Tim Lundy: Well gentlemen, it's good to be with you today. And I do like this session because we take the turn at this point and we really start mapping out how do we live out that life compass? How do we live out the definition of what it means to be a man? And we've been looking at the compass of that true north, of following God's word, of recognizing on both sides of us the women and the work that are around us, how do we negotiate those well. And then the legacy, the world that we're leaving behind. And it's good to get a lay of the land. It's good to know where you are and kind of get direction in it.

In fact, I read the story of a burglar who got the lay of the land one night as he broke into a house and that he was moving kind of stealthily across this dark house, the living room, when suddenly he heard this voice that called out that said, "Jesus is watching you." And he stopped dead in his tracks and just stayed silent for a second. No other sounds so he just took a couple of more steps. Suddenly the voice came out again, "Jesus is watching you." And it scared him to death so he stopped and he looked around the room and over in the corner of the room in the dark he saw this bird cage with this big parrot in it. And he looked at it and he said, "Are you the one that told me Jesus is watching me?" And the parrot said, "Yes." He exhaled. He goes, "What's your name?" And the parrot said, "Ronald." He goes, "Ronald, that's a stupid name for a parrot." He goes, "What idiot named you Ronald?" And the parrot said, "The same idiot that named the rottweiler Jesus.

It's good to get a lay of the land, there's some land mines. There's some things in your path. And there's some things as a man if we don't get clarity, if we don't know where we're going, guys, it doesn't just impact us, it impacts all the people that depend on us. The people that we will work with today, the people that we will go home to, the people that are looking up to us. And so on each of these sessions on the next few weeks, these are all vital because life's bigger than us.

In fact, if you look in your notes, just a review from last week, we defined the good life and specifically said that a vibrant faith is critical to having a good life. And if we don't have a real faith, it's hard to experience the kind of life not just the Bible, but social scientists say it, vibrant faith is key to that. And so we walked through what does a vibrant faith involve? And you look at the parts of it. A vibrant faith begins with God's great mercy. It always starts with God. God is the one that initiated toward us. God's the one who's merciful to us. It comes alive when we believe God and are born again. When we're born again. And we treat that word born again as an emotional term in our culture. Oh, he's born again. Somebody needs to be born again. You got to remember when Jesus first used the term, he's talking to an educated man. As he talks to an educated man he says, "You think you figured out life. And the way you're doing life is not working. You have to start over. Completely start over. Die to your life and receive the life that he's giving. You're literally born again."

There's an author I like, Andrew Klavan. And I read more of his commentary on things But he writes mysteries, murder mysteries. A number of his books have been turned into movies. He describes his own faith journey. And as he described it he goes, "I'm not somebody who really kind of grew up around it." Listen to his words with it. He says, "My life is more like one of those Outward Bound programs where they drop you far from home and you have to make your way back with a piece of string and a match book. I was born and raised a Jew. I came up in that wonderful secular intellectual tradition that teaches you to analyze everything. God kept coming into my life and I kept disproving him. I was very good at it."

But one of the things I really like about him, he's intellectually honest. And so the same scrutiny that he applied toward God, he started to apply toward the rest of his life and what he actually believed. He says, "Fortunately I could also disprove the foundations of my disproof. Eventually I saw that the pillars of the secular consensus, scientism, materialism, rationalism, were all made of sand. Whereas the deeper I went into the experience of God, the more I found life in abundance."

And so this guy who grew up a secular Jew found himself as he got deeper and deeper into it to a place where he had to take that step of being born again. As you do that, you see the third thing, he joins us to a living hope. Jesus, he's actually alive, it's a real relationship with him. And not just life here, but life to come. It assures us of our life in heaven. And so we walked through what that means to have that kind of vibrant faith and how important that is.

This week as we step back, if you look in your notes there we want to just kind of give a snap shot of the four seasons, the four spiritual seasons of a man's life. I think this is an important picture as well. And as we walk through this here's what I want you the do, I want to just kind of be thinking about your own life, which of these seasons match me? Now, here in California, we don't really experience dramatic changes in the seasons. If you've lived in California your whole life, you don't know that. If you've ever lived in any other part of the country, you recognize what it means to really go through four distinct seasons. And in the same way in your spiritual life, there's seasons that we go through.

Look at the first one, winter. Winter, a season of struggle. A season of struggle, that marks winter. And it's where you're wrestling with the big questions of life. And you can see in your notes, look at the questions that are there. Is this life all there is? Is there a God? How do you connect with him? Is there life after death? What about the Bible, is it even true? Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Is Jesus the only way to God? What does God think about me? Will I go to heaven? How do I know for sure? How serious should I be about spiritual things? That's a big wrestling question, especially for men. Where do start? Why am I here? What's my purpose? Those are all really life-changing questions. And here's what I would say with it, you should wrestle with them at some point as a man.

