



STUDENT GUIDE

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LIVING THE DASH

ICE BREAKER QUESTION:

What was your security item as a child (security blanket, stuffed animal, etc) and do you still have it?

LEADER:

This study is an opportunity to really understand and check the way we are living our lives. A lot of us probably don't use the perspective of how we would live if we were about to die as a lens into our lifestyles. It's a very scary thought that often times sheds light on how intentional we are, the choices we make, and the relationships we have. It's a wake up call to change our ways so we can live ready to be obedient to the spirit.

DISCUSS:

What does it mean to live like you have one month to live?

OBSERVE:

In this Psalm Moses is praying to God seeking mercy for the people of Israel and asking for wisdom in understanding what their lives mean.

READ: Psalm 90:10-17 (ESV)

“The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as

many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!"

DISCUSS:

- What does number our days mean? Why does the Psalmist ask for this?
- Do you live for the Lord? What does it mean to live for the Lord?
- Are you living out of fear or out of a desire for what is right?
- Would you say you're living like you have one month to live?

PASTOR KERRY AND CHRIS SHOOK:

"Over the years of watching others live out their last days, I began to ask myself, "Why can't all of us live more like we're dying? Wasn't that how we were meant to live in the first place? To discover what we're made for and to utilize our unique gifts in the limited time we're given?" I've come to believe that the one month to live lifestyle is universal in principle but unique in expression. If we all lived as if we had one month left on this earth, we would each spend our days differently, in ways unique to us, and yet I believe we would all experience more fulfilling lives that could leave a legacy for eternity."

LEADER:

Current culture has twisted this concept and left out the most crucial element. You only live once, live life with no regrets; these are similar statements but lacking the specific purpose of why. Anyone can go spend their life savings or do something crazy for the adventure, but to live a life truly with no regrets means we have a deep understanding of what is most important in life. When people are faced with death they tend to focus on a few key things. First, they want to get their relationship with God sorted out. Second, they want to get right with the people they love the most. In these moments you see hearts that once were not willing to forgive now radically transformed and ready to offer forgiveness. Families come together and reconcile differences, because it truly is now or never. True friends stand by your side in these moments wrestling with the emotions and heartbreak you both are experiencing.

OBSERVE:

Paul wrote a letter to the Thessalonians and was lifting them up and encouraging them in the way they should live.

READ: 1 Thessalonians 2:10-13 (ESV)

“You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

DISCUSS:

- How are we called to live? Do you live like that?
- What are some practical ways you are able to walk in a manner worthy of God?

LEADER:

The harsh reality is that this is what we should have been doing from the beginning. This is how we were created to live, but sin, hurt, pain, pride and selfishness have interfered in who God intended for us to be. The good news is that it's not too late! You still have breath and a chance now to live with purpose, with urgency and with passion investing in the things that will last for eternity. Welcome to the one month to live lifestyle. Ask these questions below as you begin to process what this looks like in your own life.

DISCUSS:

- What are the most important things in your life?
- Are you living in a way that reflects those are truly the most important things?
- If you need to make changes, what steps or changes can you make today?
- What obstacles or challenges will stand in your way of making these changes and what type of strategy can you develop to overcome them?

LIVE PASSIONATELY

ICE BREAKER GAME: SKITTLES INTRODUCTIONS

Pass around a bag of skittles (or any other colored candy) and tell each person to choose one to five pieces. Instruct them not to eat them, though. After they have chosen their candy, you will tell them what each candy color represents:

Red - Favorite Hobbies

Green - Favorite Place on Earth

Blue - Favorite Memory

Yellow - Dream Job

Orange - Wildcard (tell us anything about yourself)

Each person takes turns introducing himself or herself, beginning with his/her name and then saying one fact for each color candy picked.

LEADER:

Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the land God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, what should have been a couple weeks trip, ended up taking 40 years because the Israelites kept turning away from the Lord. Finally, when they were about to enter the promised land leadership changed. Moses was replaced by Joshua. You can imagine he was a little nervous. Let's read what the Lord says to Joshua...

