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Are you ready to discover the power of the seven principles?

This study guide for *Seven Principles for Living Bravely* gives you and your study group an 8-week reading plan to tackle one chapter each week and get the most out of your spiritual journey through the book.

We believe the seven principles you will encounter in this book will give you the strength and resolve to thrive in any season of life. And do you know what the best part is? By using this guide, you can take this journey with others and learn how the seven principles apply to an entire community – not just individuals.

In this guide you will find summaries, discussion questions, and helpful verses that will enhance your reading experience and kickstart spiritual growth in your life. So, grab some friends, grab a copy of the book, commit to just one chapter a week, and find out for yourself how seven simple principles can transform your life.

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LET'S GET STARTED!



Week 1 – Introduction

Summary

Rabbi Eger and Rev. Thomas had been friends for many years – sharing their personal and professional lives through the good times and the bad. When COVID-19 forced us to stay home, prevented us from seeing loved ones, and put a stop to in-person worship, the world was forever changed. Even ministers and spiritual leaders had to find comfort in the chaos, so Rabbi Eger and Rev. Thomas looked to one another for guidance and wisdom from their respective faith traditions. This is how the idea for *Seven Principles* began, and now they want to share what they've learned with you.

Discussion

1. *Describe your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Who did you look to for comfort and guidance during that time?*
2. *As we transition into a new, post-pandemic era, are you optimistic, pessimistic, indifferent, or unsure about the future? How do your feelings about the future affect your everyday life?*
3. *What do you hope to get out of this book?*
4. *We all have weaknesses, shortcomings, and areas of our lives that we want to improve, but we don't always know how to get where we want to be. In which areas of your life do you want to see improvement? What goals do you want to reach?*
5. *Who do you look up to as an example of strength, resolve, achievement, or spiritual fortitude? What qualities do they possess or what principles do they practice that others can learn from?*

Verse of the Week

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

—Ecclesiastes 3:1

We as human beings know all too well what it means to go through difficult seasons of life. Nevertheless, the transitions can be abrupt and a new season can come as a surprise. No matter what season you find yourself in, Ecclesiastes shows us that you are there for a reason and that every season is a part of life that you can handle.

Week 2 – A Time to Mourn

Summary

“This we can affirm, that our spiritual well-being demands we attend to our grief and our losses.” (pg.18)

True healing requires addressing and accepting the damage that has been done. Just like the five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance – it’s important to remember that healing comes in stages and takes time. The magnitude of loss that the world witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be ignored or forgotten, nor should it. There is always a time to mourn because without mourning we cannot move on to any other spiritual principle. Every culture and tradition practices mourning in its own way for an important reason: grief makes sense of the past and sets the foundation for a transformed future.

Discussion

1. *Did you experience loss in the COVID-19 pandemic? Have you experienced loss recently?*
2. *We tend to be busy, busy people. Has it been a challenge for you to practice mourning? Do you ever encounter obstacles or distractions that get in the way?*
3. *What excuses do we sometimes use to avoid confronting difficult moments from our past or our present that might warrant us to practice mourning?*
4. *What has been your experience in seasons of grief? How did you process those moments? What helped you get through it?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of mourning into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”

—Psalm 34:18

God is always close at hand, but the Bible makes it a point to teach us that God is especially attentive to our grief and close to us in our sorrow. When we find ourselves in a season of grief, we can be confident that our tears are never wasted and that someone is always nearby to share our sorrows with us.

Week 3 – A Time for Truth

Summary

“We don’t practice truth as a spiritual principle because it is convenient but because it is a matter of life and death.” (pg.34)

Whether in emergency situations like a pandemic or in the course of everyday life, the principle of truth telling is fundamental to the wellbeing of society. Unfortunately, we have seen what happens when people lie or give false testimony throughout history. The consequences can be severe. As people of faith communities, it is especially important for us to tell the truth. If we truly care about others like we say we do, we will find the courage to speak up even when doing so is unpopular. To find that courage, we must start by doing the one thing we often fail to do: telling *ourselves* the truth first.