If anything, I think we've been taught as men, especially as you first become a man and you're a young man and you're trying to establish life and you're trying to establish who you are, it's very easy to just kind of put the pause button on all those questions, and I'll get to them some day. I would encourage you, every man at some point in his life needs to look at these and go, where do I stand? What do I know? What do I actually believe? Because they're shaping. These questions are shaping your life whether you've wrestled with them or not. So it would be good to go and know why you believe what you believe, what you actually believe in it. First season of winter.

And then as you wrestle with it, hopefully as you come like we described Andrew Klavan's journey and our journey, different ones of us, the second season is spring, a season of surrender. It's a season of surrender where I'm establishing a new life with a growing faith. When you think of spring time, that's where new life is sprouting. Where you see the seeds coming out of the ground. You see the produce that comes. You see everything in bloom. The same way spiritually. And so here's what this looks like, the spiritual world begins to come alive, I actually start seeing spiritual growth in me. God answers my prayers. I experience Jesus in my life. I start learning God's word, it actually speaks to me. The Bible, this book that maybe for all my life I've kind of read it and falls flat, suddenly now it's speaking to me. My life begins to change for better. I think differently, I love differently, I have new values, new desires, new hope.

One of the key metaphors you'll read all the way through the Bible is this metaphor of growth. I'm actually experiencing some growth. And Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians, it's what he had experienced in his life, what he saw over and over again, "If any man is in Christ he's a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold the new things have come." That season of spring is this tremendous season of growth, and some of you are in that where you go, "Yeah, it's come alive for the first time in my life. I'm understanding for the first time. I'm applying it in my life. I'm seeing it impact my home for the first time." And whereas you experience that growth, you go, "Man, I want more of this." Now here's the key, though, a lot of times we present it as life is really about those two season. You got winter and then spring. And as long as you're moving here and you're growing, great, you're done.

Actually, look at the next season, and I think this is a key one, especially for men to embrace. Summer is a season of significance. It's a season of significance where I'm making bold changes and special contributions. As you look at that, look at some of the things that this kind of life entails and this season entails. Focus on serving others more and more. Life's no longer just about me. Who are those people in my world that instead of everybody serving me I'm serving them? It's a season where I start getting generous with my money, I start giving to thing that I haven't given before because I actually want to make a difference with it. I start or I lead a ministry, maybe at my church, maybe in the community. I'm helping in a way. There's a passion that I have. I mentor and disciple others. This is a key one for men, where I start investing my life down. I start looking at the younger men around me and going, "Man, how do I give away what has been given to me?"

I transition. Sometimes you'll see guys transition into nonprofit work. They go, "You know what? I have made enough, I've succeeded enough, I want to move into some arena." Other guys I've seen, they actually stay in the for profit world but they do it with a totally different mentality. And I would just say on this, especially on this season of significance, ministry is a form of significance, nonprofit is a form of significance, for profit can be a great form of significance.

Some of you are great at making money. You have the gift of it. And I literally say it's a gift. There's just certain guys I know that whatever they put their hand to they are great at that. And there's nothing about that that should make you go, oh, well, I can't use that for significance. You can use it in such significant ways. As you start thinking in this season though, okay, what am I doing with this gift? What I am doing with this ability? What am I doing with the profits of this? How could I invest in a way that impacts the most amount of people? It's on outward focus instead of an inward focus. That as you start recognizing the significance of life, there's only so much significance I can build that's about me. That really the greatest significance comes when I'm starting to invest in others. And I'm using the way that I was wired, the way that I was gifted, the resources that I have for the sake of others. Look how Paul puts it. He says, "Do good. Be rich in good works. Be generous and ready to share." There's just a mentality about it.

And then that last season you see is fall. It's fall. And fall is where the colors start changing, where the growth has stopped now but there's a beauty about fall that for a lot of people it's their favorite time of year. We live in a culture that's afraid of fall. We live in a culture that's deathly afraid of growing old. And part of the reason I think that's true, people have not seen the beauty in it. When you make your life about your own personal significance and you end up in a season of fall, you can start feeling like I'm losing all the time. When you've moved through a life where significance is who I'm investing in others, fall can actually become one of the most beautiful seasons in your life. Look at the description there, it's finishing well with my life where I encourage and I support the next generation. I make some final strategic contributions. I invest more in family and friends. I reminisce on God's goodness. I anticipate eternity.

