

IDOLS of the HEART

Learning to Long for God Alone

REVISED AND UPDATED

Study Guide

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Introduction

A brief word to those who are seeking to use this guide in a study group:

We realize that the men and women who participate in weekly Bible study groups do so for a variety of reasons. Some come for the fellowship of other believers found in a small group study. Some rely on the accountability others offer to keep themselves in the Word daily. Others love the chance to pray and share with one another, and still others seek to gain new biblical knowledge and godly wisdom for their daily lives. (Some young moms may simply be looking for babysitting and people who speak sentences with words that have more than two syllables.)

We also realize that you, like us, are busy and that your schedule is already full to the brim. In light of that truth, we encourage you to do only as much of this study as you can. If just making it to the study is all you can get to right now, that's fine. We know you'll be encouraged by being with other believers and hearing their insights. If you can get only the chapter read, that's great too. We would encourage you to continue in reading with others, even if you fall behind on the work.

Of course, we think you'll get the most out of this study by attempting to complete the work in this study guide, which is intended as a supplement to the book. If you find yourself able to set aside twenty to thirty minutes each weekday, you'll find suggested Scripture memorization, daily readings in both the Bible and the book, and an encouragement to personally apply what you're learning.

It is our prayer that you will grow in community with one another as the Holy Spirit guides you to learn to long for God alone.

Thanking God for each of you,
Elyse Fitzpatrick
with Christina Baley Stark

Note from Elyse

Much of the material for this study was originally written by Christian Baley Stark of Merrimack Valley Baptist Church in Merrimack, New Hampshire. I am grateful to Christina for her love for the women in her church, the Word, and her Lord. Although her study was written to accompany the original release of *Idols of the Heart*, I have kept her format and much of her original work.

Scripture Passage for Memorization and Meditation

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–13)

Week One

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Psalm 103:8)

Day One

1. From the introduction (pp. 13–19), sum up purpose of this book.
2. Throughout chapter 1, we will use the story of Rachel from Genesis 29–35 to illustrate her point. Take time today to skim over Rachel’s story in Genesis 29–30.
3. At the end of the chapter, the author asks, “Do you identify more with Rachel or Leah?” (p. 33). [Men, you may not immediately see yourselves in Rachel or Leah’s story, but do you see within yourself a desire for something that is so powerful that it means everything to you?] Rachel may resonate with those of you who have found it easy to get what you want. Leah will be more relatable to those of you who find yourself unloved or deprived of something you long for.

Today’s Practical Application

Thank God for including stories about real people in his Word. Thank him for showing us the true story, not covering over the failures of his people. Thank him for his mercy and his impartial and eternal love.

Day Two

1. Continue skimming through Rachel's story in Genesis 31–35.
 - a. In Genesis 32, Jacob wrestles with God and prepares to meet his estranged brother, Esau.
 - b. In Genesis 33, Rachel is given preferential treatment when Jacob places her in the safest place as he prepares to meet Esau.
 - c. In Genesis 34, Jacob's daughter by Leah, Dinah, is raped by a foreign prince. Jacob's sons take revenge on the prince and his city through treachery.
 - d. In Genesis 35, Rachel seems to have given up her household idols but then dies in childbirth.
2. How are you comforted or encouraged by God's dealings with his people in these chapters?

Today's Practical Application

Read over Genesis 35:1–4. Pray for God's work in your heart in the coming months of this study. Ask him to reveal your idols, so that you can seek to bury them under the Tree that has wiped away all your record of idolatry.

Day Three

1. In the introduction you read, "In this book you'll learn that idolatry, love gone wrong, lies at the heart of every besetting sin that we struggle with" (p. 15). Later the author asks, "Think about the areas of your life in which you struggle with sin. Can you see any connection between your habitual sin and any possible idolatry?" (p. 33). Write down anything that comes to mind.

2. Read the first half of chapter 1 today (pp. 21–27). What are some of the characteristics (or dangers) of idols?

Today's Practical Application

As you go about your day, reflect on this question from **page 33**, "How would you complete this sentence: 'Give me _____ or I die?'"

