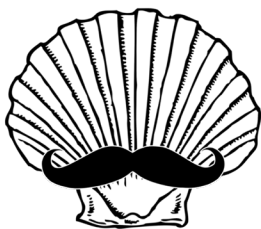


EVERY BUSH AFIRE

OFFICIAL STUDY GUIDE

Kyle Peters

This resource is designed to be used in coordination with *Every Bush Afire* by Kyle Peters. Get your copy on Amazon or use the QR code below.



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INTRODUCTION: WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY!

As I wrote *Every Bush Afire*, I worked really hard to not get into “preachy mode,” and kept it story focused. My hope is that you can see yourself in my story and that it will stir you to press into God on your own journey.

As I received feedback from friends and family who read the book, I knew I needed to create a tool that will help you go a little deeper with your own story. This is what you hold now.

This discussion guide was created to equip you to dive deeper. I’ve taken the major threads of each chapter (some chapters I’ve combined), and developed questions and experiences that will help you explore your own journey more deeply. I also want to help you to begin to “develop muscles” and begin to use some of the tools I used in my own story.

While this is presented as a discussion guide for a small group, you can work through it on your own. While you can use it on your own, you will get more out of it in a group.

2 WAYS TO NAVIGATE THIS GUIDE

You can meet for 14 weeks to work through this guide one section at a time. However, I also know that’s a big commitment.

Some groups are capable of sustaining a study of that length, most aren’t. I suggest meeting for 6 weeks, and splitting it up in one of two ways:

OPTION 1: BUFFET-STYLE

As a group, pick and choose six themes you want to focus on from the chapter list on the previous page. Create a schedule using those six sections, or whatever number you choose. Plan to read the chapter(s) included in that section before you meet. Feel free to work through other sections on your own.

Note that for the purposes of this guide, chapters 6 and 7, and chapters 13 and 14, have been combined.

OPTION 2: TOPO’S TOPICAL TRAJECTORY

I’ve broken the book into the following thematic flow:

1. Cultivating Awareness (chapters 1-3)
2. The Journey of Sonship (chapters 4-7)
3. Developing a Growth Mindset (chapters 8-10)
4. Making Big Decisions with God (chapters 11-12)
5. Identity (chapters 13-14)
6. Safety Empowers Risk (chapters 15-16)

With this option, you can read the chapters in each discussion section before you meet. You can individually work through each section through the week, then do the last chapter discussion together (for example, for the first grouping, “cultivating awareness,” work through chapter 1 and 2 on your own, then do chapter 3 together).

With this plan, readers of average speed will spend about 30 minutes reading the book each week.

Do whatever works for you. Picture these chapters as a series of meals for you to pick and choose. You don’t have to eat all of it, I recommend spacing out the calories.

SECTIONS INCLUDED

Within each chapter’s guide, you’ll find the following sections:

Review: Some weeks include a quick review question from the previous section’s work. Use it when it makes sense, otherwise feel free to ignore it. (You may want to create your own review from your previous session.)

Discussion: Every section has discussion questions, often including portions of the book to read, and scripture. Bring your book and your Bible. Note: if you have a digital version of the book, it may be more challenging to find referenced portions. No worries.

Some of these discussions include vulnerable questions. You can always opt out (give each other permission in order to create safety), but I encourage you to stretch yourself a bit. A “stretch” will be quite different for everyone, so don’t compare!

For Further Work on Your Own: A few sections have further work. Do it or don’t. If all of these sessions are the meals, consider this a special dessert!

Activation: These experiences are opportunities to practice awareness and encounter God. You may feel like you’re failing, don’t worry! No one is grading you. If you are hungry enough, you

won't let disappointment keep you from trying again.

The activations will require a **Designated Driver**. This person will facilitate the activation. They will read the activation out loud, freeing everyone else to engage. You can have one consistent person in this role, but I recommend rotating.

TIPS FOR THE DRIVER

-Take a minute and read through the activation before you begin. In fact the whole group can take a minute and read it to themselves so they can see where this is going.

-Speak softly and clearly. You're creating space where people can feel safe and can encounter Jesus.

-Don't force anything. The Holy Spirit is present and will do the heavy lifting.

-Read slowly. Notice that each activation begins with something like, "close your eyes and take a few deep breaths." Insert space here for people to relax. As you go through instructions, include a little space where you think you need it. Don't rush.

-It's not your fault if someone struggles, in fact, it's not even a bad thing if someone struggles. This is about muscle building, not perfection.

-You can try to engage as you facilitate, but you may need to try it for yourself at another time.

