

XO

THE COMPANION WORKBOOK

A twelve-week, day-by-day journal of
mind, body, and soul transformation

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TRANSFORMATION IS NOT READ. IT IS DONE.

[START HERE](#)

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is the companion to XO ExtraOrdinary. It is built to be written in — the margins, the lines, the blank pages are all yours. Nothing in it is meant to be admired. It is meant to be used, argued with, and carried into the week ahead.

What you will need

A copy of XO ExtraOrdinary, this workbook, a pen, and a willingness to be honest on paper. The book is required, not optional. Every day in this workbook sends you to a specific day's reading in it, and the questions and assignments assume you have done that reading. The Big Idea that opens each week is a reminder of what you read — not a substitute for reading it.

The twelve weeks

The journey moves in three movements, from the inside out. You will notice the ground shifting under you around Week 5, and again around Week 9; that is by design.

WEEKS 1–4

Renewing the Mind

A biblical foundation, how the brain actually changes, and how habits are broken and built.

WEEKS 5–8

Regulating the Body

Emotional intelligence, stress, the chemistry of joy, and fear turned from captor into counsel.

WEEKS 9–12

Restoring the Soul

Forgiveness, shame, dreaming again, and the anchoring of the soul that carries all of it.

How each week is built

Every week opens with the Big Idea, a condensed recap of that week's chapter. Then the week is walked day by day — five days, each with a short reading, two or three questions worth wrestling with, and one assignment to actually do before the sun goes down. Week 1 is the exception: it steps through each of the seven anchor scriptures in turn. Every week closes with Your Turn, a journal spread for the one thing this week said to you, and what you will do about it before your group meets again. Don't rush the questions — the goal is not a filled-in page but a settled conviction.

What a session evening looks like

Your group meets for about ninety minutes, in two halves. The first thirty minutes are not a warm-up — they are part of the work.

20 min A shared meal

Unhurried. No agenda, no teaching — this is where the group becomes a group.

5 min A worship song

Lyrics on screen. One song, sung together.

5 min Recap

Last week in three sentences, then the honest question: how did it go?

60 min Teaching

The week framed, the five days walked through, questions worked aloud, and a landing.

What is asked of you between meetings

Five short readings — one a day, five to eight minutes each — with the day's questions and assignment alongside them. Answer them in writing. Something happens when a vague thought is forced into a sentence, and that is most of what this workbook is for. If you arrive with the pages blank, you can still take part; if you arrive with them written, the evening will do something for you that listening cannot.

Four commitments

Your group will name these in Week 1, and again before Weeks 9 and 10, where the material turns personal.

Confidentiality. What is said here stays here.

No fixing. “Thank you for telling us that” beats advice.

Freedom to pass. Nobody must answer anything.

Attendance is a gift. The group depends on you.

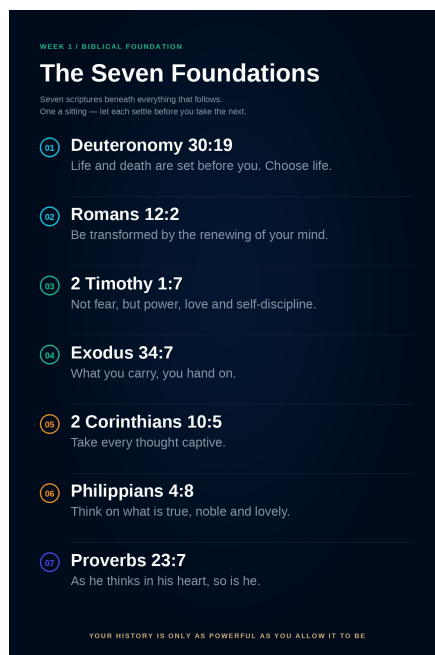
A word about Weeks 9 and 10. Forgiveness and shame are the two weeks people most often go quiet in. If something surfaces that is bigger than a group conversation, tell your leader — that is not a failure of the process, it is the process working.

POINT TO PONDER

Transformation is not read. It is done. Bring a pen.

WEEK 1

Building a Biblical Foundation



The journey from Ordinary to ExtraOrdinary begins with a single premise: your thoughts are not neutral, and Scripture got there before neuroscience did. Seven scriptures lay the foundation — walk through each one this week, a scripture a sitting, and let it settle before moving to the next.

SCRIPTURE 1 Deuteronomy 30:19

Life and death, blessings and curses, are set before you as a choice — and heaven and earth are called to witness which one you make.

Peace, joy, love, and trust can feel like they belong to circumstance rather than to you. They don't. Thinking physically reshapes the brain, and choosing wisely starts with believing the choice is really yours.

SCRIPTURE 2 Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Thinking becomes feeling, feeling becomes emotion, emotion becomes action — the whole chain starts upstream, in what you allow yourself to think. Sixty to seventy thousand thoughts a day are laying down the track.

SCRIPTURE 3 2 Timothy 1:7

God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

Fear, uncertainty, and doubt talk people into settling for the familiar. What you actually carry — His power, His love, His presence — is enough to persevere past it.

SCRIPTURE 4 Exodus 34:7

Unfailing love to a thousand generations — and the weight of a family's patterns carried forward too.

Your choices do not stop with you. Epigenetics now confirms what this verse hinted at long before the science existed: what you carry, you also pass on — for better or worse.

SCRIPTURE 5 2 Corinthians 10:5

We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Prayer, meditation, and stillness are how a thought actually gets captured rather than just noticed. Break the automatic cycle before it becomes an emotion you have to manage.

SCRIPTURE 6 Philippians 4:8

Whatever is noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable — think about such things.

Neuroplasticity means the brain reorganizes around what you feed it. Choosing your focus is not a nicety; it is the mechanism by which your reality actually changes.

SCRIPTURE 7 Proverbs 23:7

As someone thinks within himself, so he is.

The whole week compresses into one line. You are not a victim of biology or circumstance — your history is only as powerful as you allow it to be.

POINT TO PONDER

Your history is only as powerful as you allow it to be.

Questions to Settle

1. How can our thoughts and mind shape our destiny?

2. What are some toxic thought patterns that we can replace with healthier thoughts?

3. What is the connection between changing our thinking and knowing God's will for us?

4. How does fear limit our potential, and how can we overcome it?

5. How can our actions and thoughts impact future generations?

6. Why is it important to take control of our thoughts and make them obedient to Christ?

7. What are the benefits of focusing on noble, pure, and admirable things?

8. How do our thoughts shape our brain and reality?

9. What is the significance of embracing our inherent love and grace?

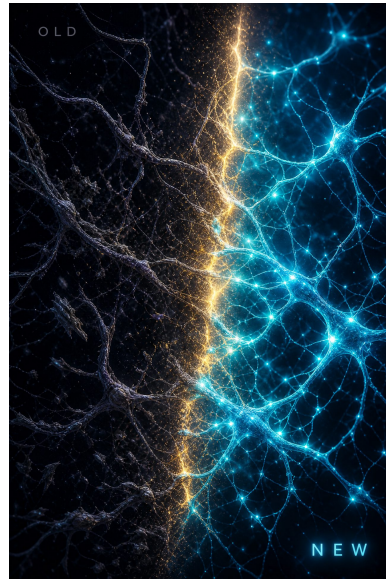
10. How can we harness neuroplasticity to transform our lives and become extraordinary?

