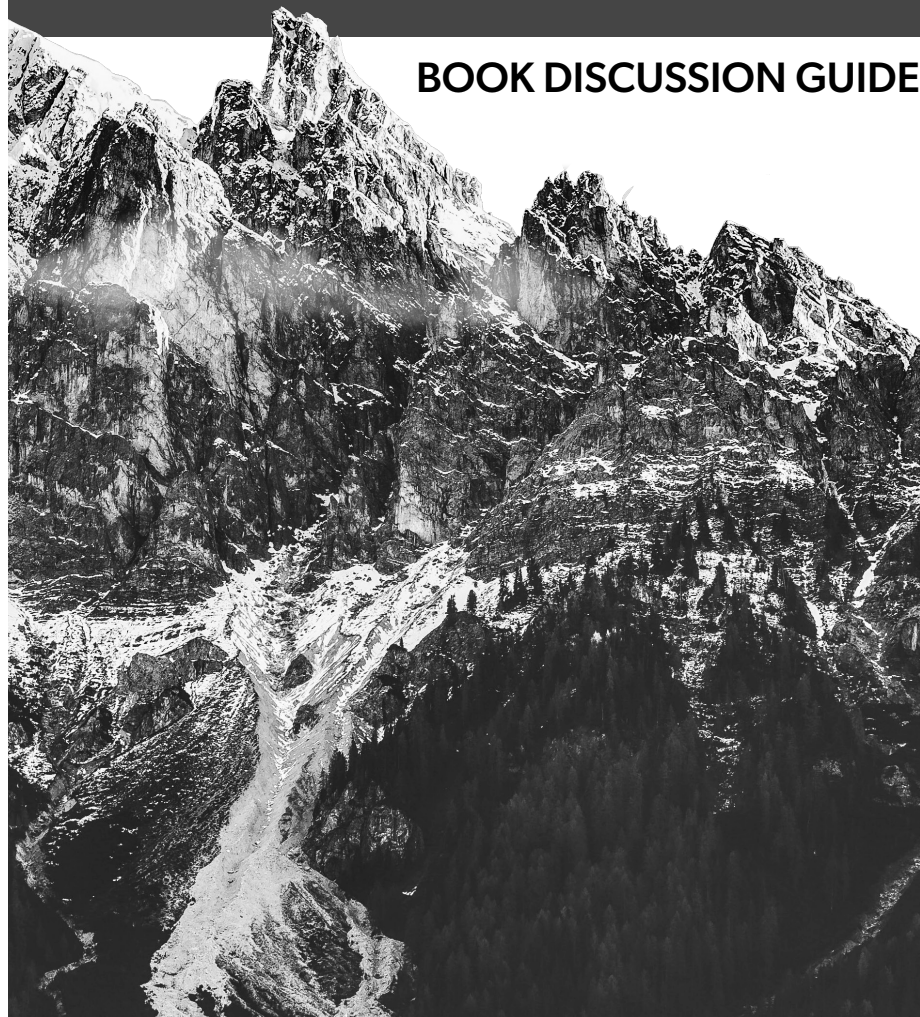


# A LONG OBEDIENCE

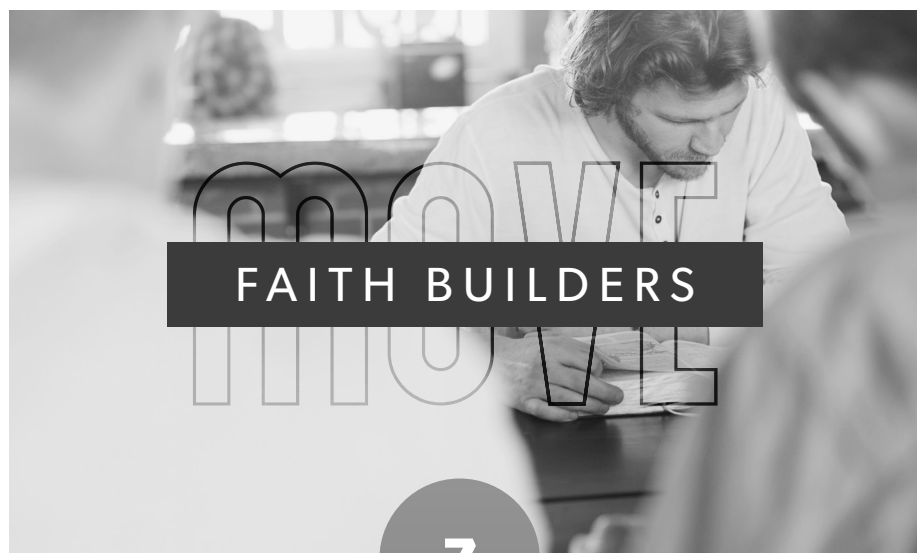
IN THE SAME DIRECTION

BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE





**Hope's 10 for 10**, which launched Nov. 2, 2019, details 10 goals for Hope in the next 10 years! With a fresh, updated vision for the next decade of ministry, we are ready to see the amazing ways God is going to move! This study is focused on goal #7, Faith Builders.