CHAPTER 1: NEARER THAN I KNEW

WE HAVE CATALYTIC MOMENTS in our lives where we're invited into a radical shift in perspective. How aware are you of the perspective you're wearing?

“Does that kind of stuff
actually happen?”

Charles Kraft describes much of western christianity as functional deists. They believe in God, but live as though He is far off and uninvolved.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- When have you experienced a specific prayer answered? How did it affect you?
- How often do you ask God for something specific?
- What's something specific you could ask for right now?

Our worldview is much like a pair of glasses. We're mostly unaware of them but they're coloring the way we view the world. Read John 12:27-30 and Acts 28:1-6.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In both of these passages, something supernatural happens, yet the people there to see it experience it in different ways. How might their worldview have informed what they experienced?
- Now think of your life. How does your worldview inform the way you deal with sickness? Finances? The weather? Conflict?
- Do you attribute things that happen solely to physical or material causes, or is there space for spiritual influence?
- What about the way you go about seeking solutions? Are there particular areas that you tend to go to prayer, while not so much in other areas? Why do you suppose it's hard for you to seek God in those areas?

THE WRAP UP

Take time and pray together, giving Jesus permission to change your perspective. As Micah Turnbo puts it, “God, break our boxes.”

CHAPTER 2: THIN PLACES

ONE DAY GOD’S GLORY IS going to cover the earth undeniably. Today, we can learn to perceive that it’s already here by growing in awareness.

“I have found one muscle to be profoundly significant: awareness.”

GROUP ACTIVITY

Let’s play a game. Someone set a timer for one minute. We’re going to take a minute and scan the room. Secretly choose one thing that you think is least likely to be noticed. When the minute’s over, take turns pointing out your object. With each item shared, everyone share whether you noticed it or not. High five to whoever seems the most observant!

Read Genesis 28:10-17 (especially look at v. 16).

Jacob seems to slap his forehead for not realizing where he was—or who else was there. In Jacob’s day, God showed up to particular people in particular places. Read “A New Thin Place” on page 19.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In light of this, where might we expect to have an encounter with God?
- In what contexts do you tend to have the hardest time being aware of God’s presence?
- In some places it’s easier to be aware of God’s presence. For Kyle it’s the wilderness, for Melissa, it’s the living room floor. Where is it easiest for you?
- In what space in your life would you like to cultivate more awareness?

ACTIVATION: CULTIVATING AWARENESS

We’re going to do an exercise in awareness. God is here right now, and we’re just going to give ourselves permission to slow down for a moment, and look for clues of His presence.

You are not being graded, it’s totally ok if you don’t sense anything! Relax. Get into a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths.

Picture yourself in the space that represents the area of your life that you want to cultivate more awareness. It could be a specific physical place like your office or your car, but if you said something more abstract, like in your family, picture a space where your family gathers.

Create the details of the space in your mind's eye. What do you notice around the room? Are you sitting, standing, lying down? Allow yourself to be in that space for a moment.

Pause before moving forward.

We're going to pray, expressing gratitude and invitation to the Lord. Feel free to use your own words, or you can follow along with this prayer:

Jesus, thank you for this space. This area of my life is a blessing from you. Thank you that you are already here in this space. You love to bless and fill this area of my life. With all my heart, I welcome you here.

As you welcome Him, look for evidence of His presence. You might see Him, or perhaps a symbol that represents Him. You might hear Him say something, or you might feel a shift—either in your body or in your emotions. Look for any hint of His presence, and when you sense something, thank Him.

THE WRAP UP

When you're finished, write down anything that happened, or share it with the group. Take time and pray together.

CHAPTER 3: THINNER SPACES

IF A THIN PLACE IS an area of our lives in which we have an acute awareness of God’s presence, then thinner spaces are the places of pressure—where we get to impact our environment with the presence of God.

“Thinner places are places of pressure..”

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Share about a time that you had to fit into a physically tight space (Spelunking? Hide and seek? Perhaps something far worse?)

Read the paragraph on page 22 which begins, “If thin places are certain sites...”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Someone explain in your own words, what are thinner spaces?

Read Acts 16:25-26.

- How do Paul and Silas respond to the “thinner space” of the prison?
- How do you suppose that impacted the people around them?
- Name a time you were recently under pressure, or in a challenging circumstance.
 - How did you respond?
 - What could we learn from your experience?

On page 24, Kyle explains that work is not a curse, but a context for co-creating and problem solving with God.

