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# *Better*



*DISCIPLESHIP FROM  
THE INSIDE OUT*

*SMALL GROUP LESSONS*



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## INTRODUCING “BETTER: DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT”

Discipleship isn't just about what we know but who we are becoming. The call to follow Jesus is an invitation to a transformed life. Jesus calls us to a *better* way, one that begins in the heart and flows outward into every thought, every word, every relationship, and every decision.

When Jesus called His disciples, He reshaped their priorities, their values, and their way of life. As they walked with Him day by day, their character and conduct began to reflect His. That same transformation is His goal for us through the daily, patient work of His Spirit forming us from the inside out.

This series, *Better: Discipleship from the Inside Out*, takes that vision seriously. If we want to grow as disciples of Jesus, we must begin with the most foundational area of leadership, the leadership of our own lives. Self-leadership in the Christian life is not about willpower or self-improvement; it's about daily surrender to Christ and intentionally cultivating habits of life that align with His way.

Over the coming weeks, we will explore six areas where Jesus calls us to grow: missionally, emotionally, collaboratively, intellectually, physically, and relationally. These aren't separate compartments to check off, but connected aspects of a whole life shaped by the gospel. As we grow in one, we find the others strengthened. This is what discipleship does, it works from the inside out, touching every part of who we are.

While this series draws inspiration from Mac Lake's *Leading Yourself*, our purpose is not to teach a book but to preach the Bible. His framework provides a helpful structure, but the heart of this series is God's Word, anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ, and aimed at the transformation of His people.

Our prayer is that we will not only learn about the better way, but that we will live it. That we will see where our lives are divided and invite the Spirit to bring wholeness. That we will not settle for partial discipleship, but pursue an integrated life of faith that is shaped by Christ in every part, from the inside out.

## WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Our small group series is built around many of the key ideas found in *Leading Yourself* by Mac Lake.

This practical and insightful book is a valuable companion to the discussions we'll be having together. If you're looking to grow in personal leadership, character, and spiritual maturity, we highly recommend picking up a copy to read alongside the weekly lessons.

DISCIPLING LEADERS SERIES

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# Better

## MISSIONALLY



Luke 12:13-21 & Matthew 28:18-20

Many people live busy lives, but few live on mission. Jesus didn't leave His followers with a vague sense of purpose. He gave them a clear mission: "Make disciples." That mission isn't just for professional pastors or missionaries; it's for every follower of Christ. It's a mission grounded in Jesus' authority, guided by His instruction, and empowered by His presence.

As a church, we summarize this calling in our mission to: Discover, Develop, and Deploy Disciples. We want to help people discover new life in Christ, develop into fully formed followers of Jesus, and deploy their lives in service to His Kingdom. However, mission drift is a genuine concern, and many well-intentioned believers become distracted or discouraged. Today's study calls us back to the core of why we're here.

## ICEBREAKER

What's something you once got excited about (a hobby, skill, or project) but slowly drifted away from over time?

## READ IT

Read Luke 12:13-21 & Matthew 28:18-20

## GET IT

1. In the passage from Luke, what mission was the man in Jesus' parable consumed with?

2. What is the lesson Jesus is teaching in this parable?
3. In Matthew 28, what are the key components of the mission Jesus gave His disciples?
4. On what authority does Jesus give this mission?
5. What promise does Jesus give us in carrying out this mission?

## LIVE IT

In Luke 12:13–21, Jesus tells a parable about a man who experienced a good thing: “his land produced plentifully”. But instead of seeing his success as an opportunity to bless others or advance God's purposes, he hoarded his gain, tore down his barns to build bigger ones, and planned a life of comfort: “relax, eat, drink, and be merry.”

His fatal mistake wasn't theft or immorality; it was living as if his life belonged to him. This story is a sobering reminder for disciples today: even good things like success, security, or even leisure, can quietly drift us away from God's mission for us.

In a culture that prizes comfort and personal freedom, many believers are tempted to trade missional living for manageable living. But Jesus doesn't call us to build bigger barns, He calls us to build His Kingdom.

6. Jesus critiques the rich man not for being rich, but for storing up treasure for himself and not being “rich toward God.” What do you think it means to be “rich toward God”?
7. In what ways are comfort, security, or leisure potentially shaping your decisions more than Christ's mission right now?

- 8. If an objective observer were to observe your life, your time, priorities, and conversations, what would they say your life's mission is? How does that align with the mission Christ has called you to?**

John Piper famously said, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."<sup>1</sup> The reason we "go" is because there are people who do not yet know the joy of treasuring Christ.

Empowered by Jesus' authority, we go into the world to proclaim who He is and to persuade others to follow Him. When people "observe all that [Jesus] commanded," they aren't merely following rules, they're aligning their lives with the One who is worthy of their devotion and worship.

