

INDIVIDUAL STUDY
or
MEN'S GROUP STUDY

THE
PURSUIT

a
Bible Study
for Men

GROWING DISCIPLES
FOR CHRIST
ONE MAN AT A TIME

DR. JOE PETTIGREW

THE PURSUIT FOR MEN

A BIBLE STUDY

SAMPLE CHAPTER

*“There is nothing stronger or more manly
than a man who loves Christ.”*

DR. JOE PETTIGREW

CHAPTER 4

BECOMING A NEW MAN

“...and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

— EPHESIANS 4:24

Men want to be men. You often hear the term “real men” that is meant to distinguish between men who are macho and men who are not so much. In today’s society, we have allowed the media to define what a “real man” is. If we are to believe the media, men are not very smart, don’t take care of their families, and shallow in relationships. Some think we are worried only about ourselves, and we disregard how that may clash with our family. Society blames almost everything wrong in this world on the failure of men today. They may be partly right, but remember they are trying to mold the world to fit them, not God.

The world should see a significant difference when men have accepted our calling to be Men of God. When a man becomes a Man of God, he is a different creation and devotes his life to things other than himself. We all desire to start over sometimes, and this is your chance to have a fresh start in your relationship with Jesus Christ. It is time for you to stand up and take your position as the spiritual leader of your family. If you want to be a changed man, now is the time to start living a new life for Jesus.

PRAYER

Pray daily before your study.

“Jesus, please help me to be the man you created me to be. I want those around me to see the difference that you are making in my life. Change me from the man I have been. Reorder my priorities in life. Jesus, I need help because the only man I know how to be is the one I have been. I want to be a new creation in you. Please help me to follow your example and resist the pull from this broken world.

AMEN

PRAYER CONCERNS

Record the prayers you want to lift to God this week.

A VIEW FROM THE WORLD TODAY

A few decades ago, men were considered to be the primary providers and protectors of their families. Today a lot of discussions are centered on gender equality. Many women around the world are fighting fiercely to make sure their rights are respected, and most men agree that they should be. It may seem the traditional role of the man is dying out as women today work to have equal career opportunities and provide for a family. Their interests are not limited to creating a cozy home for their husbands as in years past. The number of stay-at-home dads has significantly increased while their wives are pursuing their careers.

It seems as though we need to prove our ability to remain protectors and providers. Improving our skills, setting and achieving goals, being masculine—this is what is expected. We must set our expectations much higher, as we combat the world’s view of us. The time is now for us to redefine what a Man of God—a “real man”—is, in the twenty-first century. As Men of God, we must elevate the standards to which we are being held in Christ and no longer accept the outdated mantra that men will be men, and boys will be boys. Yes, being a man is challenging in today’s world. We are seen through the window of skepticism in almost everything we do. There has not been a time in history where men have been seen in a more negative light by society than today.

A MESSAGE FROM SCRIPTURE

God has already created a new self for you. You are not a different person; you are your best self. You are all that God made you to be. Your character, personality, capabilities, and passions are all perfected in what Paul calls your “new self.” Is your new self hidden away in storage for heaven? You can begin your makeover now, recognizing there is always more to come.

Paul uses the imagery of new clothing. (Ephesians 4:22-24) It is like a new outfit hanging in your closet. You could put it on, although it is not the kind the thing you have worn before, it might even be sort of scary to wear it in public because you are not sure how people will react. Yet you know that it is much better than what you usually wear, so put it on already! Of course, the new self God has for us goes much deeper than what is on the outside; it goes to the core of who we are. If Paul were writing today, he might be talking about a software upgrade, even an update of our entire operating system.

Our new self comes with unique passions and a new attitude toward life. Our

attitude becomes like Jesus: love for people, a servant heart, strength in facing evil, and a pure desire to please the Father. Think about what a difference that can make as you face the challenges and opportunities of life. Your new self comes with a new source of righteousness and holiness. The old self tries to justify itself. How can you make yourself good enough? The result is often dishonesty and trying to hide or deny sin, even from God. The new self accepts the righteousness of Christ as God's gracious gift, freeing us to be honest about who we are and what we do.

