This study guide will help you think through and apply the concepts taught in the book, *How to Live Right When Your Life Goes Wrong*. This study is not a substitute for reading the book, but is meant to be a supplemental guide to facilitate discussion about personal change in a supportive environment.
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Part 1: What Moves Our Heart to Change Our Ways?

1. Do you think knowing the truth about Jesus makes you a Christian? Why or why not? (The answer is no.)

2. What do you think is the difference between informational truth and transformational truth?

Reflect on the following quote. John Piper says, “Satan has more true thoughts about God in one day than anyone of us would have in a lifetime, but he is not a Christian. The problem with the devil is not in his theology; he knows the truth. It is in his heart. He has no desire for God.”

3. If you were to write a statement that characterized your relationship with God up to this point, what would it be?

Here are some ways saints wrote of their relationship with God:

- Abraham said of his relationship with God: “For the Lord, in whose presence I have walked.” Genesis 24:40
- David was described as “David, a man after God’s own heart.” Acts 13:22 NLT
- The apostle John described himself as the “disciple that Jesus loved.” John 13:23 NLT

Each of these statements said something significant about the way they experienced God.

4. Ask yourself, is my relationship with God more about what I know or who I love?

Although good theology is important, it is NOT sufficient in developing a deep relationship with God.

**Prayer:** Ask God for a greater desire for Him for that is what begins to move our heart to change our ways. We are looking for transformation not merely knowledge. Loving God changes us from the inside out.
Study Guide for How to Live Right When Your Life Goes Wrong

Chapter One  Rules Don’t Change Us, Relationships Do

Study Questions

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. Think about the people who have significantly influenced your life. How have they changed it? Was it for the better or the worse?

2. What do you think about the author’s statement “we have seen Christianity as more contractual than personal?” Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

3. Read John 17:3 where Jesus describes what eternal life is. Have you viewed it this way in the past? How have you sought to “know God” in the past? What has that phrase meant to you?

4. Paul prays in Philippians 3:10 that he would count everything rubbish compared to knowing Christ. What are some of the things that hinder you from putting your relationship with Christ as your top priority?

5. Read Hebrews 11:6. What does this verse indicate that might help rearrange your priorities? What kind of rewards do you think the writer of Hebrews is speaking about? Why do you think we struggle with believing God?

6. The author shares several ways how to know God better. In what ways does listening help you get to know someone more fully? Is there a difference between hearing someone and truly listening to him/her?

7. How do you feel when your spouse or good friend doesn’t listen to your perspective or feelings? What about when they don’t believe you, or care about how you feel? How would that impact your relationship with that person?

8. What things could you do to listen for God’s voice more?

"Conversion is the creation of new desires, not just new duties, new delights, not just new deeds, new treasures, not just new tasks."

John Piper, When I Don’t Desire God
9. Read John 6: 28, 29 and listen to what Jesus is saying to you through these verses. Pray to listen to God as he speaks his word to you through the scriptures.

10. Why is it so hard to believe (trust) God?

11. Listening is important but it is only the first step in knowing God. What other things does the author emphasize are important if we are to know God better so that we can trust and believe him?

**Homework:**

Read Psalm 27:8 preferably out of the New Living Bible.

What is your response? The psalmist responded, “Lord, I am coming.”

Pray that you would have a commitment to come and talk with God and deepen your intimacy with him.
Part II: The TRUTH Principle

Chapter Two Troubles and Trials: The Lathe that Shapes Our Heart

It is difficult to live in the truth of God's reality in our everyday life, especially when he allows trials and troubles to touch our lives.

The goal for this week is to train our spiritual senses (the eyes of our heart as Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:18), so that we learn how to see the reality and presence of God all around us, especially in life’s difficulties.

Two great obstacles in the life of a believer are unbelief and forgetfulness. Unbelief was touched upon last week, and forgetfulness will be emphasized this week. We are prone to forgetting God, even when he has been very good to us (see Deuteronomy 6:10-12).

