

[52 Experiences In Unhurried Honesty with God]



THE SACRED SLOW

A HOLY DEPARTURE FROM *FAST FAITH*

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author of *40 Days of Decrease*

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK



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CHANGING THE LOCKS

Scriptures for Guided Response Meditation

- *Who Am I?*
Matthew 5:13, 14
John 1:12; 15:1, 5, 15, 16
Romans 6:18, 22; 8:14, 15, 17
1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 6:17, 19; 12:27; 15:10
2 Corinthians 5:17, 18, 19
Galatians 3:26, 28; 4:6, 7
Ephesians 1:1; 2:6, 10, 19; 3:1; 4:1, 24; 5:30
Philippians 1:1; 3:20
Colossians 3:3, 4, 12
1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5
Hebrews 3:1, 14
1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10, 11; 5:8
1 John 3:1, 2; 5:18
- *Since I am in Christ, by the grace of God:*
Romans 5:1; 6:1–6; 8:1
1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:12, 16; 6:19, 20
2 Corinthians 1:21; 5:14, 15, 21
Galatians 2:20
Ephesians 1:3, 4, 5, 7, 13–14; 2:5, 6, 18; 3:12
Colossians 1:13, 14, 27; 2:7, 10, 11, 12, 13; 3:1–4
2 Timothy 1:7, 9
Titus 3:5
Hebrews 2:11; 4:16
2 Peter 1:4

WHEN THE WORD IS HEARD AND HEEDED

OUR FREQUENT DAILY PRAYERS

WHEN THE WORD IS HEARD AND HEEDED, IT . . .

Teach me Your ways.

Makes it possible for us to
walk in God's ways

I want to be pure.

Keeps the path of the young pure

Help me not sin.

Trains us not to sin against God

Lead me.

Is a counselor

Save me.

Preserves our lives

Strengthen me.

Strengthens us

Fill me with Your joy.

Enables us to find delight

Free me.

Empowers us to walk about in freedom

Comfort me.

Comforts us

Guide me.

Gives us a theme song

OUR FREQUENT DAILY PRAYERS

WHEN THE WORD IS HEARD AND
HEEDED, IT . . .

Guard me.	Prevents us from going astray
Why?	Provides perspective in times of suffering
I need wisdom!	Makes us wiser than our enemies
Grant me insight.	Gifts us with more insight than teachers
Give me understanding.	Bestows on us more understanding than elders
Teach me.	Is how God teaches us
May I hate what You hate.	Grants us understanding to hate every wrong path
Show me Your path.	Is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path
Fill me with joy.	Fills our hearts with joy
Speak to me.	Offers light and understanding to the simple
May sin not rule over me.	Strengthens us so that sin will not rule over us
Give me peace.	Imparts great peace
Deliver me from evil.	Delivers us from stumbling

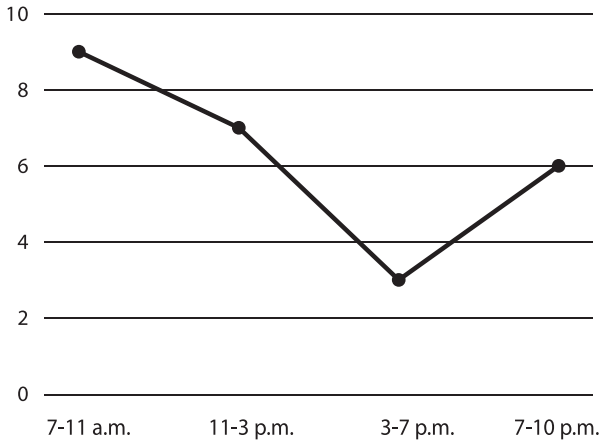
GIFT OR GRINCH?

Chapter 37 Poll

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, CIRCLE ALL OPTIONS BELOW THAT YOU FEEL ARE SOMETIMES OR ALWAYS TRUE OF WHAT I SAY, WHAT I DO, OR HOW I ACT.		
Views time as something to beat	“There’s just not enough hours in the day.”	“We’ve got all the time in the world.”
Is patient with processes	Regrets “lost” time	Is grateful for each day
Wishes the clock would stop	Views time as a gift	Is always rushing
“Take your time.”	Rested	Regularly feels behind
Whether early or late, still arrives stressed	At peace with the clock	Has time to spare
Longs for simpler days	Lives at a healthy pace	Good with time management
“Hurry up! We don’t have all day.”	“Time keeps on slippin’ slippin’, slippin’ into the future . . .”	Is disappointed in others when they “waste time”

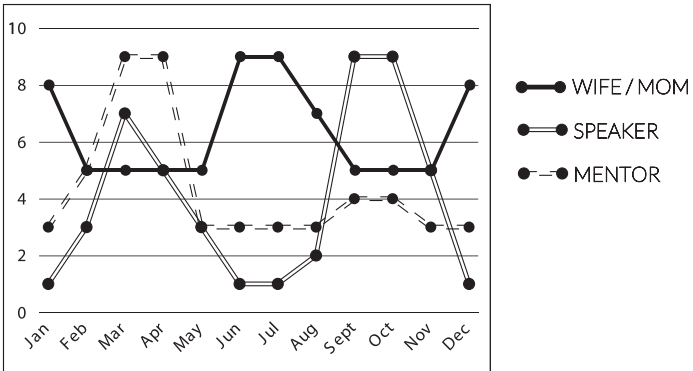
THE FLOW OF TIME

Daily Time-Flow



■ CLARITY & STRENGTH OF MIND

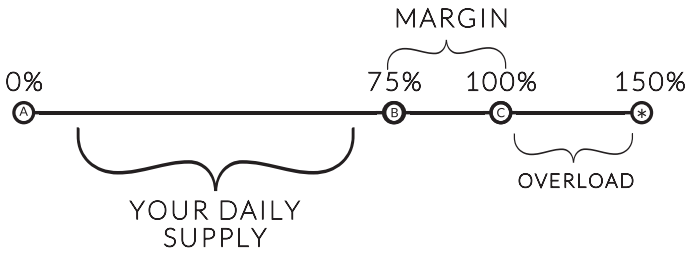
Example Yearly Time-Flow Chart



[3 9]

MARGIN

Daily Energy



[TOOLBOX]

TWELVE-WEEK FACILITATOR GUIDE

The twelve movements of *The Sacred Slow* build on one another. Each chapter's content flow is extremely intentional. As a facilitator, you have five responsibilities:

1. Create space to fully engage in the readings, thought foci, and exercises.
2. Select a handful of questions from the more-than-you-need lists below.
3. Ask these questions in an atmosphere that encourages honesty and content integration.
4. Calmly refuse to fix or prematurely dismiss difficult questions that arise.
5. Close the group time in prayer for the participants.

In other words, asking questions—not imparting answers—is your goal. The un-done-ness of the fifty-two experiences is intentional and essential. Too often we tie up Bible lessons with a neat bow when real life is anything but tidy and tame. Along with your group, experience the journey, be honest about your own un-done-ness, and anticipate the fruit of a more sustainable and satisfying nearness with God based on His presence, not your performance.