Our church embraces this mission through our commitment to "Discover, Develop, and Deploy Disciples." We want to help people discover new life in Christ, develop into spiritually mature followers, and deploy their gifts and lives for God's Kingdom, wherever He has placed them. This mission isn't just for church leaders; it belongs to all of us who follow Jesus.

- 9. Piper's quote reminds us that this mission is needed not only here but also around the world. How can your pursuit of worship fuel your desire to reach others?**

- 10. What's the difference between "observing all that Jesus commanded" and simply trying to be a good person? How can we help others see that difference?**

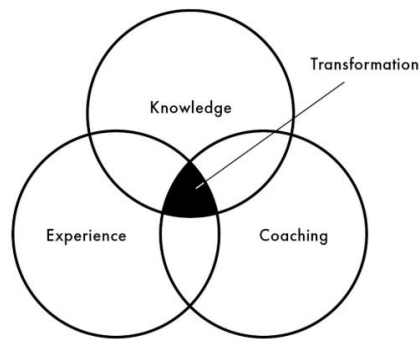
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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), p. 11.

11. What are some common barriers that keep everyday Christians from embracing this mission as their own? How can we help each other overcome them?

When Jesus said to teach people to “observe” everything He commanded, He wasn’t just talking about content delivery. Biblical discipleship is transformational, not just informational. Mac Lake outlines three key elements necessary for spiritual transformation:

- Knowledge – Learning the truths of Scripture
- Experience – Obeying and applying what’s been learned
- Coaching – Receiving feedback and encouragement along the way



This aligns with how Jesus trained His disciples: He taught them (knowledge), sent them out (experience), and debriefed them when they returned (coaching; cf. Luke 9–10).<sup>2</sup>

12. Where do you see these areas of transformational discipleship involved in the mission Jesus gave His followers in Matthew 28?

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<sup>2</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: Developing the Character and Competency to Lead Yourself* (Tampa, FL: Multiply Group, 2020), xvi–xvii.



**13. Which of the three areas – knowledge, experience, or coaching – has played the most significant role in your growth as a disciple?**

**14. What happens when we neglect one of these? (E.g., *Knowledge + Practice but no coaching, or Practice + Coaching but no knowledge*)**

Living on mission isn't just about going somewhere; it's about being someone God can work through, wherever you are. Jesus' command to "make disciples" assumes participation from all believers, not just pastors or ministry staff. That means each of us is uniquely wired for Kingdom impact.

Mac Lake emphasizes the importance of self-leadership through the discovery and deployment of our skills, passions, and spiritual gifts.

This echoes 1 Peter 4:10, where Peter urges, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." The Apostle Paul similarly describes the church as a body made up of many parts, each playing its own essential role (Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12).

**15. What are some personal skills and passions you feel God has given you and how have you seen those gifts affirmed by others in your life?**

16. What are some reasons people (yourself included) might hold back from using their gifts for God's mission?

17. How well are you currently leveraging your God-given strengths and passions to live effectively on mission?

18. Take a moment to consider your strengths, passions, and desired impact and write out a specific mission statement for your own life.

*Example: "To encourage and equip (STRENGTHS) leaders (PASSION) to multiply multipliers. (DESIRED IMPACT)"*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: Developing the Character and Competency to Lead Yourself* (Tampa, FL: Multiply Group, 2020), 17.

# Better

## EMOTIONALLY



1 Samuel 18:6-11 & Nehemiah 5:6-7

It was the wrong valve... again. I just wanted to get the kitchen sink working, and after buying the wrong one twice already, I didn't want to make the hour round trip to the hardware store a third time. I was ticked. How hard could it be to replace this little valve? In frustration, I threw it down on the ground beside me.

I knew it wasn't my best moment, but that became crystal clear when my five-year-old son, who was "helping," quietly said, "Dad, you can't throw things because you're mad."

What do you do in a moment like that? You can justify your anger, because honestly, who wouldn't be frustrated after three trips for a five-dollar part? You can deflect or lie: "I didn't mean to throw it. It slipped!" Or you can own it and look your five-year-old in the eye and say, "You're right. My anger got the best of me, and I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry."

How can I expect to teach my son self-control if I'm not practicing it myself?

Emotional intelligence isn't about suppressing our feelings or pretending we're fine. It's recognizing that God created us with emotions and what we *do* with those emotions matters. Emotional intelligence means learning to govern our emotions instead of letting our emotions govern us.

As Mac Lake writes in *Leading Yourself*, "When we respond to our emotions through the lens of God's truth, we avoid making decisions that could rob us of our peace of mind, harm our relationships, or damage our reputation."<sup>4</sup>

## ICEBREAKER

**What's one of your biggest pet peeves? It can be something small or irrational, but it gets you every time!**

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<sup>4</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 42.