Satan’s desire is to keep us sleeping spiritually (being unaware of spiritual realities) or to give us spiritual amnesia so that we will forget who we are and why we are here. His primary strategies are to dull our appetites for God by keeping us satisfied with the temporal blessings of life instead of hungering after God or to create havoc in our lives (like Job) so that we will doubt God’s goodness and love.

In this chapter we will begin to look at the troubles of life and how God uses the hardest of times as well as the minor irritating difficulties of life to teach us more about him, drawing us into a deeper relationship with him.

The word TRUTH can be used as an acronym which can serve as a tool to help us remember how to handle our trials in a godly way. Just as the Israelites were taught in Numbers 15:37 to make tassels on the corners of their garments so that they would remember God, we can do things today that will constantly remind us to look for the spiritual meaning in every situation.

"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."
Psalm 16:11
Study Guide for How to Live Right When Your Life Goes Wrong

1. Do you believe it’s possible to see all of your troubles through God’s perspective, to live in an “eternal dimension” every day? Why or why not?

2. Read John 12:27-28 and Philippians 2:5-8. What is the attitude of Christ when he submits to his Father?

3. Think about one of the greatest troubles you have faced and how you handled it. Do you find it easier to trust God with the “toughies” or the everyday annoyances? Why?

4. The author states, “God doesn’t ask us to understand him. Instead, he wants us to trust him.” Read Job 1:6-2:10 and pretend you’re Job. If you lost everything, would God be enough? Why or why not?

5. What have you found to be the most comforting response you’ve received from others when you’re in pain? Why do you think this was helpful to you, and how can this insight help you be more sensitive to others when they’re hurting?

6. The ones we lean on in the midst of adversity reveal a lot about who we are. Think about who you call in the midst of your troubles. Is the person a caring friend who gives wise counsel or someone who tells you what you want to hear?

7. Do you believe God loves us when he allows others to sin against us? Reflect on how you respond in this type of situation. Would you change anything?

8. The author reflects on God’s will primarily being in the area of spiritual maturity and that he often uses suffering to develop godly character. Is this a new idea to you? How have you seen understanding God’s will and has this chapter helped you understand it any differently?

9. If the decisions you make lead to poor or unexpected results, do you question if you acted on God’s will or missed it altogether? Explain.

10. What scriptures (if any) do you cling to during your troubles? Jot them down. Consider memorizing them (if you haven’t already).

Homework:

Read aloud the verse from the preface of Chapter 2, James 1:2-4, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

For more information, go to www.leslievernick.com
For questions, send email to leslie@leslievernick.com
Seeing our lives from God’s perspective grants us the strength to endure suffering in a positive light and also enables us to persevere in the darkest nights. Through it all, we learn to wait and rely on him, and as we will see in the next chapter, these disciplines turn the tumultuous tide of our reactions into the solid concrete of mature responses.

Pray and ask the Lord to help you persevere during your trials by remembering to constantly seek his perspective and receive the joy that comes from knowing him in the midst of our trials.
Chapter Three  Our Response to Life’s Troubles

Often the troubles in our lives test the reality or the integrity of our faith. The test is for our benefit, revealing to us our heart’s weaknesses in our faith and trust in God. Sometimes we blame others, playing the waiting game, “I’ll change if and when you do.” Other times we feel forgotten, self-righteous, entitled to certain treatment, or like a martyr, hiding behind the “everything’s fine” routine.

God wants us to be honest with him about our feelings. He can take it. Our feelings ought to inform us, not control us. Identifying our feelings and understanding where they are coming from helps us better decide what to do with them. We will begin to understand and change our emotional response to our troubles in life when we think honestly and see the situation as God sees it.

The key to better understanding our emotions is to realize that they are not based on what is happening to us but on what we think is happening to us. Too often we focus on changing our behaviors and give little thought to what is going on in our heart. Proverbs 23:7 says, “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (KJV). Only when we begin to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ will he begin to reveal the lies we tell ourselves so that we can better understand what prevents us from achieving a more lasting change.

1. Think about a recent letdown, something meaningful, something really important like a relationship, a pregnancy, a diagnosis, etc. that you wanted but didn’t get. Did your faith fall apart? Why/why not?