MOVEMENT/WEEK ONE: TWO STORIES

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
Intro	Overview of book's purpose and content	None
1	Explanation of Fast Faith	Gather a team. Fill in Life Scroll row 1 with your timeline.
2	Explanation of the Sacred Slow	Fill in Life Scroll row 2 with spiritually formative moments.
3	The number seven (symbolic of rest) and introductory study of the Sabbath (Seventh) Year	Fill in Life Scroll rows 3 and 4 with joyous and painful moments.
4	The substance of the Seventh Year	Fill in Life Scroll row 5 with your self-concepts.
5	The challenge and cost for the Israelites of neglecting the biblical Sabbath Year	Fill in Life Scroll row 6 with your God-concepts.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Anonymous: Jesus' Hidden Years . . . and Yours by Alicia Britt Chole

“The Sabbath Year,” an academic essay by Alicia Britt Chole

Optional Memory Verses

All the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:16)

[The LORD said . . .] “But in the seventh year the land is
to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD.”
(Leviticus 25:1, 4)

[The LORD said . . .] “Everything under heaven belongs to me.” (Job 41:11)

Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

The Life Scroll is among the most healing and insight-producing exercises for those I mentor. Some exercises may be emotionally challenging. But in row 7, as participants step back and begin mixing layers, their histories are often infused with new meaning and connections.

Additionally, the exercises in this first movement may press on some wounds that need further healing. Prepare a short list of trusted Christian counselors and therapists in your region that specialize in areas of grief, abuse, marital conflict, and freedom from shame.

- [1] The Life Scroll can be found in the Toolbox in this PDF. Though at times a heart-head-hands intensive, this exercise will enrich the entire experience by gifting each participant with self-awareness of their history and increased sensitivity to God’s breath over their days.
- [2] Departing from Fast Faith is not a rejection of the rich resources available in our day. But it does reframe these resources as helps instead of hopes. God is with us and He is our hope. This means that every moment for every Jesus-follower around the world can be filled with nearness with God. That nearness is not awaiting music. It is the fruit of attentiveness. Encourage participants to reposition—not abandon—their favorite tools and boosts.
- [3] Some may wonder about the emphasis on the number seven. Honestly, I avoided number studies for a very long time because some felt a wee bit flaky for my logic-loving mind. But seven is clearly symbolic of rest, and this study will lead

into an examination of the biblical seventh year. Speak of seven as a reminder to rest, and ask participants to evaluate how rested they truly are in body, mind, and soul.

- [4] Occasionally a participant feels driven to find a modern parallel application to the biblical Sabbath Year such as cancelling debts, giving generously, or quitting their job for a year. Though we certainly do not want to hinder how God may be speaking, encourage the group to commit potential applications to prayer. Sometimes we act so quickly that the water of the Word does not have time to penetrate to depths that produce lasting (as opposed to immediate but short-lived) change.
- [5] This is a real story about real people. Encourage the group to take the story off of any flannel graph in their minds and place themselves in the text. Draw on world events and discuss the realities of exile. Discuss the costs of both obedience and disobedience.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

Introduction

Reading:

- Alicia mentions three certainties supporting every line of *The Sacred Slow*. Which of these three speak to you the most?
- Why do you think Alicia places such emphasis on your responsibility to be honest?

[1] What Is Fast Faith?

Reading:

- As you begin this fifty-two-experience investment in your spiritual health, what thoughts, concerns, or questions do

you have regarding what this journey may (or may not) hold for you?

- In your own words, what is Fast Faith?

Thought Focus: Share one of the sets you selected for your life as a movie.

Exercise: Did you find it challenging or easy, comfortable or stressful, to fill in your timeline with the events that the government and your insurance company know about?

[2] What Is the Sacred Slow?

Reading:

- How naturally comfortable are you with being “undone”?
- What was the “more direct route” spoken of by Brother Lawrence?

Thought Focus: Share one spiritual formation scene that your life as a movie could not omit.

Exercise: Was it easy or difficult to identify spiritually formative moments/events in your Life Scroll? How many of these moments were outside of your control?

[3] The Number of Rest

Reading:

- Seven in Scripture speaks of “intentional times,” “set-apart spaces,” “waiting, warring, warning, and wisdom.” How will you set apart the space you need to enter fully into this Sacred Slow experience?
- Numbers carried more weight in ancient times than they seem to today. Consider Anna becoming a widow in the

seventh year of her marriage (Luke 2:36–38). How might widowhood have been perceived in her culture?

- Reflect on how Anna’s response to her seventh year ultimately positioned her to see the Messiah.

Thought Focus: Share one high or low from your life-as-a-movie trailer.

Exercise: Was it easier to identify moments of joy or moments of pain? Apply your responses to your daily life. What do you find yourself reflecting on more at the end of each day—moments of pain or moments of joy?

[4] The Original Sacred Slow

Reading:

- In what ways might honoring God’s commanded Sabbath/seventh year have “drastically changed the fabric of a community”?
- How costly might such a year of rest have been to the original hearers?
- “Rest the land and hear the Law . . . release indentured servants and cancel debts . . . make no profit and give generously.”
Which of these emphases stands out to you? Why?

Thought Focus: What qualities would you need to characterize any actor who played you in your life as a movie?

Exercise: Did any of your Life Scroll self-perceptions surprise you?

[5] God’s Issue with Clenched Fists

Reading:

- “God does seem to consistently take issue with clenched fists.”
Share any thoughts you had as you read these words.

- In what ways do you feel you are living “an open-handed existence”?
- Respond to the final question of the reading: “What could have been avoided—let alone gained—if the community had embraced the space?”

Thought Focus: Where was God in one (or more) of the scenes of your life as a movie?

Exercise: How easy or difficult was it to give yourself permission to be fully honest in this exercise?

MOVEMENT/WEEK TWO: ADDING INTENTIONALITY

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
6	Revealing the symptoms and danger of refusing to listen to God	Fill in Life Scroll row 7 by mixing layers to reveal new correlations in our stories.
7	Listening as a spiritual discipline and the power of silence	Create your Personal Inventory. Listen heaven-down for God’s direction for your lives.
8	The need to hear and heed God’s voice	Develop your Personal Inventory. Prayerfully identify application responses to the heaven-down theme.
9	The relationship between spiritual passivity and fruitlessness	Finalize your Personal Inventory. Incorporate feedback from friends.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Mansions of the Heart: Exploring the Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth by R. Thomas Ashbrook

Optional Memory Verses

The Sovereign LORD . . . wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. (Isaiah 50:4–5)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Consider carefully what you hear. . . . With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. (Mark 4:24)

Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown. (Mark 4:20)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

- [6] As a facilitator, work to make the why and what of “not listening” evident. What can it look like? What do we experience internally when someone does not listen to us? What does it feel like when we choose not to listen to others? How do we justify not listening in our relationships?
- [7] Listening is valuable whether or not the listener hears God’s voice. Listening cultivates a spiritual attentiveness that positions our soul for nearness with God and strengthens our will to discipline our minds. In other words, the action is more powerful than any answer we might hear.
- [8] As a facilitator, share a personal example from childhood or adulthood when you experienced a gap between hearing and heeding. As a group, brainstorm ways you can all strengthen your wills to heed.
- [9] The Personal Inventory is a real-time application of the

reading's emphasis on listening. Unlike a self-improvement list, PI's begin heaven-down by waiting on God. Listening does not have to be overly mystical. The Scriptures are our primary source for God's voice.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[6] The Underestimated Danger of Not Listening

Reading:

- Consider the much-loved Jeremiah 29:11–13 in context. How might the original hearers' usage of this passage differ from ours today?
- Summarize Alicia's definitions of *listening* and *not listening*.
- How did not listening lead Jeremiah's generation into idolatry? How might not listening lead us into idolatry today?

Thought Focus: Share any differences you have discerned between God's review and your review of your life as a movie.