Discussion

1. *Why is the truth sometimes difficult to accept? Why is lying sometimes the more attractive option?*
2. *Have you ever been caught in a lie? What were the consequences?*
3. *What are the costs of failing to tell the truth? How can lies damage your relationships, your communities, or you?*
4. *Not everything in life is black and white. So, what do you do when the truth isn’t so clear?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of truth telling into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“This is what you must do: Tell the truth to each other. Render verdicts in your courts that are just and that lead to peace.”

—Zechariah 8:16

Truth telling is a universal principle that families, communities, and entire nations are built upon. When people make false accusations and lies spread, societies crumble. If we’re going to build up others and be strong members of our communities, we must tell the truth to one another because truth is the foundation of justice and peace.

Week 4 – A Time for Rest

Summary

“We are human beings, not human doings. Learning how to be and not constantly to do, run, and produce is an essential expression of our humanity.” (pg.49)

Our culture is rife with pressure to go, go, go. When is there ever time to do the single most important thing our bodies, minds, and spirits need – rest? In one sense, the residual effects of the pandemic were a blessing in disguise. Staying at home, not going into the office, and greatly cutting down on social activities produced a kind of enforced rest. In the Bible, the Sabbath day is given as a day of rest because God knows that’s what we need and that if we’re not careful, we’ll burn ourselves out. When we practice the principle of rest, we’re taking important countermeasures to combat fear and anxiety, while strengthening our immunity and mental health.

Discussion

1. *Be honest, do you get enough rest? If not, what may be getting in the way?*
2. *How did you cope with pandemic shutdowns and isolation? Did the break from the typical hustle and bustle make you more restful or more anxious?*
3. *Why is rest so important to our well-being?*
4. *Practicing rest can look different to different people. What does practicing rest look like to you?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of rest into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwelling places.”

—Leviticus 23:3

Rest is so important for living a healthy, balanced life that it’s even given as a mandate in the Bible. What would it look like if we practiced Sabbath rest not as an obligation but embraced it as a gift? To do this, we need to shift our mindset and carefully consider the intrinsic value and benefits of rest and accept that rest is fundamental to being human.

Week 5 – A Time for Love

Summary

“Giving love, true love, is when we offer up our time and our strengths and our gifts especially when it is hard to do so.” (pg.56)

In English, we have only one word for love, but in biblical Greek there are a variety of words to describe different kinds of love. Why? Because love is critical to a community of faith, especially *agape* love, which puts the needs of others before our own. The pandemic demonstrated our capacity to practice sacrificial love on behalf of others, even when it was difficult to give up our own comforts. This love reflects God’s love, who first loves us even when we mistakenly believe that we are unlovable. We are imprinted by God’s love, and therefore we have the ability – and the responsibility – to practice that same love for others, even those we have a hard time getting along with.

Discussion

1. *What makes loving others so difficult to do? What makes it easy?*
2. *Why do we seek out love? Why do we tend to thrive in loving relationships?*
3. *Some have remarkable capacities to love others no matter the sacrifice. Is there someone in your life who excels in showing sacrificial love?*
4. *Agape means sacrificial love. What would be the most difficult thing to sacrifice in your life in order to show someone agape love?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of love into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.”

—Psalm 89:1

It is possible to practice intentional love toward others because God is the source of that love. God has given us the tools and the instructions to love one another because God loves us. It’s up to us to commit to love even when we’ve reached a breaking point with others. Loving one another isn’t always easy, but its rewards are immeasurable.

Week 6 – A Time for Prayer

Summary

“Prayer is an invitation to call upon oneself to do better, reach higher, and refine our character and behavior.” (pg.65)

Prayer is often viewed – and rightly so! – as a way to look outward, to give thanks, and reflect on the world around us. But prayer is just as much about examining oneself. Even the Hebrew word ‘to pray’ means to judge oneself. Prayer is a universal principle that can be found in many religious expressions that take the practice beyond mere words to incorporate physical movement and emotional expression. Prayer offers the benefits of reflection, renewal, and the opportunity to consider the mysteries of the world around us. It not only fills the heart and soul; it gives definition and clarity to hope.