- Are there any particular people or places that you have seen as a curse?
 - Is it possible that the Lord is inviting you to change your perspective?
 - How might you move toward partnering with God in that space?

THE WRAP UP

*Is anyone experiencing a “thinner space” in their life right now?
Take time and pray for one another.*

CHAPTER 4: OFFENSE AND INSECURITY

WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES offended or insecure, the situation is secondary. More important than the issue being resolved is what God wants to do inside of you. You'll find that when these things drive you to Him, giving yourself to His refining work will empower you to face the issues.

“Offense always has plenty of bricks, and he loves to share.”

During the Trustees meeting, Kyle experienced “the meeting of two pressure systems, causing a whirlwind of emotion.” For him these pressure systems were the disappointment from a friend, and the discomfort of poor ministry results.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe a time you experienced something similar. What did you feel?
- Offense is described as a person—building walls and throwing bricks. How would you describe your relationship with Offense?
- Offense causes us to reject things and people that God is actively blessing. Take a moment and ask, “Holy Spirit, would you show me any place where I’m missing what you’re doing because I’ve partnered with Offense?”
- Take time and repent, forgive anyone you need to forgive, and ask the Spirit to show you what He’s doing in and/or through that person.

THINNER PLACES

Offense and insecurity are thinner spaces. They are places of internal pressure where we can learn to encounter God’s heart and make it known even in our own inner world. There are spaces inside of you that still need to encounter the love of God.

- For Kyle, those spaces were offense and insecurity. What might they be for you?

THE WRAP UP

Take time and pray for one another, that those internal spaces would be open for God to reveal himself, and that you would have the courage to partner with Him in those spaces.

CHAPTER 5: ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

DESPITE THE PLEAS OF OUR society to anesthetize the pain, God is inviting us to wrestle with Him. In His kindness, God doesn't protect us from the pain but often uses it to bring us to a deeper breakthrough with Him.

"What we experience as kids can have an odd sort of permanence."

The Holy Spirit leads Kyle to connect his current hurt to a childhood pain. The pain of today is almost never disconnected from earlier painful events.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is it possible that some of the pain you've experienced recently is connected to an early event?
- Are you aware of any repeating patterns of brokenness in your life? What comes to mind?

Read Psalm 13.

TAKE TIME TO LAMENT

A lament is when we express our pain to God. Unfiltered pain. We don't need to justify or excuse what we feel, we just allow ourselves to feel it in God's Presence. When we ignore

"Every loss demands an appropriate season of grieving, whether it's your best friend or your favorite pen." -Terry Wardle

pain it becomes like an infection beneath the surface. It's protected by new skin, but it's tender to the touch, we feel it every time we bump against it. Lamenting is allowing the scab to be opened, so that the infection can

be pulled out. The Psalms show us that God is safe enough for us to bring Him our worst emotions.

- Is there a particular loss in your life that you need to grieve?
- You may find that your list is endless, or perhaps nothing comes to mind. Ask the Holy Spirit if there's a loss you need to let yourself face today. If you're feeling brave, share it with the group.

ACTIVATION: WRITE A LAMENT

This can be done in your group, or on your own. You might consider allowing anyone who wants to share their lament next time you meet as a group. It can be cathartic to express your grief in the presence of safe people who can sit with you in your pain without trying to fix it.

When someone shares, the responsibility of the rest of the group is to honor the pain as it's expressed. You're not trying to solve the problem, or deciding whether they should or shouldn't be upset. The best thing you can do for them is to see and hear them in their pain. Even if you sense God saying something, be cautious not to share too quickly, this is first about them having space to express the pain.

Have someone pray to close, offering up any pain that's been expressed as an offering to God, trusting that He hears and responds.

WRITING YOUR LAMENT

Want to write a lament but don't know where to start? Here's some basics to get you started:

1. Be gut honest—use whatever language fits the expression of your heart. Do not censor yourself—you do not need to make excuses for others, this isn't for them, it's for you. You do not need to reason, reason will stifle emotional expression. Let your heart speak louder than your reasoning.
2. Consider and write about what happened to you. Was there harm done? Was there something that should have happened and didn't? What was the cost of it? Note all the losses connected: financial, relational, emotional, etc.
3. Once you've poured out the intensity of your pain, take note of what aspect of God's nature you're drawn to. Conclude with an expression of trust in that aspect of God's character.

For a brief example of a lament, read "Fragments...He was listening" on page 40.

THE WRAP UP

"Like an old wound that had been opened, the pressure of the fluid had drained, now the wound could heal."

When you pour out your pain in God's presence, space opens up. Watch how eager God is to fill that space up with truth that brings comfort and joy.

