Staff Training Overview

Our staff training material equips camp staff to maximize the opportunities God gives to serve campers for His glory and the good of the youth. Below is a description of each major section in our CampsAbroad Staff Training Manual. During training, our teams provide practical application in many aspects of camp, including areas outside the scope of this notebook. At the end of this document are two more resources that expound the approach taken in staff training related to ***The Tree*** *and* ***Bible Study*** *Sessions*

Hope, Help, Handoff in Humility: This section frames the overall approach to camp ministry, introducing the guiding principles of hope, help, and hand-off in a Christlike posture.

Defining Christian Camping: This section outlines what makes a camp distinctly Christian and highlights key components for excellence: philosophy, people, program, and place. It emphasizes intentional spiritual focus and separation from everyday life.

Mission and Core Values: This section presents a sample camp mission and core values that drive decision-making and daily operations.

Our Gospel Foundation. This section introduces the gospel as the foundation for all camp ministry, clarifying misconceptions and moving from understanding the gospel in theory to personal conviction, repentance, and faith. **Sharing the Gospel** outlines on methods and frameworks for leading others to Christ. **Assurance of Salvation:** This section addresses equips counselors to handle spiritual uncertainty in campers and point them toward Christ with clarity and care.

Union with Christ: This section explains the theological and practical implications of believers' permanent union with Christ, including assurance, Christian living, and eternal perspective.

God's process of change: This section frames biblical change as a process for God's glory. The gospel is both the starting point and ongoing source of inward transformation by the Word of God.

The Counseling Process: Put Off, Renew, Put On: This section introduces Ephesians 4 as a practical framework for spiritual change. The session is structured for use by counselors with campers.

The Tree Model of Counseling: This section presents a framework for understanding spiritual growth. It distinguishes believing responses, which produce godly fruit, from unbelieving responses, which produce sinful fruit. The session moves from describing the model, to interpreting behaviors and applying it in personal and counseling contexts.

Getting to Know God: This section prepares counselors to help campers develop a pattern of Bible study that builds on proper foundations and practical applications.

Four Types of Counseling Situations: This section prepares counselors to identify and navigate a wide range of counseling situations. It emphasizes biblical examples, giving hope, and adaptability.

Building Relationships: This section provides theological foundations and practical strategies for forming Christ-centered relationships at camp and beyond.

Supporting the Local Church: This section highlights how camp ministry cand complement and strengthen a camper's experience within a gospel-teaching church.

Humility and Servant Leadership: This section prepares staff to serve campers sacrificially, following the example of Christ.

HOPE. HELP. HAND-OFF.
In Humility

God's Mission:
"God is on a mission to redeem and restore fallen people to the likeness of His Son to the praise of His glory." (Jim Berg)

Hope
- Giving gospel hope to believers and unbelievers
- Presenting the gospel without confusion
- Relating union with Christ to everyday life

Help
- Understanding how a Christian grows in Christlikeness
- Teaching campers how to know God
- Offering biblical help to campers who face suffering and sin
- Building relationships with campers

Hand-off
- Supporting and helping the local church
- Handing each camper over to the care of a local church for long-term discipleship

In Humility
- Practicing Christlike servanthood and humility

MISSION & CORE VALUES

The Wilds Mission Statement:

Using the unique benefits of Christian camping, we serve people by presenting the Truth of God with the love of God so lives can be changed *to the glory of God*.

The Wilds Core Values:

1. **Faithful to the Bible**

    a. We appeal to the Bible as the final right answer.

    b. Isaiah 40:8 *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.*

2. **Serving the local church**

    a. We recognize the church as God's divine institution and camp ministry as a support to that which God has ordained. We endeavor to honor, strengthen, and help, but not to instruct the local church.

    b. 1 Timothy 3:15 *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

3. **Enjoying life in Christ**

    a. There is something special about the atmosphere and freedom of spirit at a place whose philosophy seeks to glorify God.

    b. Galatians 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.*

4. **Christ-like servants**

    a. Because we want to be like Jesus Christ, we must be servants.

    b. Luke 22:27 *…but I am among you as he that serveth.*

    c. Philippians 2:3 *…but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

5. **Committed to excellence**

    a. We will do things in an excellent way if we prepare as though we are expecting Christ.

