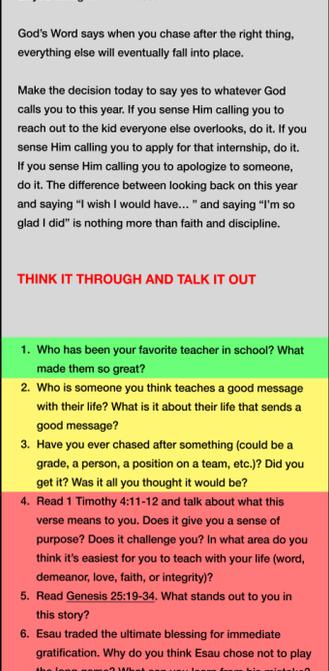


Happy New Year!
In case you haven't heard, we're going to Mars this year! But we're not going to reach the next level by simply believing something — we've got to do something. We've got to do something to grow our faith and spark the faith of those around us.

You're called to teach with your life, and nothing sends a louder message than rejecting the empire and embracing the kingdom.

We're going to spend the next seven weeks talking about what that looks like — both in your eGroups and during Rhythms Night — but before you dive into the content, check out this clip from Pastor Steve.



We're getting the word out in 2021! Let's go!

KEEP THE FAITH

"The Spirit will clear the air when it goes on, some are going to give up on the faith." 1 Timothy 4:1

January is a month marked by fresh starts, resolutions, and anticipation over what's to come. People make personal goals related to their fitness, faith, finances, and future.

Unfortunately, we usually forget about our goals by Valentine's Day. It isn't always that we give up on our goals — sometimes, it's that the daily demands of life we cause us to forget about them and we give up when we lose focus.

The same can be said about our faith. So many people start strong and then fizzle out, not because they're bad, but because they're busy.

We don't want you to give up on your faith goals this year because you got weighed down by what the world threw at you.

People don't keep their New Year's resolution by accident — it takes discipline to get to the things you really desire. It's the same for your faith — you won't grow in your faith by accident. You're going to have to work for it. Actually, we can almost guarantee you're going to have to fight for it.

You can't fully embrace something without rejecting something else, and our hope is that by rejecting God's strength this year, but that begins with rejecting the world's standards.

We want you to play the long game — to live for the ultimate instead of settling for the immediate — but you can't do that without faith. It takes faith and discipline to give up what looks good right now for something you can't even see yet.

This is going to look different for all of us. For some of you, it's going to look like ending an unhealthy relationship today so you can have a happier marriage in the future. For others, it's going to look like rejecting familiar habits like gossip so you can experience more of God's favor in your friendships.

1 Timothy 4:1 says that as time goes on, some are going to give up on the faith, but we're believing a better story for you. By believing 2 Timothy 4:7 will be true in your life at the end of 2021, and you'll be able to say, "I have kept the faith."

And we believe that as you keep your faith this year, it's going to become contagious — the kind of faith that not only changes your life but the lives of those around you.

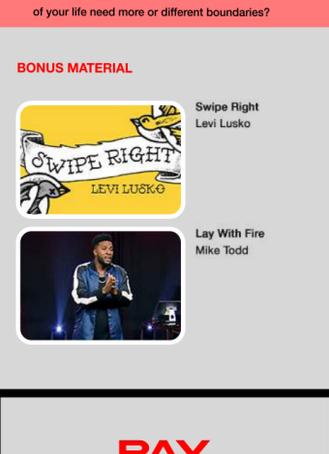
THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT

1. Did you make a New Year's resolution this year? If so, what is it?
2. What's something you've started in the past but failed to finish? (a book, a show, a project, etc)
3. 1 Timothy 4:1 says that as time goes on some people are going to give up on their faith. What does "giving up on your faith" mean to you?
4. Have you ever had a moment where you felt like giving up on your faith? Talk about it or take some time to write down the emotions you felt during that time.
5. Read Romans 8:18. How does this verse encourage you to fight for what you believe in?
6. Paul, the same writer of 1 Timothy 4, also wrote 2 Timothy 4:7, which says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." What are three things you could do this year to keep your faith?
7. Rejecting the empire is about rejecting the way culture rejects the empire. What is one practical way you can reject the empire this week so you're positioned to embrace the kingdom?