2. Do you let yourself be honest with God, even when you’re angry? If so, how does this affect your relationship with him and the way you respond to trouble? If not, why?

3. When we allow God’s word to move from our head into our heart, we dare to ask the question, “Am I going to yield to God’s perspective, or am I going to cling to my version of reality?” Think of a time when you yielded to God’s perspective. How did that change the way you felt?
4. The author talks about our thoughts influencing our feelings. A.W. Tozer says, “Thinking stirs feeling and feeling triggers action. That is the way we are made and we may as well accept it.” How have you noticed your thoughts influencing your feelings and behaviors?

5. Our biggest “button-pushers” in life are usually the people we interact with and are closest to. Who in your life does God use to test you and help shave off your rough edges?

If and when we yield ourselves to God in prayer on behalf of another, especially our enemies, God can move our hearts to learn to respond in a right manner when we interact with them.

6. Getting out of the no-win, “I’ll change if and when you do” pattern happens when we begin to see that it is our relationship with God, not another person’s actions or lack of actions that will help us to grow, change and act right. How can we draw upon our relationship with God to overcome this deeply rooted relational pattern?

7. Thomas á Kempis said, “We must diligently search into and set in order both the outward and the inner man, because both of them are of importance to our progress in godliness.” God uses our troubles in life to help us grow up in him. Do you struggle to thank God for your troubles?

8. The author states that “too often we focus on changing our behaviors and give little thought to what is going on in our heart.” Do you keep a journal?

9. How much of what you write focuses mainly on the temporal – what’s happening to you rather than how God might be using the situation to shape you or use you?

10. We need to keep reminding ourselves what God is up to in order to fix our eyes on the eternal dimension of life. What specific ways can you think of to remind yourself to do this on a daily basis?

11. What’s the one thing you wish you could change in your response to troubles? What steps can you take to “reset” your ways?

**Homework:**

Start a Trouble/Feeling/Thought/Behavior journal as explained on pages 79-80.

Read Philippians 2:1-5. Developing the mind of Christ is essential to responding to troubles in a godly way.
Pray and ask the Lord to reveal the root cause of wrong behaviors, that you may respond in a godly way to the troubles God allows in your lives and that you will grow into the man/woman God created you to be.
Chapter Four  Underlying Idols of the Heart

It all started in the garden when Eve desired more than God gave her. Even in her idyllic setting, Eve desired knowledge and control more than she desired obeying and loving God.

Throughout the Old Testament, we watch the Israelites as well as pagan nations allow their desires to rule their emotions, their thinking, as well as their choices.

Before we can change, we must identify those things that have become more important to us than loving and obeying God.

1. Have you ever seen yourself as an idolater before reading this chapter? Why or why not? In what ways have your eyes been opened to the idea?

2. The author talks about three things that hinder our life with God: life’s worries, self-deception, and other desires of our heart. Which one of these three hinder you the most? What steps do you take (or can you take) to guard your heart against them?

3. Read Proverbs 27:20 NLT. How do you experience the truth of this verse, that human desire is never satisfied?

4. Reflect for a moment. What is the deepest desire of your heart? Is the love of God and the love for God controlling you and ordering your life? Or have you found that other desires, even legitimate and good ones, have crept into first place? What are they?

5. God wants your heart to love him first and foremost. What steps can you take to set your loves in order instead of allowing lesser loves to creep into first place?

6. What happens to you and in you when you don’t get what you want (desire)? Can you trust God with that loss or do you continue to press to get your own desires met?

7. The author related a story where a woman desired more consideration and fairness in her marriage (page 91, 92). Must we have consideration and fairness in marriage in order to live as Christ commands us? Why or why not? How can we tell when our desire to be treated properly by our spouse has grown from a normal healthy desire into an unhealthy idol?

"Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs." 
Jonah 2:8
8. Paul Tillich said, “Whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him.” Do you agree or disagree?

9. People’s legitimate desires typically cluster around the three themes of (1) security and comfort; (2) approval, admiration and affection; and (3) power and control. There is nothing sinfully wrong about wanting any of these things unless they rule our life. Which of these three themes most typically grabs your heart away from putting God first?