    b. Colossians 3:23 *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.*

6. **Environment that promotes spiritual growth**

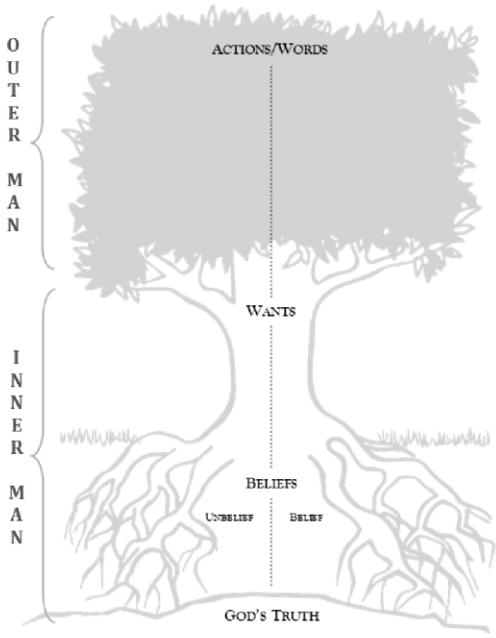
    a. We will seek to create a 24-hour Christ-honoring environment that encourages and edifies.

    b. Colossians 3:1-2 *If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth.*

The Tree: A Short Explanation

Jesus used a simple word picture to illustrate an important truth about people. Just as a tree shows its nature by the fruit it produces, the inner nature of a person—what he wants and what he believes—is revealed by the fruit—the actions and words—produced in his life.

Luke 6:43-45
For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.



This simple illustration gives us so much hope because it shows us that true, lasting change is really possible. But not by just trying to change fruit—taking off the bad and replacing it with good. This kind of change is superficial and won't last. Next season, the same bad fruit will grow again because the tree hasn't really changed. As seen in the tree diagram, a deeper change is needed. We need God to expose the sin in our inner man—our sinful desires and our wrong beliefs about Him. Real change begins when we cry out to Him, "Lord, change my tree!" Repentance on this level that comes from knowing God will result in righteous desires and fruit that bring glory to God.

Understanding how our *actions* (what we do, say, and think) are tied to our *beliefs* helps us begin the process of real and lasting change:

- We believe a lie about God. *(Beliefs)*
- That unbelief influences our desires. *(Wants)*
- Ungodly desires motivate us to act in sinful ways. *(Actions)*

In summary: *You do what you do, and you say what you say, because you want what you want. You want what you want because you believe what you believe about God, about His Word, and about yourself.*

We always please the one we love the most. So, our actions reveal who/what we love. Every sin struggle reveals this process at work in our hearts: we believe, we desire, we act.

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Since the root of every sin is *unbelief*, changing the character of our "tree" means we must know and *believe* the truth about God. This is the most important aspect of biblical change: beholding the glory of God. As we "behold" Him in His Word, we are gradually changed to reflect His glory.

> *2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

This might sound simplistic, but God doesn't make change complicated. The ultimate answer to the difficult problems of life is as simple as the gospel: repent and believe.

With God's help (because we can't do it on our own) we must "put off" what is not like Christ in our lives (both in the outer and inner man). **Repent** of unbelief. Identify and reject the lies we have chosen to believe about God, and replace them with truth. Receive God's Word, submitting to what He says in humble obedience. Prayerfully read and study the Bible to discover the truth about God, and specifically, what He thinks about our sin. Rather than just seeking principles, look for a Person. What does God say about Himself? What do we need to begin believing about His character? Memorize and prayerfully meditate on His Word until it changes us from the inside out (2 Cor. 3:18; Ps. 119:9-11; Pr. 2:1-5; Eph. 5:26). **Believe** what God says. Believers are able to trust what the Bible reveals about God's character. The Bible calls this process the renewing of our minds (Eph. 4:23).

Repent of sinful desires and disobedient actions. Biblical repentance includes confessing sin to God and forsaking it (Pr. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:9); seeking forgiveness from others and making restitution (Acts 24:16; Mt. 5:23-25); and cutting off sin at its source by radically removing it from our lives (Mt. 5:28-30; Col. 3:5-7). With God's help (because we can't do it on our own), we must "put on" righteous desires and actions—seeking to imitate the character of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; 13:14).

New patterns of godly thinking and righteous affections are developed over time as the Spirit works within us, opening our eyes to God's glory and producing in us *reverence* and *love* for Him that lead to *obedience* from the heart (Rom. 6:17). This kind of change requires a personal commitment to "behold" God—reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word with the intent to obey in the power of God's Spirit. Our **belief** in God's Word and trust in His character will be demonstrated by the fruit of obedience in our lives. God has provided the local church, where other believers help us in the process of growth. It is wise to invite accountability (Eccl. 4:9-12; Pr. 27:5-6). Who can help us become more like Jesus?