Day Four

1. Complete reading chapter 1 (**pp. 27–33**).
2. Read over Hebrews 4:13, 15–16 again. How does this Scripture illustrate this statement, "Only God, the Heart Knower, is also God, the Heart Changer" (**p. 31**)?

3. In both the introduction and chapter 1, we are challenged to see the connection between worry, fear, anger, and idolatry. With that in mind, think again about how to answer the question, "What is it in your life that you think you have to have in order for life to continue to be worth living?"

Today's Practical Application

Write out a prayer of commitment stating your desire to understand how your heart might manufacture idols.

Day Five

1. Work on your memory verse so that you can recite it at your group study:

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Psalm 103:8)

Week Two

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–13)

Day One

1. Read Luke 10:38–42. Why is this a good illustration of idolatry? Why do we struggle with Jesus' response to Martha? [Men, in what ways do you find your identity in your work *for* the Lord rather than in your relationship *with* the Lord?]
2. Read the first third of chapter 2 (pp. 35–39).
3. Write out the verbs used to illustrate undivided worship from the Westminster Larger Catechism on **page 38**.
4. Look back through the list of questions on **page 38** and underline those that are most meaningful to you. In which particular areas would you like the Lord to help you to grow? Which areas seem easiest for you?

Today's Practical Application

Read Psalm 103 in its entirety. What reasons do you see in this psalm to offer worship to the Lord? Ask the Lord for grace to begin to do so today.

Day Two

1. Today's lesson compares two fathers from Scripture. Begin by reading 1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–31. What were Eli's idols?

2. Although chosen by God, Abraham failed in many ways. Twice he failed to protect his wife and lied about her. On another occasion he foolishly listened to her when she advised him to use her maid, Hagar, as a way to try to fulfill God's promises (see Genesis 12:14, 20:14 and Genesis 16). But we also see the power of God's grace in Abraham's life as he is willing to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22. What had Abraham learned about the Lord?

3. Read **pages 39–43** for the analysis of these two fathers.

Today's Practical Application

Abraham, though weak, grew strong in faith by the grace of God. Hebrews 11:19 tells us that he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead. Choose one verse or promise from Scripture to meditate on today, perhaps from Psalm 103. How might it give you confidence to continue fighting your idolatry and seeking to trust God?

Day Three

1. Most of us can relate to Jesus' dear disciple Peter. Read Mark 14:26–31. What did Peter say? How did he say it?

2. Luke 22:31–34 is a conversation between Jesus and Peter. How did Jesus offer Peter hope and restoration even before Peter’s denial? (Look closely at verse 32.)

3. Read Luke 22:54–62. What caused Peter to weep?

4. Read John 21:14–19. What do we learn about Peter’s restoration from this passage?

5. For an analysis of this story, read **pages 44–47**.

Today’s Practical Application

Take time to reflect on Hebrews 7:25 (**p. 46**). How can this promise provide rest for us in our daily struggle against idolatry?

Day Four

1. Make time to reflect on the questions on **pages 43–44**.

2. As you consider the lives of Martha, Eli, Abraham, and Peter, what truths do they teach you about wholehearted worship?

3. Whom do you find yourself most resembling? Where do you find yourself failing?

4. Jesus is praying for you. How does this truth encourage you?

5. Who or what competes most strongly for your love or allegiance?

Today's Practical Application

Ask the Holy Spirit to illumine your understanding of your competing loves and gods.

Day Five

Reread Psalm 103 again, noting especially how verse 8 fits into the passage. After meditating on it, ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to share it with someone today.

Week Three

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever. (Psalm 103:8–9)

Day One

1. This chapter begins with Romans 7:12. What three words are used to describe the law and commandment?
2. Read Genesis 18:16–19:26. Then read the analysis of the story of Lot’s wife on **pages 49–51**.
3. Why would the Lord encourage us to “remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32)? How might you be like her? [Men, what tempts you to turn back to the world?] How do men and women turn their homes into idols?

Today’s Practical Application

Take time to thank God for the home he has provided for you. In what ways might your possessions have become an idol in your life? Take time now to thank God for his kindness and grace in your life as you continue to grow in love for him.