10. Read Matthew 4 on the temptations of Christ and notice how Satan sought to tempt Jesus in these three categories. What was Christ’s response?

11. In the sanctification process, God seeks to transform a person’s heart from a natural heart to a spiritual heart. He seeks to recapture our heart to return to him as he wants to be our first love (Mark 12:30). Read Romans 8:5. How might you fix your mind more on what the Spirit desires for you?

12. How much of a priority is God and his desires in your everyday life?

13. Setting our heart in order is making sure that we have submitted our heart – our affections, our mind, and our desires – to things that God says are good and right. Have you given God the right to rule you? Is he at the center of your heart because he is the desire of your heart?

**Homework:**

Read pages 98 to the top of 99 (*Litany of Humility*) aloud.

The above piece does a great job of putting us in our place before God’s throne. Acknowledging responsibility for our sin before God is vital to keeping him number one and avoiding the accumulation of idols in our lives.

Pray that the Lord would disclose to you any idols hidden in your heart and give you the strength to remove them permanently.
Chapter Five  

Truth: The Mirror to Our Heart

When our reason, logic, emotions, intuitions, or imaginations conflict with what God says, who are we going to believe? Who are we going to trust?

Our culture has lost confidence in objective truth apart from one’s sense of knowing something. “It may be true for you, but it’s not true for me.” Christians have bought into the lies of relativism, knowing what God says is true, but their own sense of things doesn’t quite believe it.

What is true and real can never be fully discerned by looking to self for the answer. We are vulnerable to being misled, confused, or deceived. In the Gospels, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth” more than seventy times, and in John 14:6, Jesus said that he is the Truth.

Rules about right living don’t change us; Jesus does. Only when we allow his truth to enter our heart and cause us to repent and to love and to obey God more can we see ourselves/our situations clearly, live rightly, and enjoy him fully.

1. “God doesn’t lie.” How do you think our culture in general perceives this statement?

2. Do you avoid truth tellers like scales, mirrors, photo-taking, etc.? Why or why not?

3. Read Psalm 25:1-10. Are these truths relevant to the faith struggles we have today? If so, how?

4. Can you think of a time when you trusted God, even when it didn’t seem to make sense? What was the outcome?

5. Oswald Chambers says prayer doesn’t always change a situation, prayer changes us. The author tells the story (pages 113-115) of when some unruly children, unattended to by their mentally absent father, irritated Steven Covey on the subway. When he asked the father to do something about his children, the father related the news that their mother had died an hour ago. How did knowing the whole story affect Covey’s frame of mind and emotions?

6. How might taking the time to listen to our story (trouble, or difficult life circumstance) from God’s perspective, the only One who knows the whole story, change us?

7. The author writes, “Believing by faith is one level of the Christian journey; walking by faith is another. To follow God’s truth is not to mentally agree with it; it is to radically
obey and follow it. It should change the way we live.” What do these statements mean to you? Are you walking and/or believing? How do you know this?

8. Practicing the presence of God means processing the reality of our daily experience with the truth of who God is and what he says. Take a minute and think about yesterday. What decisions did you have to make? Did you experience any pain, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual? How did scripture/prayer affect (if it did) those experiences? What would you do differently?

9. What’s one thing you can do daily to remind you to seek God’s perspective throughout the day?

10. Can you think of Bible characters that trusted God to guide them when they refused to back down from a difficult situation?

11. Do you believe it’s possible to have the kind of faith today that the above characters showed through the way they lived their lives? Why or why not? What are the obstacles?

**Homework:**

Faith uses the imagination to ponder what God has already promised. These promises become the foundation for our trust in him. We don’t always receive the promises in their entirety, but we believe they are coming. For now, let’s take encouragement from those who have gone on before us and finished the race well.

Read Hebrews 11 verse by verse.

Pray and ask the Lord to reveal the true condition of your heart. Ask him to help you walk by faith, not by sight, reason, emotion or sheer willpower. By “faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).
Chapter Six  

Our Heart’s Response to God’s Truth

Have you ever found yourself caught on the hamster wheel, stuck in a sin pattern that you can’t seem to conquer? True repentance requires both turning from our sin and turning to God. He wants our hearts first, then our habits.