CHAPTER 6-7: THE CURE FOR INSECURITY

REVIEW

Did anyone write a lament this week? Anyone want to read it?

If anyone shares, don't rush ahead. Thank them for trusting the group with such a vulnerable thing. If it seems right, take a moment and pray a simple blessing over them as they continue to explore their pain with Jesus.

Listeners remember—your responsibility is to honor the pain as it's expressed. You're not trying to solve the problem, or deciding whether they should or shouldn't be upset. The best thing you can do for them is to see and hear them in their pain. Even if you sense God saying something, be cautious about sharing too quickly, this is first about them having space to express the pain.

Perhaps Jesus's strongest power was His profound depth of security in the Father's love. He had an experiential awareness of the Father's love and so can we. I've combined chapters 6 and 7, because they're really one cohesive idea. Chapter 6 is my claim, and chapter 7 is the expression of the claim.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Let's talk affection. What kind of expression of love makes you feel the most warm n' fuzzies? (You can always start with the "5 love languages" if you need some help: words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service, gifts, and quality time. You can google "5 love languages for more information.)
- How much would you say that you experience the love of God?

Read, "Jesus comes filled to the brim...empowers Him to give freely to others" on pages 48-49.

- What stirs in you as you read this picture of Jesus?

This picture of Jesus living in the embrace of His Father is the life humanity was created for. Jesus reintroduces this not just by example, but by providing access. He is "the way" to the Father (John 14:6), and our response to Jesus positions us to become the beloved like Him (John 16:27).

"There's a lot of talk about the love of God, but little experience. Where there is love, there is meant to be an experience of that love: affection."

ACTIVATION: IMAGINATIVE ENCOUNTER

- Let's do an experiment with our imagination. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Think of a time you recently went out for breakfast with someone. Picture the scene in your mind's eye with as much detail as you can.
 - What stands out to you in that place? Were you at a booth or a table? Was the restaurant crowded or quiet? Can you see the door from your seat? The kitchen? What did you order? Picture your plate of food in front of you. Imagine the texture of it. Can you smell it? Imagine taking a bite. Is it warm? Look across the table, who is with you? What are they wearing? How do they seem? Are they happy, sad? How do you feel when you look at them?
 - What do you feel in this moment?
 - Now, if you're up to it, ask Jesus to show you where He is in the restaurant. You can say, "Jesus, where are you?" Once you ask, look for Him. Where do you see Him? Once you see Him, what do you see Him doing? Is He serving? Dining? What's the expression on His face? What happens inside of you as you look at Him? Is there something you want to say to Him? Is there something you want to ask Him?
- Debrief together. How was that experience for you? Be honest about your level of ease with using your imagination. Would you be open to trying again?

THE WRAP UP

Is there anyone in the group who wants to grow in their encounters with Jesus in the imagination? Pray for them.

CHAPTER 8: DOWNLOADS AND HIGHLIGHTS

WHEN WE LIVE IMMERSED in the Father’s love, we can’t help but ooze the stuff. Taking risks enables us to let the Father’s love touch the lives of others.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Share about a time you (or someone you know) received specific information from God.

Read the paragraph, “When we give ourselves...” on page 61.

- On a scale of 0-10, 10 being a confident “yes,” and 0 being “no way,” how open are you to approaching people when the Spirit prompts you? Explain.
- In some of Kyle’s stories in this chapter, he’s resistant to obey—often due to inconvenience. What conditions might cause you to be resistant?
- How might you fill in this prayer, “My relationship with you is more important than _____.”
- Read the paragraph, “Downloads are seeds...” on page 63.
- How do you feel about being “entrusted with seeds of heaven?”
- Let’s practice!

ACTIVATION: SEEDS FROM HEAVEN

We’re going to take some time and tune into the Spirit, asking Him for some specific information that would lead us into ministry for someone this week.

- Close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you quiet yourself and engage with Him. When you’re ready, invite the Spirit to give you specific information that would lead to ministry or prayer for someone.
- Take note of anything that comes to your mind as you wait in prayer. You might see a picture, hear a word, or get a sense of an issue the Lord wants to address—physical, emotional, social, financial, etc. It might seem vague and unhelpful, take note of it anyway. Note anything you sense as specifically as possible. Don’t disregard something simply because you think you made it up.
- Share with the group anything you sensed might be from the Lord.

“When we give ourselves over to a lifestyle of walking with God, we can rest assured that we will frequently be invited into adventure and risk taking.”