Day Two

1. Read the explanation of the first commandment on **pages 51–55**.
2. In Exodus 20:2–3, what are the two reasons God gives for the first commandment?

3. Personalize the words of Exodus 20:2–3. Who is God, and what has he done for you that makes you want to obey this command?

4. The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 29:1–7. What has your attitude toward the Ten Commandments been in the past?

Today's Practical Application

Spend time in praise to God for bringing you to himself and rescuing you from sin, Satan, and death! Pray that the Lord will take the truth that “there is one God and no god but God” and turn it into an “overpowering, brain-hammering, heart-stopping truth”¹ within your life.

Day Three

1. Read **pages 55–62**.
2. What are the four benefits of the Law in a Christian's life?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

¹ Os Guinness and John Seel, eds., *No God But God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 206.

3. Why is the Law's work necessary for our salvation?

4. Closely read Hebrews 10:14–17. What did Jesus' sacrifice do for all believers? What does God promise to do for us in these verses?

5. How should we respond to this phenomenal promise (vv. 18–25)?

Today's Practical Application

Have you ever considered God's finger carving his laws on your heart and mind at salvation? Praise him for his Son's sacrifice, the Holy Spirit's witness, and the Father's faithfulness in your life.

Day Four

1. Finish your reading of the chapter (**pp. 62–64**).
2. Answer the remaining questions at the end of the chapter (**pp. 64–65**).

Today's Practical Application

Spend time now asking God to help you grow in your understanding and appreciation of his commandments, particularly of the first one.

Day Five

Memory verse challenge time! Try to recite both verses 8 and 9 by memory.

Week Four

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever. (Psalm 103:8–9)

Write out verses 8–9 by memory.

Day One

1. Today we will take a break from reading the book and dig into one Scripture passage.
Read Luke 7:11–50.

- a. Compare the widow of Nain (v. 11–15) and the “sinful woman” of Nain (v. 37–50).
What did Jesus say to the widow? What did he say to the “sinful woman”?

2. What might have given the “sinful woman” the courage and faith to come and offer worship to Jesus?

- a. How did his interactions with the widow and John the Baptist’s disciples, as well as his rebuke against the scribes and Pharisees, inform her?

3. Describe the differences between the “sinful woman” and Simon the Pharisee.

Today's Practical Application

Spend time today meditating on Jesus' statement in Luke 7:47. Having considered all the different actors in this story, whom are you most like? Ask the Lord to grant you a heart of humility and love.

Day Two

1. Read the description of the events in Nain on **pages 67–70**. List the suggested idols that the immoral woman laid down at the feet of Jesus.

2. Can you see any reason why the immoral woman would turn to Christ? How could something so drastic happen?

3. Our look at the woman of Luke 7:36–50 is concluded with a reference to Psalm 56:8. Read Psalm 56:1–13 and rejoice over God's ability to sustain his people even when they are exiled from home and pursued by an evil ruler with murder on his mind.

Today's Practical Application

As you consider the tears of sorrow you have wept or the many ways you have traveled, how does it comfort you to consider that God counts the miles, collects the tears, and records the heart-break?

Day Three

1. Read **pages 70–80**.
2. Look at the section "How the Spirit Makes Us Holy" (**pp. 71–80**), and list the ways that the Spirit helps us in our battle with idolatry.

3. Which of the Spirit's ways are most meaningful to you? Why?

4. How did the Spirit turn your heart to Christ? In what ways were the beauties of Christ and his cross made real to you?

Today's Practical Application

Read John 16:8–15. This is Jesus' explanation of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the life of the believer. Take time to praise God today for your salvation, and pray for someone who needs salvation.

Day Four

1. Finish reading chapter 4 (pp. 80–82).

2. According to 1 Corinthians 10:13–14, why should we “flee from idolatry”?

3. According to Romans 8:28–29, what rest do we have even in the midst of our ongoing battle with idolatry?

4. Why is idolatry an assault against God's character?

5. Finish up the questions at the end of the chapter (**pp. 82-83**).

Today's Practical Application

Encourage one person today with these truths regarding the Spirit's work, the Father's faithfulness, and the glorious promise of our transformation.

