

gun lap

by Robert Wolgemuth

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Welcome to Gun Lap! As you go through this study guide (by yourself or with others), you're not just discussing a book but facing this leg of your journey with intentionality. Way to go! This book and study are not intended to merely enrich your understanding but to help you make adjustments so the coming years can be some of the best, most productive of your life.

We'll begin with a little warm-up. Then, each week, review on your own or discuss in your group the "CONTEMPLATING THE RACE" questions as you read your chapter. "YOUR NEXT STEP" gives practical applications you can take during the week to pursue substantive change. This book will be far more transforming if you'll take these steps.

Are you ready?

INTRODUCTION:

In the introduction to *Gun Lap*, Robert says that this book is designed to "reflect on the years that have gone by, and even more to embrace the amount of sand that still lingers above the pinch of the hourglass, to be encouraged about the possibilities that remain in each grain."

He reminds us that the gun lap in a race signals the final lap before the finish. This book is intended for those who are in that gun lap or preparing for it. First, we're going to do a little warm-up as we read through Robert's Introduction and do a quick assessment.

Spend the next few minutes taking a "Gun Lap Check-up" to more fully assess how you're feeling about where you are and where you need to go.

PRE-RACE WARM-UP!

PHYSICALLY

- | | Poor | Excellent |
|---|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. How's your physical health right now? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |
| 2. Are you doing the things necessary to guard your health as best as you can? | | |
| a. Eating right? | | _YES_ _NO |
| b. Exercise? | | _YES_ _NO |
| c. Recent physical exam/regular doctor check-ups? | | _YES_ _NO |
| d. What's the one thing you do that could potentially compromise your health? | | |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3. Do you worry about what has happened or may happen to you physically in the days ahead? | | _YES_ _NO |
| 4. Are you trusting God about your health, resting in His sovereign plans for you physically, even if it's not what you may choose? | | _YES_ _NO |
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EMOTIONALLY

1. As you look back over the last decades of your life ...

a. Do you feel a sense of satisfaction and joy? _YES _ NO

b. What are the five highlights of your life...things you accomplished or had the privilege of doing?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

c. If you could go back and change a few things, what are the things you wished you'd done differently?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

d. Does anything in your past haunt you? Do you think about some things with unhealthy regret or remorse? _YES _ NO

e. Do you ever feel upset with God about the twists and turns of your life? Things you felt He should have done where you didn't feel He came through on your behalf? _YES _ NO

2. Are you worried about the future? _YES _ NO

3. If so, what concerns you the most?

4. Are there some recreational activities you still enjoy? _YES _ NO

SPIRITUALLY

1. Are you completely confident that when you die, you'll go to heaven? _YES _ NO

(If you're unsure, as many are, please seek out a godly leader who can help you settle this most critical question for your gun lap. Nothing could be more important.)

2. Do you feel like you are close to Christ? That you are walking well with Him and that He's content with your relationship with Him? _YES _ NO

3. Are you spending time in the Bible each day? _YES _ NO

4. If "Yes," would you consider this time with Him vibrant? _YES _ NO

5. Is prayer the foundational, daily habit of your life? _YES _ NO

6. Are you attending, connecting, and serving in a good church? _YES _ NO

7. Are you engaged in a small group with people you love? _YES _ NO

8. Are you currently discipling/mentoring anyone? _YES _ NO

RELATIONALLY

1. How is your relationship with your wife? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How is your relationship with your children? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. How is your relationship with your grandchildren? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Do you have 2-3 close friends with whom you're sharing your life? _YES _NO
5. Do you ever (or often) feel alone? _YES _NO
6. Are there any damaged relationships in your past that you have not sought to restore? (Romans 12:18) _YES _NO

PURPOSE

1. Do you feel a sense of purpose about the coming years? _YES _NO
2. Do you ever feel useless? _YES _NO
3. What excites you about the future?

4. Think deeply about this one! Where do you think your abilities and experience could be leveraged for God's kingdom in the next decade?