Don't be shy, this isn't about being right, it's about being open and not afraid to make mistakes. You might find that by sharing out loud you begin to get more clarity as to what was from the Lord.

- Hold what you sensed loosely as you go about your life for the next few days. Ask the Lord to help you recall it and to look for a point of connection. For example, maybe you saw the color yellow, and in a few days you find your attention drawn to someone wearing yellow.
- When you see a point of connection (like the above example), approach the person. Strike up a conversation, ask them if they need prayer. If you sensed the Lord highlighting a specific issue and it seems appropriate, ask them if they need prayer for it.
- Plan to share with the group if you were able to take a risk this week! Remember mistakes are not a problem. Seek to walk in love, and leave the results up to Jesus.

THE WRAP UP

Take time and pray together. Perhaps some are nervous, pray for their ability to experience the presence of Jesus while they're out and about this week.

CHAPTER 9: BEAR THE YOKE

REVIEW

Did anyone take a risk this past week? Are you willing to share?

“I was falling into escapism again.”

We can't control when painful emotions hit us, but we can control how we handle them. It turns out, painful emotions can become a powerful asset toward breakthrough.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Can you relate? What situation are you currently wanting to escape?
- Share about a time you've daydreamed of your life situation being entirely different, or even just a little different.

Of course it's healthy to desire change; you see something that isn't as it should be and you want it to improve. But, if in your daydream you despise things as they are, you've overlooked a greater threat.

ESCAPING REALITY

When we desire to escape our current reality, we become numb to God's presence in that reality. Nothing in our circumstance can satisfy our longings and desires, except that our circumstance is filled with potential for us to experience God within it. And it's impossible to experience God anywhere other than where you are right now. To say it another way, your painful circumstance is not your problem. Your inability to perceive God's nearness in that circumstance is your problem.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be filled with light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.” -Matthew 6:22-23

It's about perception. Can you perceive that God is with you? Can you recognize His brilliant capacity to bring about your good despite the hand you've been dealt? How confident are you that God is undaunted in His ability to bring beauty from ashes, light in darkness, and life in death? Your emotions will answer that question for you.

Read the final three paragraphs on page 75, beginning with the line, “Pain is rarely the problem...” and ending with the line “He sees them as an opportunity for Him as well.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Either by your family, your culture, or society, how have you been trained to deal with negative emotions? Do you...
 1. Stuff them? Ignore them?
 2. Spew them at those around you?
 3. Punish or shame yourself for feeling them?
 4. Something else?
- Looking at the above reading, how is Kyle inviting you to handle negative emotions? How does that sound to you?

THE WRAP UP

There is more you can do here, but it may be too much to do together. Read through the section below together. You may want to brainstorm together to identify a recent event, but I would suggest taking on the work on your own. Pray for one another, for the Lord to lead your process as you work through the section below on your own.

FOR FURTHER WORK ON YOUR OWN...

Think of a recent event that caused negative emotions. Maybe something bad happened, or something good didn't happen. Maybe someone said something that struck a chord, or you had a train of thought that caused some funky feelings.

Once you have that, work through the Five Questions starting on page 73. Write down your answers or talk through them with a trusted friend.

After working through the questions, allow yourself to feel the pain of it all. Take a deep breath, and invite Jesus to meet you in the pain. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth. Ask, "Holy Spirit, would you show me what's true here?"

Wait and listen. Take note of anything that comes to mind. If you're new to this level of listening, it's ok to ask for help. Find wise counsel and share with them your sense of what you think God might be saying, ask them to help you discern God's voice. You can refer to page 56 as you learn to test whether what you're hearing is from God.

CHAPTER 10: EMBRACE THE ACCLIMATION

REVIEW

Did anyone do the exercise with the 5 questions from last week? Were you able to sense anything from the Lord?

“I’m moving you through an acclimation process.”

There is ALWAYS more to discover and to receive. You can celebrate how far you’ve come, but never settle.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Who gets bragging rights? Share, what’s the deepest you’ve ever gone in the water? Not sure? Who has jumped from the highest height into the water?
- Whoever seems to be doing the most bragging gets to do the reading...or you can delegate, cause you’re the champ.

Read: Romans 11:33 Jeremiah 33:3

We could spend our entire lives moving deeper and deeper into an experiential knowledge of God, and there would still be a bottomless wealth of beauty and riches undiscovered. If that were our single aim, it would certainly not be a life wasted. In chapters 9 and 10, Kyle is discovering the Father’s invitation to go deeper in the midst of his discomfort.