## READ IT

Read 1 Samuel 18:6-11 & Nehemiah 5:6-7

## GET IT

Read 1 Samuel 18:6-11

1. What emotions was Saul struggling with and what was the root behind those emotions?

2. How did Saul handle those emotions?

Read Nehemiah 5:1-13

3. What emotions was Nehemiah facing and what was the root cause behind them?

4. How did Nehemiah handle those emotions?

## LIVE IT

When Saul hears the people singing David's praises he reacts with jealousy, fear, and suspicion. Rather than pausing to reflect and regulate, he gives full vent to his emotions, letting his insecurity drive him to destructive behavior. This is a textbook example of poor emotional intelligence: his inability to process his feelings or see clearly leads to relational breakdown, personal torment, and eventually, leadership failure.

While we may not throw spears like Saul (hopefully), we often see similar signs when we struggle emotionally. Mac Lake, in *Leading Yourself* (p. 25), highlights warning signs of low emotional intelligence:

- Frequent mood swings
- Insensitivity to others' feelings
- Difficulty expressing emotions appropriately
- Lack of self-awareness
- Resistance to change
- Impulsive behavior
- Avoiding responsibility or blame
- Talking about yourself too much<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 25.

Whether at home, at work, or in ministry, these patterns undermine trust and fracture relationships. Emotional intelligence isn't optional, it's essential to leading ourselves and others well.

**5. Which of the signs of low emotional intelligence listed above do you see most in your own life?**

**6. Where did Saul go wrong with governing his emotions in this situation?**

**7. It's easy to pinpoint someone else's failures, but sometimes it's harder to be honest with ourselves. Thinking of a time when your own lack of emotional intelligence created unnecessary conflict, where did you go wrong with governing your own emotions in that situation?**

## Emotional Intelligence involves Self-Awareness

Emotional intelligence begins with *self-awareness*. Before we can govern our emotions well, we have to *recognize* them and be willing to ask the harder question: **Why am I feeling this way?**

Too often, we let our emotions govern us without stopping to examine what's beneath them. Anger might really be fear. Frustration might come from unmet expectations. Sadness might be rooted in shame or insecurity. But if we never pause to ask why, we'll keep reacting rather than responding.

This is what sets Nehemiah apart. In Nehemiah 5:6–7, he was *very angry*, but he didn't act immediately. Instead, he says, "*I took counsel with myself.*" He slowed down long enough to reflect: What's behind this emotion? What's the right response? His self-awareness gave him space to act with wisdom, not impulse.

Being honest with yourself is hard. But it's essential. Emotional maturity requires us to dig beneath the surface of our feelings and look for what's really going on.

**8. How would you describe the difference between feeling an emotion and being governed by it?**

**9. Nehemiah said he "*took counsel with himself*". What might that look like in a situation you faced in the past week?**

**10. How can we be sure that we are being honest with ourselves and correctly governing our emotional responses rather than justifying unchecked emotions?**



- 11. How can operating with sound emotional self-awareness help you navigate emotionally charged situations with wisdom and confidence?**

### **Emotional Intelligence involves Social-Awareness**

Self-awareness helps us understand *our* emotions. Social awareness helps us understand *others'* emotions. It's the ability to tune in to what others are experiencing and feeling, and then respond with wisdom, compassion, and respect.

Nehemiah didn't just get angry in chapter 5, he got angry for the right reasons. The people were crying out about economic injustice. Families were being broken apart, children sold, homes and lands taken. Nehemiah didn't dismiss their emotions, minimize their pain, or get defensive as a leader. He listened (v. 6), reflected, and then acted in a way that honored their dignity and challenged those in power.

That's social awareness in action. He didn't just manage his own anger (self-awareness); he recognized the grief and burden of the people and chose to act on their behalf.

We often assume people are being difficult, moody, or disrespectful, when in reality they may be carrying unseen burdens: grief, stress, trauma, insecurity, or fear. Socially aware leaders slow down enough to ask, What else might be going on here? They resist jumping to conclusions and instead choose compassion over assumption.

Growing in emotional intelligence means asking not just "*What am I feeling?*", but also, "*What might they be feeling, and how should I respond in love?*"

- 12. Why is it often easier to react to people's emotions than to pause and try to understand them?**

- 13. Think of a recent interaction where someone's behavior bothered you. Looking back, do you think there might have been something deeper going on?**

- 14. What are some practical ways you can operate with healthy emotional social-awareness at home, in your workplace, or in a ministry context this week?**

### **Emotional Intelligence involves Spirit-Awareness**

To do any and all of this, it will require a great deal of Spirit-Awareness. As Galatians 5:22–23 reminds us, *“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”* To me, that sounds a lot like living with emotional intelligence! That also means emotional maturity isn’t something we white-knuckle our way into, it’s something God grows in us as we stay in step with His Spirit.