Exercise: Toward the end of *The Sacred Slow*, you will be referencing your Life Scroll once more. Until then, what is currently your top take-home from this exercise?

[7] A Curious Remedy for Idolatry

Reading:

- Alicia calls *listening* a spiritual discipline. What is the difference between being a skilled listener and simply being in proximity?
- Is silence soothing or stressful for you? What emotions do you experience when silence is extended?
- How can silence be a "purging force"?

Thought Focus: Share your in-process purpose statement for this season of your life.

Exercise: What was it like to approach the Personal Inventory “heaven-down” by listening for God’s guidance instead of “earth-up” by listing everything in life that you would like to change?

[8] The Sound of Listening

Reading:

- What thoughts or feelings arise within you when someone talks about listening to/for God?
- Pause in silence for a moment to identify, in as much detail as possible, everything you currently can hear.
- It is hard to listen on the run. Listening requires a pause. In our noisy, motion-addicted world, what will it take to create such a pause in your life?
- Like Eve, why do we stand “close enough to forbidden fruit for Satan to use it as a speaking prop”?

Thought Focus: How would you personally answer the question, “Why do I exist?”

Exercise: Alicia emphasizes thinking with God as opposed to brainstorming solo. How easy or hard was it to “press your mind to stay in conversation with God” throughout this exercise?

[9] Seed #3 and the Enemy’s Plan B

Reading:

- Rephrase what Alicia refers to as Satan’s plan A and plan B.
- Reread Mark 4:20. What three verbs distinguish the fourth seed?

- Think about those you interact with daily. How might they benefit from your commitment to hear and heed God’s voice?

Thought Focus: Share one of the action steps you identified toward adding intentionality to your spiritual journey.

Exercise: Alicia states, “Our growth is better watered by meditating on who He is than by obsessing over who we are not.” Since the PI process began heaven-down, discuss ways to keep the PI a response to God’s initiative instead of one more item on a to-do list.

MOVEMENT/WEEK THREE: GOD-CONCEPTS

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
10	The danger of spiritual misthink	Fill in the blank: God, I think You are _____.
11	Doing nothing as a choice	Ask, “What am I thinking about God now?”
12	The presence and power of God in the room	Interview close friends about your God-concept.
13	Learning to think backward to discover the source of our God-concepts	Compare portraits from chapters 10, 11, and 12.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Knowledge of the Holy by A. W. Tozer

Jesus Manifesto: Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of

Jesus Christ by Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola

Optional Memory Verses

[Jesus asked,] “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:15–16)

The compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness . . . forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. (Exodus 34:6–7)

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

This movement guides participants through the process of seeing and then editing their God canvases. Expect intense interaction in this and the next movement. Nothing is deeper than our God-concepts and self-concepts. God is already aware of our distortions and misthink. He only reveals to heal.

[10] I cannot overemphasize the importance of this exercise. Encourage participants to take the “God, I think You are . . .” exercise with them and invest time in creating a God-concept canvas that reflects their honest views. Accurate acknowledgment is a giant step toward increased health.

[11] The question may arise, “Isn’t reading the Bible enough?” The Word is essential, but too often we go passive after we close the Book. As a facilitator, pray for your group to actively resist spiritual passivity and to rise up to reclaim an accurate and awesome view of God.

- [12] Some may sincerely have trouble attempting to process the concept of God in the room. Assure them that such a challenge is normal. The goal is to awaken to the reality that God is *with* us as a step toward a lifestyle of consciously acknowledging God's actual presence in every moment. Also, inviting others to weigh in on various exercises can be uncomfortable. Remind the group to choose the interviewees wisely, i.e., ask healthy people who will not abuse the invitation. These exercises keep spiritual introspection connected to community and real-world application.
- [13] The discipline of thinking backward is a mighty tool for spiritual formation. It may be helpful to walk through a few fictional scenarios as a group to illustrate this discipline. For example, what thoughts or beliefs could prompt an employer to shame an employee in front of his or her peers?

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[10] The Source of Spiritual Misthink

Reading:

- To date, how much energy do you feel you have invested in “identifying, purifying, and enriching [your] God-concept”?
- Review Tozer's quotes. How might a “right belief about God” relieve you of “temporal problems”?
- What do you think Alicia means when she says, “The Word heard is not enough”? Do you agree/disagree? Why?

Thought Focus: Were there any responses that you hesitated to write down? Why?

Exercise: Did anything surprise or encourage you about this first God-concept portrait?

[11] How to Water Thorns

Reading:

- Alicia explains, “I nurtured the thorn trees by omission. When I first saw them, I decided to do *nothing*. And doing nothing is a choice.” To consider this concept more concretely, discuss the impact of passivity on a yard or garden.
- What thorns are currently threatening your fruitfulness?
- A continuous point of concern is how students sometimes spiritually flounder in college. How might the thorns of misthink about God’s character contribute to their vulnerability?

Thought Focus: What thorns in your God-concept are you becoming aware of?

Exercise: Share any fresh insights about your God-concept from this second God-concept portrait.

[12] God in the Room

Reading:

- Share any responses you had to the story of the woman who had not seen God in the room of her pain.
- Are you currently aware of any discrepancies between your official and working God-concepts?
- Which of the closing thoughts on the power of “God in the room” mean the most to you today?

Thought Focus: Share any discoveries you made this week about God in the room.

Exercise: Creating this third God-concept portrait was a risky and vulnerable exercise! What thoughts from those you interviewed did you find comforting? Concerning?

[13] Thinking Backward

Reading:

- Read Isaiah 26:3–4 and John 14:27. Contrast the world's peace with Jesus' peace.
- Alicia views our attitudes and behaviors as fruit of our underlying thoughts and beliefs. Do you agree or disagree?
- Though thinking backward is strenuous, as a discipline it can be a game-changer! Are there areas in your life where thinking backward would actually help you move forward spiritually?

Thought Focus: Share any insights you discovered from thinking backward this week.

Exercise: What are the greatest areas of strength in your God-concept? Did anything puzzle you as you contrasted the three different canvases? What attributes of God need further attention in your life?

MOVEMENT/WEEK FOUR: SELF-CONCEPTS

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
14	How we mentally poison ourselves	What do you say to yourself about yourself?
15	True intellectual strength	Request input from trusted friends.
16	Revoking all-access passes into our minds	Address your self-thoughts.
17	The challenge of changing locks in our minds	Use scripture as an antidote to toxic thinking.

Optional Supplementary Resources

*Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth Through
God's Eyes* by Robert McGee

Optional Memory Verses

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

If anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8b)

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:23)

We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5b)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

- [14] And now we are getting personal. God-concept always affects self-concept. Remind the group of “God in the room” in this process. It can be easy for participants to disconnect negative self-talk from God’s loving call for them to see themselves through His redeeming eyes.
- [15] At times we treat our minds more like trash cans than treasures and welcome without scrutiny whatever the world throws our way. Guide your group in brainstorming a working definition of spiritual formation. Odds are that something holistic will emerge, leaving no area off limits to God’s redeeming work.
- [16] Participants may get stuck trying to identify what thoughts should be let into their thought space. Encourage them to focus less on specific thoughts and more on developing the

discipline of pausing. A short prayerful pause in which we whisper, *Jesus, can You and I think this thought together?* can drastically change our thinking patterns.

- [17] A relevant discussion topic could be to consider the church's understanding of pride and humility. Does humility mean that we amplify our weaknesses? Is it prideful to think well of ourselves? Misthink in this area often contributes to a false but felt belief that meditation on untruth has benefits.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[14] Does God Have an Opinion?