Like diving, there are transitional spaces in our lives where we discover a barrier to moving deeper. That transitional space often comes with pain, discomfort, and threats. When we bump into those spaces, God in His grace gives us the opportunity to press through, or come up for air and stay in shallower waters. Think about Israel at the gate of the promised land.

- Read Numbers 13:25-33. What barriers were they bumping up against? Go beyond the circumstantial barriers, what are the internal barriers? In other words, why were the circumstances not an issue for Caleb but a dealbreaker for others?

After this event Israel is given forty years to acclimate with God in the wilderness before they’re ready to face the barrier again. You can see this same type of pattern in any believer’s life. God positions us in a challenging spot that can bring about breakthrough, but how we respond is entirely up to us.

You might, for example, have a conflict with a friend where you feel like you're not being heard or valued. Of course there's an external issue that needs to be resolved, but your ability to navigate it is dependent upon your ability to resolve the things stirred up in your own heart. In this situation you can either...

- a) Run away—cut off the relationship and start over with someone else.
- b) Ignore the dysfunction and hide your pain.
- c) Explore the opportunity for growth—first in yourself, and second in your relationships.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you see a similar pattern in your history? When have you needed to “come up for air” a few times before you were able to break through a barrier?
- What do you think God was cultivating in you in that transition? (If it was a threat, perhaps God was cultivating trust. If it was a relational conflict, perhaps God wanted to grow you in love, or vulnerability, or courage to be honest.)

THE WRAP UP

Is anyone currently in such a transformation? End by praying for them, that they would be able to embrace the acclimation with the Lord!

CHAPTER 11: THE URGENCY OF NEARNESS

OBSESSING OVER THE FUTURE robs us of the present. Our ability to make big decisions well relies on our ability to remain connected to the Vine.

**“Is this what you want to
give yourself to?”**

Read the five paragraphs beginning on page 92 with “So many things...” and ending on page 93 at the section break with, “...God’s faithful nearness.”

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What is vying for your attention today?
- If your attention is an offering of worship, what do you worship?

When we obsess over future concerns—things we can’t control anyway, we are robbed of our ability to engage with the present. When we’re disconnected from the present, we miss out on the things that can only be received right now. We also neglect responsibilities God entrusts to us. Think of the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

**“Hold tight and enjoy
the ride.”**

We can’t know for sure why the priest or the Levite didn’t stop to help the man, but there is one distinction we can identify between them and the Samaritan. Read verse 33. The distinction is not compassion, it’s his attention. “When he saw him...” Compassion rose up in the Samaritan because he was able to be present enough in the moment to see the vulnerable position of the injured man. Compassion is the result of our ability to be present to the world around us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Kyle found baby Myron to be a gift, pulling Kyle back into the present moment. Is there someone in the margins of your life who—if you were to take a moment to really see them, might stir up compassion within you?
- Notice what story comes immediately after the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. What does this story have to say about attention?
- On a scale of 1 to 10—1 being distracted and 10 being positioned at the Lord’s feet, how would you rate yourself? How do you feel about that?

ACTIVATION: SURRENDER ENCOUNTER

In this activation we're going to acknowledge the things that have our attention, and we're going to entrust them to Jesus.

- Get into a comfortable position, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
- Hold your hands in front of you with palms open and facing up. Imagine you're holding things that have taken your attention—anxious thoughts about the future, money concerns, mistakes you've made recently, frustration with someone, etc. Feel the weight of these things as you look at your palms.
- Imagine Jesus standing in front of you, looking at these things in your hands. He sees you, and He's full of compassion for you. His hands are extended, waiting to receive these things.
- When you're ready, slowly turn your hands over, allowing these things to slide out of your grasp and into His hands. Say something like, Jesus, I entrust these things to you. I want to open myself up to attend to you, and to receive whatever you have for me in this moment.
- Turn your hands palms up and ask Jesus if there's anything He wants to give you.
- Take time and share with your group what you experienced.

CHAPTER 12: THE FLOW OF GRACE

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, God has always intended to partner with humanity. God is so invested in your development that He will empower you beyond what you think you're qualified for.

“Sons can't mature unless they're given freedom and power to make decisions.”

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What's a “big decision” you made recently?
- How did you make the decision? What were some of the factors you considered?
- What resources did you tap into in the process?
- Read Psalm 32: 8-9. Do you notice a bit of a tension between verses 8 and 9?
 - “I will instruct you which way to go”
 - “Don't be a mindless beast that needs to be controlled every step.”
- How do you feel about this tension?
- Would you rather...
 - Have God make every decision for you?
 - Make your own decisions every time?