DAILY READING

This week we are studying that you are unique. It is so easy to see ourselves as just regular guys, just like everyone else in the world. But you're not. You are uniquely saved by Jesus Christ and have been placed on a mission. Your mission is to show the world what a Man of God looks like. How does he act? How does he work? How does live? You are unique.

DAY ONE

How about a fresh start?

"When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, 'Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular custom."

— JOB 1:5

What do you do when there's not enough time to do everything? Have you tried to be two places at the same time? Do you feel guilty that you can't do it all? Do you desire a "new start?" In many ways, technology is making that possible for us to accomplish it all. Some parents are setting up a baby cam in the nursery so they can log on the internet and watch their children sleep. I've seen a commercial on TV where a dad watches his son play a championship soccer game from his motel room while he's away on business. The father can "be there" with his son as his son scores the winning goal.

But is it the same as being there? I wish I had a magic pill to give you that would resolve the internal conflict you feel when you're not able to be everything that everybody wants you to be. Most men face the same choices, experiences, and the same struggles.

Job used his time to build a spiritual fire. In our scripture today, we catch a glimpse into Job's home environment. He made a home where his children could thrive spiritually. Do you have memories that illustrate the spiritual fire in your childhood home? When was the last time your children or grandchildren caught you "talking with the Jesus?" Today is a great day to start anew. Today is the day to become totally invested in the Kingdom. Take off your baggage and become a new man.

Thought of the Day: We don't build "spiritual fires" with our words. We build them with our actions. Have your children seen you "walking with the Lord" lately?

Action for Today: Do something today that will allow your children to see their dad as a Man of God. (At home, at the ballpark, at a restaurant, etc.)

Prayer Request for Today: Make notes of those people or things you want to pray for today.

DAY TWO

God is interested in your future, not your past

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

— PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

Jesus is not interested in all the mistakes of your past, but in how you move forward. The Apostle Paul looked ahead rather than dwelling on his past. But that doesn't mean Paul developed amnesia while he was in the Roman jail. He clearly remembered his history and had not forgotten the man he once was. He didn't, however, let his past discourage him or defeat him. He was determined to press on and to keep running the race. Paul was focused on eternity and what awaited him at the end of his life.

We've all made mistakes and have a past that we can't change. Maybe the mistake was an affair or an addiction. We are accustomed to viewing our lives in the order of "past, present, future." The Bible suggests we should view time as flowing from the future into the present and then into the past. The Man of God should be future-oriented, forgetting what lies behind. I have often wondered if we realize how mired down in the here and now we have become. Sometimes it's dark and scary, and we're fumbling around because we feel like we have lost control because of things like broken relationships, money problems, and illnesses. Paul was focused on the future. He pressed toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Paul used the image of a race to describe the Christian life. In Philippians 3:12, Paul wrote, "I press on." In verse 14, he wrote, "I press toward the goal." The word press means to run swiftly to catch a person or thing, to run after. Paul was focused on the future.

Thought of the Day: You may have started the race a few days ago or several years ago. Maybe you started the race, but somewhere along the way, you stopped running. Perhaps you lost your joy or passion. Perhaps you stumbled and fell, or you just got tired and decided to take a break. What will it take to get you rerunning the race?

Action for Today: We are supposed to “wear out” for Jesus, not “rust out.” Quit focusing on your past and think about all the great things you can do in the future. What is a new habit you can start today to replace the one you have needed to forget?

Prayer Request for Today: Make notes below of those you want to pray for today.

DAY THREE

Does the world see any difference in you?

“They came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.’ To this, John replied, ‘A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’”

— JOHN 3:26-28

Some people enjoy Facebook. They enjoy keeping up with family and friends while seeing the new creative ideas other people come up with. I recently read an article about a study that revealed spending extended time on Facebook makes people worried, lonely, and unhappy. Being on the site also increased feelings of discontent as users compare their lives to others. One researcher wrote, “We want to learn about other people and have others learn about us—but through that very learning process, we may start to resent what others have.” Perhaps part of the human condition is the urge to compare ourselves to others to find how we measure up.