Many of us try to change our negative behavior on our own, but therein lays the problem. We can’t really change unless we surrender to God’s Spirit working in our lives. If we’re doing something we know we shouldn’t and simply try harder not to do it, God gets no glory because he didn’t change us. We changed ourselves or at least we think we changed until the problem resurfaces a few years, months, or even meals later.

1. When you know you’ve sinned, how long does it take you to “get right” with God? Is your typical pattern to avoid him or do you run into his presence to be forgiven and reconciled?

2. Read Romans 2:4. How does seeing God’s kindness help motivate us to live differently?

3. Has there ever been someone who did something so kind, so sacrificial that it changed the way you lived? If so, share it with the group.

4. Read Luke 7:36-50 about the sinful woman who anointed Jesus’ feet. Why did Jesus say those who were forgiven much, love much? What is the response of the person who is forgiven little?

5. God doesn’t expect us to be good apart from his working in us. If so, then why are we so horrified when we sin? Do you struggle to admit you’re a sinner in some areas and not others? Why or why not?

6. The author writes, “The appropriate response to seeing ourselves truthfully is humility, not self-hatred.” What is the difference between humility and self-hatred?

7. Fénelon said, “Sensitive pride cannot bear to see itself imperfect.” God gives us a good, hard look at our true condition, but we must be humble to see it. True repentance is a heart response to God’s holiness and Christ’s sacrifice. All of this evokes thanksgiving, love, obedience – a change of heart, a change of life. Do you find yourself being thankful for being forgiven or are you more miserable that you’re still a sinner? How is gratitude a key to loving and obeying God?
8. Look at the diagram on page 130. Notice both circles representing the victorious Christian life. When we stumble and fall into sin, how can we still walk by faith?

9. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. Which kind of sorrow do you tend toward most? The sorrow unto repentance or the sorrow unto death? What have you learned in this chapter that can help you move from sorrow unto death toward sorrow unto repentance the next time you sin?

10. Sin always leads to broken relationships not only with God but often with other people. What recurring sins (often associated with our idolatry) have affected your relationships at home? Anger? Pride? Controlling behaviors? Bitterness and resentment? Greed? Jealousy? Is there one in particular the Holy Spirit is shining his light on right now?

11. Obedience flows from a heart that loves God too much to disappoint him with a wasted life. In this step of the TRUTH Principle, God wants you to repent and desire to change. Are you willing?

Homework:

Write a short Psalm or prayer to God for what he has done for you, a heart-felt response to his grace and mercy.

Pray and ask God to give you a deep love for him. Take some time to commit yourself anew to the Lord.
Part III: The Pathway to Spiritual Maturity and a Lasting Change of Heart

Chapter Seven  Living to Please God

Practical Application of the TRUTH Principle

Learning to look at troubles as Christ did can be painful, but trusting that God has a purpose for our trials brings us into a deeper awareness of his nature. Discovering this is part of the maturing process as Christians.

A recipe for a delicious cake amounts to no more than a pretty index card unless the information it holds is understood and applied, producing a scrumptious dessert. We don’t want to sit in church on Sundays soaking up sermons or at home reading Scripture without having made a decision to DO what it says.

James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” We’re only kidding ourselves if we think we can “play Christian” and go through the motions of the “church game” and still handle the storms of life in a Christ-like way.

Thus far you have studied the five steps of The TRUTH Principle, now it’s time to put them into practice in a holistic way.

1. Have you memorized the five steps of The TRUTH Principle? You won’t remember them in a panic or when you’re overly emotional. The time to prepare is now.

   **T. Trouble**  What is your trouble? Are you looking for what God might be up to in the midst of your trouble?

   **R. Response**  What is your response to your trouble? What are you thinking, feeling, and how are you responding in the midst of your difficulty?
U. **Underlying Idols**  What do you want the most? What do you love? What do you fear? What takes first place in your heart?

