An aerial photograph of a boat moving through the ocean, leaving a large, circular, white wake behind it. The water is a deep blue, and the wake is a bright white, creating a stark contrast. The boat is visible in the lower-left corner of the wake.

get your life back

ONLINE
BOOK
STUDY



get
your
life
back

table of contents

SESSION 1:

WEARY AND HEAVY BURDENED

Introduction: *The Rescue*

Chapter 1: *The One Minute Pause*

Chapter 2: *Benevolent Detachment*

SESSION 2:

DELIGHT IN THE LORD

Chapter 3: *Drinking Beauty*

Chapter 4: *Simple Unplugging*

Chapter 5: *Kindness Toward Ourselves*

SESSION 3:

THE CREATOR OF LOVE

Chapter 6: *Allowing for Transitions*

Chapter 7: *Get Outside*

Chapter 8: *Remembering Who You Love*

SESSION 4:

A RICH AND SATISFYING LIFE

Interlude: *Returning to the One-Minute Pause*

Chapter 9: *Surrendering the Self Life*

Chapter 10: *Caring for Neglected Places in
Your Soul*

SESSION 5:

THESE THINGS I REMEMBER

Interlude: *Ask for It!*

Chapter 11: *The Gifts of Memory*

Chapter 12: *Believe*

SESSION 6:

REMAIN IN ME

Chapter 13: *The Hidden Life of God
in You*

Chapter 14: *The Simple Daily Things
The Daily Prayer*

Session 1:

WEARY AND HEAVY BURDENED

PRE-READING: Introduction – Chapter 2

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you.



WATCH TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER:

lutheranchurchofhope.org/teaching-video

Pastor Jeremy Johnson (15 minutes)

BIBLE READING: Matthew 11:28-30 (2 minutes)

READ ALOUD:

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-45 minutes)

- 1. Introduction:** Do you identify with the busy, weary and worn-out life that the author explained? If so, expand on how that feels. If not, what is filling you up and giving you life? Do you feel pressure to keep up? What does God want for you and your life? What is his offer? Does that sound intriguing? Why or why not? Answer the five questions that the author asks on page xiii. Are you happy most of the time? How often do you feel lighthearted? Are you excited about your future? Do you feel deeply loved? When was the last time you felt carefree? What did these answers reveal to you?
- 2. Chapter 1:** Page 4 says, "I can't tell whether my soul is more in fight or flight. But I do know this – I don't like the state I'm in." Does that statement resonate with you at all? When was the last time you experienced that "sigh" the author talks about in the beginning of chapter 1? What brings that on for you? What nourishes you? What are the moments in your day when you can pause to experience that rest? Do you feel as though you don't stop moving from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed? Where can you build in a few one-minute pauses into your day?

3. Chapter 2: Think about the last time you worried over something someone said or did. What was that experience like? What goes on in your head when that happens? What do you feel entangled with right now? Why is that happening? What does entanglement do to the feeling in your soul? What is God's invitation to you? Does it feel like you're living out that offer he's given you? Why or why not? What are some of the things you need to detach from? What are the things that are filling up your soul in unhealful ways? How can you distance yourself from those things? What's in your "backpack"?

CLOSING PRAYER: *Circle Prayer* (5 minutes)

Sit in a circle and give everyone in your group one minute to share a prayer request. Then, have someone start the group prayer by praying for the person to their left. Go around the circle, so that everyone has prayed for someone else and been prayed for themselves.

APPLICATION: *One-Minute Pause and Benevolent Detachment*

Find a time when you can practice a one-minute pause in your day. Start with just one time per day, and try to work up to two or three. Allow yourself to fully pause in those moments. Then, once you've completed that, practice your benevolent detachment. Think of the people, events, tasks or worries that you carry and say, "*God, I give _____ to you.*" Keep repeating it until you feel that your soul believes it.

NOTES:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a full page of white paper with light gray horizontal lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo. It consists of three concentric blue arcs that form a partial circle, opening towards the left. To the right of this graphic, the words "get your life back" are written in a black, lowercase, sans-serif font, stacked vertically.

PRAYER JOURNALING

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Date: _____

Today I read _____ **chapter(s)**

Takeaways as I read...