In today’s passage, John the Baptist’s disciples expressed similar feelings of discontent and jealousy. People became upset because others went to Jesus to be baptized instead of going to John. They viewed it as a competition. John was quick to set them straight. He clarified his position concerning Jesus by saying, “I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.” He asserted that his decreasing popularity was precisely as it was meant to be: “He must become greater; I must become less.” John compared himself to an attendant at a wedding. He was never meant to be the main attraction. Instead, the attention and glory are all laid at the feet of Jesus.

Thought of the Day: Our discontent, loneliness, anger, and jealousy usually stem from our focus on ourselves. We should ask God today to turn our hearts and mind away from ourselves and toward our Savior. Like John, we need to become less, so He will become more.

Action for Today: How can you teach your family today this concept? Maybe let them see you in a servant role, unlike they have seen you before. Make a point today to not talk about your day or your life, but instead, talk about helping others.

Prayer Request for Today: Make notes of those people or things you want to pray for today.

DAY FOUR

You may need a “fixer upper”

“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”

— JOEL 2:25

How wonderful it is that God is in the restoration business? We have all wandered away from God, and the world has left us broken, dirty, and in need of serious help. A wonderful Christian couple—Chip and JoAnn Gaines—have a television show called “Fixer Upper.” The tagline for their show is: “We take the worst house in the best neighborhood and turn it into our client’s dream home.”

I love to watch this show because of the interaction between Chip and JoAnn with their children, and more importantly, they are not ashamed of their faith. As incredible as the Gaines’ ability and giftedness is, as amazing as it is to see what they can do with old homes in need of restoration, God does so much more with us when He restores us.

He can take that which is ugly and make it beautiful. He can take the worst of sinners and transform them into the best of saints. God never does a patch job, fixing and repairing just parts of who we are—He always does a complete restoration, both inside and out. His work is powerfully wonderful, and when He is finished, we are not the same person we were when He started. God takes that which is useless and falling apart and makes it strong and capable in Him to do things of eternal significance. And unlike the homes restored on “Fixer Upper,” which will one day begin to deteriorate and wear out, we have been given an eternal “fixing up” by God.

Thought of the Day: Do you know someone in your life who has wandered from the faith and felt the abandonment of friends and family? If so, go to that person today and encourage them to allow God to work in their life again.

Action for Today: Call or visit someone that you know that was once sold out for Jesus, but through circumstances, they seemed to have disengaged from Him.

Prayer Request for Today: Make notes below of those you want to pray for today.

DAY FIVE

Let people see the new you

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”

— ACTS 1:8-9

We equate evangelism with witnessing. Sometimes in our desire to share the Gospel, we forget that Christ also called us to be witnesses. Being a witness refers to who a person is. Witnessing refers to what a person does. Being a witness should come before evangelism.

I love Chris, a man with a great desire to lead his neighbors to Christ. He also has several Christian bumper stickers on his car. But Chris has a problem. His yard is the embarrassment of the neighborhood, while his neighbors keep their yards neat and perfect. Chris thinks he is making headway in witnessing, but his neighbors view him as a religious fanatic who ought to spend less time at church and more time behind a lawnmower.

Jimmy is a fireball and looks for every opportunity to witness to others at work. But he will gossip about co-workers at every opportunity. When things get slow, he pulls out his Bible and reads. A few times, his boss told him to put it away. Still, Jimmy thinks he has made witnessing inroads at work, but his co-workers see him as someone who cannot be trusted. Part of being a good witness involves removing as many witnessing roadblocks as possible. Barriers are things that cause people to reject the message because they see a flaw in the messenger.

Thought of the Day: Being a good witness does not guarantee non-Christians will readily accept the Gospel. But it does mean unbelievers won't write off the message because of the messenger.

Action for Today: What things are you doing that may be hurting your witness? Who are you frustrating by your actions? Consider doing an inventory of your actions to see if you are turning people off to your witness simply because you are not walking the walk.

Prayer Request for Today: Make notes of those people or things you want to pray for today.