Discussion

1. *How often do you pray? Do you find it to be a challenge or a gift to find time for prayer?*
2. *When you pray, what do you pray for? How does prayer affect your life?*
3. *Do you incorporate movement, memorization, or other methods into your prayer? How does this affect or enhance your prayer life?*
4. *Is there a prayer warrior in your life who prays reliably and thrives off of praying for others? How can you learn from them?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of prayer into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come.”

—Psalm 65:2

Prayer is never spoken in a vacuum. God hears everyone’s prayers. But what do we seek to gain from prayer? Since prayer emphasizes self-reflection, it can never be transactional. So, let us consider the contemplative nature of prayer and its call to examine our own lives and appreciate what we have been graciously given.

Week 7 – A Time for Joy

Summary

“The secret to happiness and contentment begins with a reckoning that includes loving yourself, warts and all, and accepting who you are in the world even as you try to improve who you are in the world.” (pg.91)

Everyone wants to be happy, but nobody seems to know how to *stay* happy. The problem gets even worse when our circumstances feel like a weight on our shoulders that we can’t carry. Through pandemics and wars, trials and tribulations, people have found strength to continue by practicing joy through gratitude and laughter. Humorists and wise counselors throughout the ages have reminded us that the line between laughter and pain is paper-thin. When we choose to practice joy, we acknowledge our circumstances, no matter how negative, and find the path to persevere.

Discussion

1. *How often do you feel happiness or contentment in your life? What prevents you from feeling that contentment all the time?*
2. *In times of restlessness, how do you cope? Are there people, activities, or things that you look to in order to reclaim a sense of joy or contentment in your life?*
3. *Is there someone in your life who exudes joy and happiness no matter what situation they may be in? How do they find ways to cultivate joy?*
4. *There will always be seasons of mourning and moments when we need to grieve. So, how do you determine when it’s time for joy to enter the picture?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of joy into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.”

—Proverbs 31:25

We all go through gloomy seasons where happiness eludes us. Practicing joy is the antidote for times such as these. Joy doesn’t foolishly overlook the situation, but rather re-contextualizes it and sees the inevitability of brighter days ahead. By practicing joy, we too can find the strength to laugh in the midst of hardship and uncertainty.

Week 8 – A Time for Hope

Summary

“Faith it until you make it. Sometimes you have to accept the promises of God on faith, knowing that God has been faithful before and God will be faithful again, and just hold on tight.” (pg.108)

Hope is a basic human need, which means that when hope is broken or lost it can send us into a tailspin. Where do we find hope, and how do we keep it? The fact that we are here, that we have meaning and purpose, means we were created in a spirit of hopefulness and expectation. In the biblical sense, hope means being confident no matter what twists and turns you encounter, and we can take inspiration from the numerous people who demonstrate biblical hope day in and day out – doctors, nurses, ministers, family members, and survivors. If we want to find hope and keep it, we must learn from others who know what it means to hang in and hang on...because a new season of life is just up ahead.

Discussion

1. *Why is hope so important to being human? Where do you think this need for hope comes from?*
2. *Have there been moments in your life when you felt hopeless? How did you find a way to overcome?*
3. *Who in your life demonstrates hope? How do they do it?*
4. *How does hope relate to faith? How do the two make contact in your life?*
5. *What was something valuable that you learned from this chapter? What can you do this week to incorporate the principle of hope into your life?*

Verse of the Week

“Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”

—Proverbs 23:18

By its very nature, practicing hopefulness requires us to foster a courageous faith in what’s coming, even when we can’t yet see it. Having hope means having a well-founded confidence in a brighter tomorrow, and we can strengthen that hope by remembering that we were created for a plan and a purpose.