I would challenge you, there's a number of you that you're either in it or you're entering this season. And I love that you're here, I love that you're thinking about life in this way and I would just challenge you if you're entering that season chronologically, age wise but you really haven't entered that season emotionally or spiritually, you can find yourself afraid a lot or you can find yourself angry a lot. Now I see it a lot in the church where people have hit the fall season of life and everything in the world seems to be changing and their church seems to be changing and they kind of get angry and want to hold on. Instead of click, go, wait a second, it's not about me anymore. It's not about what I like. It's not about what I'm even used to because I'm entering a season now where my life is for those who are following me and how do invest in them and how do I cheer for them?

There's a man, Bill Smith, a lot of this material that has come whether it's through Men's Fraternity or Better Men it's come Bill Smith's influence on it. Now Bill was never one that wrote any of it or that, but he was instrumental in the early years, especially investing in Robert Lewis's life, but other men. And Bill was not a perfect guy. Great business man, made a lot of money. He was successful his whole life. Divorced, had some regrets about that, had to repair some relationships. Remarried. Reached this fall season of life and as he reached it he was challenged, hey Bill, what if you started meeting with some younger guys? And at first he thought, who would want to meet with me? But the word got out and Bill started meeting with a few young guys, and then he started meeting with a few more. And even though prostate cancer was attacking his body, through that last decade plus of his life Bill just kept investing with guys and the guys he would invest in he would encourage them, now who are you investing in?

I remember sitting at Bill's funeral, huge room, huge church, packed out, especially with men. At one point in the funeral the pastor said, "Hey, if you were personally mentored by Bill, would you stand up?" And all the different guys who stood up across that room. Then he said, "Now, look around the room, if you were mentored by one of the guys in this room, would you stand up?" And then you saw that many more men stand up. You saw the impact of this life, of a man as he walked through these seasons of life. Man, he made the spiritual journey so that when he came the end of it even though cancer robbed him of years, it didn't rob him of life I'm going to tell you because his legacy lived on in him.

Let's just step back real quick and just look at the four seasons. Look at those seasons there, kind of think about where you are in your own life, where you are in your own spiritual journey in that. I'm going to give you three observations about these seasons. Three observations. Here's the first one, no one can move you through these spiritual seasons except you. Nobody moves you through except you. The journey from one spiritual season to the next is deeply personal, it's a heart journey that only God can join you in. And especially for guys, it's interesting, guys are pretty private people, more than women. We'll talk about some things but there's certain areas of our life we just don't feel comfortable talking about much and one of the areas I think we're most private is our spiritual journeys. We have a hard time just kind of going there with other guys in it.

And there's a part of it, especially as you look at this, and this point is so true, nobody can make you move through these seasons. Nobody can. Your church can't, your pastor can't, your wife can't, your parents can't. You may have grown up with parents, man, they were the most spiritual people on the planet, they can't move you through this journey. And here's the reality, God won't force you. God will never take a man and I'm going to force you through this. He respects you. He loves you, but you have to make the choice. You have to decide where am I going to spend my life spiritually?

Second observation around that, for a number of reasons some men never leave the season of struggle and others will return to it from time to time. They stay in spiritual winter. There's just spiritual winter in their life all the time and they're always wrestling with the same questions, they always stay in that place of struggle. And the reasons for it are all different. Look at it. One reason is some guys just stay skeptics and we live in an age, and I would encourage you, especially younger guys, you've been raised in a very skeptical age. Because of social media, because we have access to so much information, we're skeptical about everything. We're skeptical about every leader, we're skeptical about anything you see. And you've been raised with an attitude of I don't know if that's true. I don't know if I believe that. I'm not telling you to turn your brain off, but it is very easy to stay the skeptic about everything in life, I'm the critic on the sideline. I'm always the guy poking holes at everything and you never engage it personally. This can be true of any part of life.

One of my heroes has always been Teddy Roosevelt. I love Roosevelt and all that he did in it. And I love the lines that Roosevelt said. Listen to it, he said, "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who's actually in the arena, who's face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. Who strides valiantly, who errs, who comes up short again and again but there is no effort without error or short coming, but who does actually strive to do the deeds. Who knows great enthusiasm, the great devotions. Who spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at the best knows the triumph of high achievement, who at his worse if he fails at least he fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold timid souls who neither know victory or defeat."

I love words because he said you're not going to be perfect in it but don't find yourself living life always in the stands criticizing the people who are actually on the field in every arena. And I would say the same is true, and it's one of the arenas we don't talk about, but spiritually the easiest place to stay is stay on the sideline and criticize everybody else's belief system. But you never step out there and go I'm going to wrestle with and really determine what I believe, you stay a skeptic. If you stay a skeptic your whole life, you'll stay in winter your whole life. It's a lifetime of spiritual winter.