CAREFULLY LOOK BACK OVER YOUR ANSWERS AND ANSWER THESE FINAL SUMMARY QUESTIONS:

1. How do you feel, overall, about your life right now? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Are you interested in learning how your life can be more fulfilling, productive, and pleasing to God in your gun lap? _YES _NO
3. Are you willing to cooperate with God in making some adjustments so you could run this lap well, all the way to the finish line? _YES _NO

*“God is my salvation; I will trust him and not be afraid,
for the LORD, the LORD himself,
is my strength and my song” (Isaiah 12:2).*

CHAPTER 1: You Need a Coach for This?

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Robert mentions the need for a fresh desire to run well as we face our gun lap. In the words of a coach, “If you really expect to win, you first gotta wanna.” As you face your gun lap, how motivated are you to run this lap well? (on a scale of 1-10).
2. Relaxing from our past responsibilities and stresses is healthy in our final years, but have you found yourself wanting to sit back passively? Are you tempted to settle for less than the best God has for you in your gun lap? If so, why?
3. Pastor and author Daniel Henderson says, “Satan doesn’t have to destroy you; he just has to distract you.” What are some distractions that could prevent you from running this lap well?
4. Do you have the courage to bring fresh resolve and commitment to run well in your gun lap? What could motivate you to work at it faithfully?
5. We all need a coach, and our greatest Coach is God Himself. But, as a Gentleman, He will not force Himself on us. we won’t experience the satisfaction of His presence if we don’t ask and aren’t regularly and intentionally in contact with Him. What is your greatest hindrance to spending time with God in His Word and prayer every day?
6. If you’re doing this study with a group, brainstorm ways each of you could become more consistent in experiencing God through His Word and prayer.

YOUR NEXT STEP

- SPIRITUAL INTAKE: Go ahead and commit to spend time every day reading God’s Word for the next 30 days. Begin this time with a short prayer, asking God to reveal Himself to you. Get a simple plan (there are many on the internet). Buy a journal and record anything you see in the Scripture. You’ll retain more if you write it down. What is God saying to you personally? You’ll find greater consistency if you use ...
 - A set TIME
 - A set PLACE
 - A set PLAN
- GROWING IN PRAYER: Start a simple prayer list. Think of categories of prayer for each day: your family, friends, church, and Christian leaders, missionaries, the needs of those around you, those who are far from God, your neighbors, and your nation. As you pray, spend a moment entering God’s Throne Room and worshiping Him. Ask His Spirit to direct your praying and pray as He prompts your heart. Another great help would be to get with a few friends and pray together weekly.
- SHARING IT: Ask God to bring people across your path who need to hear what He has told you each day through the Word and prayer. Talk about what He’s saying to you with your wife if you’re married, a close friend if you’re not. You’ll be amazed at how He is equipping you to help others.

How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers (Psalm 1:1-3)

CHAPTER 2: Runner, to Your Mark

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Robert wrote that “You and I come with our own unique past, our distinct backstory . . . the searing imprint of what it means to be a man.” What were the good things that your father or grandfathers taught you about manhood?
2. Identify characteristics you picked up from your father, your parents, or grandparents—both positive and negative.
3. In running our race, God says we are to “Lay aside the weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us” (Hebrews 12:1). What “weights” are you carrying from your past that you need to lay aside as you run your gun lap?
4. Other than your family, what three men had the most significant impact on your life? What did they teach you?
5. What admirable traits do you long to leave to those coming behind you, and what adjustments can you make in these final years to make sure that happens?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- **CULLING THE WOOD PILE:** Robert spoke of culling the good boards out of a woodpile and setting back the rest. This week, make a deliberate list of the good things your father and grandfathers gave you. If they are living, contact them and thank them for these things. If they are not alive, do that same exercise in prayer, thanking God for these men. Do the same for the three men you listed in question four.
- **LAYING ASIDE THE WEIGHTS:** No one wants to run a lap—particularly their gun lap—with weights around their ankles. Forgiveness releases the debilitating burdens of holding onto past hurts. It’s a choice of our will as we, by faith, transfer the hurts we’ve carried on our narrow shoulders to God’s broad ones (see Romans 12:17-21). Make a list of hurts you’ve been carrying from your past this week. Walk through that list, item by item, and pray this simple prayer: “Lord, I choose to forgive _____. I’m transferring this to You from my weakness to Your strength. Help me never pick it up again. I leave it in Your capable hands.”

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).

