





For further study, explore Pathways to Intimacy with God on LivingontheEdge.org



### **PATHWAYS**

### **Bible Study and Personal Reflection**

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8)

For Further Study Explore: *Pathways to Intimacy With God* 

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# GETTING STARTED: HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

#### 1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE.

Pick a time when you are at your best—mentally, emotionally, and physically. For many people this is in the morning before the day starts. Pick a place where you can be relatively free from interruptions and distractions. It's a good idea to leave your phone behind or in airplane mode.

### 2. START WITH PRAYER.

Make this more than a formality, because it's a necessity! Without God's help you won't hear His voice. Ask God to remove distractions so that you can clearly hear His voice.

### 3. WORK THROUGH THE QUESTIONS AT YOUR OWN PACE.

These questions are just a springboard to get you thinking. Answer them at your own pace and be willing to spend time on them. The goal is to spend meaningful time with God, not to finish each session as quickly as possible. If a question doesn't make sense or you can't answer it, feel free to skip it. If your thoughts go down a path different from the question at hand, awesome! The point is to grow closer to Jesus, not to finish a "homework assignment."



### **ABOUT LIVING ON THE EDGE**

### Living on the Edge exists to help Christians live like Christians.

It was established in 1995 as a radio ministry of pastor and author Chip Ingram. It has since grown into an international discipleship ministry with a clear vision: to be a catalytic movement of Christians living out their faith in ways that transform families, churches, and communities for the common good and the glory of God.

Living on the Edge creates Bible-based teachings and tools that challenge and equip spiritually hungry Christians to become mature disciples of Jesus.

To receive free resources from Living on the Edge, join our email list: **livingontheedge.org/broadcasts** 

### **DAY ONE:**

### THE PATH OF PRAYER

All relationships are built on communication, and prayer is simply communicating with God. Anyone can pray; it doesn't take a special language or a degree from a Bible college. All it takes is a willing heart that makes the time to talk with God.

. Reflect on your prayer life by taking a quick inventory. Remember: this is a personal evaluation. It's not about feeling guilty; it's about establishing a baseline so that you can grow.
a. How often do you pray?
b. Do you feel that you pray enough?
c. Realistically speaking, how much is "enough"?
d. When are you encouraged to pray?
When are you quick to turn to prayer?
e. What hinders your prayer life?
What barriers do you regularly face?
f. Do you feel that you know how to pray and what to pray for?

2. Read <b>Matthew 6:6</b>	5-8 (	(NIV	):
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But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

What is the main point Jesus is making about a person's prayer life and authentic spirituality?
In your opinion, how does God reward those who pray "in secret"?
Since God knows what we need before we ask Him (verse 8), why is it important to pray?

3. Prayers of **AFFIRMATION** (Recognizing God for Who He is)

Read **Psalm 84:11** (NIV) as a prayer to God.

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

#### THE PATH OF PRAYER

Read **Zephaniah 3:17** (NIV) as a prayer to God.

"The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

4. Prayers of **ADORATION** (Thanking God for His gifts)

Read Psalm 103:1-5 (NIV) as a prayer to God.

Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Make a list of the good things God has done in your life and spend some time in prayer thanking Him.					
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5. Prayers of **RENEWAL** (Confessing our sins to God to receive forgiveness)

Read Psalm 103:8-14 (NIV) as a prayer to God.

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

### THE PATH OF PRAYER

Confess to God any attitudes or actions that He brings to mind where you've sinned against God or another person.				
6. Prayers of <b>ASKING</b> (Requesting God's help for our deepest needs)				
Read <b>Luke 11:9-13</b> (NIV):				
"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"				
Share your deepest longings to God and ask Him to provide.				

### **WRAP UP**

We hope that these scripture passages and descriptions of different kinds of prayer helped you begin to take steps toward a more dynamic prayer life. Like anything else in our life, new habits take time to develop and require consistency. The returns on an investment in your prayer life can be a huge encouragement to you in your relationship with God. Keep it up!

### **DAY TWO:**

### THE PATH OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible is God's Word, and it contains everything we need to know about living a life of worship that honors Him. We need regular "intake" of God's Word so that we can hear His voice and gain the wisdom we need daily.

1. Reflect on your time with God's Word by taking a quick inventory.

Remember: this is a personal evaluation. It's not about feeling guit's about establishing a baseline so that you can grow.	ıilty;
a. How often do you read the Bible?	
b. Do you feel that you read the Bible often enough?	
c. Realistically speaking, how much is "enough"?	
d. When are you encouraged to spend time in God's Word? _	
e. What keeps you from reading the Bible?	
What barriers do you regularly face?	
f. Do you feel that you know how to read and understand the	Bible?

2. R	ead <b>F</b>	Prover	bs 2	::1-5	(NIV)	):
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My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Make a list of all the actions encouraged in this teaching.
When you step back from the details, what do you believe is the primary theme behind these actions?
According to this passage, a person who seeks God "understands fear' and "finds knowledge" (verse 5). In your opinion, why are "fear" and "knowledge" connected?