READ: Joshua 1:6-9 (ESV)

“Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn

from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

DISCUSS:

- Three times in this passage God tells Joshua and the people of Israel to “Be strong and courageous.” Why do you think He does this?
- What is the key to being strong and courageous according to this passage?
- Why do you think God wants them to follow the “Book of the Law?”

LEADER:

Sometimes it takes courage and perseverance to fight through the obstacles and barriers between us and the good purposes God has given us. Have you ever had a dream or idea that came and went? It was everything at first, but maybe the flame went out. Sometimes we look back on our lives and the dreams or visions we had of ourselves were good passions and purposes that God placed on our hearts, we just lost our way. I am so thankful we have a God of the second chance, and third, fourth, fifth and keep going! He’s so faithful and even when I’ve lost my way or forgotten what He did or who He created me to be, He is always there just one step of obedience from being perfectly in His will. Obedience opens us up to receive Gods blessings, and fulfill your passions.

READ: Ephesians 5:15-17 (NLT)

“So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don’t act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.”

DISCUSS:

- According to this verse, how do we make the most of every opportunity?
- How can we understand what the Lord wants us to do?

LEADER:

In order to make the most of every opportunity, it is important to understand what God wants us to do. If we follow our own ways, then we definitely will not be living life to the fullest! Staying connected to God and His word is how we understand better what He wants for us.

PASTOR KERRY AND CHRIS SHOOK:

“God has put us here for a reason and planted dreams within us so we can do our part in seeing them realized. Whether we have thirty days or thirty years, we want to leave this life on earth without regrets. “If only’s” and “what if’s” will haunt us unless we know that we poured ourselves into bringing our unique dreams to life. Many people, however, have no idea what their dreams are and what they really want in life. Don’t you feel this way at times? Maybe when your job (school) is getting you down and you wonder if you’ve completely missed your calling. Maybe when a relationship falls apart or when circumstances make you question if you’re in the right place. Maybe when you’re just bored and going through another mundane, daily routine. During these moments we tend to forget what our true desires and dreams are because they get buried under an avalanche of pain. I believe God wants to thaw out that frozen dream that He placed in your heart. He wants to rescue you from an ordinary existence and bring your dream to life! The Psalmist said, “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). I have found there is nothing tastier and more fulfilling than discovering and following the dream God has planted in your heart.”

DISCUSS:

- What are some dreams has God placed in your heart?
- What gifts, talents or resources has God given you that you aren’t utilizing?
- Our society has a natural tendency to tear down, but God has called us to build each other up. Who can you speak life into this week to live passionately?

LOVE COMPLETELY

ICE BREAKER QUESTION:

What is the most embarrassing thing you've ever cried over?

OBSERVE:

Jesus often teaches through stories called parables. They are generally short in length but used to communicate powerful teachings. In this passage Jesus shares the parable of the unforgiving debtor.

READ: Matthew 18:21-33 (MSG)

“At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, “Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?” Jesus replied, “Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven. “The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market. “The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, ‘Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.’ Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt. “The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, ‘Pay up. Now!’ “The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, ‘Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.’ But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king. “The king summoned the man and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?’”

DISCUSS:

- Why do you think God takes forgiveness of one another so seriously?
- Why was the king so angry at the servant?

LEADER:

It's important to remember what God, through Jesus, has forgiven us for! When Jesus says "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven." He doesn't mean that we calculate 490 times to forgive someone and then curse them at the 491st time. He is making a point to say that God forgives us no matter what, and thus that's how we should forgive others. It is a direct reflection of who our God is.

PASTOR KERRY AND CHRIS SHOOK:

"We can't give what we haven't received. We know we've received forgiveness, but we don't really understand the depth of God's mercy, which makes it that much harder for us to forgive others. If I can understand a little bit of how much Christ has forgiven me, it's a whole lot easier to forgive others who've hurt me. When we don't confess or embrace the forgiveness so freely given to us, we begin to sink. Think of it, our past mistakes, sins and failures, as a huge anchor that weighs us down. It's effects are devastating – anxiety, depression, insomnia, hypertension, and ulcers. Guilt can poison every part of our life. The good news is that because of God's gift, you don't have to carry around the anchor of guilt that weighs you down."