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 2

The Extraordinary Brain



THE BIG IDEA

Your brain holds 86 billion neurons, each connected to 5,000–10,000 others. Counted one per second, they would take over three thousand years to number. The Psalmist was right: we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

This week tours the three brains in one. The neocortex — the seat of conscious, creative thinking — learns new information and restrains emotional reactions. The limbic brain turns thought into chemistry, releasing the hormones that become feelings, and houses the amygdala, which can hijack your reactions before reason ever gets a vote. The cerebellum, the oldest brain, is where practiced things become automatic — where what you repeatedly do becomes who you are.

The path of transformation runs through all three: new information produces new thinking, new thinking produces new action, and repeated action becomes new being. Knowledge, to experience, to wisdom. Head, hands, heart. And because the brain reaches for old files when it decides — the cerebral rolodex — no new files means no new behavior. Renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2) is not a metaphor. It is a mechanism.

POINT TO PONDER

We are not bound by the constraints of unchangeable personalities. We have the capacity for growth, transformation, and change.

DAY 1 Your Brain Rebuilds Itself

The adversary builds present snares out of past experience. Read Week 2, Day One (pages 8–11).

1. How does the concept of guarding our hearts and minds align with the idea of cultivating a godly mindset according to Proverbs 4:23?

2. How does the idea of transforming our lives by breaking free from the limitations and control imposed by our past align with the biblical concept of being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2)?

3. What is one input you know you should cut this week — and what has stopped you so far?

ASSIGNMENT

Audit your inputs for twenty-four hours — everything watched, read, scrolled, listened to. Circle what feeds the mind you want. Cross out what feeds the one you don't.

DAY 2 The Power of Choice and Change

Neocortex, limbic, cerebellum — thinking, feeling, becoming. Read Week 2, Day Two (pages 12–14).

1. In what ways can the concept of the neocortex, being the seat of conscience or creative center, align with the biblical teaching on the importance of renewing our minds to discern and understand God's will (Romans 12:2)?

2. What does it mean, practically, that no new files means no new behavior?

3. Which of the three brains do you tend to trust most, and where has that cost you?

ASSIGNMENT

Draw the three brains from memory and label what each one does. Then write which of the three has been running your last seven days.

DAY 3 The Magnitude of the Network



Your brain decides by reaching for old files. Read Week 2, Day Three (pages 15–17).

1. How does the idea of conditioning our responses to life events by growing new neurons and choosing how our thoughts build around specific issues relate to the biblical teaching on renewing our minds to think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8)?

2. Which "old file" does your brain reach for most often, and what would you like to replace it with?

3. What would it take for a new file to become the one your brain reaches for first?

ASSIGNMENT

Name the one old file your brain reaches for under pressure. Write the new file — the replacement thought, one sentence — and put it somewhere you will see it every day this week.

DAY 4 The Limbic Brain

Two routes for the same signal, and only one of them consults you. Read Week 2, Day Four (pages 18–20).

1. In what ways can the understanding of the limbic brain's role in generating feelings and emotions relate to the biblical teaching on guarding our hearts and renewing our minds to align with God's truth and principles?

2. Describe a time the amygdala hijacked one of your reactions. What was the trigger, and what would responding rather than reacting have looked like?

3. Who pays the highest price when your amygdala wins?

ASSIGNMENT

Recall your most recent hijack. Write the trigger, the reaction, and the cost. Then write the six-second pause you will use next time, and rehearse it out loud.

DAY 5 The Levels of Learning

WEEK 2 / ACCELERATING THE PROCESS

Can the Wiring Be Hurried?

Transcranial magnetic stimulation fires the circuit from outside the skull — Hebb's law, driven by a machine.

WHAT IT DOES

- A magnetic coil held against the scalp induces a current in the cortex beneath it, depolarizing neurons without surgery or anesthesia.
- Pulses repeated in rhythm drive neurons to fire together. In animal work this produces LTP-like strengthening of excitatory synapses — the same mechanism as the spine progression, forced rather than earned.
- Cleared by the FDA in 2008 for treatment-resistant depression, since extended to OCD, anxious depression, smoking cessation, migraine with aura, and to ages 16 and up.
- A standard course runs 20–36 sessions over four to six weeks. Accelerated protocols compress that into days.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

~30% remission in the pivotal depression trial, against ~16% on sham

~50% remission within a month in a 2023 accelerated deep TMS study

64–90% still holding the benefit three to twelve months later

THE OPEN QUESTION

The coil strengthens whatever circuit happens to be firing. It cannot choose which one. The evidence base still runs on small samples, weak sham controls and short follow-ups, and whether adding the inner work improves the long game has not been settled. Repetition, attention and obedience are slower — but they are what select the pathway worth keeping. The machine can fire the neurons. It cannot pick the thought.

A CLINICAL DECISION FOR A CLINICIAN — NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE WORK

New information, new thinking, new action, new being. Read Week 2, Day Five (pages 21–26).

1. How can the process of developing coherence between the conscious and subconscious brains through intentional exercise and meditation align with the biblical teaching on renewing our minds and being transformed by the Holy Spirit?

2. How does the idea of the cerebellum's role in learning through repetition and practice relate to the biblical teaching on the importance of daily spiritual disciplines, such as reading the Scripture, prayer, worship, and meditation, for the transformation of our minds and lives?

3. Of the practices under "What Innercise Actually Looks Like," which one will you actually begin this week — and when?

ASSIGNMENT

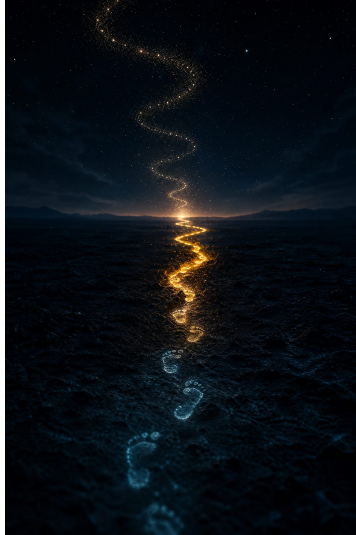
Pick one practice from "What Innercise Actually Looks Like" and do it for ten minutes today at a set time. Put it in your calendar for the next six days before you close this page.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 3

Breaking and Making Habits



THE BIG IDEA

Habit, as Montaigne warned, is "a violent and treacherous schoolmistress" — she settles her authority in us little by little, until we no longer have the liberty of raising our eyes against her. This week examines how she does it.

A single thought — any thought — changes your body: hormones secrete, brain regions surge, immune systems adjust. You are that powerful. But when feelings become the means of thinking, we can never change; to change is to think greater than how we feel. The cycle of deceptive brain messages shows how it goes wrong: a false message arises, uncomfortable sensations follow, and we reach for a habitual, unhealthy response that briefly relieves the discomfort — and deepens the rut.

The old "21-day" rule traces to Dr. Maxwell Maltz observing surgery patients adjusting to change — not breaking habits. Real research (University College London) found habits take on average 66 days to form; simple ones faster, hard ones slower. And behind every craving stand the happy hormones — Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, Endorphins (D.O.S.E.) — God-given chemistry that sin and habit can hijack into cycles of dependency.

POINT TO PONDER

When the body remembers better than the conscious mind — when the body is the mind — that is called a habit.

