

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Preparing for What's Next - Final Stretch

November 30, 2020

Have you seen [the viral video](#) of the comedian Robyn Schall reading her 2020 goals laughing hysterically? While some of us may be laughing, or crying, right alongside her, it underscores a truth that 2020 has brought into sharp focus. We have no idea what the future holds—we don't know what next week, next month, or next year will bring. None of us could have predicted the events of 2020, but what is also true is that God is never surprised. Oregon Campus Pastor Andy Rectenwald spoke this weekend about how we can prepare for whatever comes next by reading the Bible, focusing on God, and **listening** to him.

But how can we hear from God?

Andy pointed out that we primarily hear from God by reading the Bible. Wait...*hear* from God by reading? Yes, it's true! We can hear from God today through reading the Bible (and since you are reading the LIO today, we're pretty confident you want to hear from Him), but we may find ourselves in one of three groups:

1. Those who have no familiarity with the Bible yet
2. Those who want to read the Bible, but struggle to
3. Those who engage with the Bible on a regular, fulfilling basis.

It doesn't matter which category you belong to—we are so glad you are here, and even if you regularly engage with the Bible, this is important to remember - we are confident you can and will experience God personally through His word.

The bottom line for the weekend message is, "If God is speaking personally, we should listen personally." God speaks personally. Why? Because he is personal. I believe God desires to communicate with us even more than we desire to communicate with him. Andy shared a simple, yet powerful prayer that we can say before reading our Bible: ***"God, speak to me."***

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In our heart, when we are open to hearing from him, when we are faithful and open to whatever he wants to say to us, we will hear from him. We cannot predict what lies ahead—only God knows the future. But we can know God personally by reading his Word and be prepared for whatever comes next.

Questions:

How are you preparing for what's next?

Are you listening for God to speak to you?

Are you setting aside distractions to hear from God?

Next Steps:

Begin reading God's word. Set a reminder to read the LIO and then read the chapter the verse came from each day. More than 1 verse used? Just pick one and use a paper Bible, an online Bible, a Bible app, or an audio Bible to dive in!

Already been reading the Bible for awhile? Try listening to a chapter using an audio Bible while reading along with it.

Prayer:

Dear God, you are the source of all wisdom. Thank you for wanting to speak to me personally. Give me the desire to consistently read your Word. Help me to set aside distractions and listen for you personally. God, speak to me. I really want to hear your voice so I'm prepared for what comes next. Amen.

The Best Love Letter Ever! – Final Stretch

December 1, 2020

Have you ever received a love letter from someone you hardly knew? Depending on the circumstance, it's a surprise that could be at once unsettling and even a bit creepy, right?! But one received from someone you love is a joy. I received the first love letter from my husband in my barn on a beautiful summer evening, nestled in a bouquet of flowers and placed lovingly on my horse's stall, right where he was sure I would find it. That was a very good day.

This past weekend, Andy shared that God speaks personally to us through the Bible—God's personal love letter to each of his children. We have an opportunity every day to receive it with gratitude and excitement and eagerly read this personal revelation of his unceasing love for us. But do we?

There have been phases in my own life where I felt drawn to God's Word, but instead of prioritizing it, I had more excuses than motivation. A few weeks ago, when Lead Pastor Ben Snyder discussed the four stages of spiritual growth, I realized I was stuck in the immature phase of my spiritual development. By not taking time to read God's love letter to me every day, I was robbing myself of the opportunity to grow deeper in my faith and to gain greater peace and courage in hard times.

Then it happened. Motivated by Ecclesiastes 4:12, my husband and I decided to live life in a three-stranded cord with the Lord at the center.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

We made reading the Bible a priority and have since learned that our newfound dependence on God is the vaccination we needed against fear, anger, pride, and selfishness. It brings us joy, patience, and clarity of purpose—obtainable no other way.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (AMP)

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed [given by divine inspiration] and is profitable for instruction, for conviction [of sin], for correction [of error and restoration to obedience], for training in righteousness [learning to live in conformity to God's

will, both publicly and privately—behaving honorably with personal integrity and moral courage];¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete and proficient, outfitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Timothy 4:8 (AMP)

For physical training is of some value, but godliness (spiritual training) is of value in everything and in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and for the life to come.

