SHORT STUDIES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Living It Out



Short Studies on Faith at Home, at Work and in the Church
Ten studies in one volume

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity
Enterprises

Living It Out

Short Studies on Faith at Home, at Work and in the Church

Short Studies for the Christian Life

Andrew Dominguez



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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Building a Marriage That Lasts

Love, respect, and commitment in Christ

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

Couples usually start out with plenty of excitement. Sooner or later jobs, kids, bills, and old habits wear on a relationship, and the marriage that once ran smoothly starts to sputter. That does not mean the marriage is over. It usually means it needs attention.

My wife and I met through friends in 1988. She agreed to one date. We married in 1990, and 36 years later I have learned the hard way that love is not a feeling you coast on. It is daily honesty and putting your spouse ahead of your own pride. I wrote this book for couples who want a marriage built on Scripture instead of guesswork.

God designed marriage, and He knows what makes it work. This book looks at His design, the love He calls husbands to, the respect He calls wives to, the work of communication, and the commitment that keeps a marriage strong for a lifetime.

1 God's design

When Jesus was asked about marriage, He went back to the beginning. He said, "Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matthew 19:4, SLB). Genesis 1:27 (SLB) says "God created mankind in His image" and "male and female He created them."

Men and women are different, and that is by design. The differences are not wrong. They are part of how a husband and wife together reflect God's image. Many conflicts in marriage come from forgetting that and

expecting a spouse to think, feel, and react the way we do.

Research has also found what Scripture already teaches. Children raised by parents in a healthy marriage tend to do better in school and in life, and husbands and wives in healthy marriages tend to be healthier and more stable. God knew those benefits when He created marriage. A 2002 Child Trends research brief, Marriage from a Child's Perspective, reached the same conclusion about children. Modern studies simply echo what His Word says.

My working life has been spent fixing problems and moving to the next task. That habit does not work in a marriage. A marriage is not a project to manage. It is a covenant God designed, and it grows when we follow His pattern instead of our own schedule.

2 Love and respect

> *Nevertheless, you also, each one individually, let each so love his own wife as himself, and the wife* ***must see*** *that she fears the husband.*
> **Ephesians 5:33 (SLB)**

Ephesians 5:33 (SLB) gives husbands and wives different instructions. Husbands are commanded to love. Wives are told to see that they fear their husbands. Fear here means deep respect and honor, not being afraid, which is why most English Bibles say respect. Both need love and respect, but in conflict a wife often feels unloved and a husband often feels disrespected. Emerson Eggerichs has written about how each spouse's reaction can feed

the other's hurt and set off a cycle that keeps spinning.

The love a husband is called to is the same kind of love God showed us. Ephesians 5:25 (SLB) says, "Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." That is not a feeling. It is a sacrificial choice made every day.

Scripture uses several ideas for love. There is the self-giving love God shows in sending His Son. There is the love of friendship, the natural affection of family, and the romantic love between husband and wife. A strong marriage has room for all of them, with God's self-giving love at the foundation.

One year I led a couples marriage retreat with a woman from our church. I taught the men, she taught the women, and we brought the couples together for the rest. It was small on purpose, about ten couples. Watching husbands and wives hear the same truth and then turn to each other showed me how much a marriage grows when both people sit under God's Word together.

3 Four kinds of marriages

One way to picture marriage is to look at two choices. A husband can choose to love or to be harsh. A wife can choose to respect and support or to resist. Those choices produce four kinds of marriages.

In the worst kind, both spouses are selfish. He is harsh, she is resistant, and each is trying to get his or

her own way. In another kind, the wife goes along but resents her husband because he makes decisions for himself instead of the family. In a third, the husband loves, but the wife fights him at every turn.

The marriage God designed is the one where a husband loves his wife the way Christ loves the church, and a wife respects and supports her husband. Neither one is a doormat. Both are giving themselves to the other. Selfishness is the road to emptiness. Giving is the road to joy.

A marriage can stall when two people live like roommates instead of partners. When I led a small couples retreat, about ten couples, the first step was always the same: an honest look at where you stand, in the light of Scripture. I had to do that myself when my drinking came out. Honest self-examination is the first step toward growth.

4 Learning to talk and listen

Good communication does not happen by default. It takes time, energy, and practice. Personality matters, and so does the way we were raised. If my parents fought loudly or never fought at all, I probably learned a pattern I bring into my own marriage.

Men and women also tend to communicate differently. Many husbands read the headlines, and many wives read the fine print. I may hear only the facts when my wife is telling me how she feels. That is how a simple question like "Where do you want to go to dinner?" can end with someone hurt and confused.

I once heard about a marriage teacher who told the husbands in his class to go home, ask their wives how they could be better husbands, and listen. Then his own wife asked whether he had taken his own advice. That conversation with his wife took an hour. It is a fair question for every one of us. People change as the years go by, and we never stop needing to get to know each other better.

Conflict will come. James 1:19 (SLB) says, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." That one verse would settle a lot of arguments before they start.

For years I hid my drinking. I told myself I was protecting my marriage and my reputation. When my wife caught me on May 29, 2020, I saw that hiding the truth was the very thing hurting us most. Real communication starts when we stop pretending and speak the truth in love.

5 Commitment that holds

Love is a decision, not just a feeling. First Corinthians 13:4-7 (SLB) says love "is patient, is kind," "does not seek its own things," and "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." None of those are emotions. They are choices.

Marriage is not a fifty-fifty deal. It is each spouse giving one hundred percent. There will be times when we fail as friends, fail in our love, and even question our commitment. In those times, God's love does not fail. We can ask Him to love our spouse through us when we fall short.

A healthy marriage needs regular care. Warning lights include feeling bored with each other, focusing on differences, daydreaming about a perfect spouse, avoiding each other, and chasing separate goals. When those lights come on, the answer is to spend more time together, not less, and to bring Christ back to the center.

Proverbs 17:17 (SLB) says, "At every time the friend loves." The best marriages I know are built on that kind of friendship, held together by commitment, and rooted in the love of God.

When we met in 1988, my wife agreed to one date. Thirty-eight years later she has stood beside me through career changes, raising two daughters and my hardest seasons. That kind of faithfulness taught me that commitment is proven on the hard days, not the easy ones.

Living My Faith at Home

Love, leadership, and responsibility in the family

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

Faith should affect the people who live closest to me. A household sees the words, reactions, and habits that an audience may never see. I want to take that responsibility seriously. The passages in this book speak about marriage, parenting, obedience, and a life strengthened in the Lord. They call for more than a title. They call for a faithful example.

My wife and I met in 1988 and have been married 36 years. Faith at home has never looked like a staged picture. It has meant hard seasons, owning my mistakes and showing up for our two daughters and our granddaughters. Real faith is tested behind closed doors more than on Sunday morning. I wrote this book to share plain habits that keep Christ at the center of a home.

1 Leadership shaped by Christ

> *Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*
> **Ephesians 5:25 (SLB)**

First Corinthians 11:3 (SLB) and Ephesians 5:22-33 (SLB) give direction for responsibility in the home. I read those passages together with their commands about love and care. Authority in a Christian household cannot be separated from accountability to Christ.

Ephesians 5:25 (SLB) directs husbands to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." That is a high bar. It directs a

husband toward sacrifice rather than the protection of his own comfort. A claim to leadership should never become an excuse for intimidation, neglect, or refusing to listen.

The passage continues with the care a person gives his own body. A husband is called to nourish and cherish his wife. I should not use one part of the chapter to escape another. The Lord I answer to sees how I treat the wife He has entrusted to my care.

In practical terms, leadership includes noticing responsibilities instead of waiting to be reminded about everything. It includes listening when a concern is raised and acknowledging when I am wrong. A family should be able to see the connection between what I say about Christ and how I respond when my preferences are challenged.

Work taught me to organize teams and hit deadlines. Leading at home is different. Christ showed me that spiritual leadership in the home means serving first and humbling myself when I am wrong (Ephesians 5:25). It puts the good of your wife and children ahead of your pride.

