

PLAN 1: Growing the intimacy and intensity of your faith

21 days (roughly 25 minutes per day)

In this plan we will look at growing in the intimacy and intensity of your faith. We will look at the books in the Bible that are the most intimate and intense or dramatic. We will start out in the book of Psalm, the prayer book of the Bible, much of which includes prayers by King David as his life is on the line and he is in a deep place of hardship or need. We will then transition to the Gospel of Mark, which is the shortest and probably most dramatic version of Jesus's story. We will move from there to the book of Job, which is a story of a man who had it all losing everything - this will help us grapple with the subject of loss, which is intense. From there we move to Ecclesiastes, which was written by the wisest man ever, who also had 700 wives, and yet was depressed. He writes, in his deep wisdom, about the real meaning of life, and we discover that he had everything we typically put in front of God in life, yet it was worthless. We will end with a couple of verses that illustrate the true intensity and intimacy that God is looking for in our faiths.

Day 1: Psalm 1-17

Day 2: Psalm 18-30

Day 3: Psalm 31-41

Day 4: Psalm 42-54

Day 5: Psalm 55-70

Day 6: Psalm 71-80

Day 7: Psalm 81-92

Day 8: Psalm 93-107

Day 9: Psalm 108-118

Day 10: Psalm 119-127

Day 11: Psalm 128-150 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here the prayer book of the Bible. The authors of the Psalms call us to take our faith deeper, to "trust in Him at all times and pour out your heart to Him" (Psalm 62:8). The idea of pouring out our hearts to Him through prayer and meditation and in the way that we live our everyday lives, this takes the intensity of our faith to a whole new level. Psalm 139:24: "See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." - this verse doesn't just call us to quit the big sins. It says to see if there is ANY offensive way within us and our lives, and to lead us in an

everlasting, endless road of improvements. The intimacy and intensity of our faiths are clearly furthered here. We typically find no interest in these advanced types of teachings, but it's what God calls us to do. We now turn to the Gospel of Mark, which is the shortest and probably most dramatic version of Jesus's story.

Day 12: Mark 1-5

Day 13: Mark 6-9

Day 14: Mark 10-13

Day 15: Mark 14-16 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here the life of Jesus. I think that those that are interested in Christianity or looking to follow God on a deeper level could learn a lot here - how Jesus lived His everyday life, the way that He died for others in order to forgive their sins - it should shake up the average Christian. He did so much more than we do. We cared so much more. Our faith is blown out of the water by His. We are called to level up. This story, and the way that Jesus operated, introduces a level of intensity in our faith that we simply would not otherwise strive to. But I would encourage you to. And we are called to. Live like Jesus, nothing less. We now turn to the story of Job, a man who has it all and loses everything so fast - an intense, intimate story that will help us grapple with loss.

Day 16: Job 1-11

Day 17: Job 12-21

Day 18: Job 22-32

Day 19: Job 33-42 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see in Job the intense, intimate story of a man (Job) who has it all and loses everything so fast. He was close to God, had family, wealth, and good health - it would be arrogant to want more than this in life. He lost it all. The Devil approached God and proposed that Job be tested. He made the claim that Job was only following God because he had things good - Satan didn't actually care, he just wanted to torture the man - and he did. Job lost all those things. His family died, anyone he had left hated him, he lost his wealth, he began to be crippled and tortured with a long list of health issues and pain, and his love towards God was contentious because of his anger towards the situation. This is an intense, dramatic story. But we can still relate. Whether it's a bad day or a bad life, hardship is hardship, and loss is loss, and this is the story that the Bible tells to address it. In Job 1:21 he says that "naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away - may the Name of the Lord be praised." And in Job 2:10 he says "shall we only accept good things from God, and not bad?" So clearly, in the first couple chapters, Job is in a good place. He, unlike what we would do, still praises God and admits that these things that he lost are all fleeting (they come and go), and nothing (only God) lasts forever, so instead of pursuing these things, in the face of loss Job makes clear that either way he will still "praise the Name of God" and "accept the bad things." This is the intensity and

intimacy that God wants us to have in our faiths - the ability to accept and live through hardships, difficulties and loss. We now turn to Ecclesiastes, the story of the most successful man ever struggling with depression - an intense story that will help us find our true focus in life - an intimate faith in God.

Day 20: Ecclesiastes 1-12 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: We see here in Ecclesiastes a new level of intensity in our faiths. In this story we see the author, Solomon (the wisest man to ever live) tell his story about how he felt that everything was meaningless. He was trying to find the meaning of life. Solomon ends Ecclesiastes with Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind." He was arguably the most successful human being to ever live - his money would have been trillions in US Dollars in the 21st century, and he had 700 wives, and he was the king of his nation. Yet he was depressed - I wonder why... Because success and achievement here on Earth is distracting, as he admits in Ecclesiastes 2:4-11. In Ecclesiastes 12:13, he makes clear that time with God and a life lived for Him is more valuable than anything else. So live for God, not yourself, today, not tomorrow. This is the story of Solomon, and how a great man of faith, even the author of Ecclesiastes, fell into sin by focusing on and prioritizing other things in life. Let it serve as a warning. Thanks for reading. We turn now to the end of our reading plan, where I will write my thoughts on a couple of verses and what they mean for the level of intensity and intimacy that God calls us to have in our faiths.

Day 21: Matthew 22:36-39/John 4:23-24 then read the following COMMENTARY on the text: John 4:23-24: "A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in Truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." The context here is that Jesus was talking to this non-believer, this cultural rival, a Samaritan. She asked Him where she was supposed to worship the Messiah, making clear that devotion to God was seen as just doing things the right or wrong way (how to give, how to worship, location, posture, words, etc.). He told her that the time was coming when people would worship the Father God through Spirit and Truth. Not only was the time coming, but it had already come. This is His message to us as well - that the time for us to live and honor Him in the right way has already come. So how? Like He said - in the Spirit and in Truth. So your spirit is like your vibe, it's within you and it shapes who you are. So worship God through your Spirit. This is in all things that you do, both great and small alike. Keep your spirit and ultimately your life bound for Christ. Worshiping God from within encourages His peace to enter you when you live in a way that invites Him - make sacrifices. Worship at all times, in all places, and in all situations because we know that God is with us. In Matthew 22:36 this guy asked Jesus what the most important command in the Bible was - Jesus answered in verse 37 by saying to love God with all your heart and mind and soul - but in verses 38 and 39 He said that the second most important command was to love your neighbor as yourself. The man only asked for one command, but Jesus gave him both - we also don't really keep others and fellowship in mind too much, but clearly these things are important to God and we are called to level up in our faiths. Verse 37 calls us to love God with all our hearts, souls and minds. Our hearts will involve the way that we process our emotions. Keep anger in check for the Lord. Keep depression in check for the Lord. Our minds means to love

Him with our thoughts. Have a good mindset for the Lord. See others before yourself and don't be a victim, again all of this for the Lord. And do all this with "all" that you have and in all that you do. This is the intimacy and intensity that God calls us to have. Thanks for reading!