

Life-Changing Biblical Practices
for Living a Life of Purpose

LIVING UNCOMMONLY

Study Guide



MARK HARNER

Living Uncommonly

Study Guide

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Living Uncommonly

Introduction

Study Guide

This Study Guide is designed to be used in companion with the book *Living Uncommonly* by Mark Harner. The Study Guide is ideally to be used in a Small (Life) Group setting where ideas can be exchanged among group members in response to the questions in the Guide. Alternatively, the Guide can be used individually to help the reader think through the biblical concepts in the book.

Each chapter has a one-page Study Guide organized as follows:

- Reviewing the Chapter
- Challenges of the Chapter
- Application of the Chapter
- Memory Verse(s)

Reviewing the Chapter - Designed to help the reader think through and re-enforce the concepts discussed in each chapter.

Challenges of the Chapter – Asks specific questions to help the reader personally address challenges that may arise from concepts discussed in the book.

Application of the Chapter – Designed to help the reader put the book’s concepts immediately into action.

Memory Verse(s) – These are always the keynote verse(s) of each chapter. The author encourages the reader to develop Scripture memory as a Christian discipline so that the reader can have ready recall to address the challenges of life in a biblical manner.

The over-riding purpose of this Study Guide is to help the reader better understand the Scriptural principles discussed in the book, increase the reader’s intimacy with Christ, and impact others in the reader’s sphere of influence for the sake of Christ.

Mark Harner
Spring, TX
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Living Uncommonly

Chapter 1 - My Personal Spiritual Journey – Crossing the Line of Faith

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Mark says that his parents made him feel like his well-being was more important than their own. What was your experience with your parents as a child? If you are a parent, is this something you try to do as well?
- 2) Mark Bianchi seemed to live out his faith in a distinctive way. Do you know someone like that? If so, do you find the way they live more or less attractive than most other people and why?
- 3) If you are a Christian, could your life be described as a distinct Christ follower?
- 4) Before becoming a Christian, Mark believed in the “good guy” theory of salvation. Do you see any merit in that?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) Can you answer the same question posed to Mark, *“If you were to die today, would you be certain that you would go to heaven?”* with the certainty described in 1 John 5:11-13?
- 6) Mark describes his conversion experience as recognizing his need for a Savior for the forgiveness of his sins so he could be reconciled back to God. Describe where you are in your understanding of your need and your decision to be reconciled to God through Christ.

Application of the Chapter

- 7) If you have not yet crossed the line of faith, John 1:12 says that when we receive Him as Savior, we become children of God. If you would like to do that, review how Mark said he received Christ as Savior in the paragraph beginning, “On Sunday, February 29, 1976,” and ask a believer you trust to help you receive Christ.
- 8) John 10:10 speaks of the “abundant life” we can have in Christ. Have you experienced this type of life and, if so, how would you describe what that means in comparison to your everyday life?

Memory Verse – John 5:24, *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; **he has crossed over from death to life.**”*

- 9) How should this verse impact the Christian’s view of death?
- 10) If you are not a believer, is there an attraction to Christ as a result of this verse? Would you like to “cross over from death to life” while still on earth?

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Chapter 2 – Living a Life of Purpose
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) How do you think you are doing with carrying out the two broad purposes of every believer – loving God and loving others? (Matthew 22:37-39)
- 2) If you are a Christian, why do you believe God still has you on earth and not with Him in heaven?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 3) Through prayer, have you determined your prevailing purpose(s), and if so, how are you acting on it? If not, what will you do to find that purpose?
- 4) If you have settled on your prevailing purpose(s) and are acting on it, do you need to consider the three areas of caution Mark describes in the paragraph beginning, “Three points of caution here”? Why or why not?
- 5) Mark writes this, *“The Christian does not do things based solely on results, as most non-Christians do. We do things based on obedience to that for which we have been called?”* Do you agree or disagree with that statement, and why?

Application of the Chapter

- 6) Think about the coming week and determine what you will do to act on your prevailing purpose.
- 7) Now think about the next month, year, and five-year period and determine how you will act on your prevailing purpose.

Memory Verse – 2 Corinthians 5:5, *“Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”*

- 8) The Spirit living in a Christian helps every Christian to carry out his/her purpose. How are you allowing the Spirit to impact you so that you can find and carry out your purpose?