We see this tension in scripture, most clearly in the book of Acts. Sometimes someone is given direct instructions, like Ananias in Acts 9: “Go to the street called Straight to the house of Judas...” Other times God seems to invite participation in the decision. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) for example, is faced with the question of what to expect from new believing gentiles. Knowing the weight of this decision, their conclusion “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to [themselves].” (15:28).

Read the end of the chapter, starting on page 106 with the paragraph which begins, “These verses so struck me...” through the end of the chapter on page 107.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is a current decision you are facing?
- What do you sense God is cultivating in you in this season?
- How might it impact your decision if you were to consider the above question in your discernment?

Take a look at these factors Melissa and Kyle considered as they worked through the large, looming decisions in this story. Perhaps you'll find them useful as you grow in wisdom and discernment!

1. What is God saying? About this decision? About the people or places involved? About this season?
2. Are there any prophetic insights from others (who I find to be trustworthy) related to this decision?
3. How can I be faithful to how God has made me and is forming me in this decision?
4. How do I use my own best judgment in this decision? Are there values and convictions that I hold that need to be honored?
5. What am I hearing from those in my life who I consider to be wise counsel?
6. What input do I have from people who are affected by this decision?

THE WRAP UP

Is anyone facing a heavy decision? Open this up for discussion. Instead of telling them what you think they should do, take time to pray for them together. If they would like help, feel free to use these five questions to ignite the conversation.

CHAPTERS 13-14: LOOKING FOR THE GRACE

HOW WE SEE OURSELVES says a lot about how we see God. The two ideas have significant overlap when we are in Christ.

“Myth has the ability to communicate truth in a way that facts do not.”
-C.S. Lewis

*And in the quiet pride of my Father's eyes
I remember who I am
And when I feel the warmth of my Father's smile
Feels like I've been born again.
-Cory Asbury, “Born Again”*

FINDING CHRIST

Think of your favorite stories—whether they’re books or movies. What character do you feel especially drawn to? What is it about that character that stirs you?

The Holy Spirit is so creative and empowering. He can infuse fictional characters with a quality of Christ—whether the author intended it or not. And when we see a quality of Christ, we are seeing a quality of ourselves. Don’t believe me? Take turns reading some of these verses:

- Colossians 3:1-4
- Colossians 2:9-10
- Ephesians 2:4-7
- Galatians 2:20
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-17
- Romans 6:11

What stands out to you in these passages?

It’s not easy to define ourselves according to Jesus, in fact it’s impossible apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us that it’s the Spirit’s job to take what belongs to Jesus and declare it to us (John 16:14). It’s only with the Spirit’s help that we can take ownership of what is Jesus’s. Our job is to learn to be attentive and open, listening for the gentle

whispers of the Spirit. It can come when we're reading scripture or watching a movie. Perhaps in a song or in a conversation. Whenever we hear something that causes Jesus to be made bigger and more beautiful in our eyes, the Holy Spirit is at work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you think of a time the Spirit showed you something of the nature of Jesus?
- In the passages above, Paul seems to think we ought to define ourselves by Jesus. How much is your self-opinion aligned with Jesus?
- Kyle describes an encounter with Jesus next to the tributary (119-121). Kyle looked at it (remember, the tributary was a picture of himself) with disdain, how did Jesus look at it? What do you feel when you consider yourself?
- If you were to be brutally honest with yourself, how do you imagine Jesus feels when He looks at you?

FOR FURTHER WORK ON YOUR OWN:

For the next five days, ask the Holy Spirit the following questions at least once each day:

- How does Jesus see me?
- What does He think of me?
- How does He feel about me?

THE WRAP UP

Whenever you have something come to your mind in answer, write it down—don't worry about whether it's right or wrong. With each one, ask the Holy Spirit, "Is this true?" If you're having trouble, ask someone you trust what they think. See if any of these things are reflected in scripture.

CHAPTER 15: BACKFLIPS IN THE THRONE ROOM

REVIEW:

Did anyone do the homework from last week? Do you want to share what you sensed? How does Jesus see you? What does He think of you? How does He feel about you?

“There was a safety there (in the Father’s presence), to try something I had never done.”

The fruit of safety is courage. When we learn to rest in the Father’s love, we can take risks and try new things.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- When was the last time you tried something new? Maybe it wasn’t a backflip, but some sort of skill or experience—maybe a musical instrument or something creative. Maybe you used a new tool or tried a unique food?
- What was that experience like? Were you nervous? Did you feel vulnerable or was it exciting?
- Stepping into new spaces and places can be scary. There is a sense of safety in the familiar. You know what you’re up against, and you know what it takes to manage it. We feel more in control in familiar places. On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you with stepping into new spaces and places? Explain.