This is God's design for change to take place in our lives. There is no plan B. God has promised to make each of His children like His Son, and He will not fail in this task! He is changing us through our relationship with Christ. By God's grace, we can see lasting change by choosing to believe God and choosing to live out that belief in loving, dependent obedience.

The various tree examples provided on the LifeLine for Teens website serve to simply illustrate possible actions, desires, and beliefs that may be present in the life of a teen struggling with a certain aspect of sin.[1] While not exhaustive, these examples are intended to help teens and their disciple-makers begin thinking about their specific problem on a deeper level—at the level of the *heart*—where change ultimately needs to take place.

[1] For a more in-depth explanation of the Tree model, please refer to *The Heart of Biblical Change* (available through The Wilds).

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KEYS TO YOUR OWN "GOD & I TIME"

Knowing God is the greatest opportunity that a human being can experience! The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ opened the way for all believers to experience vibrant, intimate communion with God through their union with Him. You can grow daily in your relationship with God by spending time with Him in His Word. Getting to know God isn't complicated, but that doesn't mean it is easy. Relationships of all kinds take work. A growing relationship with God won't happen by accident—you must be intentional. This little booklet provides simple, practical ideas for getting to know your wonderful God in a deeper and more personal way.

Make sure you have a:

- **Set time**—set a regular, consistent time to meet with the Lord. Purpose in your heart to seek God daily. This daily time with God sets your heart for communion with Him throughout the rest of the day.
- **Set place**—be like Jesus and find a place without distractions to meet alone with God (Mt. 14:23; Mk. 6:46; Lk. 6:12).
- **Set study**—resist the urge to be random in your approach to reading and studying the Bible. Working steadily through Scripture will help you grasp the full story of the Bible and better understand the background of passages you stop to study.

Bring the essential materials:

- Bible
- Notebook
- Something to write with
- Time

Principles to follow:

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to open your eyes. *Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law* (Ps. 119:18). The Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers, is the only One who can "open your eyes" to spiritual truth. Through prayer, you demonstrate your dependence on God. You need God's enabling!
- The Bible is all about a Person! Look for God on every page of Scripture. His Words (what He says) reveal His character (who He is). The most important question you can ask as you read is, "What does this passage teach me about God?" (2 Cor. 3:18).

- Be willing to stay in a passage or a study until God changes you. Give God time to work in your heart.
- Be a good "hearer" as God speaks to you through His Word. One way to do this is by asking questions as you read Scripture or study a specific passage. "What do I learn about God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit?" "What does this passage teach me about myself, about sin, or about how I should respond to God?" Keep a record of everything you learn.
- Be a faithful "doer" of what God shows you in His Word (Js. 1:22-25). Ask, "how does knowing this truth about God change me?" By God's grace, what practical action steps will you take to become more like Christ? *Faith* in God and *love* for God will be expressed in *obedience* to God.
- End your daily time in prayer. Thank God for the privilege of getting to know Him. Ask for His help to live out the truth He has shown you in your "God & I Time."

Two Basic Types of Bible Study:
Bible study has often been compared to gardening or farming. Just as different approaches are needed to work the soil on a farm, there are several different approaches to getting our hearts and minds into the soil of God's Word. Sometimes you need a plow to cover large areas of ground. At other times you need a trowel to dig deep into a specific part of the field.

Plow Study:

- Covers large portions of the Bible
- Takes in the breadth of God's Word
- Stays more on the surface

Plow work moves through large portions of Scripture more quickly, looking for specific themes. The key is to prayerfully look for something or *Someone* as you read. Choose a book of the Bible or a specific topic that interests you. Take the next several weeks to read one chapter or more a day, recording everything you learn about that specific topic. For example, do you want to know more about the character of God? Read through the book of Psalms and write down everything you learn about God. Do you want to know what it means to be "in Christ?" Read through the Epistles and record everything you learn about what God has given you through your union with Christ. *Ideas for Getting to Know Your God* (page 9) is full of great plow study ideas. These rich studies will help you learn to "think Bible."

Trowel Study:

- Works thoroughly in a specific area of the Bible
- Takes in the depth of God's Word
- Stays in one place and digs deep

Trowel study involves choosing a passage or verse of Scripture and settling in to study that part of the Bible for a longer period of time. Take several days—or even weeks—to dig deep using *The Inductive Study Method* (page 5). Purpose to stay in that passage until the Lord helps you understand it. Trowel work, though more intensive than plow work, is not complicated. It simply takes time, intentionality, and humble dependence on the Lord.