DISCUSS:

Why is it dangerous to our health (mental, physical, spiritual) to live with unresolved guilt?

LEADER:

We are designed to be relational creatures. In Matthew 22 we are instructed in the Great Commandment by Jesus, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" The two biggest commands we have been given is to love God, and love others, when guilt gets in the way of that our natural tendency is to hold back and isolate ourselves which leads to a laundry list of negative outcomes in our life.

OBSERVE:

In the next passage, God is speaking through the prophet Micah, declaring his love for the people of Israel despite the consistent lack of faithfulness. Micah praises God for continuously overlooking the flaws of the people of Israel.

READ: Micah 7:18-19 (NLT)

“Where is another God like you, who pardons the guilt of the remnant, overlooking the sins of his special people? You will not stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing unfailing love. Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!”

LEADER:

Not only does God forgive us when we have wronged him, but he also chooses to forget it. The verse is so easy to say, “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” But it’s hard for us to view things in the big picture, or with a God perspective, because we live in the moment. Often, when we have let issues cool down, we notice that things were blown way out of proportion.

DISCUSS:

- In what ways have you experienced the burden of bitterness lifted when you’ve forgiven?
- Is there anyone who you need to forgive right now? What have they done to you?
- What about anyone who you need to ask for forgiveness from? How have you wronged them?

LEARN HUMBLY

ICE BREAKER QUESTION:

Have you ever been in the middle of a storm? It probably depends where you live or grew up, but every area of the world experiences storms! What kind of storms have you experienced, and what was the worst storm you've ever experienced? How did you react to it?

LEADER:

This week's study will be all about how we react to things in a way that honors God. Often, life throws some tough things at us. Paul's reaction in the middle of a storm can teach us that while we can't always control what happens to us in life, we can always control how we respond to it.

READ: Acts 27:14-20 (NLT)

"But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a "northeaster") burst across the island and blew us out to sea. The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale. We sailed along the sheltered side of a small island named Cauda, where with great difficulty we hoisted aboard the lifeboat being towed behind us. Then the sailors bound ropes around the hull of the ship to strengthen it. They were afraid of being driven across the sandbars of Syrtis off the African coast, so they lowered the sea anchor to slow the ship and were driven before the wind. The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. The following day they even took some of the ships gear and threw it overboard. The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone."

DISCUSS:

If you were in Paul's situation, in the middle of a storm, on a boat that was seemingly destined to sink, with a crew that had lost hope, how would you respond?

LEADER:

We can learn from Paul's example as he remained calm in the midst of the crisis. He was the only one on board who stayed confident, because he chose to look beyond the storm. He could see beyond the raging waters and gale-force winds to an upcoming positive change. Human nature inclines us to look only at the immediate problem and collateral damage rather than any potential positive outcomes. We become negative, depressed, and desperate to escape from our pain and discomfort rather than look beyond the long-term effects. Often we blame God and become bitter that He doesn't immediately alleviate our situation.

DISCUSS:

How do you react to difficult things in your life?

PASTOR KERRY AND CHRIS SHOOK:

"God doesn't cause the painful changes in our lives, but He uses them and wants to bring good out of them. One way He does this is by growing our character. Psychologist John Townsend says immaturity is demanding that reality adapt to you. In the storms, immature people think, If reality goes my way, then I'm really happy, feeling great. If reality doesn't go my way, I'm miserable, and I will let everyone know it. Maturity, on the other hand, adapts to reality. And it's never easy. We're forced to acknowledge our weakness, set aside our way of doing things, and get in sync with a different, sometimes jarring, rhythm."

READ: James 1:2-5 (NLT)

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking."

DISCUSS:

Why does the book of James say to “consider it an opportunity for great joy” to face things that are difficult in your life? Do you have this same attitude?