_____ *How I can apply this to my life...* _____



Dear God,

Teach me...

You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

SERMON NOTES

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Session 2:

DELIGHT IN THE LORD

PRE-READING: Chapters 3-5

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you.



WATCH TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER:

lutheranchurchofhope.org/teaching-video

Pastor Amanda Neppel (15 minutes)

BIBLE READING: Psalm 1:1-4 (2 minutes)

READ ALOUD:

*Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-45 minutes)

1. Chapter 3: On page 32, the author writes, “Beauty heals, partly because it proclaims that there is goodness in the world and that goodness prevails, or is preserved, or will somehow outlast all harm and darkness.” Do you believe that? When was the last time you experienced beauty like the author talked about in this chapter? What sort of feelings does that stir up in you? What is your favorite vacation spot to visit? Why do you love it so much? Where do you find beauty there? Where do you find beauty in the area where you live? Where is there beauty in your home? How can you go about filling your life with more beauty? Do you believe in the healing and restorative power of beauty? Why do you think beauty has this power? How can you let the beauty in your life fill you up more?

2. Chapter 4: Do you feel constantly distracted by different types of media? What sort of feeling does that give you? What are we distracted from? Are you addicted to your smartphone or some other type of electronic media? Do you identify with the things the author was talking about in this chapter? What is your attention span like? Has technology had an impact on that? Have you ever tried to unplug from your phone? If so, what has that experience been like? What do you think about the author's six suggestions at the end of the chapter?

3. Chapter 5: "The fruit of [kindness] is really good on my soul; the ripple effects are good on everyone else around me." When you experience kindness or treat yourself kindly, do you notice it spilling over to how you treat others? When was the last time someone's kindness surprised you? What happened? What does kindness do to people? How does kindness toward yourself impact others? Do you believe those two things are connected? How so? Have you ever noticed how you talk to or treat yourself? What is that like? Is it kind?

CLOSING PRAYER: *Popcorn Prayer* (5 minutes)

Ask someone in your group to start the group prayer and someone else to finish the group prayer. After the first person is done praying, allow group members to "pop in" with a short prayer for themselves, others or the group. Once everyone is finished, or there is minute of silence, the "finisher" will complete the group prayer time.

APPLICATION: *Receive Beauty, Unplug from Media and Show Kindness*

This week, find ways to fill your life with beauty. It doesn't have to be big things, as the author stated; it can be simple. When you see and experience beauty, take a second to pause and receive it for the gift it is. Allow it to be healing for you.

Also, find time to unplug from your phone. Turn off notifications, fast from social media, turn off your phone after 8:00 pm, don't grab your phone first thing in the morning, don't check your phone as soon as it goes off, and find some real things to do away from a screen.

Finally, start to notice how you talk to yourself. Start showing yourself kindness. Ask God "What is the pace you want for me right now, Lord?" Allow him to talk to you and receive his kindness, so that you can give it to others.

[illegible]

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Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

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Session 3:

THE CREATOR OF LOVE

PRE-READING: Chapters 6-8

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you.



WATCH TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER:

lutheranchurchofhope.org/teaching-video

Pastor Jon Anenson & Pastor Michael Hurst (15 minutes)

BIBLE READING: Psalm 19:1-11 (2 minutes)

READ ALOUD:

*The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world.
God has made a home in the heavens for the sun.
It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding.
It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race.
The sun rises at one end of the heavens
and follows its course to the other end.
Nothing can hide from its heat.
The instructions of the LORD are perfect,
reviving the soul.
The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The commandments of the LORD are right,
bringing joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are clear,
giving insight for living.
Reverence for the LORD is pure,
lasting forever.
The laws of the LORD are true;*

*each one is fair.
They are more desirable than gold,
even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey,
even honey dripping from the comb.
They are a warning to your servant,
a great reward for those who obey them.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-45 minutes)