DAY 1 Nothing Is an Obstacle Unless You Say It Is

God did not hand you the command without the equipment. Read Week 3, Day One (pages 29–30).

1. What does it mean to live "according to your true self" — the self God speaks of in Jeremiah 29:11 — and where does your daily life currently fall short of it?

2. Romans 8:1 says there is now no condemnation for those in Christ. How does that truth change the way you approach a habit you have failed to break before?

3. Which old belief or pattern most needs replacing with new information, and what is the first new "file" you could give your mind this week?

4. What have you called an obstacle that is actually a decision you have not made?

ASSIGNMENT

List the three habits you would most like gone. Beside each, write the sentence you have been telling yourself about why it cannot change.

DAY 2 One Thought Changes the Body

Every thought secretes something. Read Week 3, Day Two (pages 31–32).

1. How can we avoid cognitive dissonance and the potential brain damage that can result from conflicting thoughts and actions?

2. How can we ensure that we are not simply listening to spiritual teachings, but actually applying and living out the word in our daily lives for true transformation and growth?

3. Which thought, running unchecked, is doing the most damage to your body right now?

ASSIGNMENT

Three times today, stop and notice what your body is doing — jaw, shoulders, breath, stomach — and write down the thought that came just before it.

DAY 3 Fate or Faith

You are not an automaton; you are a creator of your reality. Read Week 3, Day Three (pages 33–35).

1. How do you think the concepts of "fate" and "faith" interact with the idea that we are creators of our own reality, as suggested in the content? Can you identify a situation in your life where you felt either controlled by fate or empowered by your own conscious decisions?

2. What deceptive brain messages can you identify that have caused habit formation in your personal experience?

3. Where have you settled for fate when faith was available?

ASSIGNMENT

Take one result in your life you have blamed on circumstance. Trace it backwards on paper: result, action, feeling, thought. Write the whole chain out.

DAY 4 The Cycle of Deceptive Brain Messages

A false message, an uncomfortable sensation, a habitual relief. Read Week 3, Day Four (pages 36–38).

1. How do our past experiences and emotions contribute to the formation of habits that are detrimental to our spiritual wellbeing?

2. What deceptive brain messages are we allowing to influence our behavior and lead us towards unhealthy habits?

3. Which deceptive message have you believed so long that it now sounds like your own voice?

ASSIGNMENT

Write the deceptive message you hear most often, word for word, in its own voice. Underneath it, write the true statement from Scripture that answers it.

DAY 5 Sixty-Six Days

Not twenty-one. Sixty-six — and every relapse re-feeds the old network. Read Week 3, Day Five (pages 39–42).

1. The twenty-one-day rule turns out to be a misreading of a plastic surgeon's notes, and the honest average is sixty-six days. Where has an unrealistic timeline caused you to quit on a change too early?

2. How can becoming more aware of the thoughts associated with our actions help us identify and address harmful habits that may be negatively impacting our mental and physical well-being?

3. What has your last attempt at this habit taught you that you can use this time?

ASSIGNMENT

Choose one habit. Mark day sixty-six on your calendar. Write the cue you will remove and the reward you intend to keep.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 4

Making the New Habits Stick



THE BIG IDEA

Habits have four characteristics: they run without awareness (a Texas A&M study found participants thinking about what they were doing only 40% of the time), they run without emotion (repetition drains both pain and pleasure — Frijda's law), they are rooted in context (same situation, same behavior), and they take time — about 66 days of consistency, where every relapse re-feeds the old network.

The tools for dismantling them: Hebb's Law (neurons that fire together wire together), the quantum Zeno effect (sustained attention holds brain circuits active long enough to rewire), and the MIT-discovered habit loop — cue, routine, reward. Isolate the cue, keep the reward, change the routine, write an if-then plan, expect slip-ups, celebrate progress.

Finally, the Reticular Activating System — your brain's librarian and search engine — filters the world according to your declared intentions. Set a clear goal and the RAS begins surfacing everything relevant to it, automatically. This is your WQ — Will Quotient — working with God's design, not against it.

POINT TO PONDER

Whatever runs automatically flies beneath awareness. Mental awareness is the first battle.

DAY 1 Four Characteristics of Habits

Without awareness, without emotion, rooted in context, and slow. Read Week 4, Day One (pages 45–46).

1. How does the lack of emotional response in habitual behaviors impact our daily experiences, and what strategies can we use to maintain or enhance the emotional engagement in activities that have become routine?

2. In what ways does altering the context or environment disrupt established habits, and how can one leverage this knowledge to intentionally break unwanted habits or form new ones?

3. Which of your habits would the people closest to you name before you did?

ASSIGNMENT

Walk back through your day and write down four things you did without deciding to do them. Note the context that triggered each one.

DAY 2 Self-Directed Neuroplasticity

The brain rewires either way; focus decides which way. Read Week 4, Day Two (pages 47–49).

1. How does the lack of awareness in habitual behaviors contribute to their detrimental effects on mental and physical well-being?

2. What role does self-directed neuroplasticity play in breaking harmful habits and rewiring the brain to align with our true selves for improved mental and physical well-being?

3. What currently competes hardest for your attention, and what is it costing you?

ASSIGNMENT

Choose the one thing you will give sustained, focused attention to this week. Write it as a single sentence and set three daily reminders on your phone.

DAY 3 Dismantling the Old

Isolate the cue, keep the reward, change the routine. Read Week 4, Day Three (pages 50–54).

1. Considering the framework of the habit loop (cue, routine, reward), how can understanding and experimenting with each component aid in effectively breaking a bad habit? Share an example of a habit you would like to change and discuss potential cues, routines, and rewards related to it.

2. Reflect on the concept of neuroplasticity and the idea that habits can be overwritten rather than forgotten. How does this understanding impact your approach to creating and maintaining new, positive habits? Discuss the importance of having a backup plan and celebrating small successes in this process.

3. What reward is your worst habit actually delivering — and what else could deliver it?

ASSIGNMENT

Map one habit around the loop on paper: cue, routine, reward. Then design a replacement routine that delivers the same reward and write it out.

DAY 4 Rewiring Your Routine

Your brain's librarian only surfaces what you have declared matters. Read Week 4, Day Four (pages 55–57).

1. How can understanding and actively engaging the Reticular Activating System (RAS) enhance our ability to break old habits and establish new ones? Discuss the role of intention setting, filtered focus, and increased motivation in this process.

2. In what ways does the Reticular Activating System (RAS) interact with personal goals and priorities to influence attention and behavior? Consider how visualization, openness to change, and consistency contribute to the effectiveness of the RAS in habit formation and personal growth.

3. What have you been unintentionally instructing your RAS to look for?

ASSIGNMENT

Write one clear, specific intention for the next thirty days. Read it aloud morning and night, and start a running list of what your RAS begins putting in front of you.

DAY 5 Making the New Habits Stick

Plan for the relapse before you need the plan. Read Week 4, Day Five (pages 58–60).

1. Considering the framework of the habit loop (cue, routine, reward), how can understanding and experimenting with each component aid in effectively breaking a bad habit? How can engaging with self-directed neuroplasticity further support this transformation?

2. How can understanding and actively engaging the Reticular Activating System (RAS) enhance our ability to break old habits and establish new ones, and how can these principles be applied within the context of spiritual growth and living an authentic life?