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Chapter 3 – Making the Most of Every Opportunity

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) How would you currently prioritize the importance of your personal agenda for the day vs. acting on relational opportunities that come your way each day? Identify specific examples of how this is demonstrated in your everyday life.
- 2) Is your “spiritual antennae” up each day, or do you find yourself looking back on the day and then seeing how you missed out on what Christ might have been leading you to do or say? Identify specific examples.
- 3) Do you know where your spiritual gift(s) and passions are so that you can direct your primary activities to those areas? If so, describe them.
- 4) What do you do when you think Christ is leading you to act in a situation, but you’re not 100% sure?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) Hebrews 11 speaks about some of the giants of the faith, including Abraham, and says this about the “results” of their faith in verse 13, *“They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance...”* Are you content with doing what Christ called you to do, even if you don’t see immediate results in your personal encounters? If not, why not?
- 6) Mark suggests that to live intentionally and to make the most of opportunities that each day begin with a Quiet Time of Scripture reading and prayer, offering ourselves to Christ as described in Romans 12:1, and then praying continually throughout the day (1 Thessalonians 5:17.) Do you agree with that? Are you in that daily practice yourself? If not, why not?

Application of the Chapter

- 7) Start today to “dream small” so that you can have the right attitude to capitalize on what God brings your way with personal encounters each day.
- 8) Spend some time reflecting on where your spiritual passions and gifts are and align your primary efforts into those areas.

Memory Verses – Ephesians 5:15-16, *“Be very careful then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”*

- 9) Have you developed the discipline to recognize and make the most of opportunities that come your way? Describe how you are intentional about it.

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Chapter 4 – Making Your Work Spiritually Significant
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) How do you relate to the life cycle of work described for each decade? Was there one that you particularly identified with?
- 2) How would you define, “making your work spiritually significant?”
- 3) Is a lack of “margin” in your life an issue for you to make your work spiritually significant? If so, what will you do about it?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) Are you currently attempting to integrate your faith into the workplace? If not, what is preventing you from doing so?
- 5) If “margin” is an issue for you to make your work spiritually significant, have you thought about ways to create margin within your current framework at work? Are you utilizing breakfast, lunch, and dinners effectively to create and build relationships? Are there hobbies you have where you could engage with a spiritual seeker?
- 6) Are you trying to act as a “lone-ranger” Christian, or do you have Christians you are accountable to and encourage you as you attempt to make your work spiritually significant?

Application of the Chapter

- 7) If you want your legacy in the workplace to be to make an impact for the sake of Christ, spend time in prayer asking Christ how He wants you to practically do it.
- 8) Based on your answer to question 7, take one step this week toward making your work spiritually significant.

Memory Verse – Colossians 3:17, *“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

- 9) Is every activity of your life, including the workplace, subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? If not, what are the primary activities or areas that you can further surrender to Him?

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Chapter 5 – Producing Spiritual Fruit

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Do you agree that the response Jesus gave to the Pharisee in Matthew 22:37-40 gives the Christian an over-riding guide for personal conduct while on earth? What other purposes do you see for your life that are not covered under these two commands?
- 2) The apostle Paul describes in I Corinthians 9:19-22 how he dealt with all kinds of people groups in his everyday encounters. Can you relate to his willingness to, “become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (verse 22)?” How have you put this idea into action?
- 3) Mark emphasizes through a reference to John 15:5, that all spiritual fruit is ultimately produced by Christ (the Vine), that the Christian’s responsibility is to be connected to the Vine (as a branch), and to then be obedient to his call on our life. Does this reduce the pressure you might feel when you are attempting to share Christ with someone?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) If you are a Christian, have you determined what your primary purpose for remaining on this earth is? If so, how closely does it relate to impacting non-believers for the sake of Christ?
- 5) Do you presently have a spiritual fruit chart? If not, could you produce one that describes your evangelistic and discipleship relationships?
- 6) If you have a spiritual fruit chart, how many spiritual generations deep is it?
- 7) Are you regularly praying for, and then looking for God to bring people into your path for which you could develop a relationship with them and share Christ with them?

Application of the Chapter

- 8) If you are not currently doing so, begin to make producing spiritual fruit an extreme priority in your life. Be intentional about it, pray about it regularly, and be on the alert for God to bring people into your life that he desires for you to make a spiritual impact upon.

Memory Verses – Matthew 28:18-20, *“Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

- 9) Do you agree with Mark that these three verses could be subtitled, “The Christian’s reason for remaining on earth and not going directly to heaven upon conversion?” Explain.

