



"Defined" Book Reading Curriculum

TIMELINE:

One-On-One Book Study

9 meetings – Begins 2/21 – partners meet weekly and wrap up by 4/25

Community Group Book Study

9 meetings – Beginning 2/21 Groups can either “fast-track” and meet weekly or keep their bi-weekly meeting schedule and utilize this material for the whole semester.

MEETING MODEL:

Read the assigned pages before the meeting.

Then get together and follow this suggested 60-90min format:

+ **Catch up on life –**

Highlight(s) of the past 7 days, Challenge(s) of the past 7 days. 15min.

+ **Discuss a series of questions:**

Weekly Discussion Questions, Fun Questions (Found at the end of this PDF), or Questions you liked from the back of the book. 30-60 min.

+ **Pray.**

Each person answer, “What’s one way we can specifically be praying for you until our next meeting?” Close in prayer and encourage different people to lift up each request. 15min

Week 1 – pages 1-36

“Do You Know Who You are?”

You’ll get to that very question in bold print on page 15 of the reading this week. The question is tucked in between a story of adoption from the author, a look at the identity of Jesus and how it was challenged... and then a chance for us to begin to process two things. First, what are those things that challenge our identity? Second, what is the **true** source of our identity? Read pages 1-36 and then process the following questions with your group or book partner(s).

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you hoping to gain as you go through this study?
2. Which part of this week’s reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
3. In Ch. 1 on pg. 17- Which questions were easy to answer & which were more difficult?

Read Matthew 16:13-20 & Exodus 3:1-15

4. What do these passages reveal to you about God?

What do these passages reveal to you about us as humans – or yourself as a child of God?

Week 2 – pages 39-68

In this week’s reading we’ve packaged 4 short chapters together that contain 3 important truths about us. The first two are life-giving, encouraging and soul-nourishing: you are created with unique-to-you specificity – and – you are created in the very image of God. The third may be more what we call a ‘hard-truth’: you are broken and imperfect. The wonderful thing is – *God’s hand and transformative power are present in all three.* What God began in you will not be thwarted by what’s messy in you. It makes me think of a line I heard from poet Amena Brown,

“See, dirt don’t scare God’s hands – God is a gardener.” The “Heart Check” Exercise at the end of this week’s reading is an important opportunity to walk out what we read in Psalm 139:23-24:

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ *See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Take the time before your next meeting with the group or your book partner and slowly answer each question in the exercise and journal your thoughts.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Which part of this week’s reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
2. On pages 46, 54, and 65 are the closing prayers for this week’s reading. Out of the three - Which one do you connect with the most? Which one is “*the prayer of your heart*” this week?
3. What did you think of “The Parable of Fred?” What responses did the parable stir in you?

Share one or two key insights that the “Heart Check” exercise revealed to you. Take your time with this section of the discussion and allow the Lord to minister and share His wisdom.

Week 3 – pages 69-105

“When you think of God’s grace, you should think of a river.”

In this week’s reading we wrap up the section on “How your story begins.” The book takes us through Luke 15 and emphasizes God’s pursuit of us and our need of Him. It presents a great processing chapter to help us find *unquestionable confidence* in our faith and relationship with the Lord. The authors also take us on an eye-

opening journey with a refreshing and insightful focus on God's epic plan of **GRACE**. And then they close the section with a short parable about twin brothers. The parable gives us an opportunity to look closely at our own lives and ask the question-

"Is my life headed in the right direction?" and if not "*What must I change to change course?*"

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
 2. As Christians - if we are not careful – sometimes it's easy to glaze over the truth that we have been sought out and saved by God. *What did you highlight or underline in Ch. 8?* What revelations or reminders did you find as you read this chapter?
 3. Chapter 9 is a great resource to help us honestly 'affirm our strengths' and 'identify weak spots' in our faith. How was your faith affirmed and how was it challenged as you went through the chapter and processed the questions?
 4. Ch. 10 is an incredible read on the full wonders of God's grace. The chapter ends with the mandate: *"Your job is to walk in grace - receiving it, sharing it – so that everyone sees what "the kindness of God" has done for you."* Where can you receive God's grace **this week**? Where can you *share it*?
 5. After reading the parable of the twins – Did you notice any similarities with Luke that encouraged you? Were there any similarities with Blake that troubled you?
-

Week 4 – pages 109-135

This week's reading will take you through the first half of the **Identity** section. The authors showcase how our identity starts in the heart. We are reminded that we are loved, blessed, rescued and made new. These concepts can be difficult to embrace sometimes... hard to believe. The authors remind us though that these truths are not contingent upon us... but rather, God the Father makes these "identity realities" available to us in the complete work of Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
 2. Chapter 12 mentions the 'hard life moments' of Joseph, Naomi, & Job and how these moments rocked them to the core & challenged their identity. Talk about a difficult season in your life that shook you - Did you lean on God to get you through? How did you respond? What did you learn?
 3. Which of the concepts in chapters 13-15 (Loved, Blessed, Made New) did you wrestle with? Which one(s) were the most reassuring?
 4. What is one area in your life where you want to see God work as He makes you new?
 5. Chapter 12 emphasizes two prayers that Paul recorded in Ephesians. (Eph. 1:15-20 & 3:16-19) As you close your meeting with prayer – pray these prayers over one another and invite the Holy Spirit to inhabit your prayer and bring His power to your words.
-

Week 5 – pages 136-155

This week's reading is short... **but vital**. Three pivotal truths of your identity in Christ are emphasized in these short chapters. *We encourage you to read it more than once – read it slow and really take it in.* You are forgiven – a saint walking in the redemptive forgiveness of God. You are His dwelling place – carrying the

Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit wherever you go. You are His workmanship – all of your life (your strengths, skills, experiences, weaknesses, & even your faults!) are His to amass and shape into something incredible. God will take all of you and craft it into something extraordinary as a gift to others and an expression of His Glory.