Proverbs 25:28 says, *“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”* Without Spirit-led self-control, we leave ourselves vulnerable to emotional chaos and ruin. But when we are aware of the Spirit’s presence and leading, we gain the strength to pause, to listen, and to respond in a way that reflects Christ, even when our emotions are intense.

The way Mac Lake puts it, Spirit-awareness means asking:

- “What does God have to say about the emotions I’m experiencing?”
- “How can I view someone else’s emotions through the lens of their relationship with God?”
- “What does God’s Word indicate is the wise thing I should do in this situation?”<sup>6</sup>

The goal isn’t just better behavior. The goal is becoming more like Jesus, and that happens when we allow the Spirit to rule our emotions, not the other way around.

- 15. Proverbs 25:28 compares a person without self-control to a city without walls. What do you think that image is meant to communicate?**

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<sup>6</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 33.

**16. In your own words, how would you describe emotional intelligence?**

**17. Why do you think emotional intelligence is essential for leading yourself and others well?**

**18. Looking at your own life, where do you most need to grow this week in self-awareness, social awareness, or Spirit-awareness?**



# Better

## COLLABORATIVELY



Philippians 2:1-5

### 1.8

That's the fastest F1 pit stop ever recorded – 1.8 seconds. That means in less than two seconds, a team of people jack the car off the ground, change all four tires, refuel, and get the car back on the track. It took you longer than that to read this paragraph!

What makes that moment possible isn't just skill, it's *synchronized teamwork*. Every crew member has a specific role, and if one person is a fraction of a second late, the whole stop falters. Formula 1 teams don't win races through raw speed alone; they win because they work *better collaboratively*.

In a similar way, the Church doesn't move forward on the strength of one gifted individual. We grow, serve, and thrive when each member works in unity with humility just as Christ modeled. In Philippians 2, Paul points us to Jesus as the ultimate example of someone who led Himself well *for the good of others*. And just like that pit crew, we have to learn what it means to value the team more than the spotlight.

## ICEBREAKER

**What's your favorite food combination (like peanut butter & jelly, chips & salsa, mac & cheese)? What makes those two things work so well together?**

## READ IT

Read Philippians 2:1-5

## GET IT

1. What kind of unity does Paul call believers to embody?

2. **What personal characteristics threaten this kind of unity?**
3. **What personal characteristic is necessary to achieve this kind of unity?**
4. **What aspects of Christ's example does Paul point our attention to?**

## LIVE IT

We were never meant to live in isolation. God designed us for community from the very beginning, and He grows us through it.

From the opening pages of Scripture, God makes it clear: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). That statement comes before the fall, meaning even in a perfect world, teamwork was essential. And this isn't just about marriage; it reflects a broader truth: humans are hardwired for connection because we're made in the image of a relational God.

God Himself has eternally existed in perfect, Trinitarian unity. The Trinity is not just a theological mystery; it's a model of unity-in-diversity. Each Person of the Godhead is distinct, yet fully and perfectly unified. Since we are created in the image of God, it's no surprise that God has wired us to live in community as well.

In the New Testament, that calling becomes clear. Paul reminds us we are "one body with many members" (Romans 12:4–5), each with different gifts designed to serve one another. And the author of Hebrews urges believers not to "neglect meeting together," but to "encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:24–25).

The better way isn't doing life in isolation but by surrounding yourself with other people because you need them and they need you!

5. **In what ways have you recently been tempted to pull back from community rather than engage more deeply in it? What's behind that?**
6. **How would you define biblical community?**

7. What are some things that act as hindrances to deep, authentic community experience? How can those things be addressed?

### Collaboration requires a Common Purpose

True collaboration doesn't happen by accident. It requires alignment around a shared purpose. Whether it's in the church, a marriage, or a workplace, when people are pulling in different directions, even good intentions can lead to conflict and frustration. But when there's clarity of purpose and unity of heart, real growth and progress becomes possible.

Paul opens this section with a heartfelt appeal, *"If there is any encouragement in Christ..."* not as a question, but as a reminder. *Since* we have these blessings in Christ, let's respond by living in unity. He then calls the church to be "of the same mind," "having the same love," "being in full accord," and "of one mind." These aren't calls to uniformity, but to a shared mindset, affection, and mission.

This kind of unity is essential in every area of life. **Marriages thrive** when spouses pursue not just individual happiness but a shared vision for their life together. **Workplaces succeed** when teams are aligned around clear goals, not individual egos. And the **church flourishes** when believers rally around the mission of Christ, bringing their diverse gifts and perspectives under one purpose.

When we each bring what we have not to build our own platform, but to pursue a shared purpose we begin to function the way God intended. Whether in the church, the home, or the workplace, unity around a common goal leads to clarity, cooperation, and lasting impact.

8. What are some signs that people are pulling in different directions instead of working together toward a common goal in a...