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Chapter 6 – Loving Others Not Like You
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) What do you think of the way the discussion leader handled the question by the lesbian woman?
- 2) What role does the Christian play in judging a person's sin level or eternal destiny?
- 3) Romans 3:23 tells us that, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Is anyone excluded from needing the grace of God?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) Are you in the habit of extending grace to people and loving those who have either wronged you or are not like you?
- 5) Are you comfortable with "taking the high road" in a contentious interaction with another person?
- 6) Do you see every person as a precious child of God, who is equally as loved by God as you, and for whom God desires to see come to faith in Him (1 Timothy 2:3-4)?

Application of the Chapter

- 7) The next time you find yourself in a disagreement, make your first reaction to extend grace and take the high road, rather than just try to win the argument.
- 8) Begin to get in the habit of seeing every person as a precious child of God, equal to you in importance to God.

Memory Verses – Ephesians 4:31-32, *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

- 9) If people practiced these memory verses, do you think the world we live in would look more like heaven?

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Chapter 7 – Disciple-Making
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Is discipleship all about Bible study, prayer, and Scripture memory, or is there more to it than that? How would you define discipleship?
- 2) Do you agree with Mark that discipleship should be organic and not a “program” to pair up individuals?
- 3) Why is Scripture memory important?
- 4) How did Jesus model discipleship?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) Mark says that discipleship is not for the faint-hearted. Why do you think he says that?
- 6) Are you willing to disciple another person? Are you willing to be discipled to grow in your faith? Why or why not?
- 7) Where will you look to find potential discipleship relationships in your life?

Application of the Chapter

- 8) If you are a more mature believer, begin to pray for God to lead you to, and actively seek out, a person(s) to disciple.
- 9) If you feel like God is calling you to be discipled, seek out a relationship with a more mature believer.
- 10) If you are not a Christian, begin to engage with a Christian with whom you respect.

Memory Verse – 2 Timothy 2:2, *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men, who will also be qualified to teach others.”*

- 11) Describe how being discipled, or discipling another person, has been or will be an important part of your Christian experience and growth.

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Chapter 8 – Becoming a Patriarch or Matriarch

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Do you believe that what you do and say today can impact current and future generations within your family and friends? Why or why not?
- 2) Do you agree with Mark that those who consider themselves patriarchs or matriarchs still need to remain humble and FAT (Faithful, Available, Teachable)? Discuss examples of how you are doing this today.
- 3) Does a person's age dictate whether they are a patriarch or matriarch?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) Mark says that patriarchs and matriarchs cannot sit idly by. Do you identify with this statement?
- 5) Do you have the "mindset" of a patriarch or matriarch? If not, how do you plan to gain this mindset, and if so, how will you further develop this mindset?

Application of the Chapter

- 6) Ask Christ to show you if, where, and how you should take on the role of a patriarch or matriarch.
- 7) Resolve to limit the number of unopened "blessing boxes" you'll see in heaven that you could have experienced in this lifetime if you would have only been willing to take on the patriarchal or matriarchal role God called you to.

Memory Verse – James 3:13, *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."*

- 8) Do you believe that you have value to add to those close to you as a patriarch or matriarch? If so, discuss some specific examples with the group.

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Chapter 9 – Trusting Christ in Uncertain Times

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) What is your first reaction when faced with a challenging and/or uncomfortable situation?
- 2) Mark described a challenging medical situation which proved to be far less serious than he initially thought. How can you relate to his first reaction to his situation?
- 3) Mark describes what he considers to be the definition of an exciting, meaningful life. “It is one where we are willing to go on an exciting journey with the Creator of the Universe through His Son Jesus Christ. It is when we can look for, and then actually see, Christ at work in our lives.” Do you agree or disagree with his definition and why?
- 4) Jonah 2:8 describes how a person can sometimes forfeit the grace that could be his or hers because we choose not to focus on Christ, but on a “worthless idol.” Has this ever happened to you?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) Are you able to look at a challenging situation as a great opportunity to seek Christ and grow in your faith?
- 6) Do you want the Healer (Jesus Christ) more than you want the healing in the challenges that you face?
- 7) What are you doing to “set your mind on things above, not on earthly things” so that you can face your next challenge with spiritual confidence?