Reading:

- What could motivate someone to self-abuse by mental self-poisoning?
- Do you think that God has an opinion about your self-thoughts?
- *The Sacred Slow* content has often been described as surgical. At 25 percent of the way into your journey, share how the experience is shaping you.

Thought Focus: Overall, do you feel that you were kind or harsh to yourself in this exercise? If harsh, did you ever find yourself reasoning, “Yeah, but it’s still kinder than I deserve” or “. . . than what [insert a name] would say about me”?

Exercise: Growing up, was it more acceptable in your culture to say positive or negative things about yourself? Share any family or cultural beliefs that may have contributed to this environment.

[15] Sorting the Mail

Reading:

- Have you ever been in an environment hostile to your faith? If so, in what ways did the challenge affect you?
- Respond to Alicia's statement: "True intellectual strength is not merely the ability *to* think. It is the ability *to choose* what to think and when to think."
- By nature, do you sort the mail in your mind? If so, share some strategies you implement. If not, how do you feel this practice might be beneficial in this specific season of your life?

Thought Focus: How easy or hard was it for you to sort the mail?

Exercise: How did you feel about inviting others into your formation process? What reasons do you think Alicia might have for calling you to take these steps?

[16] New Rules, New Start

Reading:

- Recall the three reasons the generous soul welcomed all into her home. Do any of these reasons feel familiar?
- After changing the locks, the generous soul said, "It would have been easier to leave everything the way it was." Why is taking the path of least resistance so very, very attractive?
- Share any ways in which you sense God calling you to increase vigilance in your mind.

Thought Focus: How did it feel to think of every thought as a guest?

Exercise: In what ways has the Holy Spirit historically brought His concerns to your attention? For example, have you sensed God's conviction through quiet impressions, Scripture, sermons, a child's insight, or lessons from nature?

[17] Changing the Locks

Reading:

- How would you describe your thought-life's current level of security?
- Do you agree with Alicia's belief that there's "fear in the Enemy's eyes that we are even having this discussion"? Why or why not?
- Which of the three weapons Alicia mentions seems the most practical for you? Share any other strategies you may personally use.

Thought Focus: What "perceived benefits" may have contributed to the overdue status of your identified lock change?

Exercise: Share any scriptures that have become more meaningful to you in this journey toward a healthier thought-life.

MOVEMENT/WEEK FIVE: CENTRALIZING HIS PRESENCE

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
18	Living life as a duet instead of a solo	Think about God as your center.
19	Being with Jesus is still a literal calling	Interview those who walk closely with God.
20	Christ is in us (but not us)	Practice God's presence in your daily life.
21	The power of praying Scripture over yourself	Craft an inheritance prayer.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Practicing His Presence by Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach

The Praying Plumber of Lisburn: A Sketch of God's Dealings with Thomas Haire by A. W. Tozer

Optional Memory Verses

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. (Exodus 33:11)

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. (Mark 3:14–15)

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

All four readings are designed to transition participants away from living alone in their heads and toward continuous conversation with God. This movement is the heartbeat of *The Sacred Slow*. Savor it and urge participants to explore means of retraining their minds to “live in the plural” with God. Some may feel discouraged with their attempts. Remind them of how we cheer a baby's first steps even though it often ends with a fall. We cheer because standing is in the child's heart. How much more must our heavenly Father cheer us all on in these first steps toward more sustainable intimacy with Him!

- [18] Some may wonder if practicing God's presence is a reality reserved for certain personalities. But every personality will find some disciplines easier and some harder. Invite the group to help one another see ways in which their unique wirings can be an asset to this pursuit.
- [19] Permit queries that may be rarely verbalized such as, *How do we really know that He is with us?* or *If God is present and powerful, why don't I feel His presence?* Compare God's presence to the wind that cannot be seen or to the sun that cannot always be felt.
- [20] Focus on the distinction between interaction and fusion. For too long, the church has abandoned ancient Christian disciplines due to fear. Many new-age thoughts are simply newly packaged old deception. *God in us* is an entirely different belief than *God is us*.
- [21] Direct the participants toward the Psalms. Together, identify timeless prayers and then practice personalizing them. Scripture-praying will be absolutely revolutionary for many souls.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[18] Faith as a Duet

Reading:

- In your daily life, do you believe that God is equally present in every moment?
- How can your answer affect your communion with God?
- What is the difference between making something first and making something center?

Thought Focus: What daily event did you select for this exercise?
Share any discoveries you made.

Exercise: How did it feel to “tell God things He already knows” and “purpose to converse” with Him in the moment to moment of daily life?

[19] Our Primary Occupation

Reading:

- Of the three job descriptions Jesus gave to the disciples in Mark 3, which is most intuitive for your personality? Which is most applauded in your spiritual community?
- How might the disciples have felt as Jesus said, “I am with you always” as He ascended out of sight?
- What thoughts and reactions do you have to Alicia’s closing statement that “the priority job description of a Jesus-follower is still literal.”

Thought Focus: Share any reflections from reading John 11 as you considered the early disciples’ experience of Jesus. What does it mean to you personally and practically that Jesus is with you always?

Exercise: Share any principles you gleaned from your interviews.

[20] Invited Home

Reading:

- Restate Alicia’s assertion in your own words: “. . . making our home in Jesus—being with Him—is less about physical geography and more about spiritual gravity. Remaining in Jesus is less about external activity and more about interior attentiveness.”

- When you pray, do you more often picture God as “out there, somewhere” or at home in your spirit?
- How might viewing each moment as an invitation to abide in Christ alter your everyday perspectives?

Thought Focus: Are there any spaces in your life in which the reality of “Christ in you” brings you comfort? Discomfort?

Exercise: Share your experiments with the listed practical suggestions or any other options you explored to practice the presence of God more fully.

[21] Inheritance Prayers

Reading:

- What do you most often pray for yourself?
- Consider Psalm 121. What could happen if an entire group scripture-prayed Psalm 121 over their lives daily for a month?
- Though all Scripture is (thankfully) for all people, share any scriptures that seem to consistently and deeply encourage you time after time. What eternal truths and principles from these scriptures can you pray over your life?

Thought Focus: How did it feel to ask God about His thoughts toward you? Refreshing? Silly? New?

Exercise: What did you experience as you wrote Scripture-prayers for yourself?

MOVEMENT/WEEK SIX: RELATING TO HIS WORD

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
22	Has access to the Bible led to apathy about God's Word?	Study and relate to John 14–17.
23	Without grounding in the Word, we are like kites without strings	Study and relate to John 14–17.
24	The psalmist's relationship with the Word	Study and relate to John 14–17.
25	What God's voice can accomplish in a soul that listens and obeys	Study and relate to John 14–17.
26	Prayers to God for greater relationships with His Word	Study and relate to John 14–17.

Optional Supplementary Resources

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart

Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading by Eugene Peterson

“Is the Bible Reliable?” by NewChristian.org.uk

“Can You Trust the Bible?” by Josh McDowell at PowerToChange.org

“Can I Trust the Bible?” by Glenn Harris at GospelOutreach.net

Optional Memory Verses

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm

119:105)

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. (Psalm 19:9b)

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)

Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge. (Psalm 119:54)

Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. (Psalm 119:73)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

The five readings of this movement focus on recapturing a reverence for the Word. I am deeply concerned about the lack of the Word in our generation. God interrupted my atheistic existence through an undeniable encounter. But He anchored my faith in His Word through the mentoring of extraordinary Bible teachers. If we emphasize experience alone, we leave believers vulnerable to temptation and deception, especially in dry, challenging, and disappointing seasons.