Other reasons guys do, they never go all in. They never go all in. If you ever watch poker, you play poker, the Texas Holdem Tournaments and that, you have your chips and each round you got to determine how many chips to put in. I've got a friend, he plays some high stakes tournaments. As I talk to him about it I said, "What's the key?" He's very successful. A part of it he says, "You got to know the math of poker. You always got to know your odds all the time. But more than that, you got to read everybody else around the table because you've to know those moments when you go all in, when you push all the chips in because it forces everybody else in it." He said, "What you can't do is just sit there and play it safe the whole time, I'm just going to through a couple chips and a couple." He said, "You'll just get drained dry by the guys who know what they're doing."

And the same thing, you watch some guys in life, especially parts of their spiritual life, there's never a place where they go you know what? I'm going for it. I'm all in spiritually. I'm all in in what I believe, I'm all in in my pursuits there. It's just kind of like, token, I'll throw a chip in. And you look up and you go, I really have nothing to show for this, do I? And then they go, "Ah, that spiritual thing doesn't even work." I go, "You never went for it. You never dealt with it, what did you expect?"

Next reason, they become church goes but not Jesus followers. And here's the bad part about it, as churches, we accept that. We kind of look at a guy and go, "Man, as long as you keep showing up every week, great. We're thrilled, got you in the seat." And it's never what Jesus was excited about. Do I want people here? Yes, because I think we talk about truth here, I think we deal with life here. But if that's all it is is man, I'm checking off the attendance card, I go to church just to enough to stay in the game, you're never going to get out of winter, you just aren't. That's just the reality around it.

The final category, they fall back into sin and doubt. I'll just tell you, those two go hand in hand, by the way. I was reading an author with it and he really highlighted it. He said, "I've seen people..." We talk about how young people when they go to college they walk away from their faith and they have doubts with it and maybe you hit that certain season. He said, "Here's the pattern that I've seen though, a lot of times they get involved in stuff and sin that they never were involved in before, and it's amazing when you start living in a way that you know is probably not right, it's real easy to turn back on it and go well, I don't even believe that system anymore because the dissidence in your soul goes, oh man, I can't hold both of these so I'll just turn on it. So I don't want to really change my life in anyway so I'll just doubt." And you can do that. The problem is, and maybe you've experienced that, you can keep trying to do that but then God keeps invading in ways and voices keep coming and you find yourself in a place where you go, "Man, I got to deal with this or I got to shut it off. I need to do one or the other.

There was an airline tragedy back in 1984, Avianca Airlines, a Spanish airlines, the plane literally slammed into a hillside and everybody was killed on it. They got the black box from it and they listened to the final recording of the pilots. And in the confusion of it the pilot wasn't trusting his controls And at some point the controls started crying out. You heard it, pull up, pull up, pull up. The pilot didn't know English and he thought it was just a malfunction. One of the last things you hear on the black box is the pilot saying in Spanish, "Shut up, gringo," and he turns it off. And it was right after that the plane crashes.

Man, I look at that graphic picture and I have seen it lived out with different guys who stay in spiritual winter, they stay in this place of struggle. They never move forward and part of the reason is every time truth comes in their life, every time God starts convicting them. Every time they find themselves in a setting like this and there's this part in their voice and even in a soul level they're hearing it, pull up, you can't keep living like this. Pull up, you know you got to do something. Pull up, here is truth, here's the way, here's a living hope. You know what they do? They go, "Shut up, I don't want to deal with that. I just don't want to listen to it." And if you do that hear me, I'm not saying you're crashing today. You know what's almost worse than a crash, a lifetime of spiritual winter, to be stuck there. You don't have to be. But, again, I'll go back to my other point, nobody else can move you out of it. Nobody else can make that choice for you.

So to successfully move through each of these seasons, let me give you two things. Two essentials and then we're going to walk through how to live out these essentials. The first one is teaming up with other men to share life together and grow spiritually. You need other guys. You need other guys in this arena of your life. We know this in other areas but a lot of times our spiritual life, man, we go solo real quick. You need other men that you team up with. "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." That verse is so true in every area of your life, but especially your spiritually life. Men need men. You need iron on iron. Your wife can read a bunch of spiritual books, your wife may read the Bible all the time, your wife can speak things into your home and establish things there, but she is never going to sharpen you like another man will. She is never going to spiritually bring out of you what another man will because you need iron on iron sharpening you. And as you have that, you'll find yourself suddenly what was so hard alone, man, you get a few guys who you've partnered together, you're thinking about life around that, you'd be amazed how much further you go in that.

