

12-Month Student Discipleship Journal



Joel Lusz

YM360

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My Name Is: _____

PUBLISHED BY YM360

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Published by youthministry360 in the United States of America.

ISBN 13: 9781954429352

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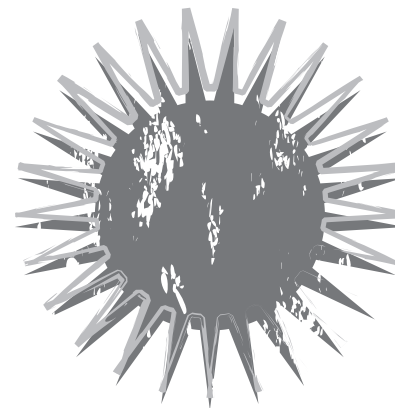
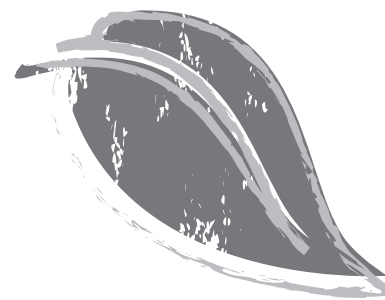
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Introduction

What you're about to do is awesome. If you stay with this discipleship journal for the entire twelve months, you will know and understand the Bible at a much better and much deeper level than you do right now.

You might be very surprised to learn how few teenagers actually read their Bibles on a regular basis. According to the Barna Group (a Christian visionary and research organization),

...a solid majority—seven out of 10 teenagers (69%) — personally own a Bible. Forty-four percent of teens read the Bible at least three or four times a year, and one in four (25%) say they read the Bible at least once a week; this includes three percent who report daily Bible reading.¹

In other words, only 3% of teenagers read their Bibles daily. You're beating the odds. So, way to go!

Here's what this journal is all about:

- It's a twelve-month journal. The plan is for you to be engaged with this for the entire year.
- It's a five-days-per-week plan. The idea is that you'll spend time with the journal every weekday, and have the weekends for make-up work. But please, do not put everything off throughout your school week and try to just "catch up" on the weekends. The journal is designed to be used in small pieces each day. (Obviously, some months may end or begin in the middle of a week. The idea is to begin each month on the first weekday of that month; you can adjust as needed.)
- It will be brief and simple. The hope is not for you to get swallowed up in overwhelming Bible reading and theology. The goal is for you to have an enjoyable, encouraging, and sometimes a little deep study of God's Word and how it impacts your life as a Christ follower.
- And finally, keep this in mind: We are reading the Bible for "transformation," and not merely for "information."

Here's What You'll Need:

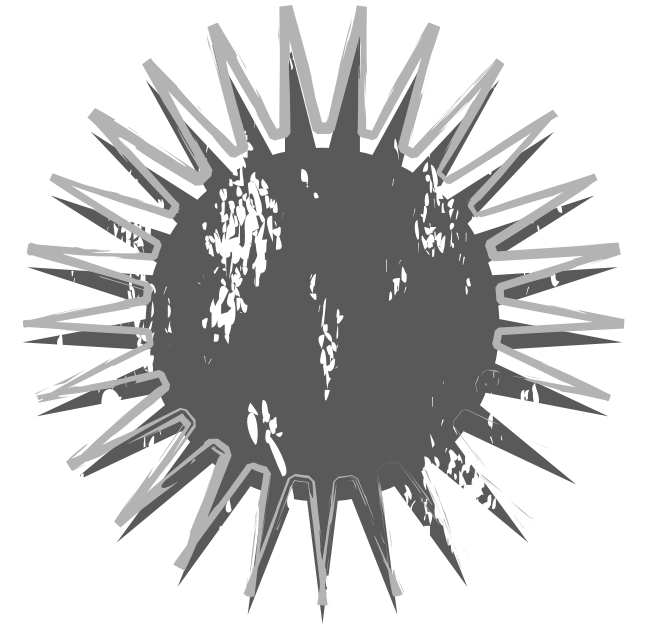
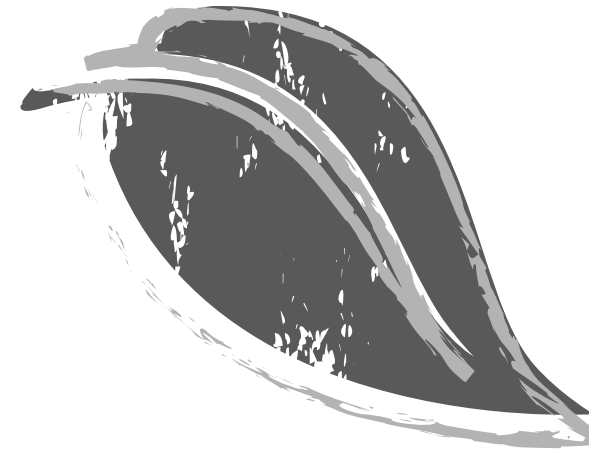
- A Bible or a cell phone, tablet, iPad, etc. with God's Word on it
- This journal
- A pen
- A few minutes each day (preferably in the morning so you can reflect on what you read as you go about your day)
- An open mind and a willing heart!