T. **Truth**  Whose reality do you most trust? Your own thoughts and feelings or God’s Word?

H. **Heart’s Response**  What is your response to God’s truth? Are you indifferent? Rebellious? Repentant?

2. Do you more easily look for God in the minor irritations of life or the major storms? What could you do to practice being more God-aware this week when difficulties hit?

3. Only God can know the purpose for all our troubles. Can you think of a time when you moved through disappointment in a godly way? Were your kids or other people watching, and if so, how did your response affect them positively or negatively?

4. “For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). What typically comes out of your mouth when you are in the midst of a trouble? What does it reveal about what’s going on in your heart?

5. Look at Chart 7.1 and 7.2. Can you relate to the way Carol and Phillip processed their trouble, and some of the thoughts he/she thought and the feelings he/she felt? How so?

6. How do you generally respond when you’ve blown it and responded poorly? Do you avoid talking about it, blame others, rationalize or make excuses for yourself? What action plan will help you start taking personal responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and actions?

7. Desires that rule us are often good and legitimate desires that have grown too important. The quickest way to ask yourself if your desires have become idolatrous is to watch your reaction when you don’t get what you want. Earlier we talked about the 3 centers that our desires typically cluster around, (1) security and comfort, (2) affirmation, appreciation, affection, (3) power and control. What idols have you identified that most commonly rule your heart instead of the love of Christ?

8. Once you’ve identified some of your idols, how do you hear God speaking to you about them? For example, people pleasing behavior might typically cluster around the desire for affirmation and appreciation. When it rules you, you are in bondage to what people think and are snared by the fear of man. The idol of power and control might manifest itself through angry outbursts when people don’t do what you want them to. Laziness and peacekeeping behavior might indicate idols around security and comfort. As you begin to identity some of your idols, how do you feel?
9. Think through some typical “troubles” you experienced this week. Can you walk yourself through the first three steps of The TRUTH Principle? Once you take responsibility for your response and identify whether you have a ruling idol, can you hear what God is saying to you in that moment? It might be “let go” or “trust me” or “watch your tongue” or “fear not”. What do you hear him saying to you?

   Truth is not in us – it’s in him. How can he help you know the truth about your trouble?

10. Does the reality of your relationship with God meet you in your deepest need? Do you really trust him? How can asking these two questions in the mist of our trouble help us?

11. Seeing the truth does not profit us if we don’t act on it. What is your heart’s response to what God is showing you?

**Homework:**

Think back over the week to a trouble you faced, one that you didn’t handle well. Using The TRUTH Principle, run your situation through all five steps and jot down your answers.

Next, jot down what you would do differently if this situation happened tomorrow. Make a conscious decision to take time everyday to examine, under the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, your troubles and your responses to them.

Pray for God to give you the discipline, discernment, and courage to daily apply the TRUTH principle to all of your troubles.
Chapter Eight  

The Big Picture  

Using the TRUTH Principle to Reveal Idolatrous Life Themes

Our goal in applying the TRUTH principle is to experience deeper personal change in pervasive habits that will help us in times of trouble. Only by consistently applying what we’ve learned will we see a difference in our behavior, our thought patterns, and our overall relationship with God and others.

Obtaining wise counsel in our walk with the Lord is essential to making these changes happen for the long haul. Not only do these older and wiser saints who have weathered many storms encourage us when the going gets tough, but they also hopefully hold us accountable to live according to biblical principles.

Maturity is always a process. Pride can easily flare up during this process, so we must constantly keep our eyes on Christ, ensuring that he is the one desire of our heart.

1. Do you ever use God as a “psychic errand-boy” rattling off your wish list in prayer but not really taking time to listen? Why? Is it our fear or our flesh that sometimes inhibits open communication with him?

2. Proverbs 15:32 says, “He who ignores discipline despises himself.” How does a disciplined life indicate a proper self-love? Our culture often endorses indulgence as a means of self-soothing. Do you find yourself shopping, watching too much television, or overeating in order to cope with the difficulties in your life? If not, how do you cope?