It's true in all of it. As they study the geese that fly... I lived in Arkansas before we were out here in California and it's a corridor for duck hunting and geese. I mean, you'll see thousands of birds coming from Canada going south. And you watch them invariably, you'll hear them before you see them sometimes. And then you see them, that V formation that they're flying in. You know why they fly in the V? That group of birds can go 71% further flying in that formation together because the first bird is actually giving lift to the birds behind. And so that first bird that's there giving lift, the rest of them, the reason that they're quacking, the reason that the geese honking with that, it's really a form of encouragement to whoever's out at the point breaking the way for everybody else. And then when that bird finally gets tired, it peels off and goes to the end of the line which is the easiest, it's got the most lift behind it. They go 71% further than a bird could fly alone.

They did the same thing with horses, it was interesting. Draft horses that were made to pull. There was a competition once where they had two draft horses and the horse that won was able to pull 4500 pounds. Second place horse pulled 4000 pounds. And then somebody said, "Hey, let's put them together because they should be able to pull 8500 pounds together." Actually together they were able to pull 12,000 pounds. There's just something about partnership in it. The same is true for us, you need some men who are gathered around you, who are speaking into your life in this.

Second thing you're going to have to have to be successful, you need private time engaging God and his word. Private time engaging God and his word, reading or listening. In Psalm 119, "With all my heart I have sought you, open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from your law or your word in it." So in the rest of our time let's walk through some practical tips on both those things. Practical tips of teaming up with other men and then we'll talk about some practical tips of how you can engage in the word. If those are the two things you need, let's walk through this.

First, some practical moves for teaming up with other men. Just practical ways of putting this in action. A, if you're a new believer, and when I say new, that's recent or you're finally getting serious about your faith, you're at that place, here's some tips for you. One, seek out more established believers to meet with and together formulate a spiritual growth plan that works for you. Seek out some people that you're meeting with and you go, "All right, I don't even know how to have a plan. I don't even know how to do this." Look around. It's one of the things we do in Better Man. I mean, you're at a table, you look around. And at this point in our time together you probably can look around the table and you go, "You know, that guy seems to be ahead of the game spiritually. I wonder what he does. I wonder how he applies this." Sometimes it's just as simple as asking someone like that. It says, "He who walks with the wise will be wise," Proverbs 13:20.

There's these things that we assume people know, a lot of times they don't, no one taught them. Remember we're talking about a lot of guys that grew up without a dad. Guys that grew up maybe not around church or around that or their dad never spoke into their life and just taking the time to teach. It's interesting, they've studied ants. When ants go to find food, the older ants will take a younger ant with them and teach them. They've watched it where an older ant will go to find the food and the older ant will stop and then let the younger ant go explore around and then come back to the older ant. And the younger ant will come back and tap the leg of the older ant and it's time to keep moving, I've learned this area. And then they do that all along the way. Now by doing that it cuts almost in half the time an ant learns how to find food. It takes it four times longer for the older ant. Again, remember, it's that attitude though, I'm moving into a season of significance as others. Instead of the things that I could do so easy on my own I'm now going, "You know what? Let me stop a little bit. Let me take time a little bit so that they could learn."

If you're that younger guy, and maybe if you're just honestly here... It's funny because guys can feel real awkward about it, like we someone are supposed to know how to do these things. I'm supposed to know how to grow spiritually or that, it just dropped in my lap. If you're here and you go, "Man, I literally, I don't have heads or tails on how to take first steps." Just grab an older guy. Go, "I need some guys to help me with that." What you want to do is just master Christian basics with the help of a mentor or a small group. But you got to make this a priority, they're not going to come find you. If you're serious about it and the first guy you go ask, it may be an older guy, you go, "Hey, could meet with me?" He may look at you and it scares him to death, he doesn't know what to do and he panics. Okay, keep moving until you find a guy that will. It's just part of life, part of being a man. I don't let the first awkwardness stop me in that.

"Like a newborn babe, long for pure milk of the word so that you may grow in respect to your salvation." You need to be like a baby who's hungry. And if a baby's hungry, you know about it, they pursue it. Use online resources to help you and you can ask about which ones are best. There's so many materials out there, ways that you can just quickly engage online.

And in this, if this applies, reveal to trusted man or men any hidden habit or addiction that you struggle with that can undermine your new Christian life and use their advice to begin addressing this issue. Remember I told you a lot of guys stay stuck in spiritual winter because they struggle with sin and doubt because those two go hand in hand. And it's interesting, you may apply yourself, you're like, "Man, I'm going to get serious about my faith. I'm going to get serious about growing and studying and that." But if you don't want to deal with the junk of your life, you'll find it starting to undermine even the new growth. And so part of it is just getting honest with a guy and just sharing with him, hey, I got this going on. I'm really struggling here. Man, I feel shame about this all the time. I feel guilt about it. It's one of the reasons I just don't even want to think about God because when I think about God I think about what I'm doing. Just having that honesty with it.