To Angie, Koral and Dakota, and Willow.
You all are amazing and I love you.
Thank you for your love and support!

Month One

The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever.

Isaiah 40:8





Read Genesis 1:1.

What is happening here?

How many gods are mentioned?

What did that God create?

The Truth:

There is only one God and that one God created everything there is.

Take a moment and pray a silent prayer of thankfulness and gratitude to this Creator God.



Read Genesis 1:26, 27.

What is being communicated here?

Now, Google the phrase *imago Dei*.

What does the phrase *imago Dei* mean?

The Truth:

God created everything. He created you. And he created you in his own image. We humans are different from every other living thing ... because God's divine nature is in us. How cool is that?!

Pray to our Creator God who created everything, and even created you in his image.



Read the following:

"You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine."
Leviticus 20:26

What does this seem to be saying?

What do you think "holy" means? (Don't look it up!)

The word "holy" means to be "set apart." We as Christians are to be different, set apart, not the same as everyone else. We should go against the grain.

Meditate for one minute about this: How are you "different" from the rest of the crowd?

The Truth:

God is holy. He made you to be holy, too. Strive to be "Wholly Holy"!

End with a prayer.



Here's a great Old Testament verse:

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
1 Samuel 16:7

When God looks at your heart, what does he see? Make a quick list of your "heart attributes." A heart attribute would include things like kindness, thoughtfulness, love, joy, gentleness, etc.

The Truth:

You have a great heart. How do I know? Because God made your heart and your heart is what he sees! You are loved, and God is with you. You will continue growing more into who God created you to be.

Take a moment to pray, asking God to make your heart to be like his.





Okay, here's a question. After you read it, write the FIRST answer to pop into your brain. Ready? Here it is:

What do you think you will be when you are an adult?

Now read this:

**"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11**

The Truth:

God has GREAT plans for you. We can see that in the promises God makes us in Scripture.

Pray for a moment and ask God to help keep you moving forward with him, wherever life takes you.



It's another day! Tired? Many (most?) people are, especially on the weekdays.

Separate from physical tiredness, is your spirit tired? Are you depressed or anxious or stressed or lonely or hurting or struggling or angry or down?

God promises to be present with us, to know us, and to love us, whatever each day brings. Read the following:

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Say this to yourself: "God's got this!" Because it's true. Whatever it is you face today, God's got it. You're like a monster eagle when God is with you. Keep that in mind today.

Try this: *Write down* this verse from Isaiah on a piece of paper or in the space below and read it several times throughout the day.

The Truth:

God is your hope, and you can trust in him. God's power is with you, whatever it is that comes your way.

Take a minute to pray. (And have an awesome day!)



Some verses in the Bible are simple to read and yet are easily misunderstood. Take this one, for example:

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4

It almost seems like the writer is saying, "If you really like God and 'delight in him,' he will be so happy with you that he will give you whatever you want!" In actuality, what this verse is communicating is a little different. Basically, the verse says that if we seek after God and find joy and delight in him, he will work in our lives, transform who we are, and transform our hearts, and because of that, we will be different. And a part of this difference is that what we want and desire will begin to change. We'll want more of what God wants and desires for and in us.

Think of it this way: "Throw yourself into all that God wants and has for you, and he will change you from the inside out so that all of your desires will actually be the desires he has for you!"

Take a moment and write down a few thoughts about this and what you hope for.