**Marriage:**

**Workplace:**

**Church:**

9. What can be done to help restore a lost sense of common purpose?

10. What are some outcomes you've seen, or imagine, when people in a marriage, workplace, or church are working together around a clear, shared purpose?

#### Collaboration requires we Consider others' Preferences

Collaboration falls apart when self-centeredness takes over. If everyone's fighting to get their own way, unity becomes impossible. But when we learn to *defer*, to *listen*, and to *prioritize others*, we make room for stronger relationships, smoother teamwork, and deeper trust.

Paul challenges the church to resist two corrosive forces: **selfish ambition** (working to promote yourself) and **conceit** (thinking too highly of yourself). Instead, he calls believers to *humility* not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself *less*. That humility shows up in how we value others and how willing we are to yield to their preferences when it serves the greater good.

This principle applies everywhere: in marriages, where one spouse might set aside a preference for the sake of the other; in workplaces, where collaborative teams listen to input instead of bulldozing ahead; and in churches, where sometimes letting go of what we personally want is best for the sake of the greater mission.

11. Paul doesn't say "think less of yourself," but "count others more significant." What's the difference, and why does that matter?

**12. When Paul says to look to the “interests of others,” what kinds of things do you think he has in mind? How might that look different in a church, a marriage, or a team setting?**

**13. When you’re working with other people in any context, how do you decide when to hold your position and when to let someone else’s preference take priority? What helps you make that call?**

### **Collaboration requires a Christlike Posture**

To live and work with others the way God calls us to, we need more than tips and tricks, we need a model. And Paul gives us one: *look to Christ*. The humility, unity, and selflessness he’s been urging the Philippians to pursue all point back to Jesus. His mind His posture isn’t just one we admire. It’s the one we’re called to imitate.

And what did that look like? He emptied Himself. He took the form of a servant. He obeyed, even when it led to death. Jesus didn’t come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life for others.

That’s the posture Paul invites us to take. Not clinging to position. Not fighting for control. Not needing to be noticed. Instead: humble, sacrificial, and obedient. In a world where everyone wants to be a star, Jesus reminds us: the real strength is in choosing to be a servant.

**14. Jesus obeyed, even when it cost Him everything. How does that change the way we think about service and sacrifice in community life?**



**15. How might looking to Christ's example challenge your own posture in the "teams" you are part of, whether with your spouse, at work, in your community, or at your church?**

**16. What is one specific way in the next week you can live out the "Better Way Collaboratively"?**

# Better

## INTELLECTUALLY



Acts 17:10-12

There's a common saying: "You don't know what you don't know." No matter how much we've learned or experienced, we're always working with limited understanding. We all have blind spots – gaps in our knowledge and flaws in our thinking that we don't see.

Scripture reminds us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8–9). He operates on a level infinitely beyond ours. And that means no matter how long we've followed Christ, there is always more to learn, more to understand, and more to be changed by.

That's why being teachable is such an important trait for every believer. Not just for new Christians or pastors or "theologians", but for all of us. Teachability is the willingness to admit you don't know everything, the hunger to grow in wisdom and understanding, and the humility to be shaped by truth.

In Acts 17, we meet a group of believers in the town of Berea who modeled this posture. Luke says they were "more noble" because they received the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if what they were hearing was true. They didn't just nod along. They didn't blindly reject or accept. They leaned in with humble hearts and hungry minds.

This is the invitation for us, too: to be disciples who are open to correction, eager to grow, and grounded in truth. Because we don't know what we don't know, but God does. And He's ready to teach those who are willing to learn.

## ICEBREAKER

**If you could instantly become an expert in any subject or skill, what would you choose and why?**

## READ IT

**Read Acts 17:10-12**

## GET IT

1. How were the Jews in Berea described in comparison with those from Thessalonica?
2. How did the Bereans receive Paul's teaching?
3. What did they do after hearing the word that Paul and Silas shared with them?
4. What was the result of their teachable posture?

## LIVE IT

### Teachable Posture: Eager to Learn

The Bereans had the right posture for growth, they were open, humble, and ready to learn. Luke says they were “more noble,” a word that described not status but *character*. They didn't scoff at Paul's teaching or assume they knew better. They listened carefully with spiritual curiosity. They *welcomed* the opportunity to grow.

That kind of posture matters. In a world full of noise, strong opinions, and resistance to correction, teachable people stand out. They're not gullible, but they are open, not clinging to what's comfortable but pursuing what's true. They're humble enough to admit they haven't arrived, and hungry enough to want to learn more.

Teachability begins with *openness*. That means being receptive to ideas, perspectives, or even corrections that challenge us. And not just about spiritual things, but about relationships, work, parenting, leadership, even how we understand the world around us.

The Bereans' eagerness didn't make them naive. It made them noble. And it gave them the foundation to pursue truth faithfully.

