

MORE> *Real*

STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed to be used either on your own or in a group

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

PERSONAL

Read through the chapter and then take some time reflecting on the questions. Be as honest as you can and try not to skip the more awkward questions. You might find it helpful to write your answers in a journal.

GROUPS

The study guide works well in pairs or small groups.

Each chapter has an Ice Breaker, designed to get people talking before the questions go a bit deeper.

It's worth having a Bible to hand as some of the discussions revolve around specific passages and stories from the Bible.

You know your group dynamics and needs so feel free to adapt the questions or add in new ones.

At the end of each section there is a Creative Moment and Next Step. The Creative Moment may take a bit of preparation (e.g. getting some pens and paper) and the Next Step is worth following up during the week.

As always, group discussion will be far better if people are open and honest. If you model this then you'll set the tone and others will follow. Struggle with being open and honest? Read the Real Relationships chapter!

EBOOK

The eBook of the MORE > Real Study Guide can be found at ivpbooks.com/more-resources.

VIDEO

MORE > Real Study Guide videos can be found at ivpbooks.com/more-resources or on [IVP UK's YouTube channel](#).

The title of each chapter also links to the respective Study Guide video.

REAL FAITH

Key verse: Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68)

Ice Breaker: What did you believe about God as you were growing up?

Is doubt ever discussed in your church/small group/friendship group?

Have you had any friends walk away from their faith? Why do you think they did? How did it make you feel about your own faith?

'Doubt is not the opposite of faith but often a sign of it. Doubt can reveal that you want to know the truth and are not running from it.' Do you agree? Is there a difference between doubt and cynicism?

When do you doubt God's existence? Do you live like God is real?

Read John 6:66. Have you ever had a moment where you've found yourself saying 'A big part of me wants to walk away but how can I? I know you're God and the only way to heaven.'

What are you doing to build a strong, flexible faith?

Creative Moment: Get some paper or a journal and brainstorm the words 'faith' and 'doubt'.

Next Step: What are some practical steps you can take to build a strong flexible faith? How can you start implementing them this week?

REAL PRAYER

Key verse: How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ... But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me. (Psalm 13:1, 5-6)

Ice Breaker: What things do you pray about most?

Do you believe that praying makes a difference? Does your prayer life reflect your answer?

'Real prayers come from deep within. They're raw and genuine. They're very normal and may sound unimpressive. They're full of real, heartfelt words and eternal truths.' Would this be a description of your prayers?

'Emotions can deceive. We all know how fragile our feelings are and how easily they can change. They can be affected by tiredness, alcohol, stress, hormones and even sunlight. And the stronger they become the more they obscure our vision. We can end up being so locked into a moment that we lose perspective.' At what points do you find yourself most impacted by your emotions? How can prayer and fixing your eyes on Jesus realign your perspective?

Have you ever had a moment where it was hard to believe and say that God was good? How long did it take to get to that point and how did it feel when you eventually did?

Creative Moment: Write out a prayer to God.

Next Step: When you next experience pain, confusion or disappointment pray using the model of Psalm 13: 'God, I feel like ...; you seem like ..., but I will worship you because I know you are ...'

REAL GRACE

Key verse: And you, who were dead in your trespasses... God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Ice Breaker: Did you ever shoplift as a kid? Were you caught?

When you read the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) what lessons do you learn for your own life?

The word 'grace' gets used a lot in Christian circles but can be difficult to define. How would you explain grace?

'The jarring truth is that there is evil inside each of us. The capacity for the worst of actions is common to man.'

How easy do you find it thinking that you could be capable of such actions?

Which of these can be your most common responses when you're confronted with your sin: deny, downplay, defend or deflect?

Is repentance a common response and occurrence in your life?

'The greatest and most freeing truth you can ever discover is that you were a lost, blind wretch but that Jesus has found you and given you sight and poured out an amazing grace that never runs dry.' How would your thoughts and actions be different if you had a deeper understanding of grace? How would it impact your pride? How would it impact your shame?

Creative Moment: Write out some of the sins you've been struggling with recently. Repent of them and then destroy the paper as a symbolic reminder that God has removed your sins 'as far as the east is from the west' (Psalm 103:12).

Next Step: Do you have an accountability partner? Someone who you can confess to, repent with and help point you to the grace of God? If not, find someone soon.

REAL GROWTH

Key verse: But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” (Mark 4:20)

Ice Breaker: Have you ever successfully kept a plant alive?

The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4 & Matthew 13) talks of 4 types of ground that we can be. It tells us the way to experience real growth and human flourishing. Let's look at some of the questions that arise from each:

1. The Path: Are you aware of the effects of the devil in your life?
2. Rocky Ground: How have you found coming down from moments of spiritual highs?
3. Thorns: To what extent are unhealthy attitudes towards money, relationships and family affecting your life? What's the biggest thorn in your life right now and how close is it to choking you out?
4. Good Soil: 'When you hear his words and receive Jesus then those seeds of truth become planted within you and then the natural response is to grow.' Has that been true in your own life?