Both types of Bible study are needed for a balanced diet in our Christian life. Even as you settle down to accurately interpret smaller portions of God's Word, it is helpful for you to have the "big picture" view provided by plow work. Plow and trowel work complement each other. Consistent time in the Word, whatever study you choose, will produce a fuller knowledge of God and His ways.

Your time in the Word should never stop short of ***application*** (1 Cor. 8:1; Js. 1:22-25; Heb. 5:14). Seeing yourself in light of God's nature leads to real change. As you read and study the Bible, ask the Lord to help you apply what you learn to every-day life. What needs to change so that your life better reflects God's character? This step should help you move past just hearing God's Word to actually doing it! Making truth practical means going beyond **general** application (which is fairly simple and non-confrontational: "*I need to pray more*") and actually getting **specific** ("*I will demonstrate my dependence on God by starting each day in prayer*"). Prayerfully consider what action steps you need to take. "How does knowing God change me?" Consider your relationship with God first, then expand your application to relationships with others. Apply truth to your outward ***actions***—what you ***say*** and ***do***—but don't stop there. Target your ***heart***—what you ***believe*** and ***desire***. Finally, take time to ***respond*** to God through prayer.

The goal of Bible study is not to gain academic knowledge. The aim is much higher. God wants you to gain true understanding of what He has communicated about Himself, which ultimately leads to knowing Him better. Remember, the Bible is all about a Person!

Guilt-Driven vs. Glory-Driven

Getting to know God is possible for anyone who truly desires it. God is not hiding. He *invites* us to know Him. God demonstrated His commitment to knowing us when He sent Jesus—who not only made God known to us (Jn. 1:14; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 1:1-3), but also provided the only way for us to have a right relationship with Him (Jn. 14:6). Through Jesus our "hope of glory" is restored (Rom. 5:1-2; 1 Jn. 3:1-3). We get some of this glory *even now* when we behold God in His Word (2 Cor. 3:18). Like Moses, we can pray in faith, "Lord, show me Thy glory" (Ex. 33:18). God loves answering this prayer for His children. He reveals Himself to all who seek for Him in His Word.

Bible study isn't about guilt. It's about glory—God's glory. But a "glory-driven" mindset doesn't negate the simple truth that growing in your relationship with the Lord does not happen accidentally. But neither does it happen by self-effort. Rather, this spiritual discipline requires *dependence*, relying on God for strength to obey and trusting Him to give understanding. Jerry Bridges puts it well,

> We would much rather pray, "Lord, make me godly," and expect Him to "pour" some godliness into our souls in some mysterious way. God does in fact work in a mysterious way to make us godly, but He does not do this apart from the fulfillment of our own personal responsibility…The power and enablement for a godly life comes from the risen Christ and is experienced through our relationship with Him by expressing my dependence on Christ through prayer and by beholding the glory of Christ in His Word. (Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*)

A "guilt-driven" mindset expresses itself in "doing devotions" and checking Bible reading off a list of spiritual things I'm expected to do. A "glory-driven" mindset expresses itself in diligently and dependently seeking God in His Word with the *hopeful expectation* of getting to know Him to become more like Him. Not duty, but delight. Opening the Bible with a desire to see God is an act of faith. Faithfully do your part while trusting God to do what He has promised:

> **Jeremiah 29:13** *And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye search for Me with all your heart.*
>
> **Hebrews 11:6** …*He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*

What is the reward? God Himself! Of course, this is a reward that you cannot hoard. Knowing God is not a selfish pursuit. You *get glory* from God so that you can *give glory* to God. May you devote your life to seeking Him. He is worthy of such devotion.

THE INDUCTIVE STUDY METHOD

There is a big difference between an "inductive" and a "deductive" approach to Bible study. Inductive simply means that you come to the Bible with the desire to examine what the Bible says before you decide what the Bible says. Like a good scientist, you thoroughly investigate all the facts *before* drawing any conclusions. In contrast, a deductive approach to Bible study means that you come to the Bible with preconceived ideas *already* formed, looking for Scripture to support your position. We will often come away with wrong ideas about God, His world, and ourselves when we approach the Bible this way. It is important that you allow God's Word to speak for itself. Of course, unlike a scientist who studies the natural world, we cannot understand spiritual truth using our own intellect. We need God to open our eyes to His truth. This is dependent work!