BONUS MATERIAL



Following Jesus Fully
Switch Ministries



Kingdom People
Devotional

CHASE IT TO EMBRACE IT

"So above all, constantly chase after the realm of God's kingdom and the righteousness that proceeds from him. Then all these less important things will be given to you abundantly." Matthew 6:33

If you want to embrace God's kingdom, you've got to be willing to chase after it.

That's what playing the long game is all about. It's living with the mindset that there is more to life than today and there is more at stake than what you can see. It's about being the student you were called to be today so you can be the boss you hope to be tomorrow. It's about dating wisely now for the marriage you hope to have later.

If God's plan was only to save us, we would all be transported to heaven as soon as we believed in Him. But He leaves us here, in the empire, because there's a purpose for us here.

When you play the long game and seek God's kingdom and all He has planned for you, you actually find your purpose within the empire. There's a job for you to do here.

God specifically chose you and placed you in the year 2021 at the age you are right now on purpose for a purpose, and the devil's job is to distract you from that purpose.

So, what's your purpose? What are you actually called to do with your life? Well, God's Word tells you the answer. You're called to teach with your life. That's what 1 Timothy 4:11-12 says, and it doesn't say you're called to teach with your life once you graduate from high school or turn 25. It says you're called to teach with your life right now — while you're a youth!

Your faith isn't just for you. It's for the people around you. It's for the people in your house and in your school. It's for the generation behind you and the people ahead of you too.

Your purpose involves other people, and if you're going to chase after God's kingdom, you're going to have to chase after His people.

What did you chase after in 2020? Did you get it? Was it all you thought it could be?

God's Word says when you chase after the right thing, everything else will eventually fall into place.

Make the decision today to say yes when whatever God calls you to this year. If you sense Him calling you to reach out to the kid everyone else overlooks, do it. If you sense Him calling you to apply for that internship, do it. If you sense Him calling you to apologize to someone, do it. The difference between looking back on this year and saying "I wish I would have..." and saying "I'm so glad I did" is nothing more than faith and discipline.

THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT

1. Who has been your favorite teacher in school? What made them so great?
2. Who is someone you think teaches a good message with their life? What is it about their life that sends a good message?
3. Have you ever chased after something (could be a grade, a person, a position on a team, etc)? Did you get it? Was it all you thought it would be?
4. Read 1 Timothy 4:11-12 and talk about what this verse means to you. Does it give you a sense of purpose? Does it challenge you? In what area do you think it's easiest for you to teach with your life (word, demeanor, love, faith, or integrity)?
5. Read Genesis 25:19-34. What stands out to you in this story?
6. Esau traded the ultimate blessing for immediate gratification. Why do you think Esau chose not to play the long game? What can you learn from this mistake?
7. How can you chase after God's kingdom this week?

BONUS MATERIAL

The Call Of God With
Christine Caine
WHOA That's Good Podcast

The Chase
Devotional

TASTE YOUR WORDS BEFORE YOU SPIT THEM OUT

"Get the word out...And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity." 1 Timothy 4:11-12

The first way God tells us to teach with our lives is with our words. The things you say carry weight, and the Bible is filled with words of wisdom about the words that come from your mouth.

Proverbs 18:21 says both life and death are in the power of the tongue. In the same way a brick can be used to build a home or break a window, your words can be used to build people up or tear them down. Your words can breathe life or break hearts.

You're called to speak the truth, but that begins with calling out the lies. To embrace the truth of the kingdom requires rejecting the lies of this world.

1 Timothy 4:2 says that there are people in this world who have lied for so long they've actually lost their capacity for truth. They've believed so many lies that they can't even recognize the truth anymore.

But that's not you. If you're a part of Elevation YH, then you're learning truth so you can spread the truth.

But before you can speak truth over others, you've got to get good at speaking truth over yourself. You can't lead yourself if you're lying to yourself.

The easiest lies to believe are the ones that come in the form of questions — questions like "Do I really matter?" or "Are people even listening to me?"

When you believe that nothing you say matters, you won't be concerned about the things you say. Can you see how the devil uses a lie dressed up as a question to lead you to a place where you've eventually given up? Don't let him do that to you this year!