Questions:

Do you prioritize reading God's Word every day? If not, why? Are you too busy? If so, I encourage you to rethink your priorities and put reading God's words to you first.

Next Steps:

Rearrange your schedule to spend 30 minutes every day reading the Bible. Before you begin, say a prayer of praise and ask God for a deeper understanding of his will for your life and the desire to obey him. Then pray for opportunities to know him deeper and serve him better.

Consider reading one portion from an Old Testament book and one from a New Testament book every morning. [Here's one](#) if you are interested.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I'm sorry for taking so long to learn the importance of spending time with you, reading your love letter to me every morning. I recognize that I can serve you and love you with greater effectiveness when I connect with you personally through your Word each day. I'm sorry I have failed to do that, and thank you for waiting for me so patiently. Thank you for now blessing me a thousand fold for finally being obedient. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Personalize Your Relationship with God – Final Stretch

December 2, 2020

When my grandfather passed away, I spent days telling the stories he shared with me over the years. Some forgotten moments warmed listeners' hearts, but other tales of my grandfather's past were met with oohs and ahs. I quickly learned that many family members didn't completely know his legend. My guess is that my grandfather noticed my excitement while learning about his life, so he made sure to tell me as much as possible.

We tend to be more open or intentional with our interactions when we know our audience is personally involved. God isn't the same way. His words have always been, and will always be, personal to us, no matter our response. This past weekend, Andy shared with us that the best way to navigate life's difficult circumstances is to listen to God. The best way we can listen to God—read our Bibles personally. Remember Andy shared, "If God is speaking personally, we should listen personally."

How do we make it personal? How do we teach ourselves to listen? *Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods* offers nine questions to ask when diving into your Bible.

Is there ...

1. *A sin to confess?*
2. *A promise to claim?*
3. *An attitude to change?*
4. *A command to keep?*
5. *An example to follow?*
6. *A prayer to pray?*
7. *An error to avoid?*
8. *A truth to believe?*
9. *Something to thank God for?*

Colossians 2:6-7

⁶ *And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.* ⁷ *Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on*

him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

As I read the Colossians passage, I used this technique and focused on a couple of questions: Is there an example to follow? Is there a truth to believe?

Yes—Jesus was sent to be the example for us to follow, and the truth to believe is that acknowledging Jesus in all we do will keep our faith heading in the right direction. There were too many times when I only followed God because it fit my needs. My faith was lacking because I wasn't pursuing a personal relationship with God, but my world opened up when I started to really concentrate on my spiritual development.

Questions:

Do you think your relationship with God is personal? Do you feel a disconnect when you skim over God's words?

Next Steps:

Find quiet time each day to study your Bible. Try to find ways that scripture fits into your daily life. Take GrowthTrack to discover God's purpose for your life to mature in your spiritual development.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for not wasting any moments in my life and for continuously showing me grace and patience. When my faith seems small to me, remind me that my faith comes from your words. Let me remain encouraged to start each day with open eyes and ears, to see and hear how to use my relationship with you to spread your truth. Amen.

Say “Yes” to the Bible – Final Stretch

December 3, 2020

When the alarm goes off first thing each morning, many of us go from being pretty much dead asleep to within moments checking our emails, pulling up social media and clicking on the latest news link. This is valuable time and energy invested into things most of us feel we need to do - after all, it's best to know the latest and be up-to-date. This isn't necessarily a new thing. Socrates' "Triple Filter Test" advised that people should simply focus on what is true, good, and useful.

If we are being totally honest though, at its worst, the reasons we do this have zero to do with what is true for us, good for us, and useful for those around us, and in light of today's topic, it begs the question: who is defining for us what is true, good and useful?

Joshua 1:8

“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”

Many people have a desire to read the Bible, and they believe it is something they should do, but they haven't yet made it a part of their every day, a discipline. To say “yes” to reading the Bible, we have to say “no” to those other things that occupy our thoughts and time. Our God is a loving God who wants you to know him, but we need to spend time with him.

Psalms 37:7

Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Paul had discovered the peace that comes from total trust in the Lord. When Christians mature to this point in their spiritual journey—when they no longer worry about the things they cannot change—then they rest in the Lord.