Creative Moment: Get a plant. Try to keep it alive. Whenever you look at it ask God to make your heart good soil.

Next Step: 'Our actions are the overflow of what we believe. It's why in Matthew 7:20 Jesus says that we know what people are like by their fruit.' Look at your actions this week and reflect on what they reveal about what you believe.

REAL COST

Key verse: Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27)

Ice Breaker: What's the most expensive piece of clothing you ever bought? Was it worth it?

What do you take away from the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-21)?

Was Jesus being extreme or harsh when telling the man to give everything away? How would you feel if Jesus had said that to you? Would you (honestly) give the same advice to a 'Rich Young Ruler' in your own church?

When sharing the gospel and discipling someone how and when should we talk about the cost of following Jesus and what that person will need to sacrifice?

Does the kingdom of heaven feel like a treasure that's worth you giving everything for? (Matthew 13:44). What have you sacrificed and has it felt worth the cost?

Is there anything you're holding back? If you went to Jesus, as the Rich Young Ruler did, what might he challenge you to do?

Creative Moment: Listen to some worship songs that are rich in truths about all that God has done.

Next Step: Ask God to identify anything you love more than him then take steps this week to re-order your loves.

REAL HAPPINESS

Key verse: 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.' (Luke 22:42)

Ice Breaker: How bad a procrastinator are you?

What are some of the places you go to escape? (e.g. digital worlds, substances, busyness, the past, the future, shallowness)

Phones are increasingly one of the most common escapes. How regularly is it one for you? Note: Many smartphones now tell you how long you've spent on certain apps. Take a look – it could be a revealing insight!

To what extent do you have a tendency for avoidance or addiction?

What are you currently escaping? Why are you escaping it? What is God's truth in this situation?

'He endured the cross for the joy of having a relationship with you and with me, no longer restricted by our sin. Instead of punishment we receive mercy, instead of death we receive life, and instead of despair we receive hope. Because Jesus didn't escape, we can be present; we can know joy.' As you reflect on all that Jesus endured so that he could have a relationship with you, what response and emotions does it stir?

Creative Moment: Write out a truth that you need to remember this week. Put it somewhere you'll see it e.g. your mirror or phone background.

Next Step: Fast one of your escapes this week and use the time and discomfort to address the deeper issues head on.

REAL RELATIONSHIP

Key verse: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Ice Breaker: How has social media positively and negatively impacted your relationships?

'The central issue is this: if you don't have authenticity, you don't have relationship. You're not in a real relationship with someone if you're not honest, open and vulnerable, because they're not in a relationship with you – they're just in a relationship with a shallow projection of you.' Why do you think there can be a tendency not to show weakness in our friendship groups and churches?

'Right at the beginning, God said that it is not good for us to be alone. Nothing combats loneliness and cultivates closeness like saying, 'Me too. I get it. I'm with you.' What has been the impact in your life when you're struggling with something and someone shared that they have had the same issue?

Do you find it difficult admitting that you're wrong? Why/why not?

Are there ways that you could be like the mighty elephant in the story: having the ability to be free but still living bound by shame?

What would more freedom look like in your life?

Creative Moment: Send someone an encouraging message.

Next Step: Look for ways this week to be honest and open. If you're at a small group then share something you're struggling with and would like prayer for.

REAL SUCCESS

Key verse: But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Ice Breaker: Did you ever go to a Christian summer camp or anything similar? What were the best and worst moments?

How has life been similar or different than you expected?

‘There is an idolatry of magnitude. ... For things to be of value we believe they need to be impressive. They need to be striking, attractive, excellent, documented, recognized, notable, liked and tweeted about.’ In what ways do we display the idolatry of magnitude in our own lives and in our churches?

Are we called to be ‘history makers’?

‘We view success by the three R’s: Riches. Reputation. Relationships ... We run hard for these markers of success. They can sometimes be unhealthy but often they’re good things. Either way, they will never fully satisfy. They will never bring the fulfilment we long for. Why? Because they are temporary and unstable.’ What do your behaviour, thoughts and decisions reveal about your view of riches, reputation and relationships? What have been moments when you’ve experienced their emptiness?

What stands out most to you from the story of Naaman and the servant girl? (2 Kings 5)

How have you struggled with comparison? In a moment when you’ve found yourself getting jealous have you ever tried to celebrate their success instead?

How easy do you find it to fix your eyes on the things above? In what ways can you do that more? How would a greater eternal perspective affect how you live your life?

Creative Moment: How do you want to be remembered? What would a successful life look like for you? Pray about it, write it out and then reflect on whether the way you spend your time, energy and resources reflect those dreams.

Next Step: Spend time this week thinking about the unshakable, unchangeable truths of who God is and who he's called you to be. Ask him that those truths would sink deep into your heart and shape every area of your life.