The exercises will be thrilling and revolutionary for some and tedious and boring for others. That is okay. Speak of these exercises as the development of a fundamental skill.

[22] Though it may seem unnerving as a facilitator not to have definitive answers for any doubts participants express about the Bible, guide participants in the discipline of holding their questions in God's presence. Challenge them to live the doubt *with* God. Honesty, held in God's presence, leads to deeper intimacy with Him.

[23] This reading could touch a nerve in your group. It may help to think of the Bible as the expert mentor in the pursuit of intimacy with God. In any sincere endeavor, wisdom invites us to learn from experts. In other areas (health, education,

work), what might motivate someone to dismiss the opportunity to consult a readily available expert?

- [24] At first glance, Psalm 119 can appear repetitive. Help participants picture a human writing these words. What is the writer's subject? What emotions does the writer express toward his subject? What overlapping themes are present? Through such questions, we can help participants catch from the author what words alone cannot teach.
- [25] Attempt to make the poetry of Psalm 119 practical by asking, "Do you think the author was always filled with joy or always without sin because he meditated on God's Word? What, then, was he expressing as he penned the psalm?"
- [26] As this movement concludes, invite participants to share how their thoughts toward the Bible have shifted or changed. Lead them in responding to this prompt: "In one year, I would like my relationship with the Bible to be characterized by _____."

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[22] The Word

Reading:

- Imagine that you are John writing John 1:1–2 about Jesus. In your own words, what was John trying to communicate to his readers?
- Regarding honoring the Bible, has "access led to apathy" in your culture?
- "Somehow, King David's 'Your Word is a lamp to my feet' has deteriorated into 'Your Word is optional to my faith-walk.'" Do you agree or disagree with this statement from Alicia?

Thought Focus: What thoughts came to your mind in response to the question, “What do I really believe about God’s Word?”

Exercise: Describe any discoveries or observations from your time of study.

[23] A Kite Without a String

Reading:

- In your own words, what did the young man on the plane believe about the Scriptures?
- What factors might contribute to how flippantly many dismiss the Word’s weight in your culture?
- Consider the reality of a kite without a string. What is attractive? Destructive?

Thought Focus: Which line of Psalm 19:7–11 is most meaningful to you today?

Exercise: Did any patterns emerge in your study?

[24] To God About God’s Word

Reading:

- The subject of the psalmist’s poem is the Word: God’s laws, precepts, statutes, commands, and decrees. What current cultural realities affect how rarely verbs like *delight*, *rejoice*, *love*, and *consumed* are connected to nouns like *laws*, *decrees*, and *commands*?
- In your own words, rephrase Psalm 119:120: “I stand in awe of your laws.”
- Imagine being mentored by this psalmist. Picture yourself meeting weekly for coffee. What do you think would characterize his perspective on life?

Thought Focus: Think through how you would explain Psalm 119:11 to a child. How can hiding God’s Word in your heart help you not to sin against Him?

Exercise: Were any sentences especially mysterious, intriguing, or puzzling to you?

[25] When the Word Is Heard and Heeded

Reading:

- What thought, image, or phrase stood out to you the most from Alicia’s personal story?
- In a few sentences, describe your journey with the Word of God. For example, “As a child, the Bible was just the biggest book in the house. I bought a Bible in my twenties after hearing a minister speak from 1 Corinthians 13 at a wedding. Today, I try to read every day, but it often feels dry.”
- Which, if any, of the listed daily prayers does God frequently hear from you? Write down the corresponding scripture and try to read it daily for a week.

Thought Focus: Share any scriptures that came to mind as you paused to pray.

Exercise: What do you think Jesus’ words in John 15–16 might have meant to the original hearers?

[26] A Request for More

Reading:

- The psalmist was a literate, educated, gifted writer and leader. Guess how many people on the planet cannot read or write and how many people are without a Bible in their first

language. Visit UIS.UNESCO.org and Wycliffe.org to check your guesses.

- How do you think this psalmist kept his passion for God’s Word in the midst of his academic, intellectual, and spiritual privileges?
- Brainstorm ways you can nurture an ache for more of God’s Word.

Thought Focus: Share any phrases or thoughts that stood out to you from the three-thousand-year-old prayers.

Exercise: How do you think this five-chapter emphasis on Bible study has impacted you? Are there any practices you would like to incorporate into your life going forward?

MOVEMENT/WEEK SEVEN: DISCOVERING GOD-PRINTS

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
27	Description of a sploshy soul	Identify how you connect with God.
28	A challenge for visionaries and volunteers	Take an action step to nurture your God-print.
29	A story of how we are all created to know Him	Draft a personal God-print statement.
30	The discipline of gratitude	Develop gratitude practices.
31	Lessons on the power of pure pleasure from Eric Liddell	Exercise the discipline of celebration.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
The Wired Soul by Tricia McCary Rhodes

Optional Memory Verses

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)

You created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. (Revelation 4:11)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)

For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory. Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. (Psalm 149:4–5)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

This movement calls readers to consider the truth that they are personally saturated with God's fingerprints. God custom designed us to know Him. You may be surprised who struggles with this movement. Some of the most faithful, hard-working servants have settled in their minds long ago that intimacy with God is for others. Settle in your heart your theology in this matter so that you can wholeheartedly encourage them to discover their God-prints.

[27] This chapter invites participants to consider how God uniquely crafted them to experience Him. Some may feel uncomfortable personalizing God's love in this way and prefer to deflect to a one-size-fits-all experience of God. Calling on parenting images can guide them away from viewing such personalization as a form of narcissism toward recognizing it as a means of honoring God's love and creativity.

[28] We often believe that the height of Christian maturity is service. But ancient writers speak of love for God, others,

and ourselves as the true fruit of maturity. Some form of faith crisis often creates the bridge between service and love. Emphasize that the wall will become a door for those who live it, lean into it, and stay present to the disappointment that created it.

- [29] Viewing ourselves as God's art exposes areas in which shame still shadows us. Place the topic on the table and discuss how shame's agenda is separation from God.
- [30] Grandma Ella did not suddenly choose gratitude in her nineties. Neither will we. The choices we make today absolutely influence who we will become in the future. With your group, consider how the principle of sowing and reaping applies to the attitudes we nurture today and who we become.
- [31] In this final chapter of movement seven, take time to ask participants how the movement has affected their understanding of practicing the presence of God. Encourage them to write down anything they never want to forget about God's personal love for them.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[27] Sploshy

Reading:

- What is the difference between how Alicia defines *sploshy* and emotionalism?
- What do you notice about yourself when your spirit is saturated with God's presence? What changes do you notice in your attitudes, actions, or thoughts?
- Make a list of people who seem to leave a sploshy watermark wherever they go. What similarities do they share?

Thought Focus: How splashy has your leadership been lately?

Exercise: Was it easy or difficult to identify contexts or experiences that water your love for God?

[28] A Wall and a Door

Reading:

- Have you ever hit a wall where your faith went cold in service or leadership? If so, what emotions and thoughts marked the experience?
- What is the difference between *passion* and *intimacy* with regard to our relationship with God?

Thought Focus: Does anything feel familiar to you in the spiritual profile of a passionate visionary or diligent church worker?

Exercise: How can we, as a group, encourage one another to prioritize practices that nourish our souls?