### 3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 (NIV):

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

### 4. Read **Hebrews 4:12** (NIV):

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any doubleedged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

When was the last time that God's Word penetrated deeply, judging the thoughts and attitudes of your heart? What happened?				

5. One great way to understand scripture is to study how the Bible describes itself through vivid imagery. Read through the following verses and consider each word picture. In your current life, which one is the most meaningful to you? Why?

#### **FOOD**

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight. (Jeremiah 15:16, NIV)

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4, NIV)

#### **RAIN**

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11-12, NIV)

#### **MIRROR**

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing ithe will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:23-25, NIV)

#### **SEED**

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23; See also Mark 4:1-20, NIV)

#### **LAMP**

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105, NIV)

#### **SWORD**

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12, NIV)

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17, NIV)

#### FIRE AND HAMMER

Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes. (Jeremiah 5:14, NIV)

Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? (Jeremiah 23:29, NIV)

#### **WRAP UP**

Way to go! You finished the second lesson! It's our hope that your personal reflections lead you to a deeper understanding and appreciation for God's Word. It can be tough to understand the Bible, let alone make the time to read it. But be encouraged: God will speak to you through His Word!

### **DAY THREE:**

### THE PATH OF REMEMBRANCE

It is human nature to be great at forgetting things—not just the small stuff but also the important things. We all need constant reminders of who God is and His promises. Let's take a look at how we can grow in our relationship with God as we are more intentional about remembering Him and His sacrifice for us.

1. Life's struggles can cause all of us to drift away from our most

important relationships. Describe a time when this happened to you. What caused it? What made you aware of the separation? What did you do next?
2. Read <b>Revelation 2:2-5</b> (NIV):
I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.
In the current season of your spiritual life, do you feel that you have "forsaken the love you had at first"? What did that "first love" look like?

For you personally, what were the "first things" you did when you became a Christian? How would you describe the "love you had at first"?
Are there any specific steps you need to take to "restore your first love" with Jesus? If so, what could you do this week?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV):  For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord
Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
When we celebrate Communion, or the Lord's Supper, what is it specifically that we are remembering?

According to this scripture, celebrating the Lord's Supper "proclaims the Lord's death." Since we already believe in Jesus, why is it necessary to celebrate the Lord's Supper?
Describe a time when the Lord's Supper was especially meaningful for you personally.
What steps can you take to keep the Lord's Supper from becoming a meaningless ritual?

### 4. Read **Deuteronomy 8:10-14** (NIV):

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

How can blessings cause us to think less about God? Has this ever happened to you? According to this scripture, how can we guard against forgetting God?
5. Read <b>1 Corinthians 11:27–28</b> (NIV):
So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.
According to this passage, what does it mean for a person to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV) and Galatians 6:3-5 (NIV):
Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of

If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. (Galatians 6:3-5)

course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

According to these scripture passages, why is self-examination necessary? In what ways is self-deception harmful? Practically speaking how can we test ourselves and what standard should we use?		

### **WRAP UP**

The third lesson is in the bag! You're more than halfway through this Bible Study! Perhaps you've been celebrating Communion, or the Lord's Supper for a long time, and like anything we repeat, it can lose meaning. But a relationship with God is so much more than observing rituals that lack meaning! The time we spend remembering Jesus - His sacrifice on the cross and defeating death through the resurrection - is time well spent.

### **DAY FOUR:**

### THE PATH OF FELLOWSHIP

The word **fellowship** is used often in Christian circles, which can lead to confusion about what it actually means. In today's study, we'll let God define fellowship, as we look at what He says in His Word.

1. 1 John 1:7 (NIV) says: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another..."

The following "one another" scriptures paint a vivid picture of fellowship. Read through the list and do some further personal study by looking up the verses if you find any of the actions confusing or difficult to understand.

#### We are to:

- belong to one another (Romans 7:4)
- be devoted to and honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- love one another (Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 2

Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8; 1 John 3:23, 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5)

- accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- instruct one another (Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16)
- agree with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2)
- forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- **encourage** one another (Ephesians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11; Hebrews 3:13, 10:24)
- **submit to** one another (Ephesians 5:21)
- meet with one another (Hebrews 10:25)
- offer hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- be humble to one another (1 Peter 5:5)

### We are NOT to:

- judge one another or cause others to stumble (Romans 14:13)
- slander one another (James 4:11)
- grumble against one another (James 5:9)

2. Based on this list, identify your strengths and weaknesses. Pick two		
actions that come easily for you and two areas where you struggle.		
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### THE PATH OF FELLOWSHIP

3. Mark each sta	stement as true or false:
T F A person T F Christian T F Every C T F A Christian T F Christian T F Fellows T F Without T F Christian T F Fellows T F Without T F Without T F Without T F Without T F Christian T F Without T F W	ne wants healthy relationships. On can be happy without healthy relationships. In fellowship is always filled with happiness. Christian should be in a small group. Itian and a non-Christian can have fellowship. Itians can live successful lives for God without fellowship. Is ship is more recreational than relational. Is ship is hard work. It food, you can't have biblical fellowship. Is ship and entertainment are mutually opposed.
Pick three of the way you did.	e statements above and explain why you answered the
to the breaking at the many vibelievers were property and day they contibroke bread in hearts, praising Lord added to the last scripture, vibro the breaking the	I themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, and of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the etogether and had everything in common. They sold possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every sinued to meet together in the temple courts. They in their homes and ate together with glad and sincereing God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the of their number daily those who were being saved.  We get a peek into the life of the early Church. What are from this passage that stand out to you about fellowship?

