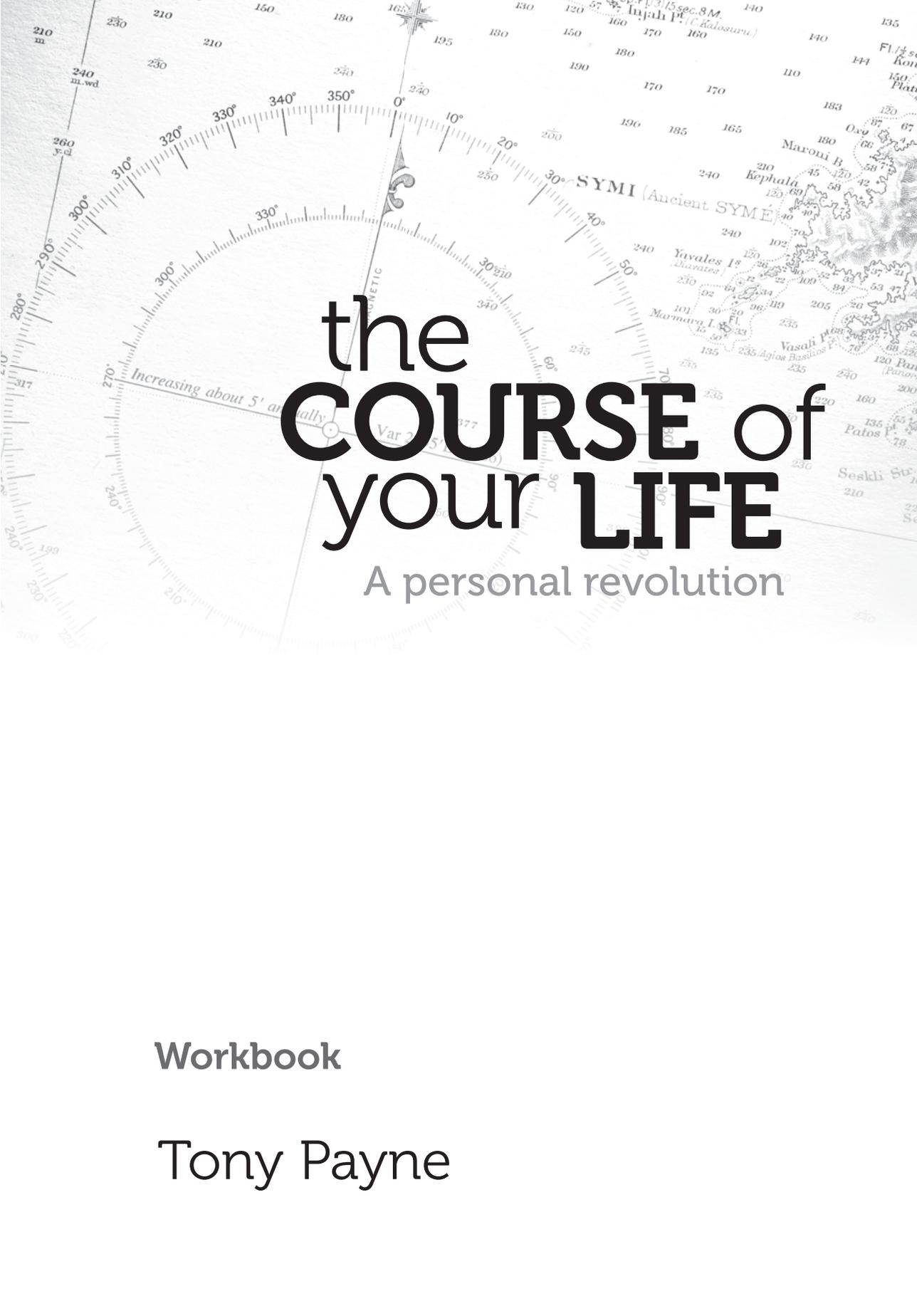
The background of the cover is a composite image. The upper portion shows a detailed nautical chart with a compass rose, showing magnetic variation and various geographical labels like 'SYMI (Ancient SYME)', 'Yavales I.', 'Marmara I.', and 'Vasali'. The lower portion shows a wooden rowing boat on a body of water, with two oars resting inside. The overall color palette is warm, with reds, oranges, and yellows.

the COURSE of your LIFE

A personal revolution



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Workbook

Tony Payne

The Course of Your Life: Workbook

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Seminar 1

Getting started

1. Introductions

A. A quick get-to-know-you quiz

Introduce yourselves by getting each person in the group to answer the following three questions in no more than 60 seconds:

- What's your full name (including middle name/s)?
- Where do you live now and with whom?
- Can you name a book, movie or TV show you have enjoyed in the last three months?

B. Thinking about your life

Now take it in turns to answer one of the following two questions (no more than three minutes for each person). Group members are allowed to ask follow-up questions.

- What have been the turning points in your life so far—the key moments when the road has taken a turn?
- Can you name one or two people (excluding your parents and God) who have had the most influence (for good or ill) in making you into the person you are today? How have they influenced you?

C. Pray

Two or three of the group who feel comfortable to do so can lead in prayer:

- giving thanks for this opportunity to pause and reconsider where our lives are headed
- praying for the members of the group by name, asking God to give insight and clarity and conviction over the duration of the course.

2. Input: Why are we here?

Notes and questions from input:

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3. Three gifts and three strands

A. Three gifts

You've just heard a summary of what this course is about. Another way of summarizing the methodology of this course is that we will be trying to make the most of three incredible gifts that God has given us:

- God has given us **his word**, the Bible, to light our path like a torch on a dark night. It is good to share our thoughts, feelings and experiences—but in the end it's God who not only has the answers, but also knows which are the truly important questions.
- God also gives us **each other**—to help, to urge, to encourage and to

sharpen each other. You'll spend lots of time in the Bible during this course, and you'll do most of it together rather than individually.