Mark 1:35

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.

In addition to knowing God's word, Mark emphasizes that Jesus began each day of his earthly ministry with earnest, persistent prayer, seeking his Father's wisdom. Jesus went to pray, not with others, but alone. The most precious times with God are those private moments between just you and him.

Psalms 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God!"

God speaks into our lives today, and his voice communicates a profound love that changes us in ways both big and small. God sent his son to live as a man, die on a Roman cross, and rise again so that we could be saved and know him personally. Don't miss this: only when we encounter the love of God are we truly changed at the very core of our being. When we focus on what his words tell us are true, good and useful, connecting then also with him in prayer, we will find peace, purpose, and strength in Jesus.

Questions:

How much time do you spend with God in your life? Do you pray to him alone, read Scripture, or spend time with other Christians?

Next Steps:

The degree to which you hear from God is directly related to how much time you spend with him. Commit to him today—attend church regularly, get involved in a Group, start a Bible reading plan, and spend some time alone with God during your day.

Prayer:

Abba Father, I kneel before you to offer myself so that I may spend time and energy in your word and have a prayerful life with you. Lord, help keep me in the spirit of prayer so I do not neglect this commitment to you, spending time in your presence to know and experience your love. Help me to trust that your words are true, good and useful and bring them back to me as I pray! Amen.

Open My Eyes to Adventure - Final Stretch

December 4, 2020

All throughout the Bible, we see God inviting us on an adventure. Lead Pastor Ben Snyder talked about this in week one of our series, *The Final Stretch*.

We're invited to:

- Know God
- Find Freedom
- Discover Our Purpose
- Make a Difference

To find personal answers in Scripture and apply what you're reading to events in your life, here are four questions to ask yourself while reading the Bible:

1. How does this help me know God more?
2. In what area is God revealing that I need to find freedom?
3. What does this show me about discovering my purpose?
4. How does knowing this help me make a difference?

These are simple questions, but they help us see the adventure God has invited us on. Recently, I applied these questions to Acts 2:46-47.

Acts 2:46-47

⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

We know God is generous and wants his followers to be generous as well. Sharing things like my time, resources, and talents with my community can help me find freedom when I'm tempted to be selfish.

Sharing also reminds me that my purpose is to love others by going out of my way for them. Sometimes that means sacrificing my time, resources, or talents, but doing so can make a difference in someone's life by meeting a need or showing support.

This year, I was challenged to be more intentional with sharing by spending \$20 a week on someone else. When one of my friends was having car problems, I realized this was one way I could be intentionally generous. So I wrote her a letter and put in an envelope with \$20 dollars and a key chain that I got in Israel. That small act made such a big difference. I wanted to do more for her, but I realized even something small and intentional demonstrated a lot of support.

I was able to find freedom by being more trusting and open-handed with what God has given me. God used that step of faith to show me the purpose of being intentional and how it builds friendship. It put a smile on my friend's face and encouraged her while she was dealing with her car problems. For me, it was a simple reminder that when you are intentionally generous, it can make an impact.

By reading God's word personally and intentionally applying what it teaches to my life, I am able to grow in my understanding of God, find freedom from my own struggles, and experience some of my purpose by making a difference in the life of someone else!

God is inviting us into an adventure every day. When you read Scripture and ask questions like these, you can apply God's lessons to your life in a way that helps you see the adventure God is inviting you into.

Questions:

What excites you about the adventure with God?

What keeps you from stepping into the adventure with God?

Which of the four questions above resonates most with you? Why?

Next Steps:

Take time this week to read Scripture and as you read, ask yourself those four questions.

If you resonate with finding freedom the most, join a Group. If you resonate with finding purpose or making a difference, join GrowthTrack.

Prayer:

Psalm 119:18

Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions.

God, I pray for clear vision to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. Your instructions reveal powerful promises about who you are. Lord, help me to commit to spending more time with you so that I can know you more. And help me to reveal the areas in my life where I need to find freedom to see you more clearly and follow your way. I pray that out of that freedom, I find the purpose you have for me and use it to make more of a difference for your glory. God, you are inviting me on an awesome adventure, and I pray that your Word will give me the confidence and boldness to continue to step into the journey with you. In Jesus' name, amen.