5. What are some common situations or emotions that make it hard for people to stay teachable?

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## Teachable Practice: Examining the Truth

The Bereans didn't stop at curiosity. Their eagerness to learn led them to open the Scriptures and search them diligently on a *daily* basis. The word *examining* (Greek: *anakinō*) means to investigate, question, or scrutinize something carefully. It's the same word used for legal cross-examinations. In other words, they weren't flipping through the Bible for inspirational quotes. They were weighing Paul's message against the truth of God's Word.

That's what teachability looks like in practice: it's not blind belief or shallow agreement, but an intentional, thoughtful pursuit of truth. And it's a practice we're called to develop not just for spiritual growth, but for every area of life. Whether we're discerning advice at work, processing a cultural message, or evaluating a decision, we need to ask: *Does this line up with God's truth?*

This is where Mac Lake's disciplines of asking questions, listening deeply, and reading daily come into play.<sup>7</sup> Teachable people don't just collect facts, they seek understanding. They ask clarifying questions. They listen for insight, not just affirmation. And they return to Scripture again and again as their source of wisdom.

But this kind of examination takes effort. It takes discipline. And it takes time. That's why many people opt for shortcuts – just accepting what sounds good or going with what feels right. But the Bereans show us a better way: **truth is worth the work.**

9. **When you hear a new idea, whether in church, online, at work, or in conversation, how do you typically respond? What filters do you use to test whether it's true or helpful?**

10. **How do you keep Scripture central in your learning process? What are some habits that help you examine what you hear through the lens of God's Word?**

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<sup>7</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 76-84.



11. When you're testing a new idea against Scripture, how do you make sure you're letting the Bible speak for itself and not just using it to confirm what you want to be true?

### Teachable Product: Embracing What Is True

The end goal of teachability isn't simply *knowing more*, it's *growing more*. Luke tells us that "many of them therefore believed." Their belief wasn't shallow or rushed, it was the result of a faithful process of learning and examination so that once they were convinced of the truth, they embraced it fully.

That's the natural product of a teachable life: when God reveals truth through Scripture, feedback, life experience, or even failure, we respond in faith and obedience. We change our minds. We adjust our behavior. We believe and act differently than we did before.

It's easy to stop short of this step. Some people are open to hearing new ideas but never examine them. Others love to examine but never embrace anything, remaining a perpetual skeptic, never willing to commit.

But the Bereans show us the full path: posture → practice → product. They were eager, they examined, and when convinced, they embraced.

This final step calls for courage. Embracing truth often requires letting go of false assumptions, old habits, or even long-held traditions. It demands humility and trust – not just in the truth itself, but in the God who gives it. As Jesus said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). When we embrace God's truth, we embrace Him—and we are changed.

12. Why do you think it's tempting to stop short of full commitment, either by avoiding hard truths or staying stuck in analysis mode?

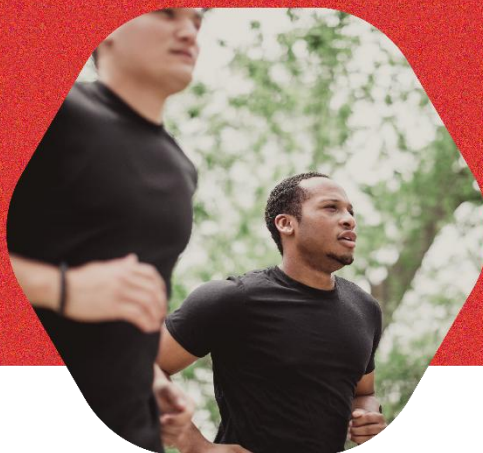
**13. What truth has God made clear to you recently that you've struggled to fully embrace? What's holding you back?**

**14. When it comes to the three stages of teachability (Posture, Practice, and Product) where do you typically get stuck most often?**

**15. What would it look like for you to take intentional steps to break through those barriers in the next month?**

# Better

## PHYSICALLY



1 Timothy 4:7-10

We've all had those days where we hit the pillow wondering where the time and energy went. Our lives move fast, and it's easy to slip into survival mode: doing what's urgent, neglecting what's important, and hoping we'll find time for the rest later. But later doesn't always come. The Bible doesn't shy away from this reality. In fact, it speaks directly to it: your time is limited, your strength is finite, and your calling is too important to live carelessly.

In *Leading Yourself*, Mac Lake challenges us to think differently about our energy, not just as something we need to "have," but something we're called to *steward*. Not just for our health, but for God's purposes. Scripture makes the same point. Paul tells Timothy to train – not just physically, but spiritually. To pursue a kind of disciplined living that fuels godliness and lasts beyond this life.

## ICEBREAKER

If you had to compete in one Olympic event tomorrow, which one would you choose?

## READ IT

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-10

## GET IT

1. In verse 7, what is Timothy told to avoid, and what is he told to pursue instead?

2. What two kinds of training does Paul mention in verse 8, and how does he compare their value?
3. According to verse 8, what benefits come from training in godliness and when do those benefits show up?
4. How does Paul describe his own effort and motivation in verse 10? What does this reveal about his priorities?

