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Relentless

This Book Belongs to: _____

Date Started: _____

Relentless

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Design: Upper Air Creative

FOR WE

**CANNOT
HELP
SPEAKING
ABOUT WHAT WE
HAVE SEEN
& HEARD**

Acts 4:20

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Getting Started

So here you are . . .

You're holding an interactive journal that will serve as your guide for an in-depth look at what it means to be relentless in your approach to living out your faith in Christ. This means at some point in the not-so-distant past you probably spent a weekend going through RELENTLESS with your youth group.

Maybe you thought you were done talking about the concept of what it means be relentless. Maybe you thought you had learned all there was to learn.

The truth? You're just getting started.

"Relentless" is more than a word. It's an attitude. Being relentless in your pursuit of Christ and in the living out of your faith says to the world that the goal being pursued is worth more than the pain endured. The Bible is clear that our faith in Christ will be costly. But the life Christ purchased for you on the cross cost Him everything. As His children, living out a relentless faith is the very definition of what it means to be a Christ-follower.

This book will take you on a four-week journey of going deeper into what exactly living a relentless faith looks like. Embrace this journey. Give it your best. Commit to sticking with this book until the end. It will only take a few minutes each day. And you'll find that your life will be richer as a result of spending such quality time in God's presence.

LET'S GET STARTED.

LOOK AT THE NEXT PAGE TO LEARN HOW THIS BOOK WORKS.

How This Book Works

Here are a few things you need to know to put this book to good use.

Start With This Advice

Whether you're super-committed and read your Bible each day or struggle to read a few verses a couple of times a week, the key to sticking with this through four weeks is commitment. Your routine may change, but your commitment to meet God each day has to be there. Tell yourself that whether or not you read this journal at the same time everyday, or if you read it whenever you get a few extra minutes, you'll make it a priority in your daily life.

Have Your Bible Open

Resist the urge to ignore the spots where this book will tell you to read a passage of Scripture. This book is only a guide for the Book. The close relationship with God that you want only happens by reading and doing what's in the Bible. Have it open as you go through this book.

Each Week Is Structured The Same, But Is Really Different

Each week's content works in similar ways. But, each day is different. And, there are a lot of different kinds of activities. Some will take 3-5 minutes, some 10-15. Some will ask you to look at two or three passages of Scripture; some will just ask you to think about a concept. The variety will make it easier to stick with and help you learn in different ways that are suited to you.

What If I Miss A Day of Reading? Or Three?

Don't give up! Take this at your pace! The goal is for you to grow closer to God. If you miss a day or two . . . or four . . . don't throw in the towel. Pick this book back up and start where you left off. You can do this! And by doing it, you'll show the world that God makes an incredible difference in the lives of His followers. So, hang in there! You've got this!

Well, that's what you need to know to get started! Turn the page to read the introduction to Week 1.

Week One Intro

Before starting Week 1, read this short introduction.

Let's be honest: most of us like things to be easy. If given the choice to have to work hard for something or to simply have it given to us, we'd rather have it handed to us without the hard work. If we could be in shape without working out, we'd take that option right? If you could get into a great college without the extra time spent studying, that would be pretty awesome, wouldn't it? The problem is that life doesn't work this way. And neither does our faith.

Many people who have come to know Christ have bought into a version of Christianity that doesn't cost them anything. When they encounter pain, persecution, and problems they walk away from the invitation to follow Jesus because of the challenges that present themselves when doing so. Things get hard. Times are tough. And some people think that when they committed to following Christ all their troubles would go away. Life wouldn't be hard. Life would be easy.

The issue with this is that Jesus never promises this in the Bible. In fact, Jesus told us that following Him would lead to persecution. Your challenge as a Christ-follower is to redefine the cost of following Christ in a world that hates Him and His followers. Jesus gave it all for us. What's keeping us from giving our all for Him?

Relentless is centered around one idea:

If you were put into a situation where you had to choose Christ, but by doing so you would lose everything, including maybe even your life, would you still do it?

Are you willing to pursue Jesus in a way where nothing else comes first? If so, this book will give you some guidelines for how to think about living this kind of faith.

It won't be easy. But here's a secret: few things truly worth having are. Your relationship with Christ is no different.

If you're ready to get started, turn to page 5 for Week 1, Day 1.



WEEK 1 ► DAY 1

Read today's devotion below and answer the questions on page 6.

What does your faith cost you? In what ways does the amazing relationship you enjoy with God cause you to experience discomfort? Take a moment today and look at what it cost two of the real foundational figures of our faith.

Read Acts 16:16-34. The Gospel was spreading rapidly and the Apostle Paul was on a mission to take the Gospel to the furthest points on the earth. It was not an easy trip. Opposition from those who hated Christianity marked his journey.

In this section you just read, a different kind of opposition came from a rather peculiar place. A demon-possessed young girl actually affirmed the ministry of Paul and Silas by stating they were servants of the Most High God (Acts 16:14). Paul didn't want attention drawn to him so he cast the demon out of the girl and set her free from both the chains of Satan and the slave owner.