Choose a passage or verse you would like to study. Get out your Bible, a notebook, and something with which to write. Use the guide below to dig deep into the passage (elements of this guide were taken from *A Place of Quiet Rest* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss). Don't rush. Take several days to prayerfully work through each of the three big questions:

1) ***What does it say?***
2) ***What does it mean?***
3) ***What should I do?***

You don't have to follow every detail listed below—simply use the basic elements of the inductive study method as a guide, at whatever level you feel comfortable. God honors those who seek Him with a tender, humble heart. Record what you learn in a notebook.

Inductive Study Guide

PREPARATION: ***Getting My Heart Ready to Meet with God***

As you open the Word, continually express your dependence on God to help you to understand His Word. Ask God to give you a tender and humble heart that is eager to obey whatever He shows you in His Word. You could call it "obedient listening."

> **Psalm 25:4-5** *Shew me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.*

OBSERVATION: *What Does It Say?*

Start with the most obvious, simple observations about the passage before probing deeper for further understanding.

Simple Observations:

- Consider the **context** ("con" = together; "textus" = woven) of the verse/passage. When we open the Bible to one particular chapter of one particular book, that chapter is connected to what comes before it and what comes after it. Context matters! How is this verse/passage connected to what comes before and after it? Record what you learn.
- Ask **investigative questions** such as who, what, when, where, why, and how. Record what you discover.
    - ***Who*** wrote it? To whom was it written?
    - ***What*** happened? What are the main events?
    - ***When*** was it written? When did the events take place?
    - ***Where*** did it happen? Where is the author/the audience?
    - ***Why*** was it written?
    - ***How*** did it happen? How is the audience expected to respond?
- Look for patterns—**repeated words**, **phrases**, or **ideas** to help you understand what the author intends to emphasize. It might be helpful to mark these patterns with a colored pencil or highlighter.
- Look for the **author's purpose**. Who is writing? Who is he writing to? What is the situation? What problems are being addressed? Is there a single idea that holds everything together? Finding the answers to these questions will help you answer the bigger question, "Why did the author write this?" Apply this same question to God Himself, remembering that He is the ultimate Author!
- Try to locate the **key verse** of the passage.
- Consider **genre** (Is this section of Scripture historical narrative, poetry, prophecy, epistle, or apocalyptic?). Be aware that genres are often mixed together, but wherever you happen to be studying, look for God's character—He is the unifying theme throughout all types of genres.

Deeper Digging:

- Look up the meaning of **key words** in the passage. Don't worry about finding something profound for every word; just look for the essential meaning of the main words in the passage. It is

best to look up the definition in the original languages rather than English. There are many good resources available to help with this process such as *Blue Letter Bible* and *Olive Tree*.

- Look for **"linking words"** (e.g., *therefore, consequently, for, because, since, so*). Linking words help us see the flow of an argument, reveal the connection between different statements, or point our attention to a result.
- Look up **cross-references** to provide a broader understanding of the verse/passage. You can find other related Scripture passages in the margin of your Bible, the concordance located in the back of your Bible, or by using the search feature in an online Bible program. Write down any insights you gain that help you better understand your topic.
- Read the passage in various translations.
- Using the information you have gathered so far, take time to summarize the "big idea" of the passage in your own words.
- After spending personal time in study and meditation on the passage, you may want to consult some trusted commentaries or the notes in a study Bible to gain further insight.

INTERPRETATION: *What Does It Mean?*

The goal of studying the Bible is to understand what God has communicated about Himself so that we can know and glorify Him (Col. 1:9-10). Remember, the Bible is all about a Person! Good interpretation seeks to get at the plain meaning of God's Word. Ask the following kinds of questions to better understand the meaning of the text. Journal your thoughts.

- What does this passage teach me about God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- What does this passage teach me about myself?
- Are there any promises to claim?
- Are there any commands to obey?

APPLICATION*: What Should I Do?*

Prayerfully consider what specific **action steps** you need to take in response to what God has shown you in His Word. Plan to use what you learn. Application is often the hardest step of Bible study. It forces us to be honest with ourselves and with God. Use probing questions, like the ones below, to help you personalize what you are learning. Ask God to enable you to have a whole-hearted response to His Word

(Ps. 119:2, 10): A "whole heart" includes your mind, desires, and will. While application is often a humbling step, it also prepares us to receive grace from God (Js. 4:6).