Day Five

Using a good study Bible and/or commentary, research Psalm 103:8-9 and consider the gracious truth about God's anger.

Week Five

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities. (Psalm 103:8–10)

Day One

1. Read Psalm 63.
 - a. Where was David when he composed this psalm?

 - b. Spiritually and physically, how does he feel?

 - c. What challenges does he face?

 - d. What characteristics of God does he remind himself of?

 - e. What promise from God does he hope in?

 - f. As he worships, what are his actions?

Today's Practical Application

As we reconsider Psalm 63, how are you able to relate to David's plight? What does he teach us about worshipping in the midst of trial? What "thirst" (unfulfilled longing) fills your life? Ask the Lord to help you to thirst for him alone.

Day Two

1. Read through chapter 5 until the subheading “Why Do We Choose the Way We Do?” (pp. 85–95).
2. Read over the illustrations on pages 86–87. Which ones ring most true to you?
3. Do you believe that the Holy Spirit is able to make God your “chief treasure”?
4. What do you think Augustine meant when he said, “Man’s happiness is God himself”?
5. What do you think about the concept of pursuing happiness? In what sense could pursuing happiness be godly? In what sense could it be ungodly?

Today’s Practical Application

Pray that the Lord would enable you to see both the godly and ungodly ways that you pursue your own happiness. When you use ways that are sinful, what is the “seeming good” that you are pursuing? Ask the Lord for grace to pursue true good today.

Day Three

1. Complete your reading of the chapter (pp. 95–99).
2. Does it surprise you that the Puritans spoke so much about happiness?

3. What is the difference between shallow and godly happiness?

Today's Practical Application

Consider the statement, "You can pursue [Christ] without fear of losing anything worthwhile, for he will 'use you in only safe and honorable services, and to no worse end than your endless happiness'" (p. 95). Ask the Lord to help you to believe this.

Day Four

Complete the "For Further Thought" questions at the end of the chapter (pp. 99–100).

² Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996), 75.

Today's Practical Application

If today's study has convicted you, take time to come to God now with your sin. Confess it, and ask God for forgiveness. Ask him for the Spirit's help to turn away from sin and to run toward the true happiness that is found in God alone.

Day Five

Memory verse challenge time! Read over Psalm 103 in its entirety and try to see the categories of people to which the Lord is merciful. Try to recite all three of our verses (8-10).

Week Six

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–14)

Day One

1. Read Joshua 2.
2. How do you see Rahab's faith in action? What specific things did she do?
3. What did Rahab base her faith on?
4. How did her faith encourage the spies?
5. Begin to read through chapter 6, ending at the subheading "Understanding the Heart" (pp. 101–4).
6. How does the story of Rahab encourage you?

Today's Practical Application

Like Rahab, encourage another person today with what you have learned about God today. "For the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:11).

Day Two

1. How would you define the “heart”?
2. Read chapter 6 to subheading “Our Heart Disease” (pp. 104–9).
3. How has your understanding of the biblical term *heart* changed?
4. What does the story of Moses prove about God’s ability to work in our hearts?

Today’s Practical Application

Using Hebrews 11:24–27 as a model, write a “by faith” paragraph for yourself. What idols will you lay aside? What promises will you cling to?

Day Three

1. Read the remainder of chapter 6 (**pp. 110–17**).
2. Answer the “For Further Thought” questions (**p. 118**).

Today’s Practical Application

Reread the paragraph on **page 113** that begins, “This struggle against the sin in our hearts . . .” Turn that purpose statement into a prayer for learning to love the God who knows, and yet loves, the real you.

Day Four

1. Read Hebrews 4:12–13.
2. What does this passage tell us about our hearts?

3. Why is it necessary for us to spend time in God's Word?

Day Five

Memory Verse Challenge Time

1. Review Psalm 103:10.
2. Why is it important for us to know and believe that God doesn't deal with us according to our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities?

3. Try saying the entire passage by memory.

Week Seven

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–11)

Day One

1. Read the story of King Josiah from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34:3–7.
2. What kind of king was Josiah?

