

STIR

INTRODUCTION

ROCKET FUEL FOR THE SOUL

CHAPTER 1

START STRONG

CHAPTER 2

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

CHAPTER 3

OWN THE JOURNEY

WHAT'S STIRRING?

1. Which aspects about “owning the journey” seem most appealing? Most difficult? Most important in the process of transformation?
2. How do you respond to the idea that “the LORD is your life”? In what way is that true for you today? What other sources of “life” or well-being do you tend to draw from?
3. Who, if anyone, has helped you experience a deeper life with God?
4. Read Psalm 139. What kind of circumstances do you imagine might have led someone to compose such a psalm?
5. Have you ever experienced a “desert” season? What led you into that season? Who, if anyone, accompanied or led you through it?



CHAPTER 4

BECOME A DESERT GUIDE

CHAPTER 5

STAY THE COURSE

WHAT'S STIRRING?

1. Do you remember a season of life or ministry when you knew you had passed through a desert of some kind? Were you reluctant at all? Why or why not?

2. Have you been able to accept and even grow to love your own story enough to offer it to others in service to their journey? What parts of your story do you hope that God may yet redeem?

3. Which part of the progression from surrender to participation do you find yourself in right now?

4. Who are the people walking with you during this season of life?



CHAPTER 6

RUNNING TOGETHER

APPENDIX 1

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION RESOURCES

The list of resources in this appendix is not meant to be exhaustive. Ideally, it will serve as a starting point for learning more and for taking next steps in spiritual direction.

FINDING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Whether you meet in person or via Skype, you will find that a spiritual director can be a tremendous help at any stage in the spiritual journey and particularly in the Journeying Together and Following Together stages. Many of the resources listed below also provide training for becoming a spiritual director. For more information on finding a spiritual director, check out the following:

- Evangelical Center for Spiritual Wisdom (Debbie Swindoll, executive director) provides curriculum for twelve-week studies for small groups and a directory for finding spiritual directors through its Evangelical Spiritual Directors Association (ESDA); for more information, visit www.ecswisdom.org.

- Leadership Transformations, Inc. (Steve Macchia, founder and president), offers a wide range of spiritual formation resources, including spiritual direction resources, as well as a one-year retreat-based leadership community; for more information, visit www.leadershiptransformations.org/emmaus.htm.
- Christos Center for Spiritual Formation in Lino Lakes, Minnesota, offers spiritual direction, a directory of their graduates, and a variety of retreats, workshops, and pilgrimages; for more information, visit www.christoscenter.org.
- The Transforming Center (Ruth Haley Barton, founder) offers many terrific resources for spiritual formation, including a directory of recommended spiritual directors; for more information, visit www.transformingcenter.org.
- Spiritual Directors International has a multi-faith directory of spiritual directors, including many Christians; for more information, visit www.sdiworld.org.

BECOMING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

For more information on becoming a spiritual director, check out the following:

- Leadership Transformations, Inc. (Steve Macchia, founder and president), offers the Selah certificate program in spiritual direction; for more information, visit www.leadershiptransformations.org/selah.htm.

The ministry also offers an excellent process for leadership teams to develop their discernment in decision making. Since many in the Following Together stage serve as leaders, these resources are particularly helpful in cultivating spiritual discernment within teams. Downloadable guides and consulting services are available; for more information, visit www.leadershiptransformations.org/sdt.htm.

- The Institute for Spiritual Formation at Talbot School of Theology and Biola University (John Coe, institute director) offers graduate programs in spiritual formation and soul care;

for more information, visit www.biola.edu/spiritualformation/programs.

- Christos Center for Spiritual Formation, located in Lino Lakes, Minnesota, offers a two-year certificate program called “Tending the Holy,” which prepares participants for the ministry of spiritual direction; for more information, visit www.christoscenter.org.
- Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, located near Washington, DC, offers many training opportunities; for more information, visit www.shalem.org.

APPENDIX 2

REVEAL FINDINGS

In 2007 the Willow Creek Association published the findings from research conducted on an unprecedented scale. The study has now extended to 1,600 churches, representing some 480,000 individual surveys taken in five countries. The groundbreaking REVEAL data focused on patterns that emerged when congregants were asked about their spiritual lives in the context of their church.

Here are some key findings:

1. Involvement in church activities does not predict or drive long-term spiritual growth. But there is a spiritual continuum that is very predictable and powerful.
2. Spiritual growth is all about increasing relational closeness to Christ.
3. The church is most important in the early stages of spiritual growth. Its role then shifts from being a primary influence to a secondary influence.

4. Personal spiritual practices are the building blocks for a Christ-centered life.
5. A church's most effective evangelists, volunteers, and donors come from the most spiritually advanced segments.
6. More than 25 percent of those surveyed described themselves as spiritually "stalled" or "dissatisfied" with the role of the church in their spiritual growth.
7. The need for relationships actually increases over the course of spiritual development, though the nature of the relationships changes with maturity.

For more information on REVEAL and the REVEAL Spiritual Life Survey, visit www.revealnow.com.

APPENDIX 3

TEST YOUR BIBLE IQ*

1. Who wrote the first four books of the New Testament?
2. Who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament?
3. Which two Old Testament books are named for women?
4. What is the Great Commission?
5. What is the book of Acts about?
6. Which angel appeared to Mary?
7. Who was known as the wisest man in the world?
8. Which city fell after the Israelites marched around it daily for seven days?
9. What did God give the Israelites to eat in the wilderness?
10. What was Jesus' first miracle?
11. Who was the "weeping prophet"?
12. What is the Greatest Commandment?
13. On what occasion was the Holy Spirit given to the church?