3. How have you historically treated a slip-up — as failure, or as data?

ASSIGNMENT

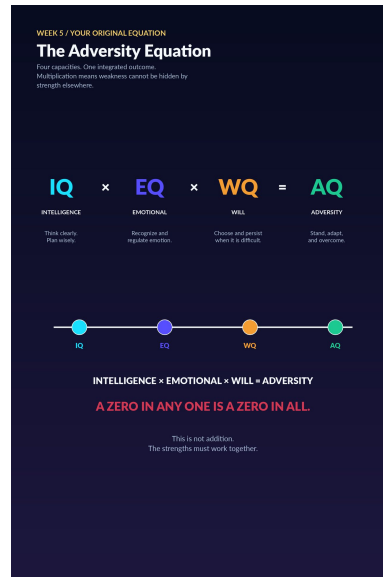
Write your if-then plan: "If ____ happens, then I will ____." Then write what you will do the day after a relapse — today, while it is still theoretical.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 5

$$IQ \times EQ \times WQ = AQ$$



THE BIG IDEA

We've been told IQ decides success; Einstein, who couldn't remember his own phone number, disproves the point. This week is about EQ — Emotional Intelligence: the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways. Daniel Goleman identifies five elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Scripture anticipated every one — choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19), be transformed by renewed thinking (Romans 12:2), take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5), for as a man thinks, so he is (Proverbs 23:7).

Developing EQ means teaching the conscious mind to take control of the subconscious — the same process this whole journey has traced: better results require healthier habits, healthier habits require aligned actions, aligned actions require captive thoughts, and captive thoughts require devotion to His Word.

The week closes with the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems — the accelerator and the brake God built into your body — and the sobering portrait of Alexander the Great, who conquered the world but not himself. IQ times EQ times WQ (Will) equals AQ: the Adversity Quotient that determines what you do when life pushes back.

POINT TO PONDER

Alexander the Great conquered the world, but he could not conquer himself.

DAY 1 The Five Elements of EQ

Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills. Read Week 5, Day One (pages 63–65).

1. How can the foundational principles of Emotional Intelligence, as outlined in Scripture, guide us in choosing life and blessings over negativity in our daily lives?

2. In what ways can self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills contribute to our spiritual growth and personal EQ?

3. Reflect on a time when you had to practice empathy and social skills in a difficult situation. How did this experience impact your Emotional Intelligence and spiritual growth?

ASSIGNMENT

Score yourself one to ten on each of Goleman's five. Then ask one person who knows you well to score you on the same five, and compare the two columns.

DAY 2 Self-Examination and Thought Control

Teaching the conscious mind to take charge of the subconscious. Read Week 5, Day Two (pages 66–67).

1. Have you ever taken the time to examine your own thoughts and beliefs to understand how they influence your emotions and responses in different situations?

2. How do you think practicing self-examination and thought control can contribute to your personal well-being and spiritual growth?

3. In what ways do you think being intentional about your thoughts and emotions can lead to a deeper connection with your spirituality and understanding of yourself?

ASSIGNMENT

Sit in silence for ten minutes with no input of any kind. Write down every thought that surfaces, then mark which ones you chose and which simply arrived.

DAY 3 The Brain-Emotion Connection

Phineas Gage and the wiring between reason and feeling. Read Week 5, Day Three (pages 68–70).

1. How can understanding the brain-emotion connection help us in our journey towards Emotional Intelligence and self-regulation?

2. In what ways can the separation between the emotional and logical regions of the brain guide us in managing our emotions effectively?

3. What role does the subconscious mind play in our emotional reactions, and how can we use our conscious mind to control and guide our emotions?

ASSIGNMENT

Write about a decision you made purely on emotion. What did the reasoning part of you already know at the time that could not get a word in?

DAY 4 The Accelerator and the Brake

Sympathetic and parasympathetic — God built you both. Read Week 5, Day Four (pages 71–74).

1. How can the principles outlined in Philippians 4:8-9 help us to strengthen our Emotional Intelligence and align our thoughts with biblical truths during difficult times?

2. In what ways can the knowledge of the autonomic nervous system and its impact on our emotions empower us to regulate our emotional responses more effectively?

3. How can the three states of the nervous system (ventral vagal, sympathetic, and dorsal vagal) impact our emotional well-being, and what strategies can we employ to remain in the safe and social state for a healthier EQ?

ASSIGNMENT

Practise one physiological brake today — a long slow exhale, a walk, cold water on the face — at the first sign of tension rather than after it peaks. Record what changed.

DAY 5 Conquering Yourself

Alexander conquered the world and lost the smaller war. Read Week 5, Day Five (pages 75–80).

1. How can we ensure that we are responding, rather than reacting, in conflicts to maintain a sense of calm and composure?

2. How does self-awareness play a role in enhancing our Emotional Intelligence and improving our relationships with others?

3. How can we use assertive communication to express ourselves clearly and confidently while respecting the opinions and boundaries of others?

ASSIGNMENT

Identify the one area where you are winning outwardly and losing inwardly. Tell one trusted person about it before your group meets again.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 6

Dealing with Stress



THE BIG IDEA

Stress touches biology, neurocircuitry, hormones, even gene expression. Seventy percent of the population lives in what this book calls neurotic chaos — constantly driven by the hormones of stress. Yet not all stress is bad: think of it as a traffic light. No light: insufficient stress, no motivation. Green: positive stress that moves you. Yellow: warning signs — slow down. Red: burnout — movement stops and repair is required.

The most-highlighted Bible passage on Kindle is Philippians 4:6–7 — "Do not be anxious about anything..." — which tells you something about the age we live in. Of the top psychiatric drugs prescribed, seven of seven treat anxiety. The chapter's personal testimony — panic in a familiar store, keys left in a running car — is a reminder that stress creeps in through thoughts long before it announces itself in the body.

The way back is coherence: rhythm and order, casting cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7), thinking on what is true and lovely (Philippians 4:8), gratitude, prayer, rest, and connection. In toxic stress the immune response collapses; in coherence, the well-watered garden of Isaiah 58:11 returns.

POINT TO PONDER

Seventy percent of the population lives in what I call neurotic chaos — constantly driven by the hormones of stress. Coherence is the pathway back to peace.

DAY 1 Neurotic Chaos

Seventy percent live driven by the hormones of stress. Read Week 6, Day One (pages 82–84).

1. How can we actively cast our cares upon Jesus in order to find peace in the midst of stress and chaos?

2. In what ways can we shift our focus from negative, anxiety-inducing thoughts to thoughts that align with the teachings of Christ and bring about peace?

3. What changes can we make in our lifestyle to effectively manage stress and prevent burnout?

ASSIGNMENT

Write down every source of stress currently on you. Circle the ones you actually control. Draw a box around the ones you do not.

DAY 2 A Global Epidemic

No light, green, yellow, red — which one are you living in? Read Week 6, Day Two (pages 85–87).

1. How does the teaching from Philippians 4:6-7 about presenting our requests to God in prayer relate to the idea of managing stress in our lives?

2. In what ways can recognizing stress as a "traffic light" help us to understand the different levels of stress we may experience in our daily lives?

3. How can we differentiate between healthy stress that motivates us and toxic stress that can lead to negative consequences?

ASSIGNMENT

Name your zone honestly and write the three specific signals that told you which one it is.

