

FUNDAMENTALS
OF THE CHRISTIAN
LIFE SERIES



Persevere and Finish Strong

SIX BIBLE STUDY LESSONS
FOR GROUP DISCIPLESHIP

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FOR GROUP DISCIPLESHIP



EVERY NATION
P R O D U C T I O N S

How to Use this Material

In Victory, the primary venue for discipleship happens in a small group. It is called a Victory group. We strongly encourage everyone to be involved since these groups are specifically designed to help disciples grow spiritually.

A Victory group meeting has three sections: **Connect**, **Word**, and **Prayer**, and ideally lasts from forty to sixty minutes.

CONNECT (5-10 minutes)

Victory group meetings begin with a time to relate with one another. Depending on the people who comprise the group, this can be done through a variety of ways:

- Fun—such as an icebreaker activity
- Answered prayers—sharing of testimonies and updates
- Questions—such as those provided in the material, learning each other’s personal stories, and sharing feedback from the weekly message

Effective Questions During the Connect Portion:

- Are deliberately friendly to first-timers
- Ask for opinion or experiences
- Require no Bible knowledge
- Have no right or wrong answer
- Are not controversial
- Are preferably connected to the meeting’s topic

PERSEVERE AND FINISH STRONG

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WORD (20-30 minutes)

Teach the truth and relevance of God's Word for life application. The Victory group meeting is not primarily a Bible study. Although teaching and explanation of Scripture is involved, the goal is to minister, not finish a material.

There is no need to teach all the points in a material.

Within this section, we look at what the Bible says, its relevance to us today, and its application in our lives.

What: *What does the Bible say?*

Communicate and impart biblical truth clearly and concisely.

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17

Tips for Sharing the Word Effectively

- Let the Bible speak for itself.
- Use illustrations and tell stories to explain Bible verses.
- When entertaining clarifications, be watchful not to allow the discussion to go off-tangent.
- The primary goal is to minister to the needs of the people, not to finish a Bible lesson.
- Be led by the Spirit when using the material.

So What: *What is the relevance of the Word to my life?*

Give participants the opportunity to discuss how the Word impacts the way they live.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2

Now What: *How do I apply the Word to my life?*

Our primary reason for sharing the Bible is so that people will know who God is and what He has done. In doing so, the participants will begin to discover who they are and what they should do.

If it is a promise, teach them to claim it. If it is a command or a principle, encourage them to put it to action by God's grace. If it is a truth, let them embrace it willingly and not under compulsion. Allow God's grace and love to win them by the way you teach God's Word.

Encourage specific, measurable action steps that are consistent with the life change that the Scripture is bringing about. We do not command people, but we spur them on toward love and good deeds.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says. JAMES 1:22

Tips for Life-Changing Application

- You may choose one of the "So What" and "Now What" questions or you may add your own.
- An effective standby application question is: "What one action step are you going to take as a result of what you heard today?"
- Designate who will be the first to answer the question asked.
- Do not allow someone to argue or be critical of others.
- Remind everyone to apply the lesson to their own lives, not to someone else's.
- Ask God for wisdom to know when to balance or correct strange or unbiblical applications. Insensitive correction or criticism can kill the group, as can unchecked heresy.
- Remind everyone that transformation is God's work, not ours, and our obedience is a response to who He is and His love for us. It is God's grace that enables us to apply and obey His Word.

PRAY (15-20 minutes)

Prayer is the most important part of the Victory group meeting. Make sure you have plenty of time left so your prayer time is not rushed. This is not a “closing prayer,” but a time for everyone in the group to take specific requests to God. This is where the action is. The goal is to create a venue where people will see God move on their behalf.

“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” MATTHEW 18:19

Tips for Powerful Prayer

- Listen to the Holy Spirit carefully during the Connect and Word sections for things that may need prayer.
- Spend your time praying for one another, not sharing and discussing prayer requests.
- Keep your prayers simple, sincere, and short. Most non-believers have never heard an ordinary Christian just talk to God and will be touched by the sincerity and simplicity of the prayer.
- Pray, don’t preach. Pray in simple and short sentences, not long “sermon prayers.”
- Use conversational prayer, not complicated or profound, intercessory prayer.
- Expect God to answer your prayers.