## LIVE IT

Scripture reminds us our days are numbered: you don't get more time, you get this time. Paul urges believers to "look carefully then how you walk... making the best use of the time" (Eph. 5:15-16), and Moses prays, "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). Life isn't just measured in days and years, but in how we use them!

In *Leading Yourself*, Mac Lake writes that we cannot extend our *lifespan* beyond what God has already appointed. But we *can* expand our *health span* by being intentional about making the most of the days we've been given.<sup>8</sup> This changes the question. It's not just "how long will I live?" but "how well can I live for God with the days I've been given?" That's not about hustle culture or added pressure for productivity. It's about living with purpose and wisdom.

When we fail to think intentionally about our time, it's not just our schedules that suffer, it's our relationships, our witness, and our spiritual fruitfulness. Paul's call to walk carefully is a call to live purposefully, not reactively. Wisdom begins with numbering our days and asking God how best to use them.

5. What most distracts you from investing your time with intentionality?

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<sup>8</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 90-91.

**6. What would it look like to evaluate your time not by productivity, but by purpose?**

**7. If you knew exactly how many days you had left, what would you start doing differently today?**

In his letter to Timothy, Paul draws a clear parallel between physical training and spiritual training. He doesn't dismiss physical discipline but affirms its value. Taking care of your body matters. It matters not because your worth is in your fitness, but because the body God has given you is a tool for serving Him and others around you.

In *Leading Yourself*, Mac Lake emphasizes this exact point: you don't need to be a health fanatic, but you *do* need to pay attention to the rhythms that affect your energy. That includes sleep, rest, exercise, what you eat, and how you manage stress.<sup>9</sup> These aren't superficial concerns because they affect your availability, attitude, and awareness in the life God has called you to live.

Jesus wasn't disembodied. He ate, walked, slept, wept, touched, and took time to retreat. Our faith is an embodied one. If we neglect the physical, we may find ourselves too depleted to show up for the people and opportunities God places in our path.

**8. In what ways have cultural messages (e.g., productivity pressure, image obsession, or self-indulgence) shaped how you view your body or energy? How does the gospel reframe that?**

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<sup>9</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 97-107.



9. Mac Lake emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the rhythms that shape your energy. What rhythms in your life are currently helping you? Which ones are hurting you?
10. Why do you think it's so easy to treat physical health as something separate from your spiritual life? How does Scripture challenge that divide?
11. What's one small, realistic change you could make to your physical routines this week that would increase your energy and focus for what matters most?

Physical discipline isn't unspiritual, it just isn't ultimate. Paul says bodily training has *some* value (1 Tim. 4:8), and that value increases when it's rooted in a desire to honor the Lord. We don't pursue health for its own sake or out of vanity. We pursue it because our bodies belong to God knowing they are tools for His mission, temples of His Spirit, and vessels for His work in the world.

But Scripture also calls us to pursue a different kind of training: *spiritual* discipline. When Paul tells Timothy to "train yourself for godliness," he uses the Greek word *gumnaze*, the root of our English word *gymnasium*. Essentially, Paul's telling us to *hit the gym for godliness*. Spiritual disciplines like prayer, Scripture reading, worship, Sabbath, fasting, and solitude are how we train. They're habits that root us in God's truth and grace, aligning us with His purposes, strengthen us for daily faithfulness, and shape us for eternal impact.

**12. If godliness "is of value in every way," what's at stake if we neglect this kind of training?**

**13. How do you tend to respond when spiritual disciplines feel dry or difficult? What might faithfulness look like in those seasons?**

**14. Which spiritual discipline has been most helpful in shaping your walk with God and why?**

**15. If you were to honestly evaluate your current “training plan” for godliness, what kind of growth would you expect to see in the months ahead?**

**16. Where could you create space in your weekly schedule to intentionally train in godliness, even in a small way?**

# Better

## RELATIONALLY



1 Peter 2:11-17

We all know someone like this: the kind of person who, when you talk to them, makes you feel like you're the most important person in the room. They ask good questions. They really listen. They remember what matters to you. And without even trying to impress you, they leave a mark. That's influence.

As Christians, we're called to live lives that influence the people around us, not through titles or power, but through character, humility, and presence. That kind of influence doesn't start with others. It starts with us. It starts with how we lead ourselves. When we're intentional about how we live, love, and listen, we position ourselves to make a real difference in the lives of others.

This kind of influence is what Peter had in mind when he urged believers to keep their conduct honorable and to show honor to everyone. Influence isn't about being impressive. It's about being faithful, consistent, and real. And it's something every believer is called and equipped to develop.

## ICEBREAKER

If your life were a sitcom, what would the title be?