2 Parenting with purpose

> *And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in **the** discipline and admonition of **the** Lord.*
>
> **Ephesians 6:4 (SLB)**

Ephesians 6:4 (SLB) gives fathers both a warning and a responsibility. They are not to provoke their

children to anger, and they are to "bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." The way I correct and teach my children should look like the Lord I am teaching them about.

Correction should be clear enough for a child to understand. Anger that changes the rules from one day to the next creates confusion. I need to distinguish a child's disobedience from my own frustration. A child can need correction while I also need to correct the way I deliver it.

Teaching happens in conversation and in example. Children notice whether an apology is possible in the home, whether truth is valued when it costs something, and whether people are treated with dignity. I cannot ask them to take my faith seriously while treating repentance as something only they need.

Parents also need to recognize the person in front of them. Age, understanding, and circumstances affect how instruction is received. Patience does not remove responsibility. It helps me carry out that responsibility in a way that teaches rather than simply releases my irritation. The goal is a child learning to understand and respond to the Lord.

Raising two daughters taught my wife and me that kids watch what we do far more than what we say. Parenting with purpose means guiding children toward Christ by daily example, not leaving it to the church.

3 Learning obedience together

> *Children, obey your parents in **the** Lord, for this is right.*
> **Ephesians 6:1 (SLB)**

Ephesians 6:1-3 (SLB) calls children to obey their parents in the Lord and connects the instruction with honoring father and mother. The passage belongs in a household where the adults are also hearing the commands addressed to them. Christian responsibility should not run in only one direction.

Honoring another person does not mean that every human demand becomes right. The words "in the Lord" matter. Scripture should never be used to require participation in wrongdoing or to conceal harm. The same Lord who calls for obedience also calls parents to exercise their responsibility faithfully.

The family can practice obedience in ordinary responsibilities. Keeping a promise, helping with a task, and telling the truth are opportunities to learn faithfulness. These habits should be encouraged for their connection to character and love, rather than only as ways to avoid punishment.

Adults remain learners too. I may need to change a habit I have defended for years. I may need to receive a concern from someone younger without dismissing it. A home where everyone is accountable to God can become a place of growth. That requires enough humility to admit that being older does not make every response wise.

In my lowest season, I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. Since May 29, 2020, recovery has taken humility from me and grace from my wife as we rebuilt trust step by step. Doing right today does not mean everyone has forgiven you, and I have had to leave that with God. Obedience becomes real in a home when a family walks through repentance and grace together.

4 Habits that support a faithful home

Faithful responsibility at home grows through attention to Scripture, prayer, fellowship, a life pleasing to God, and the armor of God. These are not extras added on top of leadership. They shape the person who is trying to lead.

Psalm 1 (SLB) describes delight in the Lord's instruction, and Psalm 119:105 (SLB) presents His Word as a lamp and light. Regular attention to Scripture gives a household more than a collection of rules. It gives us a place to return when our preferences differ and our patience is thin.

I read the NASB 1995 for my own study. Simple habits like an open Bible in the house and time in Scripture keep a home steady. None of them are flashy, but small habits built around God's Word hold a household together when storms hit.

Prayer can be simple and honest. Bring a real concern before the Lord, give thanks for His provision, and ask for help with a responsibility. I should not turn a family prayer into an indirect lecture aimed at the person sitting beside me. Prayer

should express dependence on God, not become another method of control.

Fellowship matters too. A family that stays close to a local church has other believers to encourage them and to speak up when something is wrong (Hebrews 10:24-25, SLB). And a life pleasing to God is the point of all of these habits. Scripture, prayer, and church are not boxes to check. They are how a household learns to walk in a way that pleases the Lord (Colossians 1:10, SLB).

Ephesians 6:10-18 (SLB) calls believers to stand in the Lord's strength, with truth, righteousness, the readiness of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, God's Word, and prayer. The people in my home are not the enemy named in that passage. I want to remember that when a disagreement becomes difficult. A faithful home grows through people who remain willing to obey, serve, repent, and seek the Lord together.

Choosing Forgiveness and Resolving Conflict

Responding to wrong with truth and grace

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

A wrong can become the center of a relationship when every conversation returns to what one person owes the other. Scripture calls us toward forgiveness, and it also gives direction for addressing sin. I want to hold those responsibilities together. Forgiveness should lead me away from revenge, while truth should keep me from pretending that the wrong never mattered.

My wife and I have been married 36 years, and I have had plenty of chances to give and ask for forgiveness. My biggest lesson came when I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me, and I had to face the damage honestly. Receiving grace I did not deserve changed how I treat people when conflict hits. I wrote this book for anyone carrying an old grudge or trying to rebuild trust.

1 The account I keep

First Corinthians 13:4-8 (SLB) describes love through both what it does and what it refuses to do. It "is patient, is kind," it "does not count the evil," and it "does not rejoice over unrighteousness." That hits a habit most of us know: keeping a grudge handy so I can pull it out whenever I want the upper hand.

It is possible to remember an event because it helps me act wisely. It is also possible to preserve the event as a weapon. The difference is in what I am doing with it. Am I seeking truth, repair, and appropriate accountability, or am I waiting for an opportunity to make the person pay again?

Forgiveness is not a command to destroy accurate records, deny harm, or expose someone to repeated abuse. A necessary boundary can exist alongside a refusal to seek revenge. Trust may need to be rebuilt through truthful conduct over time. Making peace takes more than one person saying the issue is finished.

I want to examine the account I carry in my heart. If my sense of importance depends on another person's failure, I have allowed the grievance to shape more than the relationship. It is shaping me. The Lord calls me toward a different response, one grounded in the mercy I have received from Him.

2 Remembering the mercy I need

> *bearing with one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a complaint against anyone; just as Christ also forgave you, so also you.*
> **Colossians 3:13 (SLB)**

Colossians 3:13 (SLB) places forgiveness in the everyday life of believers. Complaints and failures will occur in a community of imperfect people. The instruction is to bear with one another and forgive, "just as Christ also forgave you." The standard begins with His grace.

That does not make every offense small. Some wrongs are serious, and some consequences remain even after forgiveness is expressed. God's mercy should never become a phrase used to pressure an injured person into silence. The person who caused

harm still needs to tell the truth and accept responsibility.

I also want to be careful when speaking about God forgetting sin. Psalm 103:12 (SLB) says, "He has removed our transgressions far from us." That is a promise about our sin before God. It does not mean that what people do no longer matters. Revelation 20:11-15 (SLB) describes judgment according to the deeds of those who died without Christ. God's forgiveness for those in Christ and His judgment of those without Him are both true, and I need to keep both in view.

Remembering the mercy I need changes the spirit in which I approach another person. I can take the wrong seriously without pretending I stand above the need for grace. The goal is to show the Lord's character in a hard situation, even in the parts where my pride would rather stay in charge.

In my lowest season, I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. My pastor did not turn me away. He listened, and he helped me back toward God. When you know how much you have been forgiven, it gets much harder to hold someone else by the throat (Matthew 18:33). Remembering the mercy we received is the cure for a hard heart.

3 Going to the person

> *And if your brother sins against you, go and reprove him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.*
> **Matthew 18:15 (SLB)**

Matthew 18:15 (SLB) begins with a private approach when a brother sins. In other words, I talk to the person first, not to everyone else about the person. A calm, face-to-face talk gives the other person a chance to hear me out without being cornered in front of others.

The wider passage provides further steps when the person does not listen, including witnesses and the church. Those steps belong to the passage's setting. I should not turn them into a rigid policy for every workplace or family disagreement. The practical principle of addressing the actual person still helps in many ordinary conflicts.

I can prepare by separating what I observed from what I assumed. Describe the action, explain its effect, and allow a response. Listening does not mean I must abandon a clear concern. It gives me a better chance of understanding the full situation before deciding what repair is needed.