I remember I was in a study similar to this, it was some material with it and I was just a table leader. And I was there around the table and I was learning in the study like everybody else and I had recruited some of the guys around our table. And one of the guys that was at the table with me was doctor, a guy I really respected and his adult son. His son had just finished his PhD. Brilliant young guy. Great leader. Strong Christian. We're around the table kind of just sharing where we are in these seasons of life. And I'll never forget because I so admired the courage of this young guy with his dad right there. He finally spoke up and he goes, "Guys, man, I am so stuck right now." And tears filled his eyes, he goes, "Porn is just kicking my butt. I just find myself stuck in it. And dad I didn't know how to tell you because I'm so ashamed of it but I can't live in this anymore."

And the power of that moment, man, I was there looking at him going, "Man, that guy has courage." And to watch his dad instead of rejecting him, man, putting his arm on his shoulder and going, "Man, I can not tell you what it means that you would share that with me, the reality of that struggle." And then different guys around the table there, it's funny because everybody had said they had been really real up to that, everybody got really real at that point. I mean there were guys that spoke and like, "I am there." And different ones that were sharing with it because a young guy said, "I don't want to stay stuck and I don't want to live under the shame all the time." It's amazing when you share that. And I would encourage you, man, if there's something that is kicking your butt, I hope there's somebody around your table, I hope there's somebody in your group. Maybe you don't feel the freedom to share it in the group as a whole but you pull one guy aside and just go, hey, can I be real with you? Can I talk to you? You'd be amazed just even cracking that door open, the power that gives and the reality of just going okay, we're in this together. We need it.

I love that Proverbs, "Where there is no God, it's the people fail." You stay stuck. "But in an abundance of counselors there's victory." Now on the flip side of it, let's say you're the seasoned guy, you're the seasoned believer. You've been walking with this for a while. Here's a challenge to you, you need to cultivate some spiritually solid men friends to do life with. This may be new for you but actually interact over the Bible and great Christian resources. Push one another to grow as men and to pursue spiritual adventures together. Push one another. The best way to grow spiritually is to team up with other men.

Now, again, I would encourage you, maybe you've growing for years, who's pushing you? Who pushes you in this area of your life? We do this in all other areas, don't we? You get a guy, he gets into riding bikes, what does he do? He's got a group of guys, man, we meet, we meet every Saturday and we get together and we push each other. Whether it's mountain biking or we're climbing a new hill or we're going to go a new distance or we're going... we just naturally like to push each other. You get into working out. You do something like Crossfit, you go and you have a workout buddy, what do you do? You don't sit there and kind of passively going, "Well, I wish he'd lift that weight. Good luck with that." No. What do guys do? They get in each other's face, "Come on, you can do it." You push.

We do this in every other arena and then it comes spiritually and we kind of just go, "Well, good luck, you're on your own. Hope you grow. Hope you really step up. Man, hope you make it to fall." We're scared to talk into each other's lives. Who do you have that pushes you, that speaks into your life? I don't care where you are on your faith journey, you need those voices. Have you established them?

And then the flip side of it, invest yourself spiritually in younger men. Mentoring these men will bless them and bless you as you make that turn that it's not just about me, who can I invest in? Paul said it this way, "These things which you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Having those young guys in your life, having someone that you're investing in in your life. That's what made Bill Smith's life so powerful. And one of the things Bill, as he started meeting with young guys, he realized guys didn't know how to study the Bible even. So Bill just started documenting how did he study the Bible as a business guy. It was one of the most powerful things he did. It wasn't a pastor or someone else, it was just here's a business guy and he said, "Man, here's how I study," and he taught guys how to do that. It was as simple as some of those tools with it.

Listen to this phrase and I think it's so important. Douglas Lawson said it in his book Give to Live. He said, "If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help a young man succeed." I'm telling you, it's absolutely true. And some of you you're in a season right now of life that you've kind of conquered the big milestones in life and you're sitting there looking and you're going, "What's left?" And, "I can only plan so many great vacations." And, "I can only play golf so many times." You're going, "Is this it?" I'm telling you, I think you're about on the edge of your best adventure, but it won't be the one you personally experience, it's the one you invest in and the one that you get to see that extends beyond you of investing in younger guys and investing down.