## READ IT

Read 1 Peter 2:11-17

## GET IT

1. What does Peter urge his readers to do in verse 11?

2. According to verse 12, why does Peter say believers should keep their conduct honorable?
3. What reason does verse 15 give for why we should do good?
4. How does verse 16 describe the balance between freedom and responsibility?
5. What four groups of people are mentioned in verse 17, and how are believers instructed to relate to each one?

## LIVE IT

We all leave a mark on the people around us. Sometimes it's a lasting impression for good. Other times, it's the kind of mark we wish we could erase. But one thing is certain: you don't need a title to make an impact. As Mac Lake puts it, *"Developing influence is about leaving a mark."*<sup>10</sup>

There's a difference between leading from a position and leading personally. Titles can give you authority, but they don't guarantee influence. Real influence isn't about power or position. It's about presence. It happens when people know you care about them, not just what they can do. That kind of leadership is available to everyone, everywhere, whether at home, at work, or at church.

Influence grows through relationships. It's the quiet consistency of a friend who shows up. It's the parent who keeps their word. It's the coworker who speaks with grace. If we want to leave a mark that lasts, we have to lead personally, with intentionality, humility, and care.

6. When you think of someone who left a lasting mark on your life, what made their influence so strong?

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<sup>10</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: Developing the Character and Competency to Lead Yourself* (Tampa, FL: Multiply Group, 2020), 114-115.

- 7. Why do you think we often associate leadership with titles or positions? How does this limit our view of influence?**

You can't influence people from a distance. Influence doesn't flow through perfection, performance, or pretending; it flows through presence. It takes a real, authentic relationship. If others are going to trust your voice, they need to know your heart. They need to see who you are, not just what you do.

That's why Peter's call to "honor everyone" (1 Peter 2:17) is more than a polite suggestion. It's a relational posture. Honor sees people as valuable. It listens with real interest, shows up in their lives, and offers support even when it costs you something. And it's two-way. You can't expect others to let you speak into their life if you're unwilling to open up your own.

Authentic relationships are built on trust, honesty, and care. You develop those things by asking questions, remembering details, showing up consistently, and letting people see your own struggles and hopes. When you lead this way, influence becomes less about convincing people and more about walking with them.

- 8. What do you think it looks like practically to "honor everyone"?**

- 9. Why is it hard to be truly authentic in our relationships? What fears or obstacles get in the way?**

- 10. How might pretending, performing, or polishing your image actually *limit* your ability to influence others?**



- 11. Which of the following comes most naturally to you: being present, being open, being interested, or being supportive?**

**Which is most difficult, and why? What are some practices you can take to grow in that area?**

- 12. Think of someone in your life you trust deeply. What helped build that trust? How does that shape how you pursue authentic relationships with others?**

You can't lead others where you haven't gone yourself. If we want others to follow our lead, we need to be the kind of people they *can* and *want* to follow. That doesn't mean being perfect. But it does mean being consistent. Your character is either building credibility or breaking it down.

Peter calls believers to "abstain from the passions of the flesh" and to "keep your conduct honorable" among unbelievers (1 Peter 2:11-12). Why? Because our lives are being watched. Our example matters. And while people may not always listen to what we say, they're always watching how we live.

That's what this series is all about: before you can lead others well, you need to lead yourself well. When your life is overgrown with unchecked habits, unrepented sin, or emotional chaos, it undermines your impact. But when you're pursuing growth, owning your weaknesses, and walking in step with Christ, others notice. You become someone that can be followed, not because you have it all together, but because you're heading in the right direction.

- 13. What are some areas of life where inconsistency tends to erode a person's influence, even if their intentions are good?**

**14. If someone followed your example this week (in the way you speak, think, pray, and lead yourself) where would it take them?**

**15. In which of the areas we've studied so far (mission, emotions, relationships, intellect, physical energy) have you seen growth? Which one still needs intentional attention?**

True influence isn't about having all the right answers. It starts with asking the right questions. You can't help someone grow if you don't understand where they're at today. And you can't encourage someone meaningfully if you haven't first listened with care.

Peter calls us to live with wisdom and humility among outsiders (1 Peter 2:13–17), but the principle holds in all relationships: influence requires connection, and connection requires communication. This includes active listening, asking thoughtful questions, being aware of non-verbal signals, and offering words that build rather than bruise.

When you listen well, you lead well. You begin to understand what others need. You learn how to speak truth in a way that lands with grace. You notice moments where your words can lift someone up or call something out in love.

**16. Why is it often easier to speak than to listen? What's lost when we spend more time talking than listening and understanding?**

**17. Communication involves far more than words. What makes for effective interpersonal communication?**

**18. How well do you really know the emotional and spiritual needs of the people closest to you? What might help you understand them more clearly?**

**19. Thinking of those who are closest to you, who are some individuals that you'd like to develop more influence in their lives?**