3. What actions did he take after he discovered God's Law? See 2 Chronicles 35:18.

Today's Practical Application

Our journey with the Lord will often go through similar events as those in Josiah's life. God kindly reveals our sin to us and grants us a desire to obey, and we are able to walk even more closely with him. As you go through your day today, reflect on God's grace and praise him for his revelation of himself.

Day Two

1. Begin reading chapter 7, stopping at "The Foolishness of Idolatry" (pp. 119–123).
2. Why is it important for you to have a correct understanding of God?

3. How does God inform you about his nature? What particular characteristic of his do you especially rejoice in?

Today's Practical Application

We read, "If we worship a god who is anything less than [he has declared himself to be], or other than this, we're not worshiping the God of the Bible. We're worshiping a god of our creation" (**p. 123**). Spend time in gratitude today that God is revealing himself to you and that he longs for you to know him.

Day Three

1. Finish reading chapter 7 (**pp. 123–34**).
2. Answer question 2 on **page 135**: How would you explain the role of idolatry to a sixth grader?

3. From question 3: "Identify any areas where you have expectations that function as gods. Think about your imaginations during the day. How do you see yourself?"

Today's Practical Application

Look over the list on **pages 129–30**. What do you think you need to have in order to be "happy"? Ask the Spirit to open your eyes to your idolatrous expectations and be willing to bring them to the Lord.

Day Four

1. Reread the section under the subheading “False Gods Breed Disobedience” (pp. 131–34).
2. Use the questions on **page 131** to uncover your habitual sin and idolatry.

Today’s Practical Application

“Write out a prayer that God, by the Holy Spirit, will illumine your heart and make you aware of your idols. When he does so, don’t give up in self-loathing or despair; repent and ask him to teach you the truth about his nature. Plead with him to give you a heart that would love and worship only him” (p. 135).

Day Five

1. Review your memory verses and write them out.

2. Read all of Psalm 103 to remind yourself of the reasons you should worship God alone.

Week Eight

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–11)

Day One

1. What would it be to desire God alone (p. 155)?

Read the following passages for clues to this answer.

- a. Psalm 42:1–2
 - b. Psalm 143:6
 - c. Isaiah 26:8–9
 - d. Luke 9:23–25
2. After reflecting on the passages above, would you change your answer in any way?

Today's Practical Application

How did you define a desire for God alone? Begin to pray that the Lord would enable you to do so, to long for him even as you long for a deep drink of cold water after exercising on a hot day.

Day Two

1. Reflect on the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1–18.
2. What are some of the actions that Hannah takes?

3. What do we know about Hannah from verses 10 and 18? What has changed in her?

4. Begin chapter 8, reading until “The Nature of Desire” (pp. 137–38).

Today’s Practical Application

Do you have a deep longing like Hannah did? Have you ever considered it an opportunity for “deep, heartfelt worship” (p. 138)? Pray that God would graciously transform your longings into godly ones, ones that will bring glory to him. Share your heart with him, and rest in his perfect plan.

Day Three

1. Continue reading in the chapter until “The Shattered Mirror” (pp. 139–44).
2. What are the two main questions we are seeking to answer in this chapter (p. 139)?

3. When you’ve finished your reading for the day, answer the first question.

Today’s Practical Application

Ask the Lord to grant you grace to focus all your desire on him and to know what doing so would look like in your life. Thank him that he will gladly help you all along the way.

Day Four

1. Look back over the list titled “Adam and Eve’s Created Purpose” (pp. 143–44). Do you wish any of these purposes were more of a reality in your life?

2. Read the section “The Shattered Mirror” (pp. 145–52).
3. What is our only hope for “regaining what’s been lost, of recovering holy desires that produce God-centered worship” (p. 149)?

Today’s Practical Application

Ask the Lord to help you to abide in his love while you continue to rest in his ongoing work in your life. Remember that he gave you the ability to desire and that he can mold your desires so that they are more properly focused on him. Remember also that he continues to love and forgive, no matter how we struggle.