DAY 3 Overcoming Toxic Stress

The brain is hardware; the mind is what you run on it. Read Week 6, Day Three (pages 88).

1. How does the concept of the mind, body, and soul align with the idea of being created in the image of God? (Genesis 1:27)

2. How can practicing mindfulness and meditation help align our thoughts with God's will and purpose for our lives? (Philippians 4:8)

3. In what ways can nurturing our soul through connecting with our values and beliefs help us maintain a strong relationship with God? (Psalm 119:105)

ASSIGNMENT

Name the specific thoughts that breed your stress — not the situations, the thoughts. Write each one out and answer it with Philippians 4:8.

DAY 4 The Cause and the Curse

Obsession with self, the future, and the story you keep repeating. Read Week 6, Day Four (pages 89–94).

1. How can we apply the biblical teachings of Philippians 2:3-4 and Matthew 6:34 to overcome the obsession with self and worry about the future that lead to toxic stress?

2. In what ways can the scriptures in Philippians 3:13-14 and Psalm 34:5 help us release shame from past experiences and find peace to move forward?

3. How can the verses in Psalm 127:2 and Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 guide us in prioritizing rest, connection with others, and support to combat toxic stress caused by lack of sleep and isolation?

ASSIGNMENT

Identify which of these has quietly become an idol: yourself, the future, the past, or the story you retell. Confess it in writing.

DAY 5 The Cure

Rejoice, request, rest, and think on these things. Read Week 6, Day Five (pages 95–106).

1. How can rejoicing in the Lord and expressing gratitude help shift our perspective and reduce stress in line with biblical teachings? (Colossians 3:17)

2. In what ways can prayer help us surrender our worries to God and bring about a sense of peace and reassurance? (1 Peter 5:7)

3. How does the act of taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ, as described in 2 Corinthians 10:5, play a role in healing from toxic stress?

ASSIGNMENT

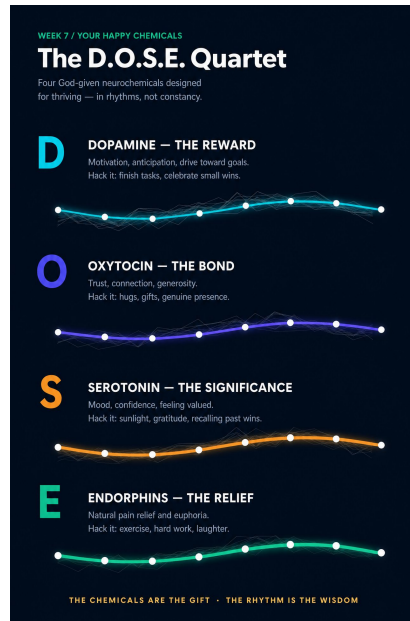
Build tomorrow around Philippians 4:4–8: one deliberate act of rejoicing, one specific request in prayer, one genuine rest, and one gratitude written down before you sleep.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 7

Hacking Into Your Happy Chemicals



THE BIG IDEA

You might not have a money tree, but you can have a happiness tree. Four neurochemicals — Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, Endorphins (D.O.S.E.) — are the quartet God built into you for thriving, not mere survival.

Dopamine rewards the hunt: it surges in anticipation, spurs you toward goals, and explains both motivation and addiction. Hack it by finishing tasks, celebrating small wins, and breaking big goals into pieces. Oxytocin is the bonding hormone, released by touch, hugs, gifts, and generosity — the glue of healthy relationships. Serotonin flows when you feel significant; it's why recognition lifts us and why loneliness devastates. Sunlight, gratitude, and reflecting on past victories all release it — your brain can't tell a remembered win from a fresh one. Endorphins are the body's own morphine, released by exercise, hard work, and laughter.

The warning: these states were designed for rhythms, not for constancy. Living in perpetual pursuit of any one of them breeds addiction — workaholism, substance abuse, codependency. The chemicals are the gift; the rhythm is the wisdom.

POINT TO PONDER

You might not have a money tree, but you can have a happiness tree.

DAY 1 Dopamine — The Reward of the Hunt

It surges in anticipation, not arrival. Read Week 7, Day One (pages 108–109).

1. How can understanding the role of dopamine in our brains help us in achieving our goals and increasing motivation?

2. Why is it important to break big goals into smaller pieces to increase dopamine release and maintain motivation?

3. In what ways can leaders use the knowledge of dopamine to motivate their teams and increase productivity?

ASSIGNMENT

Break one stalled goal into five small finishable pieces. Complete the first one today and mark it done where you can see it.

DAY 2 Oxytocin — The Bonding Chemical

Touch, encouragement, generosity, presence. Read Week 7, Day Two (pages 110).

1. How does the release of oxytocin in response to comforting touch align with Jesus' command in John 13:34?

2. In what ways can the concept of oxytocin increasing fidelity in relationships be seen through the lens of the biblical value of faithfulness in marriage (Hebrews 13:4)?

3. How can the practice of intentionally giving hugs, gifts, compliments, and affection align with treating others as we would like to be treated (Matthew 7:12)?

ASSIGNMENT

Give three deliberate acts of connection today — a hug, a written encouragement, an unexpected gift. Write down what it did to you, not just to them.

DAY 3 Serotonin — Significance

Your brain cannot tell a remembered win from a fresh one. Read Week 7, Day Three (pages 111–112).

1. How does the concept of serotonin in relation to recognition and affirmation tie in with biblical teachings on the importance of community and uplifting one another (Romans 12:10, Galatians 6:2)?

2. In what ways can reflecting on past achievements and victories be seen as a form of gratitude towards God for His faithfulness (Psalm 103:2-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:18)?

3. How can incorporating habits like spending time outdoors, getting adequate sleep, and engaging in physical activity align with caring for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?

ASSIGNMENT

Get fifteen minutes of sunlight and write out three past victories in detail. Notice what your body does while you remember them.

DAY 4 Endorphins — The Body's Own Morphine

Exercise, hard work, laughter. Read Week 7, Day Four (pages 113–114).

1. How can the concept of endorphins and the satisfaction from hard work be related to biblical teachings on perseverance and diligence?

2. In what ways can the idea of endorphins being released as a response to pain and stress connect to finding joy and peace in the midst of trials?

3. How can the simple acts of laughter, enjoying pleasant scents, and indulging in small treats be seen as ways to honor and care for our bodies?

ASSIGNMENT

Do something physically hard today — a workout, a run, a stretch of manual labour — and laugh out loud at least once on purpose.

DAY 5 Rhythm, Not Constancy

The chemicals are the gift; the rhythm is the wisdom. Read Week 7, Day Five (pages 115–118).

1. Which of the four happy chemicals do you most actively chase, and what does that reveal about what you are really seeking?

2. God gave us these hormones so that we could thrive and not merely survive. Where in your life has a good gift become a driving master instead?

3. Which of the practical "hacks" in this chapter will you actually build into next week, and when?

ASSIGNMENT

Name the chemical you chase hardest. Write where it has become a master rather than a gift, and the one boundary you will set this week.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 8

Fear as a Motivator



THE BIG IDEA

Fear is a liar — but it is also a gift, and the difference is everything. Survival fear keeps you alive at the cliff edge. Irrational fear — False Evidence Appearing Real — kills dreams: the artist who never paints, the speaker who never speaks. Your amygdala cannot tell a tiger from an ego threat; it floods you with the same hormones either way, and some people live in fight-or-flight permanently.