Buckle Up – *this is who God says you are!*

Suggested Questions:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
 2. Chapter 16 points out that 'saints' are not really people who live *exemplary* lives so much as they are normal people who have accepted God's *complete* forgiveness...
So, are you a saint? Is there an area in your life where it's been hard to accept - and *trust in* - God's cleansing forgiveness? Share a story of God's forgiveness in your life.
 3. Chapter 17 does a great job of tracing God's presence among us from the old testament, to Mary carrying Jesus in her body, to now our bodies being the place where God the Holy Spirit chooses to dwell. After reading the chapter – how do you think differently about God's presence in your body and in your life?
 4. Take a moment and look at all of your life. Consider your past, your passions, your skills, and strengths. Where are you confident? Where are you not-so-confident? How has God uniquely gifted you for a specific task? How has He equipped you for this season of life that you are in right now? Where do you sense Him leading you? What's next as you journey with Him?
-

Week 6 – pages 159-183

This week a LOT of ground is covered as we take an in-depth look at our *inheritance* as sons and daughters in God's Family. Our Heavenly Father has given us more than we can likely comprehend: Resources, Access, The Holy Spirit, True Eternal Hope...all of it ours through Jesus Christ. This week we will be reminded of and encouraged by the rich inheritance we have in the Lord.

Suggested Questions:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
 2. Ch. 19, pg 160 : "God does not just save and forgive us. He blesses and resources us as well."
Resources... Inheritance... *according to God's riches*... How has God blessed and resourced you? In what ways are you praying for blessing and resources?
 3. Ch 20 makes it clear we have access to God. In what ways do you draw on that access? How is this 'access' a blessing or benefit in your life?
 4. After reading chapter 21- what is confirmed and clear about the Holy Spirit's presence in your life?
 5. John 14:2-3 is found on pg 178... As you read Jesus' words – what about them gives you the most hope? What do you look forward to most when it comes to heaven?
-

Week 7 – pages 187-220

This week's reading helps us see two-sides of some life-changing 'coins.' Our thoughts, our words, our heart... each of them can be troublesome and dark - or - vibrant and full of light and life from the Lord. This section closes with great reminders of the Sprit's leading and the power of God's Love.

Suggested Questions:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
 2. **Thinking:** When you think about yourself and your life – are the majority of your thoughts harsh or kind? How did this chapter encourage you to think more God-inspired thoughts?
 3. **Speaking:** We have the power to bless others with our words. Who can God lead you to genuinely bless this week with a kind or encouraging word?
 4. **Heart:** What did this chapter
 5. **Spirit:** How did this chapter bring clarity to follow the Spirit's lead in our daily lives? What did you learn that will help you "Be filled... Be led... and Walk by the Spirit?"
 6. **Love:** It's one of the most powerful things we can do as a Christian – channel God's love into someone else's life. Who has been that conduit for you? Who can you bless by being a channel for them?
-

Week 8 – pages 223-246

Immovable. It's a word we would certainly use to describe the Lord... but is it a word we would ever use to describe ourselves? As we finish the book together, the final chapters will help us navigate the attacks of the enemy and find victory after some of life's most debilitating challenges. This week the chapters focus on spiritual attack, temptation, criticism, and failure.

Suggested Questions:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?
 2. Have you endured a spiritual attack similar to one described in the chapter? What did you take away from that experience?
 3. It's been said that "Sin will always take you further than you want to go and cost you more than you want to pay." How do you battle temptation? What action steps have you found to be effective and help you refrain from taking the bait?
 4. What's some of the best constructive criticism you've heard?
 5. It's encouraging to read that Peter was the same Peter in God's eyes before and **after** his moment of failure. God's plan for Peter wasn't thwarted at all by his moment of weakness. How does that truth help you understand the stability of God's plan for you?
-

Week 9 – pages 247-268

Here we are at the end of the book... the last three chapters. As you finish up the book and your study with your reading partner or group – We encourage you to reflect on what God has done in your heart and in your life as a result of this study. What has God shown you? What has He revealed to you? How has He encouraged you or sharpened you?

I find it particularly cool that the book concludes with the blessing that we often close our services with at TPCC. "May the God of peace Himself – sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful – and He will do it." In Jesus' Name – AMEN!

Suggested Questions:

1. Which part of this week's reading challenged you, encouraged you, or spoke to you? Why?

2. Talk about something you've lost in your life? What did you learn in the midst of it?
3. How can you "glorify God" in the days ahead? What are some different ways you reflect on His goodness and then show it with your actions, thoughts, or words?
4. Look at page 260. As you read through the "stops and starts" – what's one thing you can stop doing? What's one thing you can start doing?
5. Take a moment and thank God for this study, for your book partner or community group, and share one thing God has deposited in you throughout the journey.



Fun Questions to Add to Your Conversations:

1. Aside from necessities, what one thing could you not go a day without?
2. If you could hire someone to help you, would it be with cleaning, cooking, or yard work?
3. What's your favorite type of foreign food?
4. What's your favorite family tradition?
5. Who was your favorite teacher in school and why?
6. What was your first job?
7. What would you change about yourself if you could?
8. What is the hardest part about your job?
9. Would you rather ride a bike, ride a horse, or drive a car?
10. If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?
11. Do you like or dislike surprises? Why or why not?
12. What was the last thing you watched on TV?
13. Name a favorite sporting event or concert you've attended... What would you love to go see?
14. What's your favorite fast food chain?
15. What's the most interesting thing you can see out of your office or kitchen window?