And it isn't enough to just speak the truth — your words must be gracious if you're going to lead people into the presence of God.

Colossians 4:6 says your speech should always be gracious and seasoned with salt.

There's a saying that goes, "Taste your words before you spit them out."

Are the words you're speaking coming out through a tone of love and gentleness? Are you speaking from a place of humility and kindness? Are your words filled with faith?

It isn't just what you say but how you say it that will teach others about God's grace and goodness.

THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT

1. What's something kind someone has said to you recently? How did it make you feel?
2. 1 Timothy 4:12 makes it clear that the first way we're called to teach with our lives is with our words. Why do you think words are so important?
3. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word into gifts this week?"
4. What lies have you been speaking over yourself, and what truth can you replace those lies with today?
5. Romans 2:4 says, "In kindness God takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change." God's kindness is what changes us. How have you experienced God's kindness and goodness in your life?
6. Who in your life could experience radical life-change because of the kind words you speak to them?
7. Luke 6:45 says, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the heart speaks what the heart is full of." What has your mouth been full of lately? You can't give away what you don't have, so how can you fill up on God's kindness and truth this week?

BONUS MATERIAL

Stating Faith, Charles
Metcalf

BE A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

"Get the word out...And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity." 1 Timothy 4:11-12

This week we're talking about your demeanor, which is your behavior and your attitude. It's how you carry yourself as you walk through life.

You're called to teach a good message with your life, but you can't teach a good message with a bad attitude.

Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves."

Our words says you need to be interesting to get attention, but the kingdom calls you to be interested in others because you're already accepted by God.

The attitude you bring into your school, your home, and your friendships has the ability to undermine or enhance the message you want to send.

Paul, the writer of Philippians, tells us we should be "a breath of fresh air." Is that how people would describe your attitude? Are you a breath of fresh air, or does your attitude drain the people in your life?

Philippians 2:14-15 says, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure...you will shine like stars in the world."

Standing out starts with your attitude. If you want to stand out, then start out of the drama. When your parents ask you to do a chore, do it with a smile. When heartache comes, make the choice to rejoice. That doesn't mean you're happy you're hurting. A joyful attitude doesn't deny reality — it defies the reality. It says, "This is hard and this hurts, but I serve a good God. I know I'll be okay." That kind of attitude sends a powerful message.

If you know a bunch of Bible verses but you roll your eyes when your mom asks you for help, you're sending a mixed message with your life.

If you never miss an eGroup but you fail to bring your best in school, you're sending a mixed message with your life.

Colossians 3:23 says, "Don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart...for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance."

Put your heart and soul into the work God has for you today. Whether you're unloading the dishwasher, mowing the yard, or studying for chemistry, do it for the kingdom, not the empire.

THINK THROUGH IT AND TALK IT OUT

1. What's one thing that always puts you in a bad mood? (could be being hot, being hungry, finals week, etc.)
2. Who in your life is a breath of fresh air (a refreshing person who is a source of positivity)? What makes them a breath of fresh air?
3. Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves." How do these verses contradict what culture teaches?
4. What's one area in your life where you haven't been bringing the best attitude? Why?
5. Why do you think a bad attitude sends a mixed message if you're trying to point others to Jesus?
6. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Which of these attitudes come easiest for you? Which one do you need to ask God to help you develop so you can send a stronger message with your life?
7. Who can you be a breath of fresh air to this week?

BONUS MATERIAL

Shut Up & Shine
Holly Furtick

Switch On
Devotional

NO EXCUSES

"Get the word out...And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity." 1 Timothy 4:11-12

Nobody taught a better message with their life than Jesus. He came from the kingdom to show us how to reject the empire and was misunderstood by almost everyone while He was here. One reason He was so misunderstood was because He pursued the people others avoided. Jesus loved everyone from children to criminals, and His example of love eliminates all of our excuses.

Jesus knew the future (it was a perk of being fully God), so He knew His closest friends were going to leave Him during the hardest hour of His life. Peter, one of Jesus' best friends, would deny even knowing Him. His other friend, Judas, betrayed Him for a few pieces of silver.