Some situations require protection, reporting, or help from an appropriate authority rather than an isolated private meeting. A biblical call to restoration should not be used to conceal serious harm. Wise assistance can help keep the response truthful and responsible.

Seeking that assistance is different from turning a grievance into gossip.

4 Repair that can be seen

> *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.*
>
> **Ephesians 4:32 (SLB)**

When I have done wrong, I should take responsibility without waiting for the other person to present a perfect case. A clear apology names the conduct and acknowledges its effect. If something can be restored, replaced, or corrected, the response should include that action.

When I have been wronged, I may need time to work through anger and grief. I can bring that process before the Lord without pretending the pain has disappeared. Releasing revenge does not require an instant feeling of warmth. It does require a growing willingness to stop making repayment the purpose of the relationship.

Ephesians 4:32 (SLB) calls believers to kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness in light of what God has done in Christ. That plays out every day in a home, a church, or a friendship. The person beside me should not have to be flawless before I am willing to respond with grace.

I want conflict to become an occasion for truth and growth rather than another reason for division. That will require humility from the person who speaks and

the person who listens. I cannot control both responses. I can take responsibility for my own words, seek appropriate help, and refuse to make revenge my task.

Saying "I am sorry" takes two seconds. Rebuilding trust takes steady follow-through you can see. Since May 29, 2020, I have learned that repentance shows up in changed habits, honest accountability and keeping your word day after day. Part of my own 12-step work was making amends, including telling a friend of more than 40 years the truth. Even then, doing right today does not mean everyone has forgiven you. You give that to God and do not dwell on what others think. People do not need bigger promises. They need actions they can see (Luke 3:8).

Speaking with Grace and Discernment

Words that honor God and respect people

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

What I say can encourage a person, deepen a wound, or make an already difficult situation worse. Scripture takes that responsibility seriously. It also calls me to discernment. I want to speak truthfully without making contempt sound like conviction, and I want to show kindness without pretending that right and wrong no longer matter.

Writing the nonpartisan Fact Check Series taught me how words either clear things up or start fires. Too often Christians use careless words that push away the very people we want to reach. I wrote this book for believers who want their speech to honor God and show respect. Learning when to speak, how to say it and when to stay quiet changes every relationship.

1 The responsibility of a small part

> *With it we bless the God and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made according to* ***the*** *likeness of God.*
>
> **James 3:9 (SLB)**

> *Out of the same mouth come forth blessing and cursing. These things ought not, my brothers, to be so.*
>
> **James 3:10 (SLB)**

James 3:2-12 (SLB) compares the tongue with a bit directing a horse, a rudder guiding a ship, and a small fire spreading through a forest. The images show how something small can have a large effect.

My words may last in another person's memory long after I have stopped thinking about the conversation.

The passage also exposes a contradiction. With the same tongue we bless the Lord and curse people made in God's likeness. James does not shrug that off as normal. He says, "These things ought not, my brothers, to be so." Worship should affect the way I speak when the gathering is over.

Proverbs 18:21 (SLB) says, "Death and life are in the hand of the tongue." I understand that as a serious statement about the effect of speech. I do not use it to teach that saying particular words gives me control over events. Words can mislead, shame, comfort, and encourage. That is plenty of responsibility already. I do not need to add a power the verse never gives.

I want to notice the habits that develop around my speech. Sarcasm can become a way of avoiding an honest conversation. Complaining can become the language of a household. Praise can become flattery when I want something. The first step toward change is being willing to recognize the pattern instead of explaining every example away.

In guitar work, a tiny adjustment to a truss rod or a nut slot changes how the whole instrument plays. James 3 says the tongue is like a small bit in a horse's mouth or a small rudder on a ship. Early in my marriage I learned the hard way that one careless remark can undo a lot of patient trust. Guarding a small part protects everything else we are building.

2 Seeing the person before the label

> ***doing*** *nothing according to selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility considering one another* ***as*** *surpassing yourselves.*
>
> **Philippians 2:3 (SLB)**

I need to consider how little I may know about another person's circumstances. Clothing, income, appearance, or a brief encounter cannot tell the whole story. I can form a confident opinion while missing the very information that would change it.

Romans 2:1 (SLB) warns the person who condemns another while practicing the same things. That passage turns the spotlight back on the one doing the talking. It should make me slow to use someone else's failure to prove I am better. I need the same truth and mercy I am willing to discuss in somebody else's life.

Philippians 2:3 (SLB) calls for "humility considering one another as surpassing yourselves." That does not require me to agree with everything someone says or to deny what is plainly wrong. It does require me to stop treating a person as though disagreeing with me takes away their dignity.

Before repeating a claim, I can ask whether I actually know it is true. Before assigning a motive, I can ask whether I have heard the other person. Before speaking about a difficulty to everybody except the person involved, I can consider whether I am seeking help or spreading a grievance. These habits will not

solve every conflict, but they can prevent needless damage.

When I was a boy, Pastor Jimmy Carter did not see just a neighborhood kid who mowed his lawn. He saw a boy who needed someone to care about his soul. Years later, recovery taught me that everyone carries burdens you cannot see. When we treat each person as someone made in God's image, our tone changes. People listen when they know you see them as a neighbor, not a target.

3 Correction without condemnation

> *Hypocrite! First cast out the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to cast out the splinter from the eye of your brother.*
>
> **Matthew 7:5 (SLB)**

Matthew 7:1-5 (SLB) should be read as a whole. Jesus warns against hypocritical judgment and directs a person to cast out the beam from his own eye before helping with the splinter in his brother's eye. The passage does not end with a command to stop caring about the splinter. It calls for humility and clear sight.

That distinction matters. I should not appoint myself the final judge of another person's heart. I can still recognize harmful conduct, refuse dishonesty, or speak to a fellow believer about sin. The purpose should be truth and restoration rather than humiliation.

Correction is more likely to be useful when I name the actual action instead of attacking the whole person. I can describe what happened, explain the concern, and listen to the response. An accusation about someone's entire character often closes the conversation before it begins.

I also need to accept correction myself. If I insist on speaking into other people's lives while rejecting every concern about my own, I am practicing the very hypocrisy Jesus warns against. When I am willing to be corrected too, my care for others carries more weight.

Running technical training programs and serving as a lay pastor taught me that how you correct someone matters as much as being right. After my own failure came to light in 2020, I learned to separate a person's mistake from his worth before God (Galatians 6:1). Gentle correction invites growth. Harsh words make people put their armor on.

4 A different pattern of speech

Encouragement should be specific enough to mean something. Thank someone for a particular act of care. Recognize effort. Tell a family member that their contribution matters. A sincere sentence can help a person see that their work and presence have been noticed.

An apology should be equally clear. I need to name what I said, acknowledge the harm, and avoid making the injured person responsible for my words. I can explain what was going on, but that should not take

away my responsibility. If I spread something false, part of the repair may involve correcting it with the people who heard it.

There are also times to wait. Anger can make a quick response feel necessary when a short pause would make a truthful response more likely. I can take time to pray and think without using silence as a weapon. The purpose of the pause is to return with care, not to avoid the matter indefinitely.

I want the way I talk to match the faith I say I have. That will require attention, repentance, and help from God. The people closest to me should not hear one kind of speech in public and another at home. They should see a growing willingness to speak truth with grace.

In about 40 years of field and office work, I have heard plenty of rough talk and cutting people down treated as normal. Following Christ means refusing to match the tone of the room. When I wrote the Fact Check Series, I used the same rule: stick to verified facts, drop the name-calling, and let plain truth speak (Ephesians 4:29).

Faith at Work

Integrity, leadership, and serving God on Monday morning

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

Most of us spend more waking hours at work than anywhere else. If my faith only shows up on Sunday, it is missing from most of my life. The One we worship on Sunday should not be ignored on Monday.