- 1. Chapter 6:** From page 73, “Efficiency is often what drives us to remove all margin from our lives.” Think about a book. They could produce it for a lot less money if they put words from the very top to very bottom, far left to far right, but it would be more difficult for you to read. Publishers understand that what they would gain in efficiency they would lose in book sales. How have you sacrificed joy, happiness, peace and satisfaction in your life because you don’t have sufficient margin? Or, if you feel you have adequate margin and, therefore, room for transitions, how do you protect that space and what do you gain from it?
- 2. Chapter 7:** What is the difference between “relief” and “restoration”? Which one do you do more of? What is a restorative activity for you, and how long has it been since you did it? Can you get it on your calendar again soon?
- 3. Chapter 8:** On page 99, Eldredge writes about acknowledging our pain or hurt feelings and inviting God into that space. On page 102, he writes about naming the things you love and realizing that God loves those things, too, and gave us those things. These two approaches give us an opportunity to connect with God whether things are good or not-so-good in our lives at any given moment. Which one speaks to you the most right now? How might either of these approaches to God help you grow in love for him?

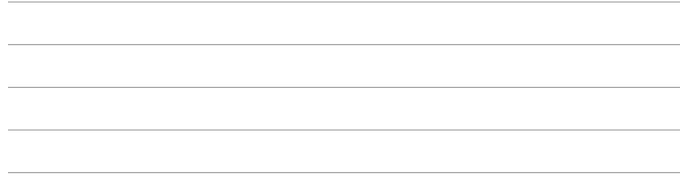
CLOSING PRAYER: *Prayer Partners* (5 minutes)

Split your group up into smaller groups of two or three people. Set a timer for five minutes and allow each person to share a prayer request with their partner(s). Allow each pair to pray together before coming back as a bigger group to wrap up your group meeting.

APPLICATION: *Remember Who You Love*

Make a list this week of people, things, experiences, foods, etc., that you love. Consider for a moment that God loves them, too, and that he created a world with these things and these people and you get to enjoy them. You might even be on someone else’s list, and that’s pretty amazing. Thank God for his love and goodness in your life. See if you can do this two or three times this week.

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Dear God,

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You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

SERMON NOTES

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Session 4:

A RICH AND SATISFYING LIFE

PRE-READING: Interlude – Chapter 10

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you.



WATCH TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER:

lutheranchurchofhope.org/teaching-video

Jamie Richards (15 minutes)

BIBLE READING: John 10:10-14 (2 minutes)

READ ALOUD:

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me ... "

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-45 minutes)

- 1. Interlude:** If you have continued with the one-minute pause, do you notice yourself getting better at this practice? What have you gained from it? If you haven't done it, what is holding you back? (P.S. It's not time. What is it really?)
- 2. Chapter 9:** In Philippians 2, Paul writes of Jesus, "Though he was God, he did not consider equality with God something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges and took the humble position of a slave." This is the ultimate opposite of the Self Life, and it's what Jesus did for you and me. What is it about the Self Life that is so tempting and seductive? How do you see the Self Life getting its way in your life? What would it feel like to let go of getting your own way and instead ask for God to get his way in your life?

3. Chapter 10: The world around us expects us to be “fine,” all the time.

No one asks, “How are you?” and anticipates a list of your challenges or disappointments. We get really good at denying our needs because the world seems to require it. Think of yourself and people you love and ask this question: Does denying our souls’ needs seem to be working? What are the risks and rewards of being honest about the needs of our souls?

CLOSING PRAYER: *The Lord’s Prayer* (5 minutes)

Recite the Lord’s Prayer together as a group...

*“Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.”*

APPLICATION: *Take Inventory*

Ask God which of these two options are what you need most right now.

1. Get honest about how your Self Life is impacting those around you.
Here’s a clue: How often do you believe that other people are the source of your problems? How often do you believe that other people are just more lucky than you? These are strong signals that the Self Life is running the show. Ask God to help you with this; ask for the courage to pray for those problem people and lucky ducks. Be honest, as that’s the best way to deal with it.
2. Do what John did and make a list of losses, big and small. The goal isn’t to wallow in them, the goal is to get honest about them and actually hand them over to Jesus (not stand from a safe distance). Once you make the list and have actively talked to God about them, do what you need to do. Hit the garbage can, burn the list, have a good cry, etc. God is with you in this and is not one bit afraid of your emotions. He created them, after all.



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Dear God,

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Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

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Session 5:

THESE THINGS I REMEMBER

PRE-READING: Interlude – Chapter 12

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you.