The Truth:

God will shape you! Allow him to do that by looking for the ways God is present with you. Think of what it would mean to allow God to transform you—heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Say a prayer of thanksgiving and ask God to begin working in you in such a way that you will want what he wants, with all your heart.



Write down the answer to this question: "Why do people need flashlights?"

Now read this:

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6**

Like a flashlight, the Word of God "makes your paths straight." When you're confused, worried, scared, and not sure what to do or what direction to go, you can trust that God knows the way. How much can you trust him? "With all your heart." He knows you. He loves you. He has the best for you. Rest in that.

The Truth:

One of the simplest and yet most challenging invitations God offers us is to trust him. It seems easy, and yet it is so difficult. But he promises us that if we trust him, he will lead and guide us. That's a great promise!

Pray for a few minutes about your life and trusting God.





Good morning!

I have a challenge for you today. During your everyday walking-around life, look for ways to be kind and just. And at the same time, check yourself to see how often you are tempted to be arrogant or self-centered today.

Read this:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8

Answer this question in your own words:

What does God require of you?

The Truth:

God cares much more about love and kindness and justice than he does about first-place finishes, trophies, SAT scores, homecoming court nominations, making lots of money, cool cars, or expensive shoes.

Before you go to sleep, come back to this journal and write down a few things that you discovered today. How/when were you kind and just? And when were you tempted to be self-centered? After writing your list, take a few minutes to pray.



Here's a challenging verse:

**"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."
2 Chronicles 7:14**

These words were spoken to Solomon—a wise and wealthy king from the Old Testament—but they remain true and important for us today, too. In this passage, God is asking everyone to humble themselves and pray and seek after him. He's asking us all to quit dabbling in sinful behavior and seek after him.

Is there anything you're spending time thinking or doing that is probably not pleasing to God? Anything that is not bringing out the best in you and helping you grow into the kind of person God has created you to become? Make a short list:

The Truth:

God is always present with you. He's not trying to catch you doing something wrong—he's watching like a loving father watches over his children. He loves you and wants the very best for you.

Pray. Remember that God doesn't exist way out in space somewhere, judging you from afar, but he is right here, right with you...always!



Think ahead for a moment. Name one thing you think you'll really want in ten years. What is it?

Now, name five things you already have that you are most thankful for:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Read Psalm 23.

Briefly, what did you read?

The Truth:

The first sentence of this psalm reads, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." The psalmist (the person writing this) basically is saying, "God loves me and provides everything for me. I have everything I need."

Pray a prayer thanking God for all he has provided for you!



Read Psalm 23 again.

In essence this psalm is saying that God is always with you, always loving you, always comforting you.

Write down two or three or four words from this psalm that stuck out for you or that you found meaningful.

The Truth:

We can rest. We can be assured of God's presence always in our lives if we proclaim, as this psalmist did, that we will dwell in God's house our whole life long. Take a few minutes now to rest in God's presence.





Read Exodus 20, verses 3-17. (It's a little long—that's okay!)

What are these verses generally called?

The _____

Now write down verse 3:

What do you think this verse means?

The Truth:

God knows that all humans are going to worship someone or something. That's why worship is the focus of the first commandment. God wants us to make sure that we worship the one and only true God.

Pray. Ask God to forgive you for the times you've "worshipped" something more important to you than him. And then pray, thanking him for being your God.

Read Exodus 20:4-6.

What do you think an "idol" is?

Verse 4 is speaking to the idea of having idols—things that are way too important to us as human beings and that can, and often do, move in and replace God as a priority.

Make a short list of the things in your life that could potentially become an idol to you, or have become an idol to you already:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The Truth:

There's a simple saying that helps us to know what we're giving most of ourselves to: "Whatever it is that you cannot get enough of, that is your god!" In other words, that is an idol.

Pray. Ask God to reveal to you the things in your life that may be, or may be becoming, way too important to you. And then thank him for his love and patience with you.

Read Exodus 20:7.

What do you think this verse means?

It probably has a couple of meanings. One, of course, is that we should not use God's name in a trivial or profane way. In other words, no inserting God's name into cussing or swear words. The words we speak should honor God, bringing out the best in ourselves and others. Another meaning of this commandment is this: Don't take God's name *lightly*! If you say you're a Christian—one who chooses to follow after Christ—you've literally described yourself with a word that has a name of God in it: *Christian*. Those of us who choose to bear Christ's name should live our lives as if God matters to us—affecting our actions, our relationships, our thoughts, and our words.