I started in utility field work in 1987 and have spent about 40 years in infrastructure work. Faith gets tested when schedules are tight and cutting a corner would be the easy way out. Faith only matters if it holds up on a Tuesday afternoon when nobody from church is watching. I wrote this book for working believers who want to honor Christ in the middle of real deadlines.

This book looks at what Scripture says about doing our work for the Lord, about integrity in business, about leading people well, about hard conversations and difficult decisions, and about hiring and keeping people of good character.

1 Working for the Lord

> *And everything, whatever you do, work from **the** soul, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from **the** Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*
> **Colossians 3:23-24 (SLB)**

Every job is a place to serve Christ. That changes how I show up, how I treat customers, and how I handle the resources in my care. They are not really mine. They belong to God, and I am a steward of them.

Here is how I would put it: at work, God is my ultimate boss. A Christian manager who believes that puts customer needs first, works hard not to oversell what the product can do, and treats the budget as God's money rather than his own.

I started in the field in 1987, and a lot of that early work was routine and unseen. Colossians 3:23 says to work at it with all your heart, as for the Lord. Whether I was in the field or, years later, leading programs, the standard stayed the same. Working for the Lord turns ordinary work into worship.

2 Integrity begins in the heart

When business scandals make the news, people call for new laws. Laws have their place, but they cannot create integrity. Chuck Colson argued that scandals like Enron were not only bad business decisions. They were evidence of moral collapse.

The Hebrew word often translated integrity carries the idea of completeness, wholeness, and moral uprightness. A person of integrity is the same person in every room. He is not complicated or conniving. His life holds together.

> *The integrity of **the** upright guides them, and the crookedness of **the** treacherous destroys them.*
> **Proverbs 11:3 (SLB)**

The Bible gives us pictures of people with integrity. God described Job that way (Job 2:3, SLB). David prayed, "Judge me, LORD, for I, I have walked in my integrity" (Psalm 26:1, SLB). David was not sinless.

But when he was confronted with his sin, he wanted to be made whole before God again.

The prophets condemned those who trampled the poor and took bribes, and Amos called out, "let justice roll like the waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing wadi" (Amos 5:24, SLB). Integrity in business starts with integrity in my own heart and home.

3 Leading with humility and resolve

Jesus turned the world's idea of leadership upside down. He said, "whoever desires to become great among you will be your servant," and that "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:43-45, SLB).

In his book Good to Great, Jim Collins found that the leaders who took companies from good to great were not celebrity personalities. They combined deep personal humility with fierce resolve. Collins was not writing a Christian book, but what he found sounds a lot like what Jesus taught His disciples.

Collins described a habit he called the window and the mirror. When things go well, look out the window and give credit to others. When things go wrong, look in the mirror. That is a practical way to live out Philippians 2:3 (SLB), which says, "in humility considering one another as surpassing yourselves."

Good leaders also ask for advice. "Plans go wrong when there is no counsel, and in a multitude of counselors it is established" (Proverbs 15:22, SLB). And they encourage the people around them:

"encourage one another and build up one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11, SLB).

I started in the field and worked my way up to running technical training programs. A title never earned anyone's respect. When a plan fails, a leader has to own the mistake, listen to the people doing the work, and still make the hard call. Serving as a lay pastor taught me the same balance of humility and backbone.

4 Correcting with fairness

When an employee is not performing, the first place to look is my own leadership. Are the expectations clear? Have I given the training, instruction, and support needed? If not, the right first step is to apologize and fix that problem. Only then can I fairly hold someone accountable.

When correction is needed, start privately. Explain the problem and the change that is needed, and keep a note of what was said. If the problem continues, put it in writing. Jesus said, "if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3, SLB).

> *He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, and he who confesses and forsakes **them** will be shown mercy.*
>
> **Proverbs 28:13 (SLB)**

The two key words in that proverb are "confesses" and "forsakes." An apology without a change is not

repentance. Ask the person to name what went wrong and say clearly what they will do differently.

Some offenses, like dishonesty or theft, may leave no choice but to end someone's employment, even when the person is truly sorry. Letting dishonesty stand will eat away at an organization. And always follow the employment laws where you work.

5 Hiring people of character

Most hiring processes measure skills and experience. Few measure character. Yet honesty, trustworthiness, patience, self-control, and humility matter as much as any skill on a resume. If they matter, they belong in the job description and the hiring process.

Scripture warns that first impressions can mislead. "He who hates disguises himself with his lips, and in his inner being he sets deceit. When he makes his voice gracious, do not trust in him" (Proverbs 26:24-25, SLB). A thirty-minute interview is a weak measure of character.

Here are a few practical steps I recommend. Check references, then ask each reference for the name of someone else who knows the candidate well, and keep going a few levels deep. And consider rewarding current employees who refer good people, because people tend to recommend those they are proud to work beside.

Putting Faith into Practice

Trusting Christ through obedience and difficulty

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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Introduction

Faith becomes practical when trusting Christ changes the way I respond. Scripture gives us examples of people who believed, hesitated, obeyed, and needed help. I want to learn from those accounts without turning them into promises that every risk I choose must succeed. The Lord Himself is the object of our faith. His character gives us reason to trust Him.

Knowing what the Bible says and trusting Christ when life gets hard are two different things. I have lived both: seasons walking close to God and seasons when my own bad choices brought real trouble. I wrote this book for believers who want a faith that holds through obedience, work and hard trials.

1 What faith rests on

> *Now faith is **the** assurance of **things** hoped for,*
> ***the** conviction of things not seen.*
> **Hebrews 11:1 (SLB)**

Hebrews 11 (SLB) describes faith in relation to what is hoped for and what is not yet seen. The people named in that chapter responded to God in different circumstances. Some saw remarkable deliverance. Others endured suffering. Reading the whole chapter keeps me from thinking faith always ends in a win I can see.

Faith is not confidence in how strong my feelings are. It rests in God. I may feel unsure about the next step and still do what He has made clear. I may also feel

very sure of a plan that Scripture never required me to make. Strong feelings and faithful obedience are not always the same thing.

Romans 4 (SLB) points us to God's promise, received through faith. James 2 (SLB) pushes back on talk about faith that never turns into care or action. I want to keep the order right. We do not earn salvation by doing good works. Faith that is alive should affect what we do.

That makes obedience ordinary as well as serious. Telling the truth, keeping a commitment, and helping a person in need can all require trust. I do not need a dramatic setting before I can practice faith. I need a willingness to obey the Lord in the setting I already have.

At 16 I passed the California High School Proficiency Exam early and aced the Air Force tests. When they would not give me the computer job they had promised, I walked away, and it felt like my plan had fallen apart. Looking back, God was steering me toward a career, a family and a ministry I could never have planned. Our faith rests on a God who sees the whole picture.

2 Jesus in the storm

> *And He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How **is it that** you do not have faith?"*
> **Mark 4:40 (SLB)**

Mark 4:35-41 (SLB) describes Jesus and His disciples crossing the sea when a fierce storm arises. The boat

is taking in water, and Jesus is asleep. The disciples wake Him with a question about whether He cares that they are perishing. Their fear is real, and the passage does not hide it.

Jesus rebukes the wind and speaks to the sea. The calm that follows shows His authority. The disciples then ask who He is, that even the wind and sea obey Him. Their need reaches beyond relief from the storm. They need to understand the One who is with them.

I should be careful with the application. This event does not promise that every believer will be protected from every physical harm. The same Scriptures call believers to endurance and describe suffering for Christ. What the account shows is Jesus' authority and the disciples' need to trust Him.

When I face a difficulty, fear can narrow my attention until the difficulty seems to be the whole story. I can bring that fear to the Lord. I can also remember what He has made known about Himself. Faith does not require denying that the storm is dangerous. It calls me to recognize that the storm is not greater than the Lord.

In the deepest hole of my life, I walked into my pastor's office carrying more shame than I could handle. I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. My pastor did not push me away. He listened and walked beside me as I found my way back to God. God often shows His presence in our storms through a believer who will not walk out on us.