#### THE PATH OF FELLOWSHIP

### 5. Read Romans 12:6-8 (NIV) and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV):

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:6-8)

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, r and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

n the fellowship of believers, everyone is gifted by God to build up the Church. How often are you using the gifts God has given you to bless wild up the Church? What are some ways that you can develop your ift and use it more frequently to bless the Church?	/

#### **WRAP UP**

Congratulations for finishing the fourth lesson! It's our prayer that your relationships with other believers would be a source of strength, support, and encouragement. In our world, it's easy to maintain life at a superficial level, keeping people "at arm's length." As a result, we may know a lot of people, but we're never really known by anyone. We are better together. God created us for deep and meaningful relationships with one another.

### **DAY FIVE:**

### THE PATH OF PARADOX

In today's study, we will be looking at five radical teachings from Jesus—teachings that would seem to be directly opposed to human nature. But what we think is normal is really upside down. This is the "path of paradox."

from Jesus. How was your thinking changed by God?
Paradox #1: DIE TO FIND LIFE  Matthew 16:24-27 (NIV) and John 12:25 (NIV)
Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. (Matthew 16:24-27)
Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:26)
Life is a gift from God, so why shouldn't we love it? Why is Jesus telling us to hate our lives? What does it mean to love our lives too much?

Personalize this scripture: What does it look like for you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus?
Since Jesus will reward people for what they have done, is salvation based on works (what we do) and not faith? Explore why you feel the way you do.
In your own words, what does it mean to "lose your life" for Jesus?

Paradox #2: GIVE TO GAIN Mark 10:17-22 (NIV)

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother." "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

If the man believed Jesus was good, why didn't he follow Him?	
From the time he was a young boy, the man had followed all of the commandments. Why, then, did Jesus tell him he needed to do more? Hadn't he already done enough?	
Since Jesus asked this man to sell everything, does this mean all Christians should sell everything? Explore why you feel the way you do.	
In your own life, how can you tell when you love your stuff too much?	

Jesus's commands are never separated from His compassion. In verse 21, we read: "Jesus looked at him and loved him." And then Jesus offered the man a two-part challenge: "Go sell everything, then come follow me." And then Jesus said: "One thing you lack" Ask God to show you what you should give back to Him. What do you think this might be?
Paradox #3: BE LAST TO BECOME FIRST  Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV)
Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."  Is it wrong for leaders to exercise their authority? What is Jesus saying
about leadership? Explore why you feel the way you do.
Jesus taught that the path to greatness means becoming a servant or a slave. Why do you think He used such strong language?

Why isn't it easy to be a servant? For you personally, what gets in the way of serving others?
Paradox #4: BECOME A CHILD TO GROW UP  Luke 18:15-17 (NIV)
People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."
Why do you think the disciples were against the children coming to Jesus?
What childlike qualities do you think Jesus is looking for in His followers:

## Paradox #5: BUILD GOD'S KINGDOM TO BUILD YOUR OWN Luke 12:27-31 (NIV)

"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Based on this teaching, should Christians have scripture passage mean we ought to only pray	
Seeking first God's kingdom means making it outside observer had been watching your life what would they say are your top priorities?	

### **WRAP UP**

You made it to the finish line! In many ways, this last lesson was a "heavy hitter." We trust that Jesus's teaching turned your life upside down! It's human nature to be focused on ourselves, and the more we walk with Jesus, the more we learn how to serve others.

While this is the end of this Bible Study, it is our hope that this really just the beginning of your journey to greater intimacy with God. The next page has a few ideas for how you can keep growing in your spiritual life it is our hope that this is only the beginning.



### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Now that you've finished, what's next? Here are a few ideas:

- 1. Take a moment to **celebrate your accomplishment**—it's a big deal! Look over your answers and thank God for how He's worked in your life.
- 2. **We'd love to hear from you!** Let us know how this resource benefited you and we'll throw a mini-party in your honor. If you have suggestions for how we can make it better, we'd love to hear those, too! Email us at info@lote.org.
- 3. **Share this resource with a friend.** If you know someone who could benefit from this resource, email it to them as a way to encourage their faith. Tell them what you liked about it to help motivate them to check it out.
- 4. **Determine what's next for your personal devotional life.** Pick a book from the Bible and read it systematically or head over to **livingontheedge.org** to find a new tool designed to help you grow.

To receive free resources from Living on the Edge, join our email list: **livingontheedge.org/broadcasts.** 

We're praying for you!
The Team at Living on the Edge