WATCH TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER:

lutheranchurchofhope.org/teaching-video

Pastor Scott Rains (15 minutes)

BIBLE READING: Psalm 42:1-11 (2 minutes)

READ ALOUD:

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;*

*all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.
By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-45 minutes)

- 1. Interlude:** How have you been doing with the practices discussed so far in this book? What has been the most helpful or impactful to you? What has been your biggest takeaway? What do you need to ask God for? What is his response?
- 2. Chapter 11:** What is one of your favorite childhood memories? What is your favorite vacation memory? Why is that memory so special? In 10-20 years, when you look back on this time, what will stand out as a fond memory about the time you're living in now? What sort of emotions do your favorite memories stir up? What do they do for your soul? How can you incorporate these memories into your daily life? How does memory help us with loss? Have you experienced a loss that a memory helps to heal? What are some “Ebenezers” that you have in your life? What sort of things can you add to your life that act as “Ebenezers” to help you remember?
- 3. Chapter 12:** Do you ever wake up feeling “blah” like the author described at the beginning of this chapter? How does this feeling impact your faith for the day? Does belief come easy or hard to you? Do you ever think of belief as a choice? How can we make it a choice instead of a feeling? What did you think about the idea of exercising or practicing belief? What sort of things can you do to make belief more of a conscious and intentional choice? Read through the Apostle's Creed in the back of the chapter. What stands out to you? How does that impact your belief in the moment?

CLOSING PRAYER: *Thankfulness* (5 minutes)

Give everyone in your group time to say one or two things they are thankful for. Once everyone has shared, take a couple minutes to thank God for those things.

APPLICATION: *Find Your Ebenezer and Recite the Creed*

To help stir up your memories and allow them to heal and nourish your soul, find some things that can be “Ebenezers” in your life. Allow those things to remind you of something that is good for your soul. Find time each day to notice these things and let your memory take you to that place.

Next, pick one of the creeds, like the Apostle's Creed, or write out your own statement of belief that you can read at different times in your day to remind yourself to practice and exercise your belief.

NOTES:

[illegible]

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Dear God,

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Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

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Session 6:

THESE THINGS I REMEMBER

PRE-READING: Chapter 13 – The Daily Prayer

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation, and request that he reveal his truth to you.



WATCH TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER:

lutheranchurchofhope.org/teaching-video

Pastor Scott Rains (15 minutes)

BIBLE READING: John 15:1-17 (2 minutes)

READ ALOUD:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-45 minutes)

- 1. Chapter 13:** On page 169, the author talks about trees restoring someone’s soul. What restores your soul? What is the significance of being connected to others? What does that do to you? Have you felt your soul being healed over the last few weeks of reading this book and practicing the things it talks about? What is the miraculous offer that Jesus gives us in John 15 when he talks about being the Vine? On page 175, the author talks about belief, obedience and service. Have you ever thought about your faith like that? What is missing from those three? What is intimacy with God? What does it provide us? How can you let God heal your suffering and trauma?
- 2. Chapter 14:** What are some of the positive and negative “barometers” in your life? How do you know that your soul is doing well or not? If you don’t have those already, how can you go about identifying them? Is your life too complicated? Do you have a desire to simplify? What does that look like? How often do you feel like you’re in a hurry? How can you eliminate hurry from your life? Why is hurry bad for your soul? On page 195, the author asks, “What will you do, on a daily and weekly basis, to find God and receive more of Him?” What are the consistent practices you are going to put into place in your life to help heal your soul?

CLOSING PRAYER: *Thankfulness* (5 minutes)

Give everyone in your group time to say one or two things they are thankful for. Once everyone has shared, take a couple minutes to thank God for those things.

APPLICATION: *Find Union with God and The Daily Prayer*

God wants union with you. Take time, each day, to meet him. Focus on being close to him and spending quality time with him. Then, present yourself to God. Say, “I present myself to you, God, for union with you.” Finally, move toward greater release of everything taking up room in your soul.

Also, find time each day this week to read the Daily Prayer on page 199-203. Each time you read it, underline something new that God reveals to you.

NOTES:

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 28 horizontal lines. The first 24 lines are full-width, and the last 4 lines are shorter, ending at the right margin.



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