3 Peter leaves the boat

> *But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage; I am **He**; do not be afraid."*
> **Matthew 14:27 (SLB)**

> *And immediately Jesus, having stretched out the hand, took hold of him, and says to him, "**You** of little faith, why did you doubt?"*
> **Matthew 14:31 (SLB)**

Matthew 14:22-33 (SLB) records a different event. Jesus comes to the disciples walking on the sea. They are afraid, and He speaks to them. Peter asks Jesus to command him to come on the water. Jesus says, "Come" (Matthew 14:29, SLB), and Peter responds.

The order matters. Peter is responding to Jesus, rather than inventing a dangerous act to demonstrate his own courage. I should not turn this account into an instruction to take every possible risk or assume that caution is always unbelief. Being faithful means listening to the Lord, not making up a dramatic moment.

When Peter sees the wind, he becomes afraid and begins to sink. He cries for help, and Jesus immediately takes hold of him. The account includes both Peter's response and his need for rescue. It gives me no reason to boast about being stronger than another believer who is struggling.

I want to keep my attention on Christ when circumstances compete for it. That may require returning to a clear command, seeking wise counsel, or admitting I have begun to act from fear. If I need

help, I should ask. Peter's cry points us to the Savior who can help, not to a trick for getting amazing results.

For five straight years I helped lead youth mission trips to Baja, Mexico. Crossing that border each year meant leaving familiar routines behind and trusting God with the trip. Obedience usually starts with one uncomfortable step. You never see what Christ can do on the water until you step out of the boat (Matthew 14:29).

4 Faith that stays faithful

So how should these passages shape the way we live? I may never face the same circumstances as the disciples on the sea, but I will face decisions that reveal what I trust. I can obey a clear instruction even when the result is not immediately comfortable.

This includes service that receives little recognition. It includes generosity that requires planning, patience with somebody who grows slowly, and honesty when an excuse would be easier. Most of the time, faithfulness is built one small choice at a time, not in one big moment.

I also need other believers. Someone else may help me tell a real duty from a needless risk. A mature friend can remind me of God's Word when my thoughts become crowded with fear. Taking that help is part of faith. It does not mean my faith has failed.

I want my life to show a growing trust in Jesus. When He calls me to act, I want to respond. When I fail, I

want to turn back toward Him. When I cannot understand the circumstances, I want to remain faithful to what He has made clear. The point is not to make my life look extraordinary. It is to live in a way that honors the One I am following.

I was baptized on October 19, 1995, and that same day I baptized my wife. Staying faithful since then has taken daily choices, and there were seasons, in 2000 and again in 2013, when I drifted. What kept me coming back was Scripture, confessing when I fell short and taking the next step. Faithfulness is getting back up and walking with Christ day after day.

Growing Together as the Church

Unity, community, and the use of our gifts

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

God has not called His people to live without one another. We need encouragement, correction, help, and opportunities to serve. Unity gets real when we actually do those things. I want a church life that reflects Christ in the way we care for people, including the ones whose gifts, experiences, and preferences differ from mine.

I have led Bible studies, served as a lay pastor and helped lead youth mission trips. No Christian is built to walk alone. I wrote this book for church members who want real fellowship, not just sitting in rows once a week. When each person uses the gifts God gave, the whole church grows strong together.

1 Members of one body

First Corinthians 12 (SLB) describes a body with different members. Their differences do not make them unnecessary. That picture speaks to the proud person and to the discouraged one. I should not act as though the church depends only on my contribution, and I should not assume I have nothing useful to give.

The passage calls for care when one member suffers and shared joy when another is honored. That reaches beyond attendance. It asks whether we notice people, whether we respond when they need help, and whether another person's recognition can be received without resentment.

Some jobs are too big for one person. A family, a work crew, or a team learns quickly why different contributions matter. The church's unity, however, has a deeper basis than convenience. We belong to Christ. Our service should reflect His care for the people who belong to Him.

I want to resist the tendency to value only what is visible. Preparation, practical help, patient conversation, and faithful prayer may happen away from a platform. A healthy community learns to appreciate service without turning every contribution into a competition for notice.

For five straight years I helped lead youth mission trips to Baja, Mexico, with teams of 16 to 45 kids. A trip like that only works when everyone does a part. That is 1 Corinthians 12 in action. A church works the way God designed when every member plays his part.

2 What weakens our fellowship

Pride can turn a difference into a contest over who matters most. When I need to appear right in every conversation, other people become obstacles rather than fellow believers. Humility makes room to listen while still taking truth seriously.

Some disagreements involve the central claims of the gospel. Others concern matters on which faithful Christians reach different conclusions. I should not treat every preference as a test of salvation. I hold a pre-tribulation view of the Rapture, and I explain it in Living in Hope of the Return of Christ. Disagreement

over its timing does not determine a person's salvation.

That distinction does not make study unnecessary. I should know why I hold a position and be willing to explain it from Scripture. But contempt is never the right way to defend it.

Bitterness and unforgiveness also weaken fellowship. A grievance carried from one relationship into the next can make the whole community feel unsafe. I need to address wrong truthfully and seek repair. Unity requires more than asking everybody else to be easier to live with.

When I was drifting, I kept people at a distance so nobody would ask hard questions. I hid my drinking from almost everyone, even a friend of more than 40 years. Fellowship weakens fastest when we trade honesty for polite small talk.

3 Using what God has given

> *And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: whether prophecy, according to the proportion of the faith; or ministry, in the ministry; or the one who teaches, in the teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the exhortation; the one who gives, in generosity; the one who leads, in diligence; the one who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.*
>
> **Romans 12:6-8 (SLB)**

Romans 12:6-8 (SLB) names different gifts and calls for their exercise. Service should be practiced in serving. Teaching should be practiced in teaching.

Generosity, leadership, and mercy are also described with attention to how they are carried out. The emphasis is on using what God has given.

Natural talents and spiritual gifts are not the same thing. Romans 12 (SLB) does not list musical talent or medical training, but God can still use those abilities when we serve others.

Finding where to serve can start with whatever job needs doing. Offer help, listen to those who know the need, and receive feedback. I do not need a public title before I can encourage someone, give practical assistance, or make room for another person's growth.

I also need to remain teachable. A willingness to serve does not mean I already know how every task should be done. Preparation, supervision, and dependable follow-through can be expressions of humility. A gift is for the good of others, not a reason to dodge the work.

When I started leading Bible studies and writing study guides, I did not think of myself as a scholar. My teaching at work was analytical and regimented. With the Bible I take a softer, more personal approach, because people are not a checklist. God takes ordinary skills and shapes them for His people. You do not need a title to serve. You need to use what He put in your hands.

4 Staying close enough to care

> *and let us consider one another for stirring up of love and of good works, not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves, as **is the** custom of some, but encouraging **one another**, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.*
>
> **Hebrews 10:24-25 (SLB)**

Hebrews 10:24-25 (SLB) connects gathering with encouraging one another toward love and good works. It gives fellowship a purpose. I am not simply present to receive something. I also have a responsibility to help another believer remain faithful.

There is a difference between time alone with God and a pattern of avoiding every relationship that could bring help or correction. Solitude can refresh us. Isolation can leave us without people who know what is happening in our lives. I need enough honest connection for care to become possible.

A good start can be smaller than a new program. Learn a person's name. Follow up on a need. Make room for someone who does not already know the group. If I have withdrawn because of a hurt, I may need support in finding a healthy way to reconnect.

I want unity to be visible in the way we live together. We will not agree on every detail, and we will sometimes fail one another. We can still practice repentance, forgiveness, and faithful service. A church grows in strength when people remain willing

to love the real members of the body, rather than an imagined community that never disappoints.

In my lowest season, I had made choices that hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. Hiding made it worse. Things began to change when a pastor and a few trusted men stayed close enough to tell me the truth. You cannot carry someone's burden from across the parking lot.