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⁶“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. ⁷Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” JOSHUA 1:6-8

WHAT

God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous because a great task was ahead of him. Joshua had to take Moses’ place and lead God’s people into the Promised Land. Though this was a daunting task, God gave Joshua the key to success—God’s Word. If we are to have strong faith and do what God calls us to do, we will also need to hold on to His Word. In this lesson, we will unpack the lessons from Joshua 1:8.

1 Speak the Word.

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth . . .” JOSHUA 1:8

“ . . . For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”
MATTHEW 12:34

Like Joshua, we are to speak God’s Word. Declare God’s truth and hold on to His promises even in difficult situations. The Bible says that our words reflect our hearts. If we are in doubt, we will speak words of unbelief. But if we hide His Word in our hearts, we will speak it in faith and hope.

How have you seen
the power of words
in your own life?

2 Meditate on the Word daily.

“ . . . meditate on it day and night . . .” JOSHUA 1:8

Even though Joshua was getting busy leading God’s people, God asked him to prioritize His Word—and to meditate on it day and night. Like Joshua, we need to value and spend time in God’s Word no matter how busy our schedules get.

How do you
meditate on
the Word?

3 Obey the Word.

“ . . . so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” JOSHUA 1:8

Reading, speaking, and meditating on God’s Word should lead to obedience. Success comes as we obey God.

Why should we
“be careful to do
everything” in God’s
Word? Why can’t we
just pick and choose
what to obey?

Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you." JOSHUA 3:5

WHAT

As the Israelites were about to fight for their Promised Land by first conquering Jericho, Joshua told them to prepare by consecrating themselves. It's an interesting way to prepare for battle. To "consecrate" means to devote, separate, dedicate, or set apart something for a special, holy, and godly purpose. There are at least three lessons we can learn from this.

1 We are set apart for God's purpose.

²⁰In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. ²¹If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. 2 TIMOTHY 2:20,21

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality . . . 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

The Israelites had to be set apart and completely devoted for God's purpose. As followers of Jesus, we are also to be consecrated and dedicated to Him.

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What are some things that are usually set apart for a special purpose?
Why are we called to be set apart or different?

2 We should be wholly devoted to God.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. DEUTERONOMY 6:5

God asks His people for complete obedience and devotion. He gave the Israelites specific instructions as they were about to enter the Promised Land, even from the time of Moses, like in this verse. For us, complete love, obedience, and devotion is only possible through Jesus, and He wants all of us to love Him. As we walk with God, we will be more like Him and more devoted to Him.

What do the words all, fully, and wholly have in common?

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3 We should be in faith for what God will do.

This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. JOSHUA 3:10

God was with the Israelites in their battles. Truly, He did "amazing things" among them. But more than success and victory, their greatest reward—and ours too—is God's presence. He is our greatest blessing, and because He is with us, we can be in faith for what He will do.

How has God done "amazing things" in your own life, like He did for the Israelites?

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SO WHAT

- What are some things people are devoted to? What does God want us to be devoted to?
- How are Christians supposed to be different from the world? Why can't we be like everyone else?
- What were some of the amazing things God did for His people after they consecrated themselves to Him?

NOW WHAT

- Have you dedicated yourself to the Lord? Is there an area that is not fully consecrated to Him? What will you do about it?
- How can you walk more closely with God and know Him more every day?
- Are you in faith for God to fulfill His promises for you and your family? How can you be strong as you wait for this to happen?

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- Dedicate yourself wholly to God and His purposes.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to continuously help you become more like Christ.
 - Pray that you will be ready for the things God is about to do in and through you, as you have consecrated yourself to Him.

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Stand Strong

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C O N N E C T

- Do you like asking for help? Why or why not? Explain briefly.
- What was the most unique experience you had this month?
- Who is the strongest person you know? What do you think makes him/her strong?

¹²On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: “O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” ¹³So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. ¹⁴There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!

JOSHUA 10:12-14

WHAT

When Joshua and the Israelites came to help the Gibeonites, their allies, they faced an enemy superior in number and strength. However, God helped His people. He caused the sun to stand still for them and gave them victory. We, too, can stand strong because of who God is—a powerful, miracle-working God, not because of how skilled, faithful, or good we think we are. There are three lessons we can learn about who God is from this story.