- We also need God to work in our hearts and minds to help us understand and change. That's why **prayer** is such a precious gift—God invites us to come to him and ask him to work in our lives, and he promises to give us only good gifts in response to our prayers.

The Course of Your Life is built on these three gifts from God, and consists of three interconnected components or strands.

B. Three strands

i. Seminars

- Around 90 minutes in length.
- Addressing key topic areas by doing Bible research together, pulling ideas together, and praying together.
- There are nine seminars (including this opening one).

ii. One-to-one meetings

- With one other person, to read and pray together.
- Focusing on Paul's letter to the Colossians.
- Complementing and supporting the topics covered in the seminars.
- Providing opportunity to talk privately about what you're learning and being challenged by.

iii. Intensive

- Towards the end of the course (usually between seminars 8 and 9).
- Can be two days away together, or over consecutive Saturdays, or similar.
- Integrating and completing the course content.
- Providing time and space to think through the implications for different aspects of your own lives, and to pray.

The course has been designed so that these three strands interconnect and reinforce each other. The passages you study in your one-to-one meetings will feed into the seminar discussions, and the intensive will draw upon all the material that has been done in the one-to-one meetings and the seminars.

All this will take time and require a little patience. We won't answer every question by the end of seminar 3. If at various points in the course you feel a little frustrated, or even confused, that's not altogether a bad thing! A serious rethinking of our lives is not the easiest thing in the world to do. In God's

grace, by the end of the course we hope and trust that you will have reached a new clarity.

4. More about the one-to-one meetings

For some of you, this may be the first time you've ever read the Bible one-to-one. Don't worry—it's not very difficult! And to make it even easier, we've provided you with a simple framework to use each time. This basically consists of:

- having a quick catch-up about what is happening in your life
- praying and giving thanks together briefly
- reading and discussing the Bible together for about 30 minutes (using the provided template/material)
- praying to conclude.

By far the most difficult thing about meeting one-to-one to read the Bible is... actually meeting. This is like Bible reading in general. The hardest aspect of personal Bible reading is usually just being disciplined enough to sit down, open the Bible and start reading. It's the same with meeting one-to-one. Working out a convenient time and then sticking to it—that's the key.

Once you're there it's really not that hard, and almost always very rewarding.

To make the meetings as convenient as possible, your course leader has tried to pair you up with someone who either lives or works close to you.

5. Meet your one-to-one partner

- A.** Start by working out a suitable time and place for your first meeting—which needs to happen before seminar 2. (This might turn into your regular meeting time. You can sort that out when you get together.)
- B.** Share a little bit about yourself with your partner by answering one of the following questions:
- When you were 18 (which might have been 3 or 30 years ago!), did you have any dreams or goals in life? Have they been met?
 - Can you think of a major mistake you have made in your life? What were the consequences?
 - Think back to a reasonably major life decision you have made in the last five years (relating to work, family, friends, church, etc.). What were the key factors that determined your decision? What process did you go through in making up your mind?

C. Read Psalm 139:1-16 aloud together.

(i) What does this passage say about God's place in the course of our lives?

(ii) How does the psalmist feel about this? How does he react?

(iii) How do you react?



Seminar 2

God's creative purposes

1. Bible research: God and his world

A. In your subgroups, read Genesis 1-2. As you read, think about the following two questions:

(i) Why did God make the world? What clues do we get here about his purposes or intentions?

(ii) More specifically, why did he make humanity? What purposes did he have in mind?

Spend a few minutes discussing your answers to these two questions.

B. Divide the following passages among the groups and fill in the table described below (you'll need to draw a larger version on the sheets of paper provided by your course leader). Select from:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Isaiah 14:24-27 | Psalm 33 |
| Isaiah 45:5-10 | Proverbs 16:4 |
| Isaiah 46:8-11 | Acts 17:24-27 |
| Isaiah 55:6-11 | Revelation 4:11 |
| Psalm 8 | |

As you do this exercise:

- Look up each passage as a group, and read it aloud.
- Choose one person to be the scribe.
- When questions arise, jot them in the 'question' column, but don't pause to discuss them (at this point).
- You won't be able to put things in every column for each passage.
- Keep moving quickly, and allow 5-10 minutes at the end of the exercise to do part C.

Draw up a table as follows. In each column jot down quickly what you learn about that subject in the Bible passages you have selected.

Passage	What do we learn about God the creator?	What do we learn about God's purposes or intentions?	What do we learn about ourselves?	Other notes and questions

C. Still in your subgroups, try to summarize the most important points you've picked up from your Bible research under the following headings:

(i) What did you learn about God the creator?

(ii) What did you learn about God's purposes or intentions for his creation?

(iii) What did you learn about yourself?

(iv) What questions puzzled you most?

2. Group feedback

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Do you ever stop and think about where your life is going?

Most people do this from time to time. We pause and take our bearings. Who am I? Is my life where I thought it would be now? Is there some sort of overriding purpose? Why did God put me here?

In **The Course of Your Life**, you have the opportunity to discover in God's word that our lives do in fact have a profound and revolutionary purpose. God did make us for a reason, and it is all connected with the extraordinary work that he is doing in our lives and in his world.

Do you want to discover that purpose, and live the rest of your life pursuing it? That's what this course is about.



Tony Payne has spent more than 25 years in Christian ministry, serving for much of that time as the Publishing Director of Matthias Media. He is the author or co-author of many popular books and resources, including *The Trellis* and

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