Today's culture sometimes teaches us that if we've got a friend like Peter or Judas, we cancel them — the empire can suggest that we should simply dismiss what we dislike.

But Jesus didn't cancel anybody. He actually washed their feet. He loved, honored, and served the same people who would deny, betray, and hurt Him.

John 13:3 says, "Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into His hands, that He had come from God, and that He was going back to God." When you know where you come from and you've got a clear picture of where you're going, you can live from a different place.

When you let God be the source of all you need, you can give away the kind of love this world desperately wants.

If you're going to teach with your life then consider love your microphone. Jesus' love lives in that selfless love is costly, but it's also unforgettable.

Your love for God isn't measured by how loud you sing during worship; it's measured by how well you love people — and not just the people who you prefer to love. You're called to love all people — even the hard-to-love people.

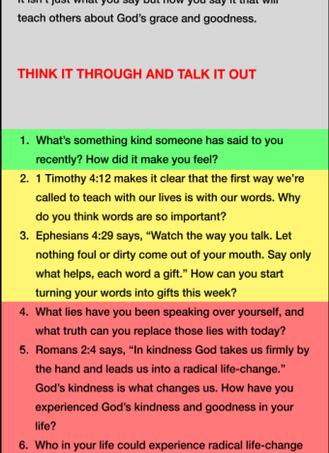
Matthew 5 tells us there's no reward for only loving the loveable. You can do that without Jesus. That's not teaching a new message. Do you want to live a life that teaches? Love the person who sits alone in the lunchroom by sitting with them. Speak a kind word about the friend who betrayed you. Extend forgiveness to the person who hurt you.

Jesus' love left us with a clear picture and no excuses.

THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT

1. A woman named Maya Angelou once said, "At the end of the day, people won't remember what you said or did — they will remember how you made them feel." Who is someone who always makes you feel loved?
2. How do you think our culture defines love?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:3-7. How is Jesus's definition of love different than the Bible's definition of love?
4. Why do you think we love to "cancel" people? What problems does this create?
5. Pastor Steven challenged us to ask better questions at the end of 2020. In a culture that is constantly wondering "How can I get noticed?" or "How can I get even?", what if you began asking, "How can I be like Jesus in this situation?" What in your life would change if you tried to be like Jesus instead of trying to get noticed or get revenge?
6. Think back to a recent argument you had with someone. How was your goal to be right or to be like Jesus? How did it end, and how did you feel?
7. You don't have to share this with your group, but think of someone in your life who you struggle to love or you're struggling to forgive. What's one step you could take this week to love them the kind of love that's described in 1 Corinthians 13?

BONUS MATERIAL



How To Forgive
Someone
Mike Todd



Getting It Right With
Others
Devotional

TEACH WITH YOUR (LOVE) LIFE

"Get the word out...And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity." 1 Timothy 4:11-12

We're dedicating one more week to talking about love because your life is lived out through your relationships, and your closest relationships aren't lived in neutral — the people closest to you are either building you up or bringing you down.

Last week, we learned that we're called to love all people always, but that doesn't mean you're supposed to invite every person into the inner circle of your life. You're called to pour your love out, but you're also commanded to protect your heart, and doing both requires wisdom.

There's probably no greater area where you'll have to fight for your faith, your future, and your best self than in the arena of dating. If you're going to teach with your life, you're going to define your boundaries when it comes to dating instead of letting the empire define them for you.

The empire will tell you love is a feeling, but God's Word makes it clear that love is a choice. The empire says to follow your heart, but God says your heart is deceitful — you're commanded to rely on His faithfulness, not your feelings, and this is so important when it comes to your love life.

When it comes to sex and dating, rejecting the empire's standards can save you countless tears and so much heartache. Following God's plan for dating isn't meant to keep you from fun — it's meant to keep you from frustration and pain so you can have more fun later.

Some of you are embracing the empire, but crying yourself to sleep at night because what this world calls "love" is leaving you feeling lonely and broken. This world will seduce you to the line and then shame you when you cross it — it makes porn seem innocent and sex seem casual, and when you buy into that lie, you're left feeling humiliated, empty, and hurt.