1 God is approachable.

On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: “O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” JOSHUA 10:12

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. EPHESIANS 3:12

Joshua was bold in asking for God’s help because God had already assured Joshua of victory (Joshua 10:8). He knew God and he could approach God. Because of what

Jesus did for us on the cross, we, too, can approach God anytime.

Recall one recent instance when you asked God for help. How did He see you through?

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2 God answers prayers.

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. JOSHUA 10:13

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:6,7

God answered Joshua’s prayer with a miracle—the sun stood still, giving Joshua and the army enough time to defeat their enemies. In the same way, God continues to answer the prayers of those who have faith in Him. Because God is God, He answers our prayers the way He wants to—not always the way we’d like Him to.

What sorts of requests do you bring to God? Why can you pray about anything and everything?

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3 God is on our side.

There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! JOSHUA 10:14

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

The Israelites won the battle because God fought for them. Likewise, God fights for us and because He is on our side, we can be assured of victory. In fact, we fight from a position of victory because of Jesus Christ.

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Because you know God is on your side, what's the most outlandish thing you have ever done? What happened?

SO WHAT

- According to Ephesians 3:12, why can we approach God with freedom and confidence?
- According to Ephesians 6:10-13, how can we be strong?
- Why does God specialize in the impossible and the miraculous? How have you seen this for yourself?

NOW WHAT

- How can you know God more this week? In what area do you need to step out in faith and believe Him for the impossible?
- Knowing that God is faithful and we can approach Him with confidence, make a list of things you are believing for Him to do for you, your family, church, and nation. Believe that He will do even what seems impossible!
- Who can you encourage this week to hold on to God and stand strong?

PRAYER

- Thank God for who He is and how He works on our behalf.
- Approach God with confidence and present your requests to Him. Ask Him in faith to do the impossible for you.
- Pray that God would use your situation and life to draw more people to Him.

So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. JOSHUA 14:14

WHAT

In anything we do, what matters more than starting strong is staying strong until the end. When God promised the Israelites to bring them into the land He had for them, most of them doubted God and this resulted in a forty-year delay for this promise to be fulfilled. And later on, when they already began entering the land, they still had to possess it completely. Caleb was one of the two men who believed God even when others did not, and he eventually received his inheritance and completed his mission. In this lesson, we will look at how Caleb stayed strong.

1 Caleb was devoted to God.

...⁸but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.⁹So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' JOSHUA 14:8,9

Even though most of his peers doubted that they could claim the Promised Land, Caleb remained devoted to and focused on God. Caleb trusted God completely, and he was able to stay strong.

What does following God wholeheartedly look like? What are some of the challenges?

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2 Caleb was confident that he would see God's promises fulfilled.

¹⁰"Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then." JOSHUA 14:10,11

Even though Caleb was already eighty-five, he had the strength to fight and defeat the enemy. He even took the mountain where he and his friends got a huge cluster of grapes forty years back (Numbers 13:22-24).

Caleb received his inheritance even if it took many, many years. In whom was Caleb's confidence?

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3 Caleb was courageous.

¹²"Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."¹³Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. JOSHUA 14:12,13

Caleb knew that the Anakites were big and powerful, and that many people were afraid of their enemy. However, Caleb still faced them courageously. Courage doesn't mean the absence of fear. Instead, it's looking to God and facing the fear because God gives us His promise and He helps us.

In what area has God taught you to have audacious faith and courage?

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¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses . . . let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. HEBREWS 12:1-3 (READ ALSO JOHN 16:33.)

WHAT

The race God has marked out for us can be likened more to a marathon than a sprint. Remember, starting the race does not count as much as getting to the finish line. Following are four tools we need so we can run with perseverance despite trials and opposition and to finish strong.

1 Focus

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 3:14

Focusing on the goal keeps runners from being distracted and enables them to reach the finish line. We focus on Jesus because He is our basis for running and our reason to endure.

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What does it mean to “fix our eyes on Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2)?

2 Faith in God

. . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Jesus is the one who gives us the ability to run the race. We can persevere because we are confident that He began the work in our lives, and He will complete it.