## MOVE

people around  
the Circle of  
Hope

—seeker to believer to follower to servant leader and around again and again—by preaching Christ and him crucified, and creating a discipleship pathway that includes introductory steps (Alpha, New Member Classes, etc.), intermediate steps (After Alpha, CORE, Page 2, Bible studies, classes, serving, etc.) and graduate-level steps (Pneuma, advanced classes, leadership development, schools of worship, prayer and youth ministry, internships, mission trips, leading groups, etc.).

Matthew 28:19-20 | Acts 2:42 | Colossians 1:28

# ALONG OBEDIENCE

IN THE SAME DIRECTION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 3    SESSION 1:**  
*Discipleship and Repentance*
  - 9    SESSION 2:**  
*Providence and Worship*
  - 15   SESSION 3:**  
*Service and Help*
  - 21   SESSION 4:**  
*Security and Joy*
  - 27   SESSION 5:**  
*Work and Happiness*
  - 33   SESSION 6:**  
*Perseverance and Hope*
  - 39   SESSION 7:**  
*Humility and Obedience*
  - 45   SESSION 8:**  
*Community and Blessing*
-

# Session 1:

## *Discipleship and Repentance*

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 1-2

### **OPENING PRAYER**

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

**BIBLE READING:** Hebrews 12:1-13

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*

*And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,*

*"My child, don't make light of the LORD's discipline,  
and don't give up when he corrects you.  
For the LORD disciplines those he loves,  
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."*

*As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?*

*For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.*

*So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you hope to learn from studying this book about discipleship?  
What has your experience of “discipleship” been in the past?
2. How are you tempted to fall into the trap of instant gratification our culture sets for us? Have you struggled or are you struggling with the idea of religion by “tourist mindset” (page 10)?
3. How do you react to the quote from Thomas Szasa on page 15? *The “simplest and most ancient of human truths: namely, that life is an arduous and tragic struggle; that what we call ‘sanity,’ what we mean by ‘not being schizophrenic,’ has a great deal to do with competence, earned by struggling for excellence; with compassion, hard won by confronting conflict; and with modesty and patience, acquire through silence and suffering.”* Have you experienced struggle, silence or suffering in your life? How did it change you, if at all? How did it impact your faith, if at all?
4. Eugene Peterson first published this book in 1980. Reread the first two paragraphs in chapter 2. What is different now in 2021?
5. Name some truths about God that you have. Now read the truths about God Peterson lists on page 22. Do your truths match Peterson’s? How are they similar? How are they different?
6. Are you surprised at how Peterson defines repentance on page 23?  
Why or why not?
7. What do you need to say “no” to in order to say “yes” to God?

## CLOSING PRAYER

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to give you the stamina for a lifetime of a long obedience to him.

Handwriting practice lines for the title "A LONG Obedience". The page contains 20 horizontal lines for writing. The title is written in the top right corner, with "A LONG" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, "Obedience" in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font, and "IN THE SAME DIRECTION" in a small, sans-serif font below it.

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**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

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# Session 2:

## *Providence and Worship*

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 3-4

### **OPENING PRAYER**

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

**BIBLE READING:** Romans 8:31-39

*What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.*

*Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Are you surprised that becoming a Christian doesn't guarantee that you will be healthy, wealthy and wise? What guarantees does a relationship with Jesus actually come with?
2. Where have you looked for help in the past? How successful have you been in finding help that is truly help and not a placebo or a temporary fix?
3. How do you relate to the idea of two religions – a glorious Sunday gospel and a mundane Monday religion (page 38)? Have you experienced this disconnect in your life? If so, how have you dealt with it?
4. Why do you go to worship? What excuses have you used to avoid worship? How do those excuses sound when you have to say them out loud to another person?

