of your part. Further, however, have some tangible object that reminds you of how you plan to outlive your life in a place that you frequently see. It will remind you not only of your commitment, but that you are in that commitment with God, who has so richly blessed you already.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the moments in your life where you saw God's blessing the most? Take a few moments and make a brief timeline of those moments.
2. What is a tangible object that would be a good representative of your goals for the next 24 months?
3. Knowing that outliving your life will require sacrifice, how does remembering the favor of God in your life reassure your new commitment?
4. What concerns do you face when you think of your goals for going, growing and giving? Who can you have pray with you for those concerns on an ongoing basis?
5. What practical steps that you can take in the next month will help you to begin achieving your goals?
6. What practices do you think would be the most helpful to make sure to keep the spiritual aspect of Outlive Your Life at the forefront? What is the danger if we are not intentional about doing that?
7. What about your goals is stretching you the most?
8. Whose salvation are you praying for as a part of your new commitment?
9. If you were going to summarize your desire for your relationship with God in the next 24 months in a sentence, what would it say?

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