Serving Others and Sharing Christ

Careful witness and faithful discipleship

Andrew Dominguez



Trinfinity Enterprises

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Introduction

The people around us need more than a religious sales pitch. They need to hear the truth about Christ and see the care His people are called to show. I want to take both responsibilities seriously. Service should express love, and our words should help people understand the Savior to whom we are pointing.

Faithful witness is not a sales pitch. It is loving people enough to meet real needs and tell them the truth about Jesus. Over years of leading Bible studies, volunteering at church camp and helping lead mission trips to Baja, I have seen God use ordinary believers who simply show up. I wrote this book for Christians who want to serve and share the gospel without pressure or gimmicks.

1 Care that moves toward a need

Luke 5:17-26 (SLB) describes men bringing a paralyzed man to Jesus. When they cannot get through the crowd, they lower him through the roof. The account centers on Jesus' authority to forgive sins and His power to heal. Their determined effort also gives us a practical example of care that acts.

I can notice a need without making myself the person's rescuer. Christ is the Savior. My responsibility may be to listen, offer practical help, explain what I believe, or make a way for someone to hear the gospel. I should not promise to do what only the Lord can do.

Friendships often open the door to honest talk. They do not make me the owner of the other person's answer. Kindness should remain kindness even when someone is not ready to discuss faith. No one should find out later that my care depended on their becoming a success story for me.

The practical opportunities are often close to home. Someone may need a ride, a meal, help with a responsibility, or a person who will listen without rushing. Serving that need is worthwhile. I want my life to make room for people rather than always finding a reason that somebody else should respond.

2 Words that make the message clear

> *Walk in wisdom toward those outside, redeeming the time.*
> **Colossians 4:5 (SLB)**

> ***Let** your word **be** always in grace, seasoned with salt, to know how you must answer each one.*
> **Colossians 4:6 (SLB)**

Colossians 4:2-6 (SLB) brings prayer, opportunity, wise conduct, and gracious speech together. Paul asks that God "may open to us a door for the word," and that he may "make it manifest, as I must speak." That is a good place to begin when I feel unsure about sharing my faith. I can ask God for an opportunity and prepare to speak plainly.

I do not need to pretend I know every answer. If someone raises a question I cannot answer, I can say so and return to it after careful study. An invented

answer may win a moment and damage trust later. Honesty is part of a faithful witness.

I also need to explain the message itself. Jesus is not just a tip for making a comfortable life a little better. We need forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The gospel points us to who Christ is, what He has done, and the call to believe in Him. My testimony should serve that message rather than replace it.

Grace should shape the conversation. It is possible to be clear without being harsh and patient without being vague. I can listen to what the person is actually asking instead of answering the argument I expected to hear. The aim is understanding, not simply getting through a prepared speech.

As a boy in Victorville, I mowed the lawn for Pastor Jimmy Carter, who lived down our street. He took me to church and led me to Christ. Years later, wanting plain, accurate words drove me to translate the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), so readers could see what Scripture actually says. People cannot trust a message they cannot understand.

3 Faithfulness when people do not respond

Mark 6:1-6 (SLB) records Jesus teaching in His hometown and encountering unbelief. The account warns me against assuming that familiarity will always make a witness easy. People who know our past may respond differently from people who meet us in a church setting.

I should not compare my imperfect life with Jesus as though our circumstances are identical. He is sinless. I may need to acknowledge ways my own conduct has made a conversation harder. A truthful apology and a consistent life can be necessary parts of my witness to people who know me well.

Mark 6:7-13 (SLB) then describes Jesus sending the Twelve with instructions for their mission. I need to read those instructions in their setting, not turn every travel detail into a rule for all ministry. The mission is carried out under His authority, and being turned away does not give the disciples license to look down on people.

Love and wisdom should guide how long and how hard I keep trying. I can remain available, pray, and look for an appropriate opportunity without pressuring someone through repeated unwanted arguments. I am accountable for faithfulness. I cannot force another person's belief. Leaving that part with God helps me keep serving without treating people as projects.

I have led Bible study groups, served as a lay pastor and preached, and there have been plenty of times I saw no response. I drifted from God more than once myself before the truth took deep root in me. We are responsible for delivering the message faithfully, not for forcing the outcome. God often works below the surface long after we think nothing happened (1 Corinthians 3:7).

4 Making disciples who continue to grow

> *Therefore, having gone, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
> **Matthew 28:19 (SLB)**

> *teaching them to observe all things, as many as I commanded you; and look, I am with you all the days, until the consummation of the age.*
> **Matthew 28:20 (SLB)**

> *For you were called to freedom, brothers; only **do** not **use** the freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be slaves to one another.*
> **Galatians 5:13 (SLB)**

Matthew 28:18-20 (SLB) gives the commission to make disciples, baptize, and teach obedience to what Jesus commanded. The job is bigger than getting someone to say a quick yes to Jesus. People need help learning to follow Him through the circumstances of ordinary life.

That help can include reading Scripture together, answering questions carefully, encouraging involvement in a church, and showing what repentance looks like when I fail. I should not make a new believer dependent on my personal authority. The direction is toward Christ and a growing understanding of His Word.

Galatians 5:13 (SLB) calls believers to "through love be slaves to one another." Mission therefore includes the way we treat fellow believers as well as the

people we hope to reach. A church that is harsh or careless with its own people can undercut the very message it says it wants to share.

I want to stay available after the first conversation, to celebrate growth, help with a difficulty, and encourage the person to serve others in turn. We keep pointing one another toward the Lord who calls us, teaches us, and remains with His people.

After I started recovery in May 2020 and went through a 12-step program, I saw how much people need structured, Scripture-based help to keep growing past the first steps. That led me to write New Beginnings, a Christ-centered 12-step course. Making disciples does not stop at a decision. It means walking beside people until they can help someone else (2 Timothy 2:2).

Telling Others What Christ Has Done

Sharing your faith and your story with care

Andrew Dominguez



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Introduction

Most Christians want to tell others about Jesus, and most of us feel unqualified to do it. We worry we will say the wrong thing, get a question we cannot answer, or push someone away. I understand that fear. I also know that God uses ordinary people who are willing to open their mouths.

The first person who took time to tell me about Christ was Pastor Jimmy Carter, a neighbor whose lawn I mowed when I was a boy in Victorville. He took me to church and led me to Christ. Years later, helping lead youth mission trips to Baja and teaching Bible studies taught me that sharing Christ does not need a polished speech. When Christ has changed your life, telling others becomes simple and honest.

This book is about sharing the good news with honesty and care. It covers using God's Word, getting to the heart of the issue, telling your own story, and staying gracious with people who see things differently.

1 Ready to give an answer

> *but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and **be** ready always for a defense to everyone who asks you an account concerning the hope in you, with gentleness and fear.*
>
> **1 Peter 3:15 (SLB)**

First Peter 3:15 (SLB) starts in the heart. Before I can speak for Christ, I need to sanctify the Lord God in

my heart. Then I can be ready when someone asks why I have hope.

Notice the last part of the verse. My answer should come "with gentleness and fear," meaning kindness toward the person and reverence toward God. The goal is not to win an argument. The goal is to help someone see Jesus clearly. A harsh answer can be correct and still drive a person away from the very Savior I want them to meet.

At work, people watch how you handle pressure long before they care what you believe. People have asked me about my faith and why I stopped drinking. Being ready for those questions, and other hard ones, gives you credibility to speak into people's lives (1 Peter 3:15). Being ready to speak starts with living in a way that makes people ask.

2 Letting the Word do the work

Jesus told Nicodemus, "unless someone is born from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, SLB). Peter later wrote that believers have been "begotten again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the word of God, living and abiding forever" (1 Peter 1:23, SLB). The seed that produces new life is the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit makes it grow.

That takes pressure off me. I do not have to argue anyone into heaven. Romans 10:17 (SLB) says, "faith is from report, and report through the word of God." John wrote his Gospel so that people would believe

that Jesus is the Christ and have life in His name (John 20:31, SLB).