Day Five

1. Read the remainder of the chapter (pp. 152–54).
 2. How do we replace the lies that often rule our hearts with the truth that transforms and redeems them?
-
3. Complete the questions at the end of the chapter (p. 155), taking time for real reflection about your desires.

4. Meditate on Psalm 103:8–11.

Today's Practical Application

God created us to have godly longings, yet sin has marred them all. Take time today to ask the Lord to grant you godly longings and desires. Rely on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to continue to work in you, changing your prayer from bitter wrestling to joyous worship.

Week Nine

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:8–12)

Day One

1. Without reading the chapter, try to answer this question from **page 171**, “How strong is your willpower and self-discipline?”
2. In this chapter we return to the life of Mary of Bethany. Read Luke 10:38–42.
3. Read through the chapter until the section entitled “Free Will” (**pp. 157–63**).

Today's Practical Application

Identify a particular sinful habit that you would like to overcome in your life. What underlying desire drives that habit? What godly desire would need to grow in your heart for you to begin to find victory over it? Pray that the Lord would grant you that grace.

Day Two

1. Is “more willpower” what we need to develop to overcome sin?
2. “What is the relationship between your choices and your desires?”

Day Four

1. Rewrite the following verses in your own words. Then pray them to the Lord.
 - a. Psalm 63:1–5

b. Psalm 42:1–2

c. Psalm 73:25–28

Today's Practical Application

As you think of it and are able, spend the day praying these prayers back to the Lord.

Day Five

1. Rewrite the following verses in your own words. Then pray them to the Lord.

a. Psalm 119:20

b. Psalm 143:6

c. Isaiah 26:8–9

2. Review your memory verses. Test yourself to see if you can write out the entire passage without peeking.

Today's Practical Application

As you think of it and are able, spend time praying these verses back to the Lord. At the end of the day, thank him that he has enabled you to make it this far in this study and that you are learning more about loving him.

Week Ten

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:8–12)

Day One

1. According to John 13:2, why did Judas betray Jesus?
2. According to John 13:18, why did Judas betray Jesus?
3. According to John 13:26–30, how was the timing of Judas' betrayal determined?

Today's Practical Application

In Judas' betrayal, we see the intersection of one man's sinful desire, Satan's temptation, and God's sovereign providential direction. We who are Christ's can rest in God's control of all things, even of those who sin against us. We can rest in his loving and sovereign plan for our lives.

Day Two

1. Read Mark 14:26–31. What attitude did Peter display in this conversation with Jesus?
2. Read Luke 22:24–34. What problem did Jesus face among all the disciples on the evening of the Last Supper?

3. What promise did Jesus make to all the disciples (Luke 22:29–30)? Why did he give them that promise?

4. What specific promise did Jesus make to Simon Peter (Luke 22:31–32)?

Today's Practical Application

In what ways do the Lord's promises to the disciples encourage you today? Spend time in prayer now, thanking God that even when it seems as though everything is falling apart, and even when you fail to do what you should, he is still ruling lovingly and sovereignly in your life.

Day Three

1. Read Luke 22:35–65.
2. What did Jesus command the disciples?

3. Read Mark 14:32–41.
4. What did Jesus ask of God?

Today's Practical Application

Both Peter and Jesus were tempted in the garden. As you consider their different responses, you can rejoice, knowing that your Savior responded to temptation in all the ways that you have failed so that you would have his perfect record. You can also rejoice that he has forgiven you for all the ways you have failed.

Day Four

1. Read the first half of chapter 10, ending at “What Are You Tempted to Worship?” (pp. 173–81)

2. Answer questions 1–4 at the end of the chapter (**pp. 191–92**).

Today's Practical Application

Ask the Lord to give you insight into the progression of temptation and how it occurs. Thank Jesus that he is presently praying for you as your Great High Priest and that he will care for you all the way home.

Day Five

1. Finish reading the chapter (**pp. 181–91**).
2. Answer the rest of the questions at the end of the chapter (**p. 192**).

3. Review the questions on **pages 182–83** and complete them as you are able.

4. Review your memory verses.

Today's Practical Application

Begin a time in prayer along these lines, “In light of Christ’s warning to watch against temptation, what should you be specifically concerned about?” (**p. 192**). Ask the Lord to bring you conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit and also great comfort in the grace of the gospel.