How has your faith in Jesus helped you persevere amidst trials?

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3 Joy

“ . . . the joy of the LORD is your strength.” NEHEMIAH 8:10

Joy helped Jesus endure torture, rejection, injustice, and shame. His joy was to see His Father glorified and each one of us redeemed. In the same way, the joy of the Lord is more powerful than any trial we face.

Share of a time when you faced a trial with joy.

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4 Hope

. . . but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. ISAIAH 40:31

Despite the opposition Jesus had to endure, He finished the race marked out for Him and He is now seated in a place of glory.

Looking to Jesus gives us hope for things to come and renews our strength. What is “hope”?

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SO WHAT

- Why do we need to focus on the goal of pleasing God? What are some of the things that can distract us from the goal?
- How does the joy of the Lord become our strength? Why can we have joy even when we face difficult situations?
- Why can we hope in God? According to Isaiah 40:31, what is the result of hoping in God?

NOW WHAT

- How can you fix your eyes on Jesus this week? Which distractions do you need to surrender to God?
- Is your hope in God? Do you need the joy of the Lord? How can you grow in your faith in God this week?
- Do you sometimes feel like quitting the race marked for you? Why? How can you persevere and finish strong?

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- Thank God for the grace and strength He gives you to trust Him and live for Him.
 - Pray that you would always fix your eyes on Jesus and that you will be faithful to Him. Ask God to help you persevere, and to withstand and overcome temptations by His grace.
 - Speak a blessing over one another. Ask God to give you more joy and hope, and that you would be a blessing to many others.

6

Look Forward to the Prize

CONNECT

- When was the last time you participated in a competition. What happened?
- What's one of the most important possessions you can't live without? Why?
- Who is the most successful person you know? Tell us about him/her.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24,25

WHAT

Athletes train hard in the hopes of winning the gold medal in their competitions. As followers of Jesus, we can be strong as we run the race He marked out for us, and we can finish strong as we fix our eyes on the prize. Following are three lessons we can glean from the Apostle Paul on how we are to finish this race.

1 We run with God's prize in mind.

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 3:14 (SEE ALSO HEBREWS 11:6.)

The Bible clearly teaches that God has set a prize we should pursue. Knowing that a reward awaits us in the end fuels our passion and helps us persevere. The Bible also teaches that God rewards those who actively pursue Him. In fact, doing so brings Him great pleasure and glory. We run to win the prize God has for us so we can give Him back the glory.

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According to Hebrews 11:6, what do we need to have to please God?

2 We run for an eternal crown.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 PETER 5:4 (SEE ALSO 1 CORINTHIANS 9:25.)

God has an eternal reward prepared for each one of us. Too often, we focus on things that will not last. However, Scripture always encourages us to live our lives in light of eternity.

What does eternity mean?

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3 We run to finish strong.

²⁶Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:26,27

The runner's speed and strength do not matter if the runner is disqualified in the end. God's Word gives us the boundaries, guidelines, and principles that we are to live by as we run this race.

Tell about a time when you stayed within a boundary line and you stayed in the race because of it.

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SO WHAT

- Why do you think the Bible says we are in a race? What are some of the benefits of running with a goal in mind?
- How should an eternal perspective affect how you live your life? What is our ultimate prize as Christians?
- What are some boundaries, guidelines, and principles we must heed if we don't want to be disqualified from the race?

NOW WHAT

- Are you in the race that God has marked out for you? If not, do you want to get into the race (or get back into the race) today? How can you begin living for God's purpose and prize today?
- In light of eternity, how should you adjust your priorities? How do you need to adjust your time, money, and energy this week?
- What do you need to do so you can finish strong in this race?

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- Thank God for His purpose and plans for your life.
 - Ask God to help you run the race marked out for you. Pray that you would treasure and guard your relationship with God above all else, and that nothing would hinder you from seeking Him.
 - Pray that every decision you make would be in light of eternity. Ask God to give you an eternal perspective of your life.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 TIMOTHY 4:7

Persevere and Finish Strong is a series of six materials for group discipleship designed to help believers develop spiritual strength and perseverance to finish this race.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Strong Faith
- Start Strong
- Stand Strong
- Stay Strong
- Finish Strong
- Look Forward to the Prize



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