This didn't go so well with the slave owner. As a result, Paul and his companions were severely beaten and imprisoned. However, what Satan means for evil, God means for good. This prison was exactly where Paul and Silas needed to be. They knew it, they sensed it, they embraced it, and seized the opportunity to make much of the moment, by making much of Jesus.

I am convinced that the most secure place in the world is in the center of God's will. But while being in the center of God's will is a secure place, it isn't always a safe place. God is far more concerned about making us holy than He is in making us happy.

Paul and Silas were taken to the inner prison and guarded as if they had committed murder. This wasn't exactly three square meals, cable TV, and air conditioning. This was some of the worst possible circumstances you could possibly imagine. Not only were they trying to recover from the beatings, but to make matters worse their feet were locked in stocks. They were suffering for the Gospel.

But the point of today's devotion is found starting in verse 25. After all of this, Paul and Silas were praising God. In the midst of their great trial, they focused on the character of God and worshiped Him. The result? God was glorified. The jailer and his family stepped into a saving relationship with God. And Paul and Silas were radically used by God to further His Kingdom.

The truth is this: If you want to be able to rejoice when you have lost everything, then you have to possess something greater than what you lost.

Take a moment and think about this. This truth will inform much of what we do in this journal for the next few weeks. Use the questions below to help you think about this concept. If you want, record your thoughts in a journal or note-taking app.

Think About This . . .

- Imagine you found yourself in a situation similar to Paul and Silas.' Imagine you've lost everything because of your faith. Think about this for a second. How would you feel about this? What emotions come to mind?
- If all you had to rely on was your relationship with Jesus, is that relationship deep enough that it could sustain you? It's a tough question. Really give it some time to consider.
- Can you identify a few things you might do to deepen your relationship with Jesus? Come up with three things you could do to get closer to Jesus today.

Spend a few minutes praying to God. Listen more than you talk. See what God is trying to tell you about your relationship with Him.

WEEK 1 ▶ DAY 2

Work through the activity below to begin thinking about praise and why it is vital to living a relentless faith-life.

We're going to do something we will do often in this journal. We're going to spend another day on the same passage you looked at yesterday.

Go back and look at Acts 16:25. We're going to spend the rest of this week talking about the idea of praise. Specifically, we're going to talk about the idea of praising God in the midst of tough times.

In the middle of Paul and Silas' suffering, they began to sing praises. Now, prison and praise are probably never mentioned in the same sentence. But Paul and Silas knew that God had placed them there. This confrontation and confinement wasn't their plan, but they knew it was part of God's will for them.

They knew one of the most important things we can know: God is at work. They knew God would use their situation to bring about salvation for many of those who heard their story. Their platform was suffering, shackles, and . . . singing! They could sing praises to God in the midst of trial because they were 100% confident in who God was and how He had chosen to use them.

*Praise
is a big part
of a relentless faith.*

It seems counterintuitive that we would praise God when we find ourselves being treated unfairly or unjustly because of our faith. But this is exactly the picture the Bible paints, over and over again.

We're going to spend the rest of the week discussing this idea about praising God in the midst of hard times. But take a few moments today and think about what praise is and the role it plays in your life. Read the following questions. Answer them in the space provided or in a journal or note-taking app.

How would you define praise in your own words?

Can you think of a few different ways to praise God?

(HINT: Singing isn't the only way.)

When was the last time you remember spending time meaningfully praising God?

What are some of the obstacles that keep you from praising God as much or as engaged as you would want?

There's no time like the present. Take a few moments and praise God right now. Pray to Him and tell Him how awesome He is.

WEEK 1 ▶ DAY 3

Read the quote below and spend some time today thinking about it. Use the prompts on page 10 to help guide your thoughts.

“Our *values* determine our evaluations.

If we value

Comfort
more than
Character

then trials will upset us.

If we *value* the material and physical more than the

Spiritual,
we will not be able to ‘count it all joy.’

If we live only for the present and forget the future, then

TRIALS will make us bitter
not better.”

- Warren Wiersbe

Use these questions to help you reflect on this quote.

1. Maybe you don't value comfort more than character, but do you get Wiersbe's point? If anything comes before your relationship with God, the trials you experience because of your faith will cause you to resent your faith. Is there anything in your life that is more important than your relationship with God? If so, what can you do about it?

2. If we value a Christ-like character, how does that lead us to see trials as something positive?

3. In essence, what Wiersbe is saying toward the end is the exact opposite of the "YOLO" mentality. How so? How does living in the moment keep you from growing a relentless faith?



WEEK 1 ▶ DAY 4

What's the difference between joy and happiness? Today's devotion will help you answer that question.

Have you ever thought about the difference between joy and happiness? Maybe you haven't. And maybe even now the difference in the two seems unimportant. But hang in there for a moment and you'll see that when it comes to relentlessly living out your faith, the distinction between the two is vital.