[29] Our Original Artist

Reading:

- Say the following aloud: “I am God’s art. He created me. I exist by divine design.” On any given day, how hard or easy is it to believe this statement?
- Have you ever had a physical weakness that has spiritually taught you to lean on God?
- Thinking of how God has crafted you to know Him, what activities might the two of you do together in heaven?

Thought Focus: As you personalized Esther Adanna’s story, were any parts especially difficult or particularly moving?

Exercise: Share, if you feel comfortable, your God-print statement.

[30] An Internal Air Freshener

Reading:

- Alicia states, “Aging seems its own wilderness.” Think of elderly saints whose company you enjoy. What qualities or characteristics do you admire?
- In your own words, describe the connection between gratitude as a discipline and practicing the presence of God.
- Pause to identify seven moments in the last twenty-four hours for which you can specifically and genuinely give thanks.

Thought Focus: What life choices can you discern in the journeys of saints whose spirits become sweeter with time?

Exercise: Share any gratitude practices—new or old—that you plan to incorporate into your life as a guardian of intimacy with God.

[31] The Positive Power of Pure Pleasure

Reading:

- Liddell did not edit his running style to make it more professional or presentable. Pause for a moment to recall any time you edited yourself to fit in. What drove that decision?
- Alicia asserts, “Excellence does not authenticate our God-prints.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
- Imagine Liddell in the prison camp. Picture the children, mothers, and fathers that he touched in Jesus’ name. Why might hell have trembled at Liddell’s imprisoned life?

Thought Focus: What activities or practices filled in the blank for you in this thought focus?

Exercise: Do you lean toward extroversion or introversion? What does celebration look like if you are being true to you?

MOVEMENT/WEEK EIGHT: THE DISCIPLINE OF RESTRAINT

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
32	<i>Can ≠ should</i>	Complete a simple meal fast.
33	The discipline of restraint in Jesus' life	Rest a strength.
34	The discipline of mental waiting	Fast rehash of the past and sin-hunts.
35	The discipline of earthly simplicity	Fast enough+.
36	The discipline of purity of soul	Evaluate how me time is spent.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Adrenaline and Stress: The Exciting New Breakthrough That Helps You Overcome Stress Damage by Archibald Hart
40 Days of Decrease: A Different Kind of Hunger. A Different Kind of Fast by Alicia Britt Chole

Optional Memory Verses

[Jesus declared,] “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”
(John 6:38)

I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. (John 14:31)

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
(Matthew 6:21)

“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive.
(1 Corinthians 10:23)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

This may be among the more unfamiliar themes of *The Sacred Slow*. We often think that God gave us strengths to use *always*. As the group considers the different forms of restraint, some may ask for formulas because they do not want to “miss God.” Encourage them to exercise the disciplines of stillness and listening that they have been developing. The Holy Spirit promises to lead us personally into all truth. His guidance is our common pursuit.

- [32] The discipline of restraint requires discernment. Be prepared to open up the discussion to how imperfect humans can ever assume they know anything about the will of a perfect God.
- [33] The Scriptures do not record every minute of Jesus’ public ministry (John 21:25). Consider how many sick individuals must have been in need of healing in Jesus’ day. Yet He walked by entire towns without pausing. Consider how many desired to hear Him speak. Yet He did not always stay where crowds were gathering. Opportunity is not the only indicator of God’s will. To help wrap examples around this concept, think of times in which God has called you to restrain. Come prepared to share from your experience.
- [34] Frame this application in terms of months and years, instead of days and weeks. Growing a disciplined mind in an undisciplined age is extremely difficult. Pose questions to the group such as, “What expectations would be reasonable? Unreasonable? Miraculous?” Remind the group that staying in the struggle *is* the victory.
- [35] If love for God is not what motivates the disciplines of simplifying and giving, the actions have minimal—if not negative—impact on our spiritual formation. Only love can turn disciplines into worship. Ask what other motivations can inspire simplifying and giving. Contrast the fruit of

those motivations with the fruit of being motivated by the love of God.

- [36] Some participants may hunger for lists to make obedience easier. Without listening, lists lead to legalism. Challenge the group to press into moment-by-moment listening and dependence.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[32] Can ≠ Should

Reading:

- Discerning when *can* ≠ *should* requires slower disciplines such as listening, waiting, and stillness. Why are slower disciplines perceived as harder disciplines in our day?
- In your own words, what is the difference (externally and internally) between timidity, passivity, and restraint?
- Share a time when someone wanted you to “push ahead” but you chose to “live led.”

Thought Focus: Share any insights from John 7:2–6.

Exercise: Was the concept of a Bridegroom Fast new or familiar? What was the hardest part of the fast?

[33] Living *Led*

Reading:

- Alicia states, “Jesus’ led was muscular and authoritative.” Where else in the Gospels do you see evidence of the discipline of restraint in Jesus’ life?
- Internally, how do you know if you are submitting a strength to God and His timing?

- How vulnerable do you feel to the woo of scenery, crowds, and opportunity?

Thought Focus: How do you know when you are inspired by opportunity or inspired by God?

Exercise: How did it feel to rest a strength?

[34] Mental Waiting

Reading:

- What does Alicia mean by “mental waiting”?
- Is controlling your thought flow a new or familiar concept to you?
- What are some of the greatest challenges you face in “taming and training” your mind?

Thought Focus: Did you experience any frustration in responding to this thought focus?

Exercise: Which of the two suggested fasts proved easier for you?

[35] Earthly Simplicity

Reading:

- Have you ever witnessed a natural disaster or seen its aftermath? What do survivors most often identify as the greatest loss in such tragedies?
- Pause for a few moments to think of the people around you. Silently ask God how you can remind them of their preciousness to you and to Him.
- “Lives are worth dying for. So perhaps they should receive more of our investment.” Share one way in which you can tangibly invest value in your relationships today.

Thought Focus: What thoughts did you have during this invitation to simplify and give?

Exercise: Did you notice any internal resistance in this exercise?

[36] Purity of Soul

Reading:

- Recall the three tests of true biblical freedom.
- How can lawlessness masquerade as liberty?
- What signs might indicate that we are *using* our bodies instead of *stewarding* our bodies?

Thought Focus: How do you personally distinguish between legalism and voluntary restraint?

Exercise: Did you struggle in any way during this exercise? If so, describe the struggle and its source.

MOVEMENT/WEEK NINE: A THEOLOGY OF TIME AND SPACE

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
37	Is time a gift or a grinch?	Take a poll of our attitudes toward time.
38	A consideration of the patterns of time	Chart a year's intensity.
39	Our need for margin	Conduct an interview.
40	Space-shaping saboteurs	Take steps to steward time.

Optional Supplementary Resources

Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives by Richard Swenson
Ordering Your Private World by Gordon MacDonald

Optional Memory Verses

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)
There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

Personally, I consider this to be one of the more fun movements. I delight to see participants discover rhythms in their lives and shape their space accordingly.

- [37] Most of us inherit our starting view of time either from models we unconsciously adopted or models we consciously rejected. Be prepared to help participants respond with grace to those who influenced their perspectives on time. Such influencers were also influenced by others and by the reality of life in a very different age.
- [38] Scheduling is not necessarily synonymous with shaping. The former is about making order, and the latter is about taking authority. Encourage the participants not to confuse being orderly with being disciplined. Time is a gift to be stewarded.
- [39] We all have different energy levels. It can be challenging for those with high energy not to dismiss those with low energy

as “uncommitted.” Start a discussion with your group about the factors that can affect a person’s energy level. Ask, “Whatever a person’s starting energy level, what could be the short-term and long-term consequences of overextending into the red zone?”