But God offers more. He wants you to trade those low standards for His strength. He wants you to bypass all that hurt by walking in honor.

When you're full of His perfect love, you won't beg for scraps of fake love. You'll live with a confidence that preaches, "Just like you shouldn't go to the grocery store when you're hungry, you shouldn't date when you're starving for love. You'll lower your standards and settle for the first thing that looks good, even if it's not good for you.

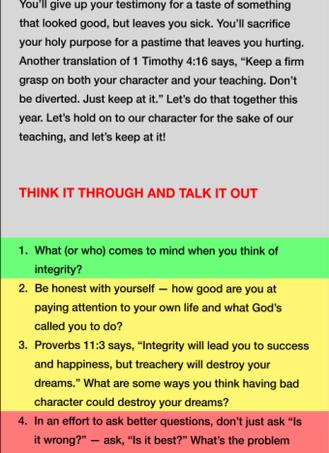
You can't live the right life if you're in wrong relationships, whether that's a toxic friendship or a dating relationship that's causing you to compromise God's Word for you.

And if you're reading this and you're thinking it's already too late for you, that's a lie you need to reject. Our heart is that you would never feel bad about your past, but you would have a reason to fight for your future. God specializes in redemption stories. It's never too late to embrace the kingdom.

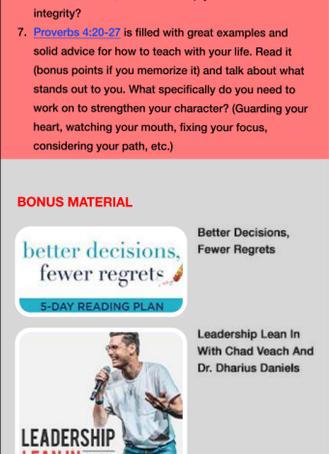
THINK IT THROUGH AND TALK IT OUT

1. Do you love Valentine's Day, or is it a holiday you prefer to skip?
2. Read Proverbs 2:26. Why do you think the right friends are important?
3. How are your relationships shaping you? What are signs of toxic relationships? What are signs of healthy relationships?
4. What do you ultimately want for your future? Don't rush through this question. Pause and take time to actually write down what you want. What career do you want? What kind of person do you want to be? What kind of relationship do you want to have? What kind of family do you want to have? Write it down!
5. Go back to the story of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:19-34) from week two of this study. Esau sacrificed what he wanted most (his inheritance) for the wrong thing (the food). What are some practical ways you can stay focused on and focused on your future so you don't sacrifice what you want most?
6. What are some of the reasons or pressures culture gives to have sex before marriage? How could giving in "sacrifice what you want most" in your future marriage and life?
7. What boundaries do you currently have? What areas of your life need more or different boundaries?

BONUS MATERIAL

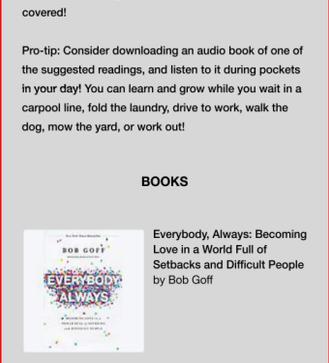


Better Decisions,
Fewer Regrets
5-DAY READING PLAN



Leadership Lean In
With Chad Leach and
Dr. Dharis Daniels

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST



EXTRAS FOR eGROUP LEADERS

If your New Year's resolution included reading more books or becoming a better leader, we've got you covered!

Pro-tip: Consider downloading an audio book of one of the suggested readings, and listen to during pockets in your day! You can learn on your walk while you in a carpool line, fold the laundry, drive to work, walk the dog, mow the yard, or work out!

BOOKS

Everytime, Always: Becoming
Love in a World Full of
Setbacks and Difficult People
by Bob Goff

Swipe Right: The Life-and-
Death
Power of Sex and Romance
by Levi Lusko

SERMONS AND PODCASTS

"Can You See It?" Play The
Long Game
by Dawn Cheryl Wilkerson

"Kingdom Steven"
by Pastor Steve Furtick

"A Steady Confidence,
Holy Furtick, The Groove"

"Living In The Tension,"
by Robert Madu