*For more questions, visit Probe Ministries to view the "Bible Literacy Quiz," www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4221247/k.261/Bible_Literacy_Quiz.htm.

14. Who was the female judge of Israel?
15. Who was the strongest man on earth?
16. What is the last book of the Old Testament?
17. Who was the first martyr?
18. Who was Paul's first ministry partner?
19. Which event caused God to splinter human language into many tongues?
20. Who was the Hebrew who became prime minister of Egypt?
21. What is the root of all kinds of evil?
22. Who are the Major Prophets?
23. What was the Old Testament feast that celebrated God's protection of the firstborn of Israel on the night they left Egypt?
24. Which cupbearer to a foreign king rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem?
25. Which two people walked on water?

ANSWERS

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
2. Most conservative scholars hold that the Pentateuch was written by Moses.
3. Esther and Ruth.
4. "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" (Matthew 28:19–20).
5. The early years of the church, as the gospel begins to spread throughout the world.
6. Gabriel (Luke 1:26).
7. Solomon (1 Kings 3:12).
8. Jericho (Joshua 6:20).
9. Manna and quail (Exodus 16).
10. Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:11).
11. Jeremiah.

12. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).
13. Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4).
14. Deborah (Judges 4:4).
15. Samson (Judges 13–16).
16. Malachi.
17. Stephen (Acts 7).
18. Barnabas (Acts 13:2).
19. The building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11).
20. Joseph (Genesis 41:41).
21. The love of money (1 Timothy 6:10).
22. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
23. Passover (Exodus 12:27).
24. Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:5).
25. Jesus and Peter (Matthew 14:29).

APPENDIX 4

GUIDES FROM THE PAST

Those who journey through the desert are often “met” by guides in the pages of books. It’s no wonder that Augustine’s *Confessions*, Brother Lawrence’s *The Practice of the Presence of God*, and, more recently, Thomas Kelly’s *A Testament of Devotion* have stood the test of time. Thomas à Kempis wrote *The Imitation of Christ* in Latin during the years 1418–1427. Next to the Bible itself, it is the most widely published devotional book ever.

AUGUSTINE

Confessions was written sometime during AD 397 or 398 and is filled with deep meaning for us today.

This is the fruit of my confessions of what I am, not of what I have been, to confess this, not before Thee only, in a secret exultation with trembling, and a secret sorrow with hope; but in the ears also of the believing sons of men, sharers of my joy, and partners in my

mortality, my fellow citizens, and fellow pilgrims, who are gone before, or are to follow on, companions of my way.¹

BROTHER LAWRENCE

Brother Lawrence entered a monastery in France and lived the last thirty years of his life working in the kitchen, cooking meals and washing pots and pans. In his beloved classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, he writes these words:

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it . . .

I still believe that all spiritual life consists of practicing God's presence, and that anyone who practices it correctly will soon attain spiritual fulfillment.²

Amid the monotony of cooking and cleaning chores, Brother Lawrence's work was his ministry, rooted in his deep love for God.

We can do little things for God; I turn the cake that is frying on the pan for love of him, and that done, if there is nothing else to call me, I prostrate myself in worship before him, who has given me grace to work; afterwards I rise happier than a king. It is enough for me to pick up but a straw from the ground for the love of God.³

THOMAS KELLY

Thomas Kelly was a Quaker missionary, educator, speaker, author, and scholar. In *A Testament of Devotion*, he wrote this about inward prayer:

Live this present moment, this present hour as you now sit in your seats, in utter, utter submission and openness toward him. Listen outwardly to these words, but within, behind the scenes, in the deeper levels of your lives where you are all alone with God the Loving Eternal One, keep up a silent prayer. "Open Thou my life. Guide my thoughts where I dare not let them go. But Thou darest. Thy will be done." Walk on the streets and chat with your friends.

But every moment behind the scenes be in prayer, offering yourselves in continuous obedience.

I find this internal continuous prayer life absolutely essential. It can be carried on day and night, in the thick of business, in home and school. Such prayer of submission can be so simple. It is well to use a single sentence, repeated over and over and over again, such as this: “Be Thou my will. Be Thou my will,” or “I open all before Thee. I open all before Thee,” or “See earth through heaven. See earth through heaven.” This hidden prayer life can pass, in time, beyond words and phrases into mere ejaculations, “My God, my God, my Holy One, my Love,” or into the adoration of the Upanishad, “O Wonderful, O Wonderful, O Wonderful.” Words may cease and one stands and walks and sits and lies in wordless attitudes of adoration and submission and rejoicing and exultation and glory.⁴

THOMAS À KEMPIS

Thomas à Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ* was first published in 1441. It has been called the “perfect expression of a spiritual movement known as *devotio moderna* (modern devotion), which swept Roman Catholicism through the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. It stressed meditation and the inner life and cautioned against the outer life of much busyness and occupation.”⁵

Many people try to escape temptations, only to fall more deeply. We cannot conquer simply by fleeing, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. The man who only shuns temptations outwardly and does not uproot them will make little progress; indeed they will quickly return, more violent than before.

Little by little, in patience and long-suffering you will overcome them, by the help of God rather than by severity and your own rash ways. Often take counsel when tempted; and do not be harsh with others who are tempted, but console them as you yourself would wish to be consoled.⁶

Whether in print or in person, fellow travelers help us interpret the unfamiliar landscape of our interior world and the activity of the Holy Spirit. They model a deep devotion to God that should inspire us to follow a similar path.