- [40] Guide your group in generating a list of possible motivations for saying yes. Then identify which ones could be sustainable. Ask the group to describe how they feel when others are disappointed with or in them. Open the floor for them to share if anyone has ever used that feeling to manipulate or control them. Brainstorm how to practically resist and release the fear of disappointing others.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[37] Gift or Grinch?

Reading:

- How *did* you feel about time when you woke up this morning?
- Alicia paints a picture of God lovingly waiting for you to awaken. How natural does that image feel to you?
- What might change in the life of a soul who stopped viewing time as “a captive of chaos” and started viewing time as “a servant of sovereignty”?

Thought Focus: What one sentence describes your working definition of time?

Exercise: How did you feel when the poll results came rolling in?

[38] The Flow of Time

Reading:

- What do you think Alicia means by “shaping the space of our lives”?
- Are there any months or seasons in which you are often blue? Happy? Under the weather? Stressed? Relationally supported?
- How would mislabeling patterns as unexpected surprises affect someone psychologically?

Thought Focus: Does your energy distribution reflect your values?

Exercise: Which months are typically more responsibility-intense for you? Do you have time beforehand to store up energy or afterward to refuel?

[39] Margin

Reading:

- What was it about the dishes that might have been the “last straw” for Alicia’s weary soul?
- How can you know when going the extra mile for a worthy cause is crossing over into debilitating burnout?
- Have you ever lived in the red zone of burnout? If you feel comfortable, describe how it felt emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and relationally.

Thought Focus: When was the last time you said one of the four opening sentences to yourself?

Exercise: Share any insights from the interview you conducted.

[40] Space-Shaping Saboteurs

Reading:

- For your wiring, which extreme is more stressful: taking life as it comes or scheduling out every hour? Describe a schedule that would truly serve you.
- If Superman Time Syndrome felt familiar, feel free to tell a story of yourself to illustrate the point.

Think about your responsibilities tomorrow. What would the nth degree look like for you? Thought Focus: What kind of requests are the hardest for you to decline?

Exercise: What would need to change for your schedule to reflect your values?

MOVEMENT/WEEK TEN: UNEXPECTED FRIENDS

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
41	The cost of Jesus' "Follow Me"	Interview those who inspire you to love God.
42	The mystery of suffering	Respond to quotes on suffering.
43	The gift of God's silence	Interview the wise on when they speak and when they are silent.
44	A friend called failure	Consider your responses to failure.

Optional Supplementary Resources

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis

Optional Memory Verses

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said. (Matthew 4:19)

Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up
in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s
afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the
church. (Colossians 1:24)

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard
my cry. (Psalm 40:1)

[Jesus said to Peter,] “And when you have turned back,
strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:32b)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

Though painful, participants will emerge from this movement with hope that their suffering is not in vain. Be prepared to listen a lot and pray. Your gift to participants in this movement is providing a safe place for honest processing.

- [41] *Free will. God’s sovereignty. The existence of evil.* Get ready for more questions about the existence of pain in the world! Spend time thinking through your own angst about these concepts. Resist the urge to tidy up your responses, and offer, “I struggle with that too” where appropriate. Honesty is a friend of intimacy with God.
- [42] Review John 11 in preparation for this movement. Consider Mary’s and Martha’s responses to Jesus and His response to them. “If you had been here . . .” is a means of asking, “Where *were* you?” Remind the group that *then* and *now*, Jesus responds to sincere questions with mercy.
- [43] On paper or a whiteboard, write *God’s silence* in the middle of the space with lines extending from the center like an idea

web. Brainstorm what assumptions we make about God's silence. Then erase or cross out any assumptions that are inconsistent with His character. Evaluating assumptions is a powerful investment in soul health.

[44] Compare and contrast the desire to avoid failure with the desire to avoid sin. The two are not always synonymous. What signs can indicate that we are more concerned about others seeing our failure than actually sinning against God?

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[41] Where Follow Leads

Reading:

- In the beginning of your faith journey, where did you think that Jesus' "Follow Me" would lead you?
- What parts of Jesus' story would you rather skip in your own journey?
- Many ask why God allowed the Fall in the first place, since it opened the door to such pain in the world. Brainstorm alternatives. In other words, what would be necessary in order for disobedience to be impossible for humans?

Thought Focus: What unexpected places have startled you in your spiritual journey?

Exercise: Did any common threads emerge from your interviews?

[42] An Ancient Angst

Reading:

- How are questions about pain and questions about God's character related?

- Attempt to restate Hebrews 5:7–10 in your own words.
- From your experience with suffering, can you personally affirm any of the outcomes of suffering identified in Hebrews 5:7–10?

Thought Focus: Share any perspective shifts you experienced during this thought focus.

Exercise: Read Lewis's quote again. Why is obedience in the midst of dark times a powerful spiritual weapon?

[43] The Silence of God

Reading:

- Do you tend to associate God's silence with God's love, discipline, absence, or disappointment?
- Think of one area in your life that you desperately wish were different. Form that ache into a specific prayer to God.
- God's ways are infinitely higher than ours, but what might inspire God to offer silence instead of explanations to us?

Thought Focus: Share your responses to the quote from John of the Cross.

Exercise: Share a time when a friend's silent presence was more healing than any words he or she could have offered.

[44] A Friend Called Failure

Reading:

- What unintended consequences can result when a parent—often inspired by their definition of love—rescues their child from experiencing failure?
- How can failure be a friend of spiritual formation?

- Quietly reflect on sin-inspired failures in your life. Take a moment to thank God for the situations that exposed sin in your soul.

Thought Focus: Though it does not change the past, how can reframing mistakes as teachers affect your future?

Exercise: Share any reflections you had on Peter's failure and restoration.

MOVEMENT/WEEK ELEVEN: SABBATH AND PRAYER RETREATS

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
45	Identifying Sabbath space in real life	Assess the space for rest in your life.
46	Taking a prayer retreat, part one	Research possibilities for prayer retreating.
47	Taking a prayer retreat, part two	Take a one-to-three-hour mini-retreat.
48	Taking a prayer retreat, part three	Learn how to evaluate your retreat.

Optional Supplementary Resources

The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath by

Mark Buchanan

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel

Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Life of Spiritual

Discipline by Lauren F. Winner

Optional Memory Verses

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. (Exodus 20:8)

Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. (Mark 6:31)

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.” (Isaiah 30:15)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

This movement addresses the reality that it takes work to experience sabbath rest and then introduces the discipline of prayer retreating. I focus on retreating because there seems to be less literature on the subject.

Encourage participants to pursue a retreat regardless of its length. Some may have glorious first retreats. Others may come back frustrated that the time felt flat. Remind them again and again that retreating is about love (not emotion) and discipline (not productivity). Like working out, a steady practice of retreating builds spiritual muscle that powerfully enhances daily intimacy with God.

[45] Be prepared to facilitate a discussion on whether the Sabbath commandment today means any day a week, Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, Sundays . . . or something else entirely. Consider what “keeping [the Sabbath] holy” might mean to God.

[46] A question may arise regarding whether prayer retreating is a function of personality. One of the myths that needs debunking is that the only way to have a still spirit is to have a still body. Some retreat as they walk, hike, garden, or paint. Encourage participants to reconsider their God-print statements and do what helps them focus on God.

[47] Invest time in helping the group recall the work God did in them during the God-concepts movement. How we view

God drastically impacts how we think He wants us to spend a retreat and even *if* we think He wants us to take a retreat. Though twenty-four hours is a worthy goal, urge everyone to start somewhere, however small it may seem.