So I want to know the Word well enough to use it. When I can, I like to have the other person read a verse with me, so they see it with their own eyes. When time is short, it helps to have key verses memorized. I do not need to defend the Bible as much as I need to let it speak.

Translating the Steadfast Literal Bible came from one conviction: plain Scripture does more than my own cleverness. When people read and hear God's Word for themselves, God does the work. Our job is to share the Word clearly and let Him do the heavy lifting.

3 Getting to the real issue

People often say we are all going to the same place on different roads. Jesus did not offer Nicodemus that kind of false comfort. He was kind, but He was plain. Later He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6, SLB).

Jesus also did not get sidetracked. He did not spend the conversation correcting every wrong idea Nicodemus had. He moved it toward the one thing that mattered most, which was the new birth. I want to learn that skill. Side debates about church differences or hard doctrines can wait. The way of salvation cannot.

I also want to avoid shortcuts. Rushing someone into a prayer before they understand what they are doing does them no favors. The issues are too important. I want each person to know what sin is, what Christ did, and what it means to trust Him.

4 Telling your own story

Your testimony is simply the story of how you came to Christ. It usually has three parts: your life before you knew Him, how you came to trust Him, and what has changed since. If you came to Christ as a child, the changes may be the biggest part of your story.

A few things make a testimony clearer. Pray before you speak. Leave out church words that outsiders may not understand. Be specific instead of vague, and do not exaggerate. Make sure the listener knows that a Christian is someone forgiven because Jesus died in his place.

A few things to avoid: do not run down other churches or Christians, do not talk down to the people listening, and do not give the impression that you are now better than they are. As a Christian, the only person I am better than is the person I used to be.

I keep a story in my notes about a woman who was afraid to share the gospel with her elderly neighbors for ten years. When she finally did, she felt she had made a mess of it. Weeks later, the neighbor's son, a pastor, knocked on her door to thank her. His father and grandmother had both trusted Christ. Paul wrote, "God chose the weak things of the world, so that He

might put the strong things to shame" (1 Corinthians 1:27, SLB).

For a long time I kept the hardest parts of my life quiet. I wanted people to see the successful project manager, not the man who had made choices that hurt his marriage and the people closest to him, and who was hiding his drinking. After May 29, 2020, I saw that hiding my failures also hid God's grace. Nobody can argue with what God has actually done in your life.

5 Gracious with every person

Some of the people I talk with belong to groups that teach a different Jesus or a different gospel. First John 4:1 (SLB) tells me to "test the spirits to see whether they are of God." The test is the Word of God. Whatever a group teaches has to be measured against Scripture.

Arguments rarely help. Second Timothy 2:24 (SLB) says, "a slave of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle toward all." I would rather keep the conversation on the person's own relationship with Jesus. A simple question works well: do you know for sure that your sins are forgiven and that you are right with God today?

Confessing Christ also means doing it openly. Jesus said, "everyone who will confess in Me before men, I also will confess in him before My Father who is in the heavens" (Matthew 10:32, SLB). When someone trusts Christ, I want to encourage them to tell another believer right away. Sharing what God has

done is good for them, and it encourages everyone who hears it.

My family attended the Catholic church when I was young, and it was a neighbor, Pastor Jimmy Carter, who later took me to his church. Over about 40 years of working with people from every walk of life, I have learned that looking down on someone's background closes every door. Whether I am working on a guitar for a customer or talking with a neighbor in Dayton, respect comes first (Colossians 4:6). Grace in how we listen earns us the right to speak.

Prayer and the Church

Studies in James | James 5:13-20

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Prayer and the Church

Studies in James | James 5:13-20

Passage	James 5:13-20
Big idea	Prayer runs through every part of church life: comfort in suffering, healing for the sick, honesty with each other, power with God, and going after the one who wanders off.
Memory verse	James 5:16
Session length	60-75 minutes
What to bring	Bible (SLB), this handout, pen.

Before You Meet (Leader Prep)

For the leader only. Read the passage at least twice during the week and pray for the group by name.

I know what happens when a believer tries to walk through hard seasons alone. In my lowest season, a pastor and a few trusted men made the difference. I wrote this book for churches and small groups that want prayer to be more than a quick item on an agenda. When a church prays for its people, nobody has to carry a burden alone.

In my lowest season, I did not need speeches. I needed a pastor who would listen and men who would stand with me. God uses His people to steady someone who is barely holding on.

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- Read the whole letter of James in one sitting. It takes about 15 minutes, and you will see the themes come back around in chapter 5.
- Read 1 Kings 17:1 and 1 Kings 18:41-45 so you know Elijah's story before the group gets to James 5:17-18.
- Read the Leader Notes. The questions on anointing with oil and on confession can bring up different church backgrounds in the room. Be ready to keep it respectful.

Opening (5-10 minutes)

Before we talk about this passage, we need to know who James was writing to. He tells us in the first verse: "To the twelve tribes which are in the dispersion" (James 1:1). These were Jewish believers in Christ scattered outside their homeland. In the very next verse he calls them "my brothers" (James 1:2) and tells them to "Consider it all joy, my brothers, whenever you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). Only believers would be told to count their trials as joy, and only family gets called brothers.

The whole letter is about holding on through hard times without wavering. In chapter 5 James comes back to that theme: "Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). Then, as he wraps up his letter, he talks about one thing over and over. Here is a hint: it is PRAYER. Prayer shows up in every verse from 13 to 18.

Icebreaker: Who is someone who prayed for you at a time you really needed it? You do not have to share the details.

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The Passage (10 minutes)

Have one or two people read the passage aloud.

> **James 5:13-20 (SLB)**
>
> [13] Is anyone among you suffering hardship? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. [14] Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15] And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him. [16] Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous ***man***, being at work, prevails much. [17] Elijah was a man of like nature to us, and he prayed with prayer that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth ***for*** three years and six months. [18] And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth sprouted its fruit. [19] Brothers, if anyone among you is led astray from the truth and someone turns him back, [20] let him know that the one who turns back a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Setting the Scene (5 minutes)

Who wrote it	James, a half brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19) and a leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Galatians 2:9). Most of the early church held this view; a few scholars think it was written by a later follower in his name.
To whom	"The twelve tribes which are in the dispersion" (James 1:1): Jewish Christians living outside Israel, many of them poor and under pressure.

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When and where	Written from Jerusalem before James was put to death in about A.D. 62. The Jewish historian Josephus records his death (Antiquities 20.9.1). Many scholars date the letter in the 40s, which would make it one of the earliest books of the New Testament.
What comes before	James 5:1-6 warns rich people who cheat their workers. James 5:7-12 tells believers to be patient until the Lord comes, like a farmer waiting for rain, and to let their yes be yes.
What comes after	Nothing. Verse 20 is the last verse of the letter. James ends without a goodbye, which makes his last words about bringing back a wanderer stand out.

What It Means (15 minutes)

Who James is talking to

Look at who James addresses in these verses:

- Verse 13: each believer on their own.
- Verses 14-15: the elders of the church.
- Verse 16: the whole church, everybody praying for everybody.

So this passage is about prayer, and specifically about four things: prayer and comfort (verse 13), prayer and restoration (verses 14-15), prayer and fellowship (verse 16), and prayer and power (verses 16-18). Then James closes with the one who wanders (verses 19-20).

Verse 13: Prayer and comfort

If anyone is suffering, James says "Let him pray" (James 5:13). Whenever we talk with God, His presence brings the comfort we

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are looking for. That does not mean the suffering stops. It means the Lord comforts us in the middle of it when we cry out to Him.

James covers the good days too: "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise" (James 5:13). Good times and hard times both belong in front of God.