Application of the Chapter

- 8) Think about the most significant challenge you are facing now or in the near future, and based on what you learned in this chapter, meditate upon how God might want you to handle the situation. Based on what you hear from God, make the necessary adjustments in your approach to the challenge.

Memory Verse – Colossians 3:2, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

- 9) How does applying this verse help us to deal with uncertain times in our lives?

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Chapter 10 – Humility
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Mark writes near the beginning of the chapter that the absence of humility is self-reliance and that self-reliance leads to the absence of Christ in a person's life. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 2) Do Christians gain a false sense of humility by comparing themselves to other people as opposed to God's standards as documented in the Bible?
- 3) Mark writes that being humble is "freeing" and allows the Christian to focus more on meaningful relationships. Do you agree or disagree and why?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) Would you rather win an argument important to you, or develop a deep relationship with someone else?
- 5) Do you think you should worry about being the best, or should you worry about being the most humble (Matthew 18:3-4)?

Application of the Chapter

- 6) Mark wrote about the disagreement he had with a work colleague and how the colleague displayed genuine humility. Think about someone you need to display genuine humility toward and ask God to help you demonstrate that humility to that person.

Memory Verse – Matthew 5:3, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

- 7) Who are the "poor in spirit" in this verse? What is their reward?

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Chapter 11 – Grumbling, Gratitude and Unwholesome Talk

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) How important is a Christian's attitude and speech as a witness to the non-believing world?
- 2) Do you think non-believers notice the way that a Christian speaks? Does God-honoring speech make a Christian less relatable to a non-Christian or more interesting and attractive?
- 3) Mark writes near the end of the chapter that grumbling and complaining is an indication that we think we are too good for the specific situation we are in. Do you agree or disagree? Do you think that Jesus Christ wants to mold you to be more like Him in your difficult situation? Explain.

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) James 1:26 and 3:6 speak to the importance of a Christian's speech. How does the way that you speak affect your relationship with Christ? Is there anything you need to change in your speech?
- 5) Describe how being a "new creation in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17) has changed your speech.
- 6) Identify examples of how you live life with "gratitude in your heart" (Colossians 3:16) for what Christ has done for you.

Application of the Chapter

- 7) If you find yourself grumbling and complaining with regularity, ask someone you see often to hold you accountable and begin to pray that you would appreciate what Christ has done for you despite the challenge(s) you may be facing.
- 8) If you are having trouble with your speech ask someone close to you to hold you accountable.

Memory Verse – Philippians 2:14, *"Do everything without complaining or arguing."*

- 9) Why would the apostle Paul (and Jesus Christ) be so concerned about complaining or arguing?

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Chapter 12 – Don't Worry
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Do you agree or disagree that the Lord's command not to worry may be one of the most disobeyed commands in the Bible?
- 2) What is the difference between worry and concern? Where is Jesus Christ in each of these approaches?
- 3) Should we expect to face challenges in life that only Christ can control (John 16:33)?
- 4) Have you ever wished you would have worried more? If not, why do you even begin to worry?
- 5) Mark writes that the antidote for worry is seeking Christ. Do you agree or disagree and why?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 6) When you face a challenge in life are you more wrapped up in worry or in seeking Christ through the challenge?
- 7) Would you rather face your next challenge in life by trusting Christ or by trusting in yourself?
- 8) Have you so sought out Christ in your life that you have crowded out worry in your life? Describe persistent worries that you encounter and how you are dealing with them now.

Application of the Chapter

- 9) Meditate on and memorize Colossians 3:23. Plan on how you will apply this verse to play for "An Audience of One" in all your life's challenges.

Memory Verse – Matthew 6:27, *"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life."*

- 10) Why would Jesus so strongly address the topic of worry?

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Chapter 13 – Forgiveness
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Can we always forgive and achieve reconciliation with another person? What is the Christian's responsibility related to both forgiving and achieving reconciliation?
- 2) How does a lack of forgiveness toward another human being affect our own human spirit and our relationship with Christ?
- 3) What are the benefits of forgiveness?
- 4) Can we receive forgiveness from Christ if we do not forgive others (see the Parable of The Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:21-35 and specifically Matthew 18:35)?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) In Matthew 18:22, Jesus tells Peter in response to his question about how often he should forgive, *"I tell you, not seven times (as Peter had suggested in verse 21) but seventy-seven times"*; a clear implication that our capacity to forgive should be endless, much like Christ's forgiveness toward us. Are you willing to endlessly forgive another human being as Christ forgave you? Describe a time when you struggled to forgive someone. How would you handle this situation differently now based on this Scripture?
- 6) Mark writes at the end of the chapter that there is not one good reason not to forgive – it benefits you, the other person, and your relationship with Christ. Is there anyone in your life for which you believe Mark's statement is not accurate?