CHAPTER 3: Left Behind

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Technology is racing past us. As you run your gun lap, do you face fears about being unable to stay up with technology and do the work you need to do? How does it make you feel?
2. Robert uses technology as a common illustration of areas where we can get overwhelmed. In your gun lap, what are other places where you experience some fear or discouragement? A sense of being left behind?
3. What are ways you can stay in the race with technology? Practical steps you can take (or have taken) to get as much help as possible?
4. It's easy to get angry or impatient with areas where we don't feel proficient. God has promised to equip us for each stage of life, giving us what we need. Robert said his friend embraced the gun lap season with incredible patience. What do you need to do to move from frustration and fear to faith and contentment?
5. Are there areas in your life that you feel you cannot change? If so, why not embrace the sovereignty and grace of God in these areas, trusting that He will come alongside your frustration and grant you His patience? Think about this or discuss with your group.

YOUR NEXT STEP

- **EMBRACING THE CHALLENGES:** Write down the areas where you are fearful of coming challenges in your life. Read Psalm 34 every day this week, asking God to give you a sense of His presence as you face these fears. Then memorize this verse: "You, O LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head" (Psalm 3:3.)
- **FILLED WITH HIM:** Patience is a gift of the Holy Spirit who, because you've invited Him, lives within you. It's the result—the Bible calls this fruit—of letting His Spirit be in control (Galatians 5:22-23). Every day this week, begin the day by asking the Holy Spirit to take full control of your life. In prayer, embrace God's sovereignty over the changes that are coming in your gun lap, and ask Him to flow through you with grace and joy.

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

CHAPTER 4: Self-Conversation

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself.” What do you think he means? How is this true for you?
2. Robert said that he often hears in the night the “tones of disdain and judgment.” Can you identify? Is your thinking filled with more self-condemnation than self-encouragement?
3. Was your home of origin filled with grace or graceless shaming? How has this affected you?
4. Speak to the Lord your desire to build grace into the fabric of your life and experience in these gun lap years. How could that start?
5. Read Revelation 12:10. Do you think our enemy, the devil, plays a part in the accusations you rehearse in your thinking?
6. What are three of the most oft-repeated lies the devil whispers in your ear? Or that you speak to yourself?
7. “Like so much of life,” Robert writes, “good thinking starts with good theology.” What accurate view of a holy God could directly combat the lies that you mentioned in the last question?
8. It’s healthy to recognize your sin and see your need for God. We are lifelong repenters. But to wallow in shame is a sign of pride that “won’t admit that God’s mercy covers it all.” Do you agree with this? What could help you accept and embrace God’s grace?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- TRUTH-ABOUT-YOU INFUSION: Spend time this week meditating on Ephesians 1:3-14. Underline everything that God says is true of you as a follower of Jesus Christ. Read these verses each day for seven days. Commit to memory any verses that will help you combat your negative self-conversation. As soon as you hear that negative talk, renew your mind with what God says is true!

*I will bless the LORD who counsels me—even at night when my thoughts trouble me
(Psalm 16:7).*

CHAPTER 5: Another Important Year

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Almost every man has regrets in his marriage. Things he'd do differently. That's you and me, too. Right? But, it's not too late to do something new. We can take deliberate steps now to make the gun lap years the best possible. What are the areas that you need to bring change in your relationship to your wife?
2. Communication is key. What one thing could you do this week to go out of your way to express your love for her? Do you have a cellphone? Does she? Do you know her number? Bathe her with a "I love you" texts this week. Add her name as a bonus.
3. If you asked your wife, "What's it like to be married to me?" how would she answer? Could you receive her answer without being defensive?
4. It's hard not to interrupt or correct your wife, even on very meaningless details. Why do we do this? How do you think this makes her feel? How do you feel when she does this to you? What are some frequent places where you do this that could be avoided?
5. What are the fun things you did together when you were first dating your wife? What would it look like if you started "dating" her again?
6. What are three things that you deeply appreciate about your wife? When was the last time you told her these things?
7. Rekindling a relationship often starts by doing some very simple things. Robert mentions several of these. What are some things you could do that would begin to rekindle your relationship with your wife?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- CLEARING THE LANE: You wouldn't begin a race if large rocks were in your lane. You may have