Joy and happiness don't mean the same thing. Not when viewed through the lens of faith. One has the ability to serve the other, but not vice versa. You see happiness is an attitude that hinges primarily on favorable circumstances. In other words, happiness depends on your surroundings. It's environmental. If life is going well, you're happy.

One the other hand, joy is an emotional state that is not dependent upon circumstances. Instead, joy comes from understanding some concrete realities: God loves us. Christ redeemed us. The Holy Spirit secures us.

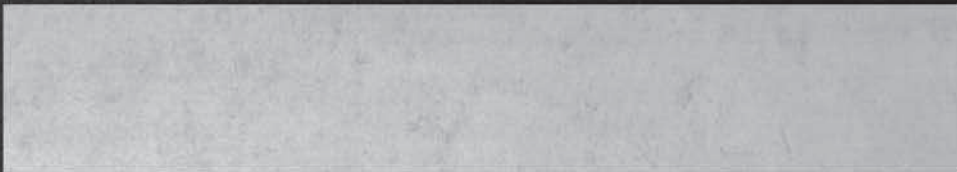
Take a second and read 1 Peter 1:3-8. Peter was speaking to an audience of people who had been persecuted for their faith, and would continue to be. He had to remind them that even though they experienced hardship because of their faith, they could rejoice. Re-read verse 8. The kind of joy Peter was talking about is the kind of joy that exists regardless of circumstance. It is the joy that is found in the heart of a Christ-follower.

The endless pursuit of humanity is to seek happiness at all cost. But those who seek joy apart from Christ fail to realize that the cost is greater than they could ever afford. The new car, the new house, the new pair of jeans, the new cell phone, the new head phones . . . these create a temporary happy feeling that will eventually fade. But joy, real joy, can't be purchased. It can't lose its value. The joy that comes from the hope we have in Christ does not change with the latest fads, seasons, or popular opinions of our day.

When life gets tough, remember that your joy is found in Jesus, the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Take a second and think about the following questions. If you want, write your answers in the space provided. Or, jot down your thoughts in a journal or note-taking app.

1. Think of some examples of times when some aspect of your surroundings made you happy.



2. Now, think of a time recently when something happened to make you unhappy.



3. Happiness is fleeting. Here one minute and gone the next. Joy is unchanging and comes from knowing and being known by Jesus. In your own words, how is this different than happiness?



4. How does knowing what joy truly is give you hope for the tough times you'll face as you live out a relentless faith?



WEEK 1 ▶ DAY 5

Are we only expected to praise God when things are good? Read today's devotion to find out.

Today we're going to bring this full-circle.

We've talked about tough times being a reality of living a relentless faith-life. We've talked about the difference in joy and happiness. And we've talked about what it means to praise God. But we haven't specifically discussed the idea of praising God in the midst of our trials and our joy.

It's an interesting thought, isn't it? Praising God in the middle of a time of persecution or heartache? Who is expected to do that?

Actually, you are. And so is every Christ-follower. Take a second and read James 1:2-3. What James says here is SO countercultural and counterintuitive. When something is countercultural that means it goes against what we observe in the world around us. When people go through tough times, you don't expect to see them rejoicing. You expect to see them complaining. Rejoicing in times of trial is a uniquely Christian thing to do. Counterintuitive means that it goes against our human nature, or common sense. It's not in our nature to praise God when times are tough. But if you've come to faith in Christ, you have God dwelling in you. This defies human nature. The Holy Spirit empowers your praise.

This is radical, world-rocking stuff here.

Do you realize that if you fully embraced this concept your life would stand out to the world around you? You would be like one of those big billboards on the Interstate, a huge sign saying

“Look at the difference Christ makes in my life”!

In the space provided below, take some time and journal your thoughts. Answer these questions:

- What keeps me from praising God during tough times?
- How can I move toward a more relentless faith by committing to praise God more no matter the circumstance?
- How will I change as a person by being more faithful in my praise of God?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for journaling or writing answers to the questions listed above. The box is positioned centrally on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the page.

WEEK 1 ▶ DAY 6

Part of what it means to live a relentless faith is that you share your faith in Christ with the world.

In light of this, we're going to devote Day 6 of each week to challenging you to do just that. Today, and the three remaining Day 6's, you're going to be presented with a verse. Your challenge is to take this verse and come up with some way to share it on Instagram or Snapchat or Vine. Be creative. Take a picture or video of something that comes to mind when you read this verse.

Have fun with this. And remember that sharing your faith journey with others is all part of leading people closer to Christ.

Here's your verse:



WEEK 1 ▶ DAY 7

*Take Today
Off... You've
Earned it.*

If you want, reflect on some of what you have learned. Look back and identify one day in the week that really stood out to you. What was it that was so meaningful? Dwell on this truth today. Think about the concepts of a relentless faith, true joy, and praising God in all situations. Listen for what God is trying to show you.