Week Eleven

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–13)

Day One

1. Read from the beginning of chapter 11 until the section “Confession and Repentance” (pp. 193–97).
2. Work through the questions beginning on **pages 195–96** about an area of sin that you are aware of.

Today's Practical Application

Spend time in thanksgiving for God's continual willingness to forgive us and transform us. Thank him that you're beginning to be able to see the function of desire, choice, and temptation in your life.

Day Two

1. Continue reading through the chapter, ending at the section "Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness" (**pp. 198–202**).
2. Answer questions 1–5 at the end of the chapter (**p. 210**).

Today's Practical Application

Write out a prayer of confession to God, asking him to help you to see the imprints of your temptations and sins in your daily life. Thank God for his mercy, forgiveness, and grace for the future.

Day Three

1. Continue reading through the chapter, ending at the section “Don’t Give Up” (pp. 202–7).
2. Answer question 6 at the end of the chapter (p. 211).

3. Complete the exercise in question 8 (p. 211). It might be helpful for you to refer to footnote 6 as you fill it out.

Put Off	Renewed Thoughts	Put On	Specific Actions

Today's Practical Application

Thank God for whatever work you were able to do on question 8. Ask him for grace to continue to confront your own sin and pray that you would rejoice in repentance.

Day Four

1. Finish reading the chapter (**pp. 207–10**).
2. Answer questions 7 and 9 at the end of the chapter (**p. 211–12**).

Today's Practical Application

Prayerfully consider this statement: “That’s how serious this matter of idolatry is: you’ve got to be willing to annihilate it in your heart. It is the very sin of idolatry, self-salvation, self-justification and unbelief that annihilated your Savior on the Roman cross. You’ve got to look with disdain on those ‘vain things that charm you most’ and strap on the sword of the Spirit. You’ve got to put on daily belief in God’s goodness and respond in confession, repentance, and a desire for obedience” (**pp. 209–10**).

Day Five

1. Try to recite the entire memory study passage. Work on the areas that you’re still struggling with.
2. Read the entire psalm again.

Today's Practical Application

Ask the Lord to help you to consider what it means to “bless the Lord.” Ask him to show you how this study has helped you to do this. Thank him for grace.

Week Twelve

Study Memory Passage

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (Psalm 103:8–13)

Day One

1. Before beginning chapter 12, think for a moment about the last time you “jumped for joy.” Describe the occasion.

2. Read Luke 1:46–55.

3. As Mary anticipated what her Messiah would accomplish she rejoiced . . . or, literally, “jumped for joy.” You can rejoice today with her because you’ve seen what her Son has done for you!

Today’s Practical Application

Spend some time in active praise for all the things the Messiah has accomplished for you. Thank him that even though you continue to struggle with idolatry, he will love and continue to welcome you.

Day Two

1. Begin to read chapter 12, ending with the section “Portraits of Our Hearts” (pp. 213–21).
2. Make a list of the blessings you can praise God for.

3. List the verbs (action words) on **pages 219–20**.

Today’s Practical Application

Write your own song of praise to God today. You don’t need to compose a melody, but do think about the wondrous gifts God has given to you and begin to list them freely.

Day Three

1. Read the rest of chapter 12 (pp. 221–28).
2. Complete the activity on page 224 that begins with the words, “If you aren’t moved by the preceding list . . .”
3. How do obedience and worship work together in our lives?

Today’s Practical Application

How will you purpose to bring your mind back to the character and benefits of God throughout the day today?

Day Four

Complete the final questions at the end of the chapter (p. 229).

Today's Practical Application

Rewrite a portion on the prayer you wrote for question 3 at the end of the chapter. Place that note in your daily planner or calendar for a month from now. When you get to that reminder next month, spend time in prayer again, and reflect on all that the Lord has enabled you to learn and understand since that time.

Day Five

1. Review the entire Scripture passage.
2. Consider all the blessings that the Lord has showered on you.
3. Thank the Lord for his goodness to you as you have learned to long more and more for him alone.