3. We were never created to mature without wise and loving helpers who can encourage us and hold us accountable. Right now, who in your life influences you the most? Is this person older/younger than you? Are they mature in their walk with the Lord?

4. Wanting to be rid of troubles and wanting the people who care about us to meet our needs are two human heart desires. Can you relate to these? Giving them up or surrendering them to God doesn’t seem fair somehow. How can we willingly yield both to the Father as Jesus did and still enjoy the abundant life God promises us?

When your eye is good your whole body is filled with light.  

Matthew 6:32
5. We don’t tend to challenge what we want. This can come back to bite us, especially if we let it override the Holy Spirit part of us that really does want to change and mature. How can we prevent this from happening?

6. Refer to Charts 8.2 and 8.3 on pages 165 and 166 and review the broader themes of idolatry that keep us stuck in repetitive sinful patterns. Where do you see yourself on these negative personality traits or sinful tendencies? When you “see” what is ruling your heart, then what? Does it help you or upset you?

7. Controller, People-Pleaser, or Self-Indulger – which tendency do you lean towards the most? In the past, have you consciously made an effort to change your ways? Think of some things that have worked for you and/or practical steps you can develop to help you combat the pitfalls of these human tendencies.

**Homework:**

Recite the components of the TRUTH principle. Work to apply it to a trouble you face this week.

Pray for the Lord to help you make decisions for lasting change in your life and to implement behavioral changes that will lead to ongoing growth and freedom in Christ.
Chapter Nine  
Disciplines of the Heart  
*Training Ourselves in the Ways of God*

Training ourselves in the ways of God involves faithfully learning a new way of thinking, seeing and responding to life. It involves making a series of choices again and again to believe God, trust him and do what he tells us.

1. Read Deuteronomy 30:19, 20. What are our choices and what are the consequences of our choices both for our life and the lives of our children?

2. The author states, “It is not enough to stop doing wrong things as a Christian; we need to daily practice doing the right things. The opportunity for practice comes in the ordinary, everyday situations of life, not in the extraordinary God moments. When those special moments happen, we want to be ready.” How has practicing the steps of The TRUTH Principle helped you change some of your responses in difficult situations?

3. Read Ezekiel 33:31-32. What happens in our relationship with God when we pretend to follow him or love him but fail to actually put into practice the things he says are important?

4. The author says, “A disciplined life doesn’t come about by deciding; it comes about through practices.” Do you agree or disagree? What are the benefits of a disciplined life?

5. Dallas Willard says that, “They [spiritual disciplines] teach us an inner posture of not having to have our way, which relieves us of one of our greatest burdens.” How does having to have our own way create a burden for us? How does having to have our own way all the time impact our relationship with others and with God?

6. What other benefit can learning and practicing spiritual disciplines provide? What are the pitfalls?

7. The author states, “The discipline of worship takes our eyes off our circumstances and focuses them on Christ, lifting and calming our spirits, reminding us that we can rest in the knowledge and assurance that he is almighty God, in control even when we don’t understand.” Have you ever thought of worship as a spiritual discipline that could help you when a difficult time came?

"He who ignores discipline despises himself."  
Proverbs 15:32
How might you discipline yourself to worship God when you’re not in church?

8. Do you love to pray? Think about your prayer life and how difficult it is to stay present to God. Prayer can be a spiritual battle because Satan does not want us to pray. What can you practice to keep yourself aware of God’s presence in your life?

9. Read Matthew 14:23 and Luke 5:16. Jesus often sought out lonely places, places of solitude, to pray. How do you “get alone” with God? Do you have a special place, a certain time of day, etc.?

10. Meditation focuses our intellect, reason, imagination, and will on a particular topic, story, verse, or image, allowing God to speak to our heart in specific ways. Can you think of something particular that God has spoken to you in a unique way during a time of mediation and study? How has that helped you grow closer to God?

11. The author states, “Whatever holds your heart to the world and away from God will rule you”. Fasting as a spiritual discipline helps us detach our heart from these things so that they no longer control our time or attention. Do you fast regularly? Why or why not? What makes that so difficult to do? Would you be willing to try this discipline?