Application of the Chapter

- 7) Think about anyone in your life that you need to forgive and/or seek reconciliation from. Forgive now and make plans to seek reconciliation.

Memory Verses – Matthew 5:23-24, *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift."*

- 8) How do these verses reveal the importance Jesus Christ places on human relationships?

Living Uncommonly
Chapter 14 – Spiritual Disciplines
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) How important is a daily quiet time to you? Do you view it as a privilege that the God of the Universe wants to meet daily with you?
- 2) Mark writes in this chapter that if we knew and followed God's Word, we could avoid many pitfalls in life. Do you agree with that? Why or why not?
- 3) Mark writes that not consistently having a Quiet Time can cause us to miss out on greater intimacy with Christ, peace and contentment, direction in life, and spiritual confidence to face life challenges. How can you improve the quality and consistency of your Quiet Time so that you can attain these spiritual benefits?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 4) Are you in the habit of memorizing Scripture? Jeremiah 31:33 tells us to have God's laws in our minds and hearts. Will ready recall resulting from memorizing Scripture help you to face the daily challenges of life?
- 5) Matthew 14:23-25 documents one example of Jesus appearing to engage in a very extended time of prayer. Do you ever have such extended times of prayer? Do you see any value in it?
- 6) Are you regularly engaged in corporate worship with believers (the church), a small group, and/or one-on-one discipleship with another believer? Describe the value you receive from investing yourself in these activities.

Application of the Chapter

- 7) If you are not having a daily Quiet Time begin today.
- 8) If you are not a part of the church, a small group, or one-on-one discipleship, pray for Christ to lead you into all three of these relationships and take action steps to do so (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Memory Verse – John 15:5, *"I am the Vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing"*

- 9) Jesus says at the end of this verse, "apart from Me you can do nothing." Do you think this is true? Describe an area where you are currently struggling to stay connected to the Vine.

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Chapter 15 – Giving
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Do you agree that giving of money and time to the cause of Christ is a way of saying “yes” to Christ and “no” to self?
- 2) What is your reaction to Mark’s statement that none of our money belongs to us, but it all belongs to God, since he is the genesis behind our earning power?
- 3) How do you view the Old Testament tithe from the perspective that God allows us to keep 90% of the money we make?
- 4) How do you view your giving to your local church — is it to help pay the bills or is it an act of obedience and gratitude for what Christ has done for you?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) Do you give as the Macedonia churches gave — considering it a high privilege to give?
- 6) How do you make the New Testament standard of “cheerful giving” come alive in your life?
- 7) In Luke 21:1-4, Jesus commends the poor widow for giving all that she had. Practically, how do we follow her example today?

Application of the Chapter

- 8) If you are not currently tithing, prayerfully consider starting right now.
- 9) Ask Christ to show you how you can be a New Testament “cheerful” giver and take action steps based on what He reveals to you.

Memory Verse – 2 Corinthians 9:7, *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

- 10) Why does God love a cheerful giver?

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Chapter 16 – Unity Among Believers
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) How do you feel about Mark's statement in this chapter that where believers lack unity in the greater body of Christ that it is due mostly to disputable or discretionary matters and not based on essential Christian doctrines?
- 2) Are you comfortable with "unity" or does it make you think you will have to compromise beyond what you are comfortable with?
- 3) Why was unity so important to Jesus?
- 4) Do you agree that a lack of unity among Christians impacts the non-believing world negatively?
- 5) What should we not compromise for the sake of unity?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 6) Unity among believers was an important topic of the prayer of Jesus in the Garden the night before His crucifixion. Do you value unity like Jesus did?
- 7) Do you agree that unity is critical to the proliferation of the gospel?
- 8) Are you ready to stop arguing about methods and instead focus on what you have in common with other believers?

Application of the Chapter

- 9) Unity among believers is essential to the spread of the gospel (John 17:23) and giving glory to God (Romans 15:5-6). If you have not fully embraced both of these concepts as they relate to unity, ask Christ to make it clear to you. Then, take a specific step with another believer, group, or church that demonstrates your unity in Christ with them.