- [48] Especially if several in your group cannot take a full day for retreating, discuss ways in which the participants can help one another make space for mini-retreats. Plan a debrief session after the retreat experiences to help normalize frustrations and inspire further experiments.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[45] The Work of Rest

Reading:

- When you were growing up, what did *Sabbath* mean in your home?
- Share any ways in which the Sabbath is different from any other day of the week for you now.
- Dream. In one year, what would you like the Sabbath to look like for you?

Thought Focus: Share Sabbath practices you have seen or practiced that helped keep the day holy.

Exercise: How much white space for sabbath rest is currently in your life? Identify one small step you can take toward keeping Sabbath.

[46] Come Away

Reading:

- Share your honest responses to the suggestion of devoting one day a month to prayer retreating.

- As a group, do a cost analysis of a prayer retreat to weigh the expenses and benefits of the investment.
- How do you feel when someone simply enjoys your company without wanting anything? How might God feel when we offer Him the gift of time with no strings attached?

Thought Focus: What objections came to your mind with regard to prayer retreating?

Exercise: Share any research findings that surprised or encouraged you.

[47] Packing Light

Reading:

- Whom do you need to consider when setting a date for a retreat?
- Which option for a space (monastery, hotel, friend's home, nature center, other) seemed most inviting to you?
- Did you experience any pangs of panic or worries about withdrawal at the thought of leaving certain things at home? If so, form that concern into a prayer and let it rest in God's presence.

Thought Focus: What did your ten- to sixty-minute mini-retreat look like?

Exercise: Share any insights, frustrations, victories, and disappointments from your one- to three-hour mini-retreat.

[48] Retreat Rhythms

Reading:

- Brainstorm ways to practically focus on God's character for your retreat.

- Alicia speaks of how worship-led repentance is “clean.” How is this different from repentance motivated by worry or witch hunts?
- What is your honest response to the thought of taking a nap—even a long one—on your retreat? What might God think of this use of time?

Thought Focus: Share any reflections from your meditation on Isaiah 30.

Exercise: “Let God measure the fruit.” What is your guess regarding how you and God might measure fruit differently?

MOVEMENT/WEEK TWELVE: THE SACRED GO

	READING SUMMARY	EXERCISE EMPHASIS
49	The overflow of <i>The Sacred Slow</i>	Evaluate your Personal Inventory.
50	Living with open eyes	Cultivate awareness as a witness.
51	Why Alicia wrote <i>The Sacred Slow</i>	Make a plan to invest in others.
52	Anticipating the fruit of the next season	Add to your Life Scroll.

Optional Supplementary Resources

In the Name of Jesus by Henri J. M. Nouwen

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman

Optional Memory Verses

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1b)

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (John 4:35)

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. (Jeremiah 6:16)

Chapter-by-Chapter Facilitator Notes

- [49] Ending well is perhaps more important than starting well. Often we trample endings with new beginnings. Endings need resting space. Encourage participants to remain fully present for this last week of *The Sacred Slow*. As a group, discuss how to savor this ending without sabotaging the next beginning.
- [50] One size does not fit all with regards to witness. Initiate a discussion on what can inspire seekers to follow Christians to Jesus. Authenticity is today's currency. Affirm the various ways that intimacy with the same God manifests in different ways in different lives.
- [51] The choice to focus interpersonally in this final movement is quite intentional. Keep emphasizing the concept of overflow to link personal soul health with interpersonal love and fruitful service.
- [52] This last note is personally for you as a facilitator. Thank you for partnering with me in awakening our generation to sustainable nearness with God! Thank you for faithfully leading your tribe through this departure from Fast Faith! My prayer is that you, too, have been strengthened as you strengthened others. Be sure to rest, celebrate, and bask in

the Father's "well done, good and faithful servant." And if you have time, send me a note about your experience. I would love to learn from you.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion Guide

[49] The Overflow

Reading:

- Alicia speaks of an ancient error that equates "visible increase with God's favor and visible decrease with man's failure." How vulnerable do you feel to this error?
- Consider the description of Jesus' life as overflow. What changes would you like to see in your life in the coming years?
- Picture God placing a crown of forgiveness and love on your head. Then pray for friends whose heads are weighed down by shame to meet your gracious and generous Savior.

Thought Focus: What comments (if any) have those near you made about you during *The Sacred Slow* journey?

Exercise: Share any mental shifts you experienced as you evaluated your Personal Inventory in terms of movement instead of accomplishment.

[50] Open Eyes

Reading:

- What might the townspeople have thought or felt as they interacted with the Twelve?
- What were the twelve leaders missing that one sinner found? In other words, why did the Samaritan woman's moments

with Jesus inspire a citywide revival when the disciples' 24/7 with Jesus did not?

- By nature and nurture, do you tend to view witness as the focus of seasonal events or as the daily overflow of gratitude and love?

Thought Focus: What did you see today in response to your prayer for “open eyes”?

Exercise: Was it easier to truly “see” certain people more than others? If so, did you notice any patterns? For example, is it more natural for you to truly see people when you are working or relaxing? When they are older or younger? When they look like you or look different from you?

[51] You+

Reading:

- Be honest: Did you think you would really make it to chapter 51?
- Brainstorm ways to intentionally pass on what you have learned from the Sacred Slow experience.
- “Life is not the offspring of paper or programs.” In your own words, what is Alicia trying to communicate through this statement?

Thought Focus: Identify some Timothys in whom you can invest the principles of practicing the presence of God.

Exercise: What one thing from your Sacred Slow journey would you like to see multiplied in the lives of those you love?

[52] Anticipation

Reading:

- What is the difference between *closure* and *transition*?
- How do you think God desires to be loved?
- Share two or three principles from *The Sacred Slow* that you never want to forget.

Thought Focus: What do you hope your life-as-a-movie sequel will feature?

Exercise: What dreams do you have for future additions to your Life Scroll?

MY PERSONAL INVENTORY

CHAPTER 7—LISTEN HEAVEN-DOWN.

My prayer: *What is Your heart for me in this season? What is Your focus as my Master Mentor? What emphasis would please You?*

My impressions:

Rough draft of this season's theme:

CHAPTER 8—PRAYERFULLY IDENTIFY AREA APPLICATIONS.

My prayer: *God, how would You like me to apply this heaven-down theme in my daily life physically? Relationally? With work? At home?*

My impressions:

Rough draft of areas of application:

AREA	APPLICATION

CHAPTER 9—INVITE TRUSTED VOICES INTO THE PROCESS.

My questions: “What are your overall impressions as you read my Personal Inventory? In your own words, what is the broad theme that God is speaking over my life? Do any of the specific applications in any area appear unclear or unrealistic? Is there anything I have expressed concern over that is not represented in my inventory?”

Their feedback:

My revised season theme:

CHAPTER 49—EVALUATE HEAVEN-DOWN.

My prayer: *God, from Your perspective, was there movement?*

My impressions:

When I plan to listen heaven-down for my next season:

JOHN 14–17

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my

name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold

over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. Come now; let us leave. I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command:

Love each other. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When

he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” At this, some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.” Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give

you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” “Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given

me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where

I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

GOD-PRINT

God has created me in such a way that I thrive when

are present and

are absent. My spirit soaks up His presence through

and

Activities that drain that reserve are

and

So, a dream day for my spirit would be

L I F E S C R O L L

ROW 7	
ROW 6	
ROW 5	
ROW 4	
ROW 3	
ROW 2	
ROW 1	
YEAR	

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