Chapman University's fear survey shows a nation afraid — of corrupt government, collapse, war, losing loved ones. Against this stands the most repeated command in Scripture: fear not. Fifteen verses this week make the case, anchored in 1 John 4:18 — perfect love drives out fear. Fear is suspicious, hoards, separates, and manages; love believes the best, shares openly, unites, and trusts. Fear is the language of orphans; love is the language of sons.

The turn: fear can become a motivator. Breathe into the present. Name the fear. Reframe it — it's trying to protect you. Let it counsel you. Then act, because the best things in life may be on the other side of it, and with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

POINT TO PONDER

It is possible that the best things in life are on the other side of fear.

DAY 1 Facing the Audition

The best things in life may be on the other side of it. Read Week 8, Day One (pages 120–122).

1. Where does fear stem from and why does it sometimes control our lives?

2. How do some individuals navigate through fear and come out stronger on the other side?

3. How does perfect love drive out fear according to 1 John 4:18, and how can we differentiate between fear and love in our daily interactions?

ASSIGNMENT

Write down the thing you are avoiding out of fear. Then write the smallest possible first step toward it — and take that step today, not tomorrow.

DAY 2 Fear Not

The most repeated command in Scripture. Read Week 8, Day Two (pages 123–124).

1. How does the verse from Luke 12:32 provide comfort in the face of fear?

2. According to Psalm 34:4, what can seeking the Lord help deliver us from?

3. What type of fear does 1 John 4:18 say perfect love can drive out?

ASSIGNMENT

Read this week's fear-not verses. Choose one, write it on a card, and carry it in your pocket all week.

DAY 3 Survival Fear and Irrational Fear

One keeps you alive; the other kills dreams. Read Week 8, Day Three (pages 125–127).

1. What are some examples of present day irrational fears?

2. How did fear play a role in the survival of early ancestors?

3. What physiological changes occur in the body when the fear response is triggered?

ASSIGNMENT

List every recurring fear you carry. Label each one S for survival or I for irrational. Then write what the ratio tells you about your life right now.

DAY 4 How Fear Constricts

The body tightens, and the mind tightens with it. Read Week 8, Day Four (pages 128–132).

1. What were the top fears of Americans in the Chapman University survey?

2. What are some of the most common phobias listed by the Baptist Health survey?

3. What is the difference between a "normal" fear and an irrational fear?

ASSIGNMENT

The next time fear rises, notice your body — jaw, chest, hands, breath — and write it down. Then deliberately open your posture and breathe out slowly, and write what changed.

DAY 5 The Nine Laws of Fear

Fear can be a counsellor rather than a captor. Read Week 8, Day Five (pages 133–140).

1. How can our fears be categorized into survival fears and irrational fears? Why is it important to differentiate between the two?

2. Why is it significant to acknowledge that fear has a positive intention, even though it may cause discomfort or hold us back?

3. How can reframing our fear and recognizing its protective nature help us overcome it and take necessary risks?

ASSIGNMENT

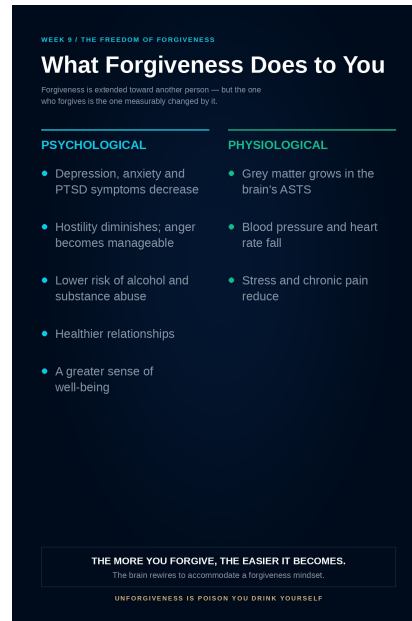
Take one fear and run it through the turn: breathe into the present, name it, reframe it as protection, let it counsel you, then act. Write what it advised — and what you did.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 9

The Freedom of Forgiveness



THE BIG IDEA

"Forgiveness is a secret hidden in plain sight. It costs nothing and is worth millions." We forgive because God commands it (Ephesians 4:31–32), because Jesus modeled it from the cross (Luke 23:34), because we have been forgiven (Matthew 6:14–15), and — as the parable of the unmerciful servant makes unmissable — because refusing to pass on mercy we have received is unthinkable.

Forgiveness is not excusing, forgetting, or pretending. It is a process — often slow, rarely linear — and it is also, remarkably, medicine: studies link forgiveness to decreased depression and anxiety, lower blood pressure, reduced chronic pain, and even measurable changes in the brain. The more you forgive, the easier forgiving becomes — the brain rewires around mercy.

Becoming "forgivingly fit" takes training like any fitness: refuse to speak disparagingly of those who hurt you, practice small daily mercies, address your inner pain honestly, develop empathy for your offender's own wounds, find meaning in your suffering, forgive yourself, and call on the Holy Spirit when it's beyond you. Harboring unforgiveness is drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

POINT TO PONDER

Harboring unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting another person to die.

DAY 1 Our Own Struggles with Forgiveness

It costs nothing and is worth millions. Read Week 9, Day One (pages 142–143).

1. What are some of the most difficult things to forgive?

2. Why should we forgive, according to the Bible?

3. How did Jesus' example of forgiveness inspire us to forgive others?

ASSIGNMENT

Write the name. The one you have not forgiven. You need not do anything else with it today — write it, and sit with it before God.

DAY 2 Forgiveness as a Process

Not excusing, not forgetting, not pretending. Read Week 9, Day Two (pages 144–147).

1. How does forgiveness play a role in increasing self-esteem and inner strength?

2. What are some steps involved in the process of forgiveness?

3. Why is forgiveness considered a sign of courage and love, rather than weakness?

ASSIGNMENT

Write what forgiving this person would NOT mean. Then, underneath, write what it would mean. Be precise about the difference.

DAY 3 Forgivingly Fit — Exercises One to Seven

Mercy trains like any other muscle. Read Week 9, Day Three (pages 148–150).

1. How can one build up their "forgiveness heart muscles" slowly in order to incorporate forgiveness into everyday life?

2. Why is it important to make a conscious effort to refrain from talking disparagingly about those who have hurt you?

3. How can empathy be connected to forgiveness and why is it an important step in the forgiveness process?

ASSIGNMENT

Choose one exercise and do it today. Refuse one disparaging comment you would normally have made. Perform one small, deliberate mercy. Write what it cost you.

DAY 4 Forgivingly Fit — Exercises Eight to Ten

Empathy, meaning, and forgiving yourself. Read Week 9, Day Four (pages 151–153).

1. When dealing with deep injustices from others, why is forgiveness still important for a meaningful life?

2. Can one develop a forgiving heart, even when forgiveness seems difficult? How?

3. Why is self-forgiveness crucial in the process of seeking forgiveness from others whom we've harmed?

ASSIGNMENT

Write down the wound your offender may be carrying. Then write where you need to forgive yourself, and pray specifically for the strength you do not have.

DAY 5 Become a Good Finder

The brain rewires around mercy. Read Week 9, Day Five (pages 154–156).