Memory Verse – John 17:23, *"I in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me."*

- 10) This verse says that unity among believers would reveal Christ to others. How is this so?

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Chapter 17 – Obedience vs. Passion
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Based on the three responses to God Joseph made as described in this chapter, how will his responses impact your response to a calling from God on your life?
- 2) How do your current commitments to serve reflect your priorities toward your God-given passions versus obedience to serve where the needs exist?
- 3) Jesus humbled Himself to serve mankind as described in Philippians 2:5-8. Why is self-sacrifice a virtue that we should pursue as well?
- 4) Does filling a gap of service in areas where we have no passion reveal spiritual maturity? Why or why not?

Challenges of the Chapter

- 5) Have you ever used the phrase, “let me pray on it for a few days,” as an excuse for not acting on something you know God has clearly called you to do? Discuss an example and the outcome.
- 6) Hebrews 11:8 describes how Abraham, “*obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.*” When was the last time you responded to God in the same way?

Application of the Chapter

- 7) Think about service needs in your church, work, or volunteer organizations you are familiar with. Identify a need(s) you could fill, at least temporarily, and pray about filling that need even though you have no passion for it.

Memory Verses – Philippians 2:5-8, “*Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus; Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.*”

- 8) Do you follow the example of Jesus and humble yourself to serve your fellow man? Discuss an example.

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Chapter 18 – Big Faith

Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Have you experienced God's blessings by getting an answer to prayer that you had not expected or foreseen? Discuss your experience with the group.
- 2) Jo framed her MRI reports to remind her of God's graciousness toward her. What reminders of God's grace toward you do you keep to encourage you and sustain you through difficult times?
- 3) Have you ever exercised your faith by praying for something that only God can do, and for which you have no control? Discuss your experience with the group.
- 4) What is more important – that your prayer gets answered exactly like you asked God to do, or that your relationship with Christ deepens? Why?
- 5) Describe your faith in your approach to life — "Big Faith" or a more "practical" faith? Explain.

Challenges of the Chapter

- 6) We can respond to adversity in one of two ways — we can lean into God or we can turn away and become bitter. Which one have you chosen in the past and which one will you choose in the future?
- 7) Are you willing to accept that God's will in a situation might not be your will? Do you trust Him to have your best interests at heart and that He has a plan greater than your own (Romans 8:28)? Why or why not?
- 8) Jo made a decision to return to play after two ACL surgeries, led by the Spirit. However, that decision probably did not make a lot of sense from a human perspective. Do you let the Spirit drive your decisions, or do you only look at the practical side of life?

Application of the Chapter

- 9) Mark writes near the end of the chapter that Big Faith is not a one-time event, but rather an expectant, hopeful way to live. Exercise Big Faith over an important issue in your life and then trust God to work for your own good, and for the good of those around you.

Memory Verses – Matthew 7:9-11, *"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!"*

- 10) Can you completely trust God to give you "good gifts," even if those good gifts might not have been what you had hoped for? Why or why not?

Living Uncommonly
Chapter 19 – Finishing Strong
Study Guide

Reviewing the Chapter

- 1) Are you a person who “leaves it all on the field” in whatever challenge you face? If so, what is your motivation for doing so?
- 2) Do you have a sense of urgency about finishing strong? How do you react to James 4:13-14?
- 3) Do you agree with Mark that finishing strong can start at any age? Why or why not?
- 4) Describe how you want to feel about your relationship with Christ when you take your last breath. How does that impact the way you are living now?
- 5) Evaluate how you respond when faced with a life challenge. Are you typically focused on the outcome or focused on following Christ? Describe an example.

Challenges of the Chapter

- 6) Are you ready to start earnestly pursuing Jesus today in order to begin the process of finishing strong? Have you already determined to say “Yes” to Jesus even before you know the challenge you might face?
- 7) Do you desire such a deep relationship with Christ that you “long for His appearing,” as Paul states in 2 Timothy 4:8? Are you in the process of deeply seeking Christ?

Application of the Chapter

- 8) Think and pray about the specific steps you will begin to take to finish strong in life (see next to last paragraph of the chapter which lists some ideas) and act upon them beginning today.
- 9) When you face the next challenge in life, say “Yes” to Jesus even before you know the full details.

Memory Verses – 2 Timothy 4:7-8, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”*

- 10) Do you think it is possible to regret the process of finishing strong in Christ? Why or why not?