- Consider your relationship with **God**. *How does knowing God change me?*
- Think about your relationships with **others.** *How does knowing God change the way I relate to others?*
- **Think Bible**: *How does meditating on God's truth impact or change your **beliefs**?*
- **Value Bible**: *How does meditating on God's truth correct your misplaced **desires** or **affections**?*
- **Live Bible:** *What steps of obedience do you need to take to demonstrate a yielded **will** to God?*

Having God expose sin and bring conviction in your life can be a humbling experience, but it is one of the most loving things that He does for you. Like a doctor who tells you the truth about a serious illness in your body, God wants you to understand the incredibly destructive nature of sin in your life. But the good news is that He also provides the cure: the gospel. The gospel reminds you that just as Christ died in your place, He also obeyed in your place. He is your justification and He is your sanctification.

Becoming like Jesus means far more than just imitating Him. Becoming like Jesus means that His life in you becomes more and more of a reality in your daily experience (Gal. 2:20). This is why it is so important to think about the gospel every day. You never can and never will earn God's favor by how well you perform. As a believer you never have to fear the loss of your righteous standing before God. You will always and only relate to God through Jesus, on the basis of His finished work on your behalf. And this means that you are free to face your sin because you don't ever have to fear facing God's wrath. *So apply God's truth to your life with gospel hope, trusting Him to help you obey as you humbly depend on Him.*

Take time to **respond to God** in prayer and worship. Consider writing out your response in the form of a prayer. In this prayer, you might confess and repent of sin, ask for help to change, offer praise to the One Who is worthy, or all of the above!

Finally, do you need **accountability** in this area? Share what you are learning with another believer. Transparent, humble sharing helps cement truth in our hearts and mobilizes helpful accountability.

IDEAS FOR GETTING TO KNOW YOUR GOD

Compiled by The Wilds Staff

One of the keys to successful Bible reading is keeping your mind engaged; always be looking for *something* as you read. Also, remember that every page of Scripture reveals God, so always be looking for *Someone* as you read! Several of the ideas reference a study guide; these are available through The Wilds.

- **Choose a Bible passage and ask the following questions** (fill a notebook with everything God teaches you as you study):
  - What do these verses teach me about God?
  - What do these verses teach me about Jesus Christ?
  - What do these verses teach me about the Holy Spirit?
  - What do these verses teach me about Satan's lies?
  - What do these verses teach me about others?
  - What do these verses teach me about myself?
  - Is there a command for me to keep?
  - Is there a sin that I need to avoid or confess?
  - Is there a promise for me to claim?
  - Is there an example for me to follow?
  - Is there a way my thinking or my actions need to change?
- **Create a notebook on the character of God**; this is called a *Biography of God*. Simply read the Bible and seek to answer the question: *What do I know about my God?* (Study guide and book by Mardi Collier available.)
- **Study the names of God**. God's names reveal specific aspects of His nature (e.g., Jehovah, Adonai, Elohim, Abba). How does knowing this name of God change how you to relate to Him?
- **Study different aspects of God's character** (His attributes) in depth (e.g., God is good, God is all-present, God is in control). Look for passages where God reveals that specific aspect of His nature to someone (e.g., Jonah: God is all-present, Job: God is all-wise, Joseph: God is good).
- **Choose a Gospel** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) to read through. Look for one specific truth about Christ as you read (several ideas are listed below). Keep a notebook of everything you learn about Christ in that specific area. As you study the life of Jesus, consider how you can be more like Christ—applying what you learn to your personal life. (Study guide *What do I Know about Christ?* available.)

- Who is Jesus? What did Jesus say about Himself? What did He say about His relationship to the Father?
- How did Jesus spend His time?
- How did Jesus treat others? With whom did He associate? What kinds of people did Jesus seek out and interact with?
- How was Jesus an example of a servant?
- How did Jesus demonstrate humility? What did Jesus teach about pride and humility?
- What did Jesus teach that He wants me to do in my life?
- What does Jesus love? What does Jesus hate?
- What did Jesus say about relationships (with Him and others)?
- What do we have in Jesus? What has He given to me?

- **Study the "I Am" statements of Christ**. (Jn. 4:26; 6:35; 7:37-38; 8:12, 23, 58; 9:5; 10:7, 11, 36; 11:25; 13:13; 14:6; 15:1; Rev. 1:8, 17)
- **Study out what the epistles say about the believer's union with Christ**. As you read through the epistles, mark every reference to "in Christ." Look for phrases like *in Christ, in Him, with Him, in whom, by Christ, from Him, through Him*, etc. Write down everything you learn about what it means to be *in Christ.* (*What Does God Say About my Identity?* and *Union with Christ* study guides available.)
- **Study Psalm 119**. Mark every reference to God's Word (a variety of synonyms are used). What is God's Word like? What does it do? What kind of attitude does the psalmist have towards it? Choose a section of this psalm to memorize. Pray for God to increase your love for His Word.
- **Study 1 Corinthians 13**. (*Love of God* study guide available.) How are each of these qualities of love displayed in the life of Jesus Christ? Apply what you learn to a specific relationship in your life.
- **Read through the New Testament marking every reference to prayer**. Record what you learn in a journal. Make specific application to your own life. What needs to change about how, why, and what you pray because of what God showed you in His Word?
- **Study the "one another" passages in the New Testament** (e.g., Rom. 12:10, Eph. 4:1-2, 1 Thess. 5:11, Heb. 10:24, 1 Pt. 4:9). Think of at least one specific example of how Jesus