1. How does forgiveness open the door to divine love and spiritual growth?

2. What role does faith play in the process of forgiveness and letting go of bitterness?

3. In what ways can choosing forgiveness impact not only our own lives, but also those around us?

ASSIGNMENT

Find and write three genuinely good things about the hardest person in your life. Then say one of them out loud — to them, or to someone else.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

Breaking the Shame Shackles



THE BIG IDEA

Are you hiding? Since Eden, shame's first move has always been the fig leaf. But hiding our nakedness from God only walls us off from the One who deals exclusively in exposed things.

The critical distinction: guilt says "I did something wrong" — legitimate conviction about behavior. Shame says "I am wrong" — illegitimate condemnation of the self. Regret grieves what never got to be. Shame's symptoms are hiding, fear, deception, avoidance, isolation, loneliness, eroded self-worth, and a savage inner critic. And shame is the five-star general over the addiction armies — every stronghold answers to it, because shame always demands a prescription to numb the pain.

Three biblical portraits — the woman at the well, King David, the hemorrhaging woman — show shame hidden in all the wrong places, and a God who broke its hold every time. The mindsets that break the spiral: accept legitimate guilt, practice transparency, risk vulnerability, re-identify yourself in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), practice gratitude and self-acceptance. And like the kintsugi bowl — broken pottery rejoined with gold — your cracks, surrendered to God, become the most valuable and beautiful thing about you.

POINT TO PONDER

He doesn't deal with hidden things. He only deals with exposed ones.

DAY 1 Are You Hiding?

Since Eden, shame's first move has been the fig leaf. Read Week 10, Day One (pages 159–160).

1. How comfortable are you with admitting your brokenness and vulnerabilities before God and others?

2. Have you ever struggled with hiding your true self or past struggles from God or others?

3. How do you think embracing your vulnerability and brokenness can lead to transformation and healing in your life?

ASSIGNMENT

Write what you are hiding — from God, from others, from yourself. Written down, not merely thought. He does not deal with hidden things; He deals with exposed ones.

DAY 2 Guilt, Shame, and Regret

I did wrong. I am wrong. What never got to be. Read Week 10, Day Two (pages 161–164).

1. How do you personally differentiate between guilt, shame, and regret in your own life?

2. Have you ever experienced shame in response to suffering or circumstances beyond your control? How did you navigate through those feelings?

3. Can you share a personal experience of a time when you felt shame but were able to break free from its hold with the help of God or a supportive community?

ASSIGNMENT

Take three things weighing on you and label each one: guilt, shame, or regret. Then write how each should be handled differently — because they should be.

DAY 3 Symptoms and Strongholds

Shame is the general over the addiction armies. Read Week 10, Day Three (pages 165–169).

1. How do you personally relate to the symptoms of shame — hiding, fear, deception, avoidance, isolation, loneliness, lack of self-esteem, or negative self-talk?

2. What are some common triggers that compel individuals to engage in destructive behaviors as a way of coping with shame?

3. In what ways can shame prevent individuals from seeking help or support from others?

ASSIGNMENT

Go through the symptom list — hiding, fear, deception, avoidance, isolation, loneliness, eroded self-worth, the inner critic. Mark honestly which have been present this month.

DAY 4 The Truth That Sets Free

Accept the guilt, refuse the condemnation. Read Week 10, Day Four (pages 170–173).

1. How can we differentiate between healthy guilt that leads to positive change and toxic shame that hinders growth and healing?

2. In what ways can vulnerability and transparency help us break free from the shame spiral and cultivate deeper connections with others?

3. How can practicing self-acceptance and self-compassion help us overcome feelings of shame and embrace our imperfections?

ASSIGNMENT

Write out your identity in Christ from 2 Corinthians 5:17 in the first person. Read it aloud every time the inner critic speaks today.

DAY 5 Kintsugi

Broken pottery rejoined with gold. Read Week 10, Day Five (pages 174–178).

1. How do you typically handle feelings of shame or vulnerability in your own life?

2. Have you ever experienced a transformation or growth from a difficult or broken situation? If so, what did that process look like for you?

3. What role do forgiveness and transparency play in your personal relationships and self-growth?

ASSIGNMENT

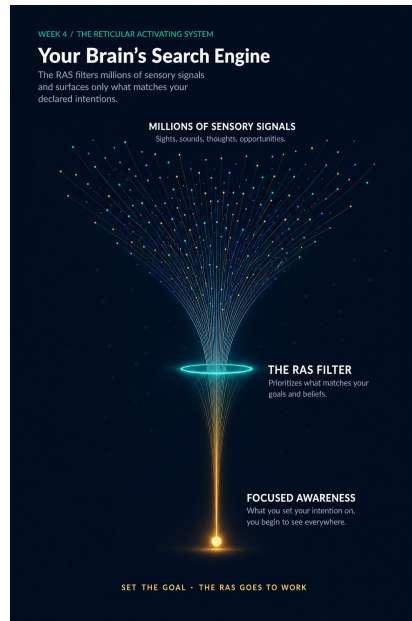
Write the crack you would most like to hide. Then write how God has already used it — or could yet use it — as gold in someone else's life.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

WEEK 11

Dare to Dream



THE BIG IDEA

God designed every member of the human race to dream. A dream doesn't drive you; it draws you — like a magnet pulling you toward itself. Without one, a person is frustrated in the present and misses their future; as Thoreau put it, most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.

But imagination alone changes nothing — this is the failure of "name it, claim it" thinking. The dream stimulates the subconscious (which outguns conscious thought by millions of neurons), the subconscious fuels proactive thinking, and thinking must become action. Dreaming without acting is an adventure in a rocking chair. The Reticular Activating System turns the dream into a filter: once the vision is set, your brain begins surfacing every opportunity that serves it — sowing and reaping, written into neurology.

The test of a God-given dream: it aligns with His Word, it is bigger than you, it requires faith, and it blesses others. Watch your thoughts — they become words, actions, habits, character, destiny. Without a vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18).

POINT TO PONDER

A dream doesn't drive you; it draws you.

DAY 1 The Dream That Slipped Away

A dream doesn't drive you; it draws you. Read Week 11, Day One (pages 180–182).

1. Have you ever had a childhood dream or vision that you felt very passionate about but slipped away as you got older? How did it make you feel?

2. How do you think circumstances, life events, and negative thinking can contribute to the loss of our dreams and aspirations?

3. Have you faced any setbacks in pursuing your dreams? How did you handle them?

ASSIGNMENT

Write the childhood dream you abandoned. Write what happened to it. Then answer honestly whether it still tugs when you get quiet.

DAY 2 Imagination Is the Root

Imagination is more powerful than knowledge. Read Week 11, Day Two (pages 183–184).

1. How does imagination play a role in achieving success in our lives?

2. What is the connection between dreams and taking positive action?

3. Why is simply having a dream not enough to lead to success?

ASSIGNMENT

Take twenty minutes with no screen and write, in present tense and vivid detail, what your life looks like five years from now if God has His way in it.

DAY 3 The Brain Cannot Tell the Difference

Set the vision and the RAS starts hunting for it. Read Week 11, Day Three (pages 185–187).

1. How does the subconscious mind play a role in our thoughts and actions?

2. What is the significance of dreaming, vision, and imagination in achieving success?

3. How does the concept of the Reticular Activation System (RAS) relate to manifesting dreams and desires into reality?

ASSIGNMENT

Read yesterday's vision aloud every morning this week. Keep a running page of what your RAS begins surfacing — people, opportunities, sentences you would otherwise have missed.