12. Timothy said that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Timothy 6:6). Sometimes our heart is attached to good things, but they hinder a deeper trust in God. Are you content with what God has given you without holding it too tightly? Are you able to accept the good with the bad, trusting God at all times? How might practicing the discipline of simplicity help you?

13. Will you devote yourself to be close to God? Discipline yourself to do something different, implementing one of the spiritual disciplines we studied in this chapter. Which discipline are you focusing on? It’s not about being in the mood or feeling like it, just do it. Your emotions are one part of you. Exercise your will and do it, opening your heart wide to God and remembering that lasting change comes about through habitual practice.

Homework:

Read the following quote:

“To worship God is to fix my gaze on the loveliness of Christ in such a way that my emotions become one with my faith and belief in God. At that point, worship becomes more than an intellectual acknowledgement. It becomes a heartfelt experience.”
Pray and ask that God would make this the experience of your life, that you would be ravished by the pleasures of knowing God throughout the week.
Chapter Ten  A New Way of Life  

**Becoming Our True Self In Christ**

The TRUTH principle helps us to see each moment from God’s perspective so that we can understand that he’s in control of it and has a purpose in it. As we walk with him more and more, our love and trust in him will grow and produce a beautiful intimacy worth waiting for.

Only when we put him above everything and everyone else can this happen, but nothing pleases him more. God is delighted and glorified when we humbly recognize our need for his love, his grace, his forgiveness to live each moment of our life. He delights in our helplessness and dependence on him.

1. What do you think of the idea that our destiny as human beings is to reflect God’s image in our human body (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)? If someone were to look at your life, would they mostly see Jesus? What parts of your life look like Jesus? What parts look still like your old self?

2. The author states, “Dying to self begins after a person has come to understand that he/she has a self to die to. Many people stay immature because they don’t do the hard work involved in knowing who they are and what they want.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

3. How have you failed to “know yourself” in the past? Has studying the 5 steps of The TRUTH Principle helped you know yourself better? What have you learned about yourself?

4. The author writes, “We will never be more fully our true self than when we fully abandon ourselves to God and die to our old self.” As a result of practicing The TRUTH Principle have you had any experience of feeling more alive and more your true self? How did that feel?

“Abandonment is being satisfied with the present moment... because you know that whatever that moment has, it contains--in that instant--God's eternal plan for you.”

Jean Guyon
5. What ways have you learned to live wholly in the moment applying The TRUTH Principle?

6. How have you begun to live wholly in the moment using the steps of The TRUTH Principle?

7. Read 2 Peter 1:3-11 and review these questions:
   - What has God given us in order to live as he called us to? Vs 3, 4
   - What is the result of living as he called us to? Vs 4
   - As a response to that truth, what are we called to do? Vs 5-7
   - As we do this, what will be the result? Vs 8
   - What is one reason we fail to develop? Vs 9

8. What can we do to not forget?

**Homework:**

Take a few minutes to remember the one thing that has made the biggest impact on you during this study.

Read 2 Timothy 1:7.

Pray for God to grant you the strength, courage, and discipline to remember and apply the TRUTH principle to your life.
THE SLOW STITCH

Every morning I awake,
   How will we be together today, Blessed One?
   Life takes a curious turn.

Self, once so familiar
   being knit again by your hand.

Tears surprise and flow.
   They have their own life in me.
Voice, most trusted of instruments,
   no longer responds to the pitch and tone of
   my choosing.

Heart--broken, healed, broken, healed, broken and
   healed again,
   now laid bare, open, waiting.
   And waiting...and waiting...and waiting.

What Lord? What?
   Wait child, wait.
   "Next" will come as gift and grace.

I believe you, Holy One. I trust you. I wait
Born from the deep, heaven placed in me
   comes the next of your hand.

I feel you knitting away
   tenderly, gently, with purpose.

In the meantime, each day I awake.
   How to be me? How to be yours?
   When the self I have been
      is no longer the self that I am,
      and not yet the self you see.

Knit faster O Lord
   Or teach me to love the slow stitch.

by Gina Gilland Campbell