Verses 14-15: Prayer and restoration

These verses are about people who are physically sick, worn down and weary. James uses two different Greek words here. In verse 14, "sick" is *astheneo*, which means weak or feeble. In verse 15, "the one who is sick" is *kamno*, which can mean sick but also means worn out or weary. When we are sick we get weary, and when we are weary we get sick.

The sick person is to "call for the elders of the church" (James 5:14). Why can't they just pray for themselves? They can, but God works through the prayers of His people, especially those who walk closely with Him. The elders are the pastors, the overseers, the spiritually mature.

Anointing with oil was common in that day. Olive oil was used as medicine; the Good Samaritan poured "oil and wine" (Luke 10:34) on the wounded man. It was also a sign of being set apart for God. Jesus' disciples "were anointing with oil many sick people, and were healing them" (Mark 6:13).

Verse 15 also says "if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him" (James 5:15). James does not say every sickness comes from sin. He says that if sin is part of the picture, God forgives that too.

Verse 16: Prayer and fellowship

James tells us to "confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). What comes out of praying together and opening up to each other? One word: FELLOWSHIP. Fellowship with each other, and fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Confession to one another does not replace confession to God: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may

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forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Confessing to each other adds honesty and accountability among believers. Through that confession comes healing, which ties right back to restoration.

For years I kept my struggles hidden from almost everyone, including a friend of more than forty years. Things began to change when I sat down in my pastor's office and told the truth about choices that had hurt my marriage and the people closest to me. Confessing to another believer broke my isolation (James 5:16).

Verses 16-18: Prayer and power

James closes verse 16 with a line many of us know by heart. In the SLB it reads: "The prayer of a righteous man, being at work, prevails much" (James 5:16).

That is why we go to the elders for prayer, why we ask other believers to pray for us, and why WE pray. Through God anything is possible, as long as it fits His will for our lives. Prayer is how we talk to God, and it keeps us focused on Him.

Then James gives an example. "Elijah was a man of like nature to us" (James 5:17). He was not a superhero. He got scared and ran for his life (1 Kings 19:3-4). But he prayed, and it did not rain for three and a half years. You can read the start of the drought in 1 Kings 17:1, and Jesus gives the same three and a half years in Luke 4:25. Then Elijah prayed again on Mount Carmel, bowed down with his face between his knees (1 Kings 18:42), and the rain came. If God answered an ordinary man like Elijah, He will hear you.

Verses 19-20: Bring back the one who wanders

James started his letter talking to the church, and he finishes the same way: "Brothers, if anyone among you is led astray from the truth and someone turns him back" (James 5:19). Once again he calls them "brothers," which shows he has a real relationship with these people.

These last two verses sum up what the whole letter is about: turning a sinner "from the error of his way" (James 5:20) to "save a

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soul from death" (James 5:20). James wrote to people who were drifting under pressure, and he wanted them back. That makes this letter hopeful and evangelistic, written to offer hope to the lost and to the believer.

The phrase "cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20) echoes "Hatred stirs up contentions, and love covers over all transgressions" (Proverbs 10:12). Peter uses the same phrase in 1 Peter 4:8. Love goes after the one who wandered off instead of writing them off.

I see all of God's Word as love. Only a father who truly loves his child would spell out what happens when we sin and go our own way, and then send people after us to bring us home.

I have believed in God since I was a boy, yet I drifted from Him more than once through my own bad choices. God did not leave me out there. He used people, a pastor who listened to me in my lowest season and a wife who would not let me keep hiding, to bring me back. Going after a wandering believer in love is one of the highest callings a church has (James 5:19-20).

Key Terms

Term	Plain meaning	Where it appears
Elders	Spiritually mature leaders who oversee a local church. In the New Testament they are also called overseers.	James 5:14
Anointing	Putting oil on someone. In Bible times it was used as medicine and as a sign of being set apart for God.	James 5:14

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Term	Plain meaning	Where it appears
Astheneo / kamno	Two Greek words for sick. The first means weak or feeble; the second can also mean weary or worn out.	James 5:14-15
Confess	To say out loud that you did wrong, and agree with God about it.	James 5:16
The dispersion	Scattered outside their homeland. Often called the Diaspora (Jewish people living outside Israel).	James 1:1

Where Christians Read This Differently

Christians agree that James 5 calls the church to pray for the sick. They put verses 14-16 into practice in different ways.

- **Catholic and Orthodox:** These churches see verses 14-15 as the basis for a sacrament. Catholics call it the Anointing of the Sick, given by a priest to the seriously ill or elderly (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1526). The Orthodox call it Holy Unction. Both also see confession as a sacrament, made through a priest.
- **Pentecostal and charismatic:** Many churches anoint the sick with oil and pray for healing in regular services, expecting God to heal today.
- **Many other Protestants:** Some churches have elders anoint and pray when a member asks. Others see the oil as the medicine of that day and stress that God heals through prayer and through doctors. Most read verse 16 as believers confessing to one another, not as a required sacrament.

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My view: God works through the prayers of His people, especially those who walk closely with Him. He can and does heal, as long as it fits His will. I believe we should call the elders when we are sick, pray for each other, and keep each other honest.

Discussion Questions (20-25 minutes)

What does it say?

1. List the situations James covers in verses 13-16. What response does he give for each one?
2. What does James say about Elijah in verses 17-18? Why do you think he picked Elijah?

What does it mean?

3. Why do you think God wants us to bring others into our prayer life instead of praying only on our own?
4. What is the difference between confessing to God and confessing to one another? Why does James ask for both?
5. Verses 19-20 are the last words of the letter. Why would James end there?

How do I live it?

6. Who do you know who has wandered from the faith? What is one step you could take toward them this week?
7. Is there something you have been carrying alone that you need to ask someone in this group to pray about?

Takeaway (5 minutes)

This week: Do not suffer, fight sickness or carry sin alone. Pray, ask the church to pray, and go after the ones who wander.

Memory verse: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man, being at work, prevails much" (James 5:16, SLB)

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Prayer

Pray for anyone in the group who is suffering or sick, by name if they are comfortable with it.

Thank God that He hears ordinary people like Elijah, and like us.

Ask God to bring to mind one person who has wandered, and to give the group courage to reach out.

Going Deeper (Optional)

- 1 Kings 17-18: The full story of Elijah, the drought and the rain.
- Galatians 6:1-2: Restore a brother gently and carry each other's burdens.
- Matthew 18:15: Jesus' first step for going to a brother who has sinned.
- Psalm 32: David on the relief of confessing sin to God.
- Hebrews 4:16: Come to God with confidence for help in time of need.

Leader Notes

Question 2 (Elijah): James picks Elijah because he was "a man of like nature to us" (James 5:17). 1 Kings 19 shows Elijah afraid and worn out. The point is that God answers the prayers of ordinary, imperfect people who are right with Him.

Question 4 (confession): Confession to God brings forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Confession to one another brings honesty, accountability and healing in the church (James 5:16). One does not replace the other. Remind the group that what is shared in the room stays in the room.

If someone asks "Does verse 15 mean every sick believer will be healed?": Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20), and

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Paul himself was not healed of his thorn (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Prayer offered in faith rests on God's will (1 John 5:14). God may heal now, or He may raise His child up on the last day. Be gentle with anyone who has prayed for healing that did not come.

If someone asks about oil: Share the different church practices in "Where Christians Read This Differently" without arguing for one. The power is in the Lord, not the oil: "the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:15).

Sources

Every outside fact in this study comes from one of these. Scripture is from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) throughout.

- Greek words in James 5:14-15: Blue Letter Bible lexicon, Strong's G770 (astheneo), https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/G770/mgnt, and Strong's G2577 (kamno), https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2577.
- James's death in about A.D. 62: Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 20.9.1, as summarized in "The Last Days of James," Biblical Archaeology Society, https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/sidebar/the-last-days-of-james/.
- Catholic teaching on the Anointing of the Sick: Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1526, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P4P.HTM.

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Acronym List

SLB: Steadfast Literal Bible

A.D.: Anno Domini, Latin for "in the year of our Lord"