DAY 4 Good Dreams and God Dreams

It aligns with His Word, it is bigger than you, it requires faith, it blesses others. Read Week 11, Day Four (pages 188–191).

1. How can you differentiate between a self-serving dream and a God-given dream?

2. What are the criteria that determine if a dream is from God?

3. Why is it important for a God-given dream to be bigger than oneself?

ASSIGNMENT

Test your dream against the four marks and write an honest verdict on each one. Where it fails a mark, write what would have to change.

DAY 5 An Adventure in a Rocking Chair

Dreaming without acting changes nothing. Read Week 11, Day Five (pages 192–196).

1. What does it mean to you to be completely committed to God?

2. How does the evidence of our faith impact those around us?

3. How can we overcome negativity, discouragement, and fear in order to embrace the promises God has for us?

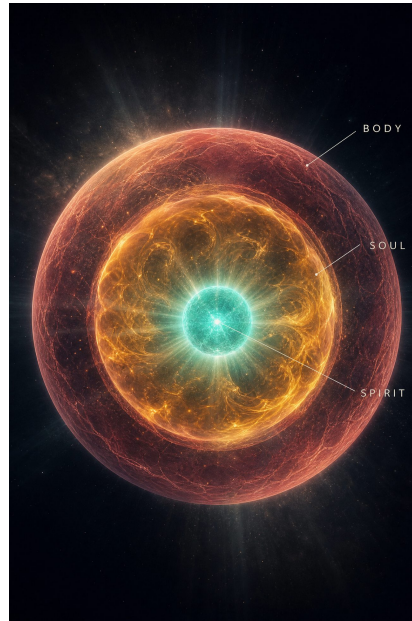
ASSIGNMENT

Write the first three concrete actions with dates beside them. Do the first one this week. Tell one person, so the dream has a witness.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

Restoring the Soul



THE BIG IDEA

No matter how much we learn about the mind, genuine peace eludes us until the soul finds its rest. Augustine said it in one sentence: "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."

You are three parts — spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The spirit is where God dwells; the body touches the world; and the soul — Greek *psuche*, your very self — is the bridge: mind, will, and emotions integrated into one life. A healthy soul is an integrated soul; sin dis-integrates it, splitting will from desire, pretense from reality. The middle letter of sin is I.

The parable of the Keeper of the Stream says it all: the village fired the unseen old man who kept the springs clean, and the stream — and the village — sickened until he was restored. The stream is your soul. You are the keeper. Guard it from the hard ground, the shallow soil, and the choking weeds of hurry — for hurry is the great enemy of souls in our day. Like Horatio Spafford, who lost everything and still wrote "It Is Well with My Soul," anchor your soul in the Rock of Ages. Only God can heal a soul; our part is to keep it.

POINT TO PONDER

His soul was anchored in the Rock of Ages. Does your soul have a sure anchor?

DAY 1 Rest for Your Souls

Come to me, all you who are weary. Read Week 12, Day One (pages 199–204).

1. Can you identify a moment in your life when your soul "dropped anchor"? What circumstances led to that feeling of security and peace?

2. In what ways do you currently prioritize the well-being of your spirit, soul, and body in your daily life?

3. Have you experienced any challenges or obstacles in maintaining a healthy balance between your spirit, soul, and body?

ASSIGNMENT

Take Matthew 11:28–30 and write what "rest for your soul" would look like in your actual calendar this week. Then put one of those things in it before you close the book.

DAY 2 The Soul Is Our Very Self

Spirit, soul, and body — and the soul is the bridge. Read Week 12, Day Two (pages 205–206).

1. How do you understand the concept of your soul as "your very self" (Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25)?

2. In what ways do you currently allow God to sanctify and transform your soul, as described in Romans 12:2?

3. How do you actively take responsibility for the well-being and growth of your soul?

ASSIGNMENT

Score your spirit, your soul, and your body one to ten today. Write one honest sentence on why each received the number it did.

DAY 3 The Keeper of the Stream

The village fired the man it could not see working. Read Week 12, Day Three (pages 207–209).

1. Reflect on a time when you felt your soul was unhealthy or "disintegrated." What factors contributed to that state?

2. Consider the various aspects of your soul, such as your mind, will, and emotions. How well do these aspects work together in harmony?

3. In what ways do you actively nurture your connection with God, others, and creation?

ASSIGNMENT

Name the unseen work that keeps your soul clean — the thing you cut first when you get busy. Put it back this week and write down when.

DAY 4 Sin Disintegrates the Soul

The middle letter of sin is I. Read Week 12, Day Four (pages 210–211).

1. Reflect on a time in your life when you experienced a disintegrated soul due to sin. What were the consequences?

2. How have you experienced discord between your thoughts, intentions, and emotions in your own life?

3. Can you identify any areas in your life where you have focused on yourself apart from God?

ASSIGNMENT

Write where your mind, your will and your emotions are currently pulling in different directions. Name it honestly, confess it, and tell one person.

DAY 5 Anchored in the Rock of Ages

Hurry is the great enemy of souls in our day. Read Week 12, Day Five (pages 212–235).

1. How would you assess the threat level of hurry to your soul right now? Is it very high, moderate, or low?

2. When are you most likely to succumb to hurry — to lose the ability to be fully present with God and others?

3. If you were to describe the characteristics of a person who is busy but not hurried, what would they be?

ASSIGNMENT

Twelve weeks in: write what has changed in your mind, in your body, and in your soul. Then write the ONE thing you will keep doing — and the date you will come back and review it.

Your Turn

Before the week ends, settle it on paper. What is the one thing this week said to you — and what will you do about it before your group meets again?

CONCLUSION

Come and Drink

THE BIG IDEA

Twelve weeks of transformation — the brain, the mind, our thoughts, our habits, our emotions, our wounds, and finally the restoration of the soul. But there is one last question worth asking. What does a thirsty soul look like?

Your body knows when it needs water. Ignore thirst long enough and the signs arrive on their own. A dehydrated soul will tell you too. Restlessness can be thirst. Constant dissatisfaction can be thirst. Exhaustion that sleep never cures can be thirst. The relentless need for approval, achievement, recognition, possessions, one more relationship, one more distraction — all of it can be nothing more than a thirsty soul looking for water in the wrong wells.

She came to Jacob's well for water. Jesus knew she was thirsty for something far deeper. Not one of the twelve weeks behind you was ever meant to replace the Source. You do not have to manufacture the water, or earn it, or pretend you are not thirsty. You simply have to come.

POINT TO PONDER

Thirst was never the problem. Knowing where to drink is.

Your Turn

Where have you been looking for water? Name the well. Then write what it would mean, today, simply to come and drink.

CLOSING

Twelve Weeks On

You began this study with a premise: that your history is only as powerful as you allow it to be.

Twelve weeks later, the pages behind you are the evidence of what you did with that.

Use the pages that follow to write the account — what changed in your mind, in your body, and in your soul; what you started that you intend to keep; and what is still unfinished. Date it. Then set a day on your calendar, ninety days out, to come back and read it.

You have the ExtraOrdinary ability to become ExtraOrdinary. Keep going.

POINT TO PONDER

Your history is only as powerful as you allow it to be.