Now, let me give you some practical things on that second one, some moves for how do you have a quiet time or a private time with God because this is going to be a key one to your growth as well. I like that Jeremiah, God says this to us, "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." When you get real about it, you'll find God. It's not as hard as we make it but you got to actually want it. Here's how you do that. One, set a regular time and place for your meeting with God. You need a regular time and place. Mornings are usually best for guys. Maybe not, maybe you're a night time guy or whatever. But here's what I would encourage, have it the same time and to the best of your ability have it the same place, that regularity. And you get alone with God and you give him 15 to 20 minutes to start with.

And here's why I say go ahead and make it shorter to start with, it's better to be shorter and consistent than, man, I'm going to get serious with time with God and you go blow it out for a couple hours and then you don't do it again for another month because I don't have a couple of hours to do that again. That was good but man I can't do that again. It's kind of like working out. Have you ever done that where you're like, "I'm going to get serious." And you go to the gym and you kill it. And then you're so sore you're like, "I'm not going back for another year." The key is, okay, how do I just set consistent time and what can be short, where can it be set?

Because it's interesting, your life is governed by habits. As you read about it, Gretchen Rubin in her book on habits she said, literally, and here's the interesting part, because you literally only have so much self control. And once you've spent all your self control, you don't have more. Here's how she describes it. She says, "Habits are the invisible architecture of daily life. We repeat about 40% of our behaviors almost daily so our habits shape our existence and our future." And so when you make something a habit, what you're doing in that moment is, I don't have to use self control to do that anymore, it's just a habit in my life. And it saves that self control energy for the things that I'm going to have to apply later. And so the more you make your time with God a habit, she said, "When we conserve our self control, we do so through our habits because we're in the habit of putting a dirty coffee cup in the office dishwasher, we don't need self control to do it anymore." I don't have to apply self control to make myself to do it, it's just become a habit in my life.

And she adds this, "Our habits are our destiny and changing our habits allow us to alter that destiny." And it really is as simple as am I going to make this a habit in my life or not? Am I going to carve out... I got that 15 to 20 minutes where every day I carve it out. It becomes a habit in my life and then it's not this battle of self control every day, am I going to do it? Oh, I guess I should. Oh, I'm kind of busy. Oh, I get distracted. No, it's just a habit now, it's part of the architecture of my life and it shapes me. When you do it, look, you need to have a good study Bible, a pen for some notes and a highlighter. Get a study Bible and a pen and a place to take some notes with it.

And so you sit down. If you've never done this before, it's not as hard as it sounds. Point C, welcome God in. You just welcome God in. You start with good morning, God. You make this a relational time. You honestly tell God where you are right now, you ask him to speak to you. You practice the presence of God. You see him as there with you. And that's a key thing, it's real. He's real. So I'm actually believing he's here, I'm actually believing he wants to meet with me. He promised me in Jeremiah, "If you seek me, you'll find me." I'm going to find him today. I'm actually going to find God in my life today.

And then look at the three Rs, they're real simple here. You practice these three Rs. One, you read or you can listen. Some guys love to listen to it on their phone. There's a bunch of great apps with it. You can pull up an app, listen to the Bible or read it. I need to read it. I'm a visual learner and so I read it. And so for many a Bible reading or listening plan is helpful in giving focus and direction. If I don't have a plan that I'm reading through, again, for me it comes back down to habit. Having the habit of a distinct plan. And sometimes I'm going for... I've done the Bible through a year plan, that can get a little laborious for me. I usually try to read a chapter a day, that's about enough for me. By the time I've kind of thought about it and read through it and I read in that and process, then I have a plan with it.

A study Bible provides valuable insight and will answer some of your questions. There's different study Bibles and literally all a study Bible means is throughout the Bible they've kind of lined out, okay, this is what this book is about. This is what the author's trying to say here. It starts giving you some insights that you go, "Okay, I understand what I'm reading." And then you need to personally react to it. You can highlight a scripture. If something impressed you, you can underline it. If you really felt like, okay, God was speaking through this one verse. Sometimes I'll read and I get to one verse, I don't read anymore because that's the verse I needed to focus on. There's no rule that said, oh, it's about covering the right thing. It's a real interaction in that. You can put a question mark next to a scripture you don't understand or need help with and go find answers to it.

And then you reflect. You reflect. When you finish reading, take a few minutes to God what are you saying to me? Remember you welcomed him, you actually believed he's there and so you say, God, what are you saying to me? What does this mean today? And as you do that, some men like to write down their reflections. I'll journal at times. I don't journal everyday but sometimes it's great for me to journal and go, okay, here's my thoughts. Sometimes I write out what I'm thinking to God. And it helps me later because I can kind of look back and go, okay, I remember what was going on in that season. For me the writing of it is what makes it real.