fulfilled each "one another" command during His earthly life. Apply what you learn to specific relationships in your family/church family.

- **Read through the book of Acts** (one chapter a day) looking for one theme as you read (see following examples). Keep a notebook of everything you learn about that specific theme. Apply what you learn to your own life as a follower of Jesus.
  - How did the resurrection of Jesus change the disciples?
  - What is the gospel (there are over 40 sermons and summaries of the gospel in the book of Acts)? What can you learn about sharing the gospel from these examples?
  - Record various responses to the gospel. How did the early Church see the gospel triumphing in spite of opposition?
  - What does Acts teach about the Holy Spirit? (*What does He do? What is He like?*) The Spirit always points people's attention to Jesus; so whenever you see the Spirit, look for Christ nearby!
  - How did first-century believers pray? Where and when did they pray? What did they pray about? What specific answers to prayer do you find in the book of Acts?
  - What did discipleship look like in the early church? Who did believers engage? When and where did they engage others? How did they advance God's kingdom in *everyday life*? What motivated them to live this way?
- **Read through Jeremiah,** marking any reference to pride (in word, action, or thought) in one color and any reference to humility (in word, action, or thought) in a contrasting color. Catalogue the references in a journal. Consider which characteristics you display in your life. (*Pride vs. Humility in Jeremiah* study guide available.)
- **Do a biographical study on different characters in the Bible** (e.g., Joseph, Ruth, Joshua, Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, Mordecai, the Pharisees, the man born blind, Paul, Tabitha, Festus).
  - What can you learn about God from their lives and circumstances? (e.g., Joseph's God, Ruth's God, etc.)
  - Record what *they* knew and believed about God/Jesus and how that affected their lives.
  - Did this person give God glory or seek to rob God of His glory? How did they do that?
  - What can you learn from observing their lives and the consequences of their choices? (situation/reaction/outcome)

- **Focus on an area of your life where growth in Christlikeness is needed.**
  - Do a word study using an exhaustive concordance like Strong's or Young's to find many references with words related to that area. Bible study tools are also available online through resources like *Blue Letter Bible*.
  - Study verses on a particular topic that you especially struggle with (e.g., anger/bitterness, selfishness, joy, contentment, depression, trust, lying, complaining, worry, serving, prayer, pride/humility, the tongue, guilt, relationships). Answer the question: *What does God say about this issue?* Record what God teaches you and what specific changes you plan to make with His help.
  - Use *The Renewing Guide* and the *Lord, Change my Tree* study template to behold a specific attribute of God; then "counsel yourself" using *The Tree*. These tools are designed to help you get to the "heart" of your spiritual struggle by demonstrating the connection between your more obvious outward sins and your less obvious inward sins of unbelief. Use these tools to work out the renewing process (Eph. 4:22-24) on a personal level (study guides available).
- **Read Proverbs.**
  - Study the different types of people found in Proverbs. Make a page for each one (e.g., the simple, the fool, the scorner, the wise, the sluggard). Record what you learn about the characteristics of each person (What is this person like? What do they do?), God's perspective on each person (What does God say about them?), and the consequences each person faces as a result of their actions/attitudes. Then make personal application to your own life. Which person are you most like? What steps do you need to take to grow in wisdom? (*Your Relationship to Wisdom* study guide available.)
  - Study through Proverbs, verse by verse, recording everything you learn about a specific topic (e.g., the fear of the Lord, wisdom, foolishness, friends, the tongue, work, possessions).
  - Study everything God says about family relationships (e.g., obedience to parents, listening to instruction, giving instruction, rearing children, husband/wife relationship).
  - The book of Proverbs has 31 chapters. Read one proverb for each day of the month. What do you learn about God?

As you find a life principle that applies to you, write it in a notebook and meditate on it.