5. Are you an “alleluia from head to toe” as Augustine wrote? Why or why not?
6. How do you respond to the idea of the “age of sensation” (page 48)? *“We think that if we don’t feel something there can be no authenticity in doing it. But the wisdom of God says something different: that we can act ourselves into a new way of feeling much quicker than we can feel ourselves into a new way of acting. Worship is an act that develops feelings for God, not a feeling for God that is expressed in an act of worship.”*
7. How is your shalom (page 50)? What do you need to do to improve it? How is your shalvah (page 51)? What do you need to do to improve it?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to help you increase your *shalom* and *shalvah*.

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# Session 3:

## Service and Help

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 5-6

### OPENING PRAYER

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

**Bible Reading:** Matthew 25:31-46

*"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*

*"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'*

*"Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'*

*"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*

*"Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'*

*"Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'*

*"And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'*

*"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Would you rather have a rule book or a snapshot of a game to learn to play something new? Why?
2. How often have you seen religion as a cosmic Amazon.com – put in your order and get home delivery?
3. Are you comfortable with a position of servitude? Why or why not?
4. How does a good parent show mercy to their child? How does God show mercy to you?
5. Peterson writes “The Christian is a person who recognizes that our real problem is not in achieving freedom but in learning service under a better master” (page 59). What master are you serving?
6. Do you believe service is freedom? Why or why not?
7. When have you experienced God’s help for your fears or sudden disasters?
8. Cynicism is often praised in our culture. What does Peterson think of cynicism (page 68)? Do you agree or disagree?
9. How are you doing the hazardous work of a Christian, putting faith, hope and love on the line every day?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to help you feel his presence in your life even with all its imperfections and need for help.

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# Session 4:

## Security and Joy

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 7-8

### OPENING PRAYER

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

**BIBLE READING:** John 17:6-19

*"I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.*

*"My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.*

*"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you experienced Christianity as walking a tightrope or as sitting in a fortress (page 78)?
2. What security systems and defense mechanisms do you default to under stress?
3. Do you defer to facts or feelings (page 81)? Why?
4. Peterson talks of three threats to confidence: depression and doubt, pain and suffering, and the possibility of defection (page 80-84). Which do you struggle with the most? How have you dealt with those threats?

5. Do you know someone (or are you) like Martin Luther's friend Philipp Melanchthon?
6. Peterson suggests we find joy by feeling good about God, not by feeling good about ourselves. What do you need to do to feel good about God?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to help increase your joy.

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*Teach me...*

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

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# Session 5:

## Work and Happiness

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 9-10

### OPENING PRAYER

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

**BIBLE READING:** Matthew 5:1-12

*One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.*

*The Beatitudes*

*"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

*God blesses those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

*God blesses those who are humble,  
for they will inherit the whole earth.*

*God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they will be satisfied.*

*God blesses those who are merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

*God blesses those whose hearts are pure,  
for they will see God.*

*God blesses those who work for peace,  
for they will be called the children of God.*

*God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

*"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role does work play in your life? Do you struggle more with workaholism or the temptation to drop out?
2. What would need to change for you to see work as "a way of being in creative relationship with another" (page 105), your *job* or your *approach* to your job?
3. How is your work mirroring God's work in the world to do love and justice, to help and to heal, and to liberate and encourage?

4. Do you agree with Peterson that it's Christians who have it easy and non-Christians who have it hard? Why or why not?
5. How do you define happiness? What do you need to be happy?
6. How do you react to H. H. Farmer's quote, "If you go across the grains of the universe you get splinters" (page 115)?
7. Were you surprised to have Christianity described as walking on God's "smooth straight road" (page 116)? Do you feel the road you're walking on is smooth or rough? Why?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to show you how your work is meant to mirror God's work of healing the world.

Handwriting practice lines for the title "A LONG Obedience" and the phrase "IN THE SAME DIRECTION". The page contains 20 horizontal lines for writing practice.

# A LONG OBEDIENCE

IN THE SAME DIRECTION

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**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

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# Session 6:

## *Perseverance and Hope*

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 11-12

### **OPENING PRAYER**

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

**BIBLE READING:** Philippians 3:7-14

*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*

*I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Share a story about something you're enthusiastic about. Do you tend to have short- or long-lived interests?
2. Do you agree with Peterson's statement, "For it is apathetic sluggish neutrality that is death to perseverance, acts like a virus in the bloodstream and enervates the muscles of discipleship" (page 124)? Why or why not?
3. How has God's faithfulness pushed you to persevere in your life and your faith?
4. How have you dealt with suffering? Did you feel you dealt with suffering in a healthy way? Why or why not?
5. How do you react to the image of the watchman waiting? Is it difficult for you to just wait or must you do something?
6. How do you define hope? How does Peterson define hope? How close is your definition to his?