The Truth:

One of the great challenges as Christians is to live out our faith completely and fully. Every day. All day. But when we fail, which happens often, we have a God who loves us and welcomes us back with open arms. That's good news!

Take a few moments and talk with God. Tell God about your struggles. Where do you sometimes fail? Maybe you will even want to confess something(s) to him. Then praise him for his never-ending, always loving heart.

Do this first: Give your life a rating on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being "Mostly Bored" and 10 being "Super Busy!"

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Now read Exodus 20:8-11.

My guess is you circled a number relatively close to, or right at, "Super Busy!" Life is busy. And it's especially busy for students. But the fourth commandment is pretty clear: We are to take a day each week and slow down our lives. The concept almost sounds impossible! But it can be done.

Write down several things that you know you could do to "take a Sabbath." Maybe your "slow down time," at first, is just an hour or two each week. You can work up to a longer stretch. Keep that in mind as you make a list of things you could be doing to slow down, rest, and take some time to be alone with God:

The Truth:

It has been said that if Satan can't make you bad, he'll make you busy! Busyness takes our eyes off of Jesus. It's of the utmost importance that we slow down, at least some of the time, and spend unhurried time with God.

Take some time now to pray about this. And, fitting with today's theme—don't be in a hurry. Breathe in, breathe out, sit for a moment, and then talk with God.



Read Exodus 20:12.

This is an easy one! Or at least it seems pretty straightforward. Are you living in such a way that it gives honor to your parents or the people who are bringing you up? Think about that for a moment. Do your actions, behaviors, words, and attitude show that you love and respect the adults who care for you? Some of you might not have those people in your life—in some situations, this commandment could be nearly impossible because of the circumstances of your life, and I'm deeply sorry for that. For those who *do* have loving guardians, what are ways you can make a shift to honoring them more?

The Truth:

Many of you have parents who are crazy about you and love you more than you could ever imagine. How can you honor them today? Write down 3-5 things you can do TODAY to honor, thank, and bless your parents or guardians. Even small things are awesome!

- 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Pray. Ask God to open your eyes to how you can honor your parents or guardians more and at a deeper level.



Read Exodus 20:13.

This is one of the shortest verses in the entire Bible. And yet it's one of the most powerful! Can you imagine breaking that commandment?

Now think for a moment. Why do you think this is included in the Bible? What would life be like if we did not have this commandment?

The Truth:

This commandment is clear: Don't kill anyone. Hopefully you never have. But there's more to it. Take a minute to read Jesus's words in Matthew 5:21-22. Certainly we are not to murder anyone. But Jesus addresses our hearts in this matter, too. So ask yourself: How do you think of others? How easily angered are you at people? Do you throw around insults or lies or rumors?

For the courageous: If there is someone you know you've been unkind to or insulted or spoken about in an inappropriate way, go and apologize to them today.

Spend a few minutes in prayer about this.



Okay, do this first. Write down a few thoughts on what you think makes an awesome marriage.

Did you mention being faithful? That's a huge part of it!

Read Exodus 20:14.

There are a few things that can ruin a marriage. The loss of trust is one of them. If you lose trust, it's really hard to get back! Even now, as a teenager, you can pray for your future. Pray for your future spouse, if God connects you with one. Pray for your openness to what your future holds, whether that includes marriage or singleness. Pray that you will be faithful, loyal, and trustworthy in all your relationships, now and in the future.

The Truth:

Covenant loyalty, faithfulness, and fidelity are of the utmost importance in the bonds of marriage. Never forget that.

Pray now for the future God has for you.



Good morning!

Okay, we're going to talk about a commandment of God's that we have all broken. Read Exodus 20:15.

When was the last time you purposely stole something? A time when you took something that was not yours, and you knew it was stealing? Why did you do it?

Can you understand why it breaks God's heart?

Think about all that you have and all that God has given you. Take a minute and write down a few of the amazing things you have that you are thankful for (I always think family, health, place to live, church, job, friends):

The Truth:

Stealing breaks a commandment, and it's not what God wants for you. And I know it hurts God's heart. Remember this truth: If God can't trust you with the little things, he is not going to trust you with the big things.

Take some time to pray, asking God to be with you in all the little and big decisions you'll face today.