- **Read a passage or chapter once a day for a full month** (e.g., Philippians 2, Colossians, James, 1 Peter, 1 John, Titus, Romans 6). Look for God's character, major themes, and timeless truths. Record your thoughts and observations in a journal.

- **Read through the Bible**.
  - Use a One Year Bible that has assigned daily readings: a passage in the Old Testament and a passage in the New Testament, plus part of Psalms and Proverbs.
  - Read through the Bible chronologically (plans can be found online).
  - A good study Bible is very useful in helping you understand difficult passages or words.
  - Each day record at least one thing you learn about God from your reading.
  - Keep a list of God's promises as you find them in Scripture.
  - Encourage a friend to do this with you. Periodically share what you are learning about God.
- **Read through a specific book of the Bible**. Use a single-volume commentary or the introduction to the book in a study Bible to try to learn the overall theme of a book before reading it; then read, with colored pencils in hand, looking for one specific theme. *Examples:*
  - Leviticus – holiness, set apart, sanctified
  - Deuteronomy – command, observe, remember, blessing vs. curse, God's concern for the outcast/oppressed
  - 1 & 2 Kings – look for what made a king good or bad in the eyes of the Lord, look for the phrase "the Lord said" and write down what God says to people or about circumstances.
  - Esther – although God's name is not mentioned in this book, His sovereign hand is very present! Look for His "fingerprints" throughout the story.
  - Ecclesiastes – vanity, under the sun, wisdom vs. foolishness, the pursuit of satisfaction
  - Isaiah – predictions of the Messiah (both His first and second coming), write down what you learn about God (His character, names, justice, mercy, redemptive plan, etc.))
  - Jeremiah – pluck up/destroy, build/plant, listen/hear, pride/humility

- Minor Prophets – God's justice and mercy (they usually appear together), the purpose for God's wrath
- John – believe (believe in), witness/testimony, life (eternal), light, come and see, true
- Romans – gospel, faith, righteousness, sin, death, life, grace, saved
- Galatians – law vs. grace, gospel, grace, faith, promise
- Philippians – joy/rejoice, faith, mind/think
- Titus – faith, sound doctrine/teaching, self-controlled, work
- 1 & 2 Peter – suffering and glory, how they relate
- Hebrews – the preeminence of Christ, Jesus is better/greater
- 1 John – believe, love, obey/keep His commandments, abide, know (evidences of salvation)
- Revelation – names of Christ, the character of God, look for parallels to the book of Genesis

- **Use a Bible commentary or a Bible doctrines book to study:**
  - A book of the Bible (Read the book through a couple of times before you start.)
  - A doctrine you would like to understand better such as salvation, sanctification, baptism, union with Christ, the church, or the Holy Spirit's work (a high school level Bible doctrines' book can be helpful).
  - A familiar passage: e.g., the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5), biblical love (1 Cor. 13), communication (Eph. 4:15-32), joy (Phil. 4), the tongue (Js. 3), the good Shepherd (Ps. 23, Jn. 10), the virtuous woman (Pr. 31)
- **Read Psalms regularly:**
  - As part of your daily God & I Time, or occasionally mixed in for variety
  - To help you better know and appreciate the character of God, to gain His perspective on life, and to find stability in what is always unchangingly true about Him.
  - Explore different types of Psalms so that you have a specific place in Scripture where you can turn to talk to God about the various experiences of life (e.g., Psalm 73—a Psalm of Lament to help you acknowledge God in your pain; Psalm 32—a Psalm of Confession when you need to seek God's forgiveness; Psalm 103—a Psalm of Praise to help you express your gratitude for God's goodness). The Psalms demonstrate how God's people can express an entire range of emotions and experiences to Him—from suffering and

sorrow to victory and joy. Personalize these Psalms and use them to worship God.

- **Study issues that are pertinent in your life:**
  - How to lead someone to Christ; how to be a good friend; how to fight sin and temptation; how to face trials with joy; how to live with an eternal perspective; etc.
  - Current cultural issues you are facing in your community. What does God say about it in His Word? How does God want me to respond to others who think differently?
- **Purchase a Bible study book or a published devotional guide**. Be careful that you get one that helps you study the Bible. Sometimes even good books get us away from studying our Bibles. Examples of good devotional guides from The Wilds:
  - *God & I Time Treasures I, II, and III* by Ken Collier and Rand Hummel
  - *6-week Bible Studies* (James, Joseph, Colossians, Titus, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 John, New Testament Postcards, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Peter, Romans 12, Matthew 6, etc.) by Rand Hummel
- **Ask other Christians for their favorite Bible study ideas.**

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