7. What are some different ways people respond to suffering? What do you need to do to respond to suffering with hope?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to increase your hope.

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# Session 7:

## Humility and Obedience

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 13-14

### OPENING PRAYER

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

**BIBLE READING:** John 15:1-8

*"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.*

*"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does faith "need continuous maintenance" (page 143)?
2. How have you been "pruned" in the past?
3. What is the difference between aspiration and "unruly ambition" (page 146)? How good are you at telling the difference in your own life?
4. Do you struggle with thinking too much or too little of yourself?
5. Where would you put yourself on the journey from "unruly arrogance to faithful aspiration"? Infantile dependency to childlike trust" (page 152)? What do you need to do to move in a faithful and mature direction?
6. Have you had an experience like the young man who had his tonsils out (page 155-157) where you long for God when you're scared but forget him when life is normal?
7. Is your first reaction to the word *obedience* positive or negative? Did the description of obedience as a "lively, adventurous response of faith" (page 158) surprise you? Why or why not?

8. What do you need to do to have a more “accurate memory of God’s ways” (page 165) so your obedience is nurtured?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to increase your hope.

Handwriting practice lines for the title "A LONG Obedience". The page contains 20 horizontal lines for writing practice. The title is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with "A LONG" in black and "Obedience" in a lighter gray color. Below the title, the words "A LONG" are repeated in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font, followed by "Obedience" in a lighter gray color. The words "A LONG" are repeated 10 times, and "Obedience" is repeated 10 times, for a total of 20 repetitions. The repetitions are arranged in two columns of 10 each. The first column of repetitions is in black, and the second column is in a lighter gray color. The repetitions are written in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. The background of the page is white, and the lines are light gray.

# A LONG OBEDIENCE

IN THE SAME DIRECTION

# PRAYER JOURNALING

Journaling is a wonderful way to talk to God. We invite you to use the following pages during your prayer time as you read through *The Total Money Makeover* with your group.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

It is important to make weekly worship a priority. It is also a great thing to do with your group. Use the following notes section to write down key points that stick out to you from each weekend's sermon. Notes are great to refer back to throughout the week so you can keep things fresh in your mind!

# Session 8:

## Community and Blessing

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**PRE-READING:** Chapter 15-16

### OPENING PRAYER

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

**BIBLE READING:** Revelation 7:9-12

*After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar,*

*"Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne  
and from the Lamb!"*

*And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. They sang,*

*"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom  
and thanksgiving and honor  
and power and strength belong to our God  
forever and ever! Amen."*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of the statement, "No Christian is an only child" (page 169)?
2. How have you tried to avoid Christian community? How did that impact your life and faith?
3. What do you need to do to see others as priests anointed alongside you?
4. How do you live in Christian community? How could you improve others' experience of living with you in community?
5. Share a story of a time when you worked hard to reach a goal and found yourself disappointed when you realized it.
6. Were you surprised that the most important thing for Christians isn't to "work" for God but to enjoy him? Do you agree? Why or why not?
7. What are two important things you discovered about God during this study? About yourself?
8. Share what your next step in your personal "long obedience in the same direction" will be.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

End your discussion time with prayer. If you like, have someone open the prayer and another person close. You may want to ask God to continue to bless you so you can be a blessing to others as you persist with a long obedience in the same direction.

Handwriting practice lines for the title "A LONG Obedience" and the subtitle "IN THE SAME DIRECTION". The page contains 20 horizontal lines for writing practice.

# A LONG OBEDIENCE

IN THE SAME DIRECTION

# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

It is important to make weekly worship a priority. It is also a great thing to do with your group. Use the following notes section to write down key points that stick out to you from each weekend's sermon. Notes are great to refer back to throughout the week so you can keep things fresh in your mind!

Handwriting practice lines for the title "A LONG OBEDIENCE IN THE SAME DIRECTION". The page contains 20 horizontal lines for writing practice. The title is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font at the bottom right of the page.

# A LONG OBEDIENCE

IN THE SAME DIRECTION

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A LONG  
OBEDIENCE  
IN THE SAME DIRECTION

# A LONG OBEDIENCE

IN THE SAME DIRECTION



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