Read Matthew 4:18-22

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Simon, Andrew, James, and John were familiar with fishing nets. They had a sense of comfort and control when they were on the boat. They knew what their future looked like in the family business, there were few unknowns. How do you think they felt when faced with Jesus’s invitation?
- Abram left his people in Ur, Moses left the solitude of shepherding, Matthew left the security of the tax booth. God seems to specialize in calling people out of the familiar. We can grow in trust and dependence when we are vulnerable, but who wants to feel vulnerable?! If Jesus were to approach you today, inviting you to leave the familiar to follow Him, what would be your biggest hesitation?

Consider these lines from *Every Bush Afire*:

“Will I get to be who I am if we move to Phoenix? Can you promise that I won’t lose these expressions?”

“What if that’s not what I have for you? Are you willing to lay these things down?” (pg. 129)

God didn’t respond to Kyle’s hesitation with reassurance, but with an invitation to surrender what he was afraid to lose. God promises to fulfill our longings, but He doesn’t promise He’ll do it the way He did it yesterday, or the way we want Him to. Ultimately it’s all about trust, and trust is cultivated over time. Trust grows, and each new level of trust positions us for new levels of risk with Him.

THE WRAP UP

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what level of risk He’s inviting you into today. Share anything you’re sensing and close with a time of prayer together.

If you’re ending with chapter 16, decide now whether you want to celebrate with a meal together. Potluck anyone?

CHAPTER 16: GAINING ALTITUDE

IT'S EASY TO CLAIM to have a new understanding, but engaging with that new understanding has a trajectory. When you begin walking in new understanding it will move you toward the reality of it. Choose to follow it no matter the cost.

“In bright red letters was the word, TRUST, imprinted on His chest.”

THE LAST CHAPTER

Well, if you've made it this far, you're either...

- My mom, and you paid for this guide even though it was free (thanks Ma!)
- You've hung around because you're in a comfortable chair with your favorite people
- You are on a journey, and you've continued to find yourself stirred by the themes you've explored here.

...I hope it's one of the latter (for you too, mom).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What growth have you noticed in yourself as you've read and discussed these things?
- What's one thread—from reading the book and/or your discussions here, that you feel compelled to move forward with?
 - What's one practical step you can take this week?

THE WRAP UP

If you haven't dug in already, it's time to go eat! Thank the Lord for the breakthroughs and insights received, and enjoy a feast together.

NOW WHAT?

You've navigated some threads here, but your journey is far from over. Yours won't look like mine, it will be your own. The most important thing you can do is to continually invite the Spirit to walk with you and to guide you. The place of greatest impact in the Kingdom of God is surrender. This is a moment by moment posture.

- Commit yourself to community: don't continue in isolation. Offense prefers to keep us on our own, but we're meant for community. Seek out others who are on a journey and walk with them. Be open about your process and invite input from those you trust.
- Practice, Practice, Practice: go after encounters with Jesus. Devote yourself to growing muscles of exploration and risk-taking. Revisit activations and practices.
- Continue exploring threads: if there are particular threads in the book that continue to draw you, honor that desire and pursue them.

Here's a short list of books that I've found helpful in some of the main threads of this book:

1. Sonship

-*Baptism of Love* by Leif Hetland

-*Spiritual Slavery to Spiritual Sonship* by Jack Frost

2. Growing in Awareness of God's Presence

-*Every Breath We Take* by Terry Wardle

-*Present Perfect* by Greg Boyd

3. Identity in Christ

-*Live Like Jesus* by Putty Putman

-*Waking the Dead* by John Eldridge

4. Emotional Healing

-*Wounded* by Terry Wardle

-*Anatomy of the Soul* by Curt Thompson

5. Ministry with the Spirit

-Putting Jesus on Display with Love and Power by Brian Blount

-Do What Jesus Did by Robby Dawkins

ENJOY YOUR JOURNEY

You're on a journey, and its trajectory has a much more significant impact on the world around you than you're aware. The more fully you can step into an awareness of God's presence, the more equipped you are for your journey. You can learn to cultivate an intimate connection with Him and to navigate daily challenges and decisions in a way that immerses your world in His goodness.

May you personally discover the God who is with you.

BEFORE YOU GO

If you found this guide helpful, share it with a friend.

You can connect with Kyle personally at TopoWilderness.com or look for “Topo Wilderness” on Facebook.