

MY NEXT STEP STUDY GUIDE

The My Next Step study guide presents the material from the book in a format that can be used as a small group, study group or cell group curriculum, or as a study guide for discipleship groups.

HOW TO USE THE STUDY

The study for one lesson or chapter of My Next Step normally lasts between one half and one hour. How long the

study lasts depends on how much discussion is generated by the introduction and application questions.

Preparation

Before the group meets, all of the participants should read the chapter of My Next Step that they will be discussing during the study. However, this shouldn't be a prerequisite to being able to participate in the study.

Big Idea

The Big Idea is an extremely concise summary of the chapter's main idea.

Start the study by simply reading the Big Idea out loud. This serves to establish the topic for the rest of the conversation or study.

Discussion

There are one or two questions that help to start to think about how the study's topic relates to our practical life.

The goal of this portion of the study is to generate discussion and conversation around the topic.

Chapter Summary

The Chapter Summary contains a brief explanation of the material that is taught in the chapter. In this part of the study,

you can read this outloud, alternating readers with each new paragraph.

This serves to provide an overview of the topic to everyone who is participating in the study, both those who read the chapter beforehand and those who didn't read.

Application

The study concludes with an application question. This question should be read out loud and everyone should share their different answers to the question. In this section of the study, we want to focus our attention in how to apply the chapter's main idea to our lives in practical ways.

Study 2

LIVING CLOSE TO GOD

Big Idea

We tend to share some moments in our lives with God, but he isn't part of every moment of our lives. The truth is that God wants to be close to his children always. We live close to him when we listen to his voice and talk to him throughout our day.

Discussion

- What are some of the times in your day when you are "with God"?

Chapter Summary

Many times we think that following Christ or being a child of God has to do with making a decision and then being a good person. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The big idea of this book is that God wants his sons and daughters to become more and more like Christ. Jesus is our example, and by living life as his followers, we should become more and more like him.

There are various disciplines, or habits, that as they become part of our lives, naturally lead us to become more and more like Jesus. The goal of this book is to help us to integrate these habits into our lives.

The first habit that leads us to become more like Jesus is that of living close to God. However, what we know about life is that living close to God doesn't come naturally to us.

WE WANT A LITTLE BIT OF GOD

Everyone wants a little bit of God. Even the hardest criminal wears a cross on his chain. We all want to have God in our lives.

However, at the same time, we don't want to loose control of our life. If God wants to be part of our life, we want to define what that relationship will look like.

We let him into our life, but not into our whole life. We have compartments for God, well-defined places and moments where we are "with God."

We don't share our life with him

In spite of the fact that we include God in different parts of our life, the reality is that God isn't in every part of our lives.

GOD WANTS TO BE NEAR

God wants to be near to his children. In the entire Bible, one theme that is repeated over and over again is that of God wanting to share life with his children. What God really desires is a relationship of Father and child with us.

2 Corinthians 6 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among

them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

YOU SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH GOD WHEN YOU TALK WITH HIM AND LISTEN TO HIM

The way that we really share our lives with God, instead of just having him be present in a few specific moments, is by talking with him and listening to him throughout the day.

You listen to his voice when you read the Bible

Even though it sounds weird, God says that through the Bible, he literally talks to us. He communicates his words to us, not with an audible voice, but through the written words.

2 Timothy 3 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The reality is that God talks today with us through these words that he previously inspired.

Hebrews 4 12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

When you read the Bible, God talks to you. Every time you open the Bible and read, even if it is only for a few minutes, God talks to you. Every time you read, you are letting God come into your life.

You talk to him when you pray

You share your life with God when you hear his voice in his Word. You also share your life with God when you talk with him, or when you pray.

Praying is much more than just repeating formal prayers that you sometimes hear in churches. Prayer is nothing more than talking to God. Prayer is your conversation with God.

True prayer is simply talking to God. You can talk to God using your own words, just like when you talk to your friends.

A new habit

If we are going to share our lives with God, we have to read and pray during our day. It is good to read and pray in the morning before starting the day. However, this doesn't automatically involve God in the rest of our life.

So then, to involve God in your whole life, you have to find moments during the day in which you can read the Bible. In the morning, before going to bed, over lunch or whenever. It doesn't have to be hours and hours of study, it can just be reading a paragraph and then thinking about what you read.

As far as prayer goes, the goal of God's child should be to maintain a constant conversation with God during the entire day. That is, in your mind always be talking with him.

Application

- What is your next step to spend more time each day with God?
- Do you have a specific time and place where you spend time with God every day?
- Are you in the habit of reading and praying at night before going to bed?

- Do you read and pray in the morning before starting your day?
- Is there a book of the Bible that you are reading through?
- What change will you make this week to spend more time with God?