We're all wired a different way. One of the things I hate is, and I would encourage you if you're teaching a guy how you do it, if you're the guy mentoring, there's certain things that are great for you that may not connect with him. You got to give enough flexibility for the way they're wired. I know some guys, they need to be outside. Their best time of just connecting to God is they listen to scripture and they're outdoors and they're talking to him. Some people need to be very quiet and alone. Some people need to write out things. Some people need to reflect on it more. You're wired a certain way, here's the key, God will meet you as you habitually set out that time to meet with him.

And then close it out by praying. Ask God to help you live out what you've read or what stood out to you. I don't want to just hear the stuff, I actually want to live it. Share your concerns. Anything before you, ask for his help. Guys, God wants to help you. He literally wants to help you. He is for you. When was the last time you asked him? Literally just asked him in an honest way? Not in a churchy way, not with language that you think he wanted to hear, with your actual language, with your actual heart.

Invite him to lead you and to speak to you in the day. That may be a new step for you that you go okay, God, I'm getting up and I'm going. Man, today will you lead me? Today as I'm going into that meeting I keep blowing it with the same person over and over again. I keep saying things I don't need to say. I keep freezing up at the wrong moment. I just keep making a mess of things, would you lead me today? Would you stop me if I need to stop? See here's what you're doing, you're actually believing okay, I'm in a real relationship with God and he wants to help me and he'll actually show up during my day as well.

And then the final thing, a good way to finish your time, especially if you have not prayed much, Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer as not as this sweet little thing that we could do and we could sing the song, he literally is teaching us how to pray. And if you read through the Lord's Prayer and you can see it written out there and it's been personalized here. If you use that as your template to go I'm going to just pray through these things, I'm going read through this.

I can't tell you how many times in my prayers when I don't really have words to pray I'll go back to this. And I just go through the Lord's Prayer and I stop after each line. And so my Father who is in heaven, I'll honor your holy name. I take a minute, I go, how do I honor God? God, what have you done that I'm thankful for? Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What do I feel like God's wanting me to do? Where's his will in my life? Give me this day, my daily bread. What do I need today? Forgive me my sins. Okay, what have I done? As I forgive those who sin against me. Okay, who do I need to forgive? I mean, just stopping and going through this using this as a guide, you'd be amazing, you'll cover everything. Jesus actually knew what he was doing when he taught us how to do it. He knew how to pray. Lead me not into temptation. Okay God, man, I'm struggling with this. I need you to lead me because my path's not going right. Deliver me from evil. To close out, yours is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever. It's about you, not about me so how do I live for you today? How do invest for others for you today? And you pray through that.

Guys, both of these things are a little out of our comfort zone. To get guys in your life that are speaking in your life spiritually and just carve out this time and make this a habit, they're not comfortable, they're not always easy but they're key. And I'll go back to why they're key, because it's not just about you, it's the people that are following you, it's the people that are looking to you, it's the people that look up to you, it's the people that need you to step up in life. If it was just about you, you can stay in whatever season you want to. But guys, it's not about you. And so what I'm asking you to do in this and what this material asks you to do, yeah, it's hard, but it's worth it.

I'll close with this story of a lighthouse in South Australia. It was built in 1857. It was built in the worst location. Even as historians look at it, they can't fathom why it was built where it was. The guy who built it was a guy named Alexander Dawson. He came, he charted out where it was needed. And even when the inspectors came and they asked him, "Why are you building on this location?" He gave all of these reasons. You know why he built where he did? He built the lighthouse because it was close to the quarry and he didn't want to have to work too hard in getting the rock to where they needed it to build it. And he built the lighthouse in a location that actually confused ships, it actually sent out a bad signal because of his laziness. And over the next 40 years two dozen ships wrecked on the reefs of that southern Australia coast because of that man's choice. They finally decommissioned it. They had to come and build a new lighthouse. And even after they decommissioned it, on nights when it was clear and the moon was out, enough light would reflect off of the decommissioned lighthouse to still confuse boats and so they finally went and they destroyed it, took it down to rubble.

I look at that and I go, "He makes one choice." You know what his choice is? I don't want to do something that's really hard, let me do what's close and what's easy. And because he makes that choice, how many people were impacted by it? Guys, your life, whether you like it or not, you're a lighthouse, somebody's looking to you, somebody's following you. And if you don't get true north, okay, who is God? What is his word? How do I actually start following this and experiencing this? If you don't make a choice, I'm going to move through these seasons, I am telling you the people that look to you will look up later and go, "Man, why didn't he do that? I was trusting him." Here's the great news, I don't care what season you're in, you can move today, you can make a step today. But I can't make the choice for you and nobody else can. I'd challenge you today even in your group, take a step. Take a step and start experiencing what is it like when God's word and a relationship with him is my true north.