LEADER:

Having a positive attitude in the middle of difficulties is an extremely difficult thing to do. The difference of Paul and the other people on board the ship is not the circumstance, it's what they fix their eyes on. If we focus on what is good, primarily God, it allows us to be able to not be shaken by a storm, but to use it as an opportunity for joy!

READ: Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:18 (NLT)

“So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”

DISCUSS:

How do you think you could change your mind and focus in the middle of a struggle or a storm?

CONCLUSION:

The reality is that storms in our life will always happen, but we get to choose how we react to storms that do come. By fixing our eyes on what is good, and remembering that God is with us and for us, it allows us to see a storm as a great opportunity for joy instead of a moment that invites fear.

LEAVE BOLDLY

ICE BREAKER GAME: BEACH BALL GAME

Blow up a beach ball or use any other sports ball. Write questions on the ball or on sticky notes. Toss it up in the air and have students catch it. Where their right thumb lands, that's the question you have to answer.

Sample questions (*can be fun or spiritual*):

1. What do you want to be when you grow up?
2. Where do you want to go to college?
3. What is something you want out of this school year?
4. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

READ: Psalm 112:1-9 (NLT)

“Praise the Lord! How joyful are those who fear the Lord and delight in obeying his commands. Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of godly people will be blessed. They themselves will be wealthy, and their good deeds will last forever. Light shines in the darkness for the godly. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous. Good comes to those who lend money generously and conduct their business fairly. Such people will not be overcome by evil. Those who are righteous will be long remembered. They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly. They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does the Psalmist say about the children of God?
- How will they be remembered? (think back to the qualities)

- What does it mean to confidently trust in the Lord?
- How does the Psalmist describe those when facing fears? Are you confident and fearless?
- Are you in a place where you will have influence and honor?

LEADER:

The Psalmist describes them as GENEROUS, COMPASSIONATE, AND RIGHTEOUS. And they will be remembered for those qualities. Everyone leaves a legacy whether they realize it or not. We are told to spend our lives getting the perfect job, buying the perfect house, driving the perfect car and saving for the perfect retirement. But if we die tomorrow, none of these things will matter. Our lives may be temporary, but they will make an eternal impact.

I think Maya Angelou said it best when she said: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” People are our legacy. One day our friends and family will all gather together at our funeral. That room will only be filled with the people whose lives were forever changed by how we lived ours, not surrounded by all the things you achieved.

DISCUSS:

- What will people at your funeral say? Things like “oh, she was funny” or “he was really smart” or will they say that you were BOLD in the way you spoke to others about Jesus, the way you loved others and how you lived?
- What do you think will matter at the end of your life? How you loved God and loved others, or all the “stuff” you have? And why?

PASTOR KERRY AND CHRIS SHOOK:

“You have been given an extraordinary gift—your life. You have an exceptional calling—to be the very best YOU that God created you to be. Your goal is to unwrap this gift and use all that you’ve been given in the pursuit of what matters most- loving God and loving other people.”

LEADER:

If you read through the book of Acts, it tells the testimonies of the early church and how they spoke BOLDY no matter what. Did they get persecuted and throw in jail? Absolutely! But they knew it was worth it for the sake of Jesus and multiplying the kingdom.

READ: Acts 4:31-34 (NIV)

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.”

DISCUSS:

- Are you filled with boldness today?
- What is the Lord asking of you that requires you to step out in faith?
- Do we live with one heart and mind with our family? (extends to church family)

LEADER:

At the end of the day, what does it mean to leave boldly? We hear the saying “Be Bold” all the time within the church setting, but what are you (yes, you leaders and then challenge the students) truly doing to be bold and leave a lasting impression on the world around you? In all reality, none of us are promised tomorrow, as Jesus promises a fulfilling life but not a long one. Were you able to love people well? Did you speak into the hearts and lives of those around you? Are you living out your faith in a bold and authentic way so that others notice the life transformation and see the Light in you?

DISCUSS:

- How did you live boldly this week that will last longer than you? Did the people around you this week notice that you love God and love them?
- How can you start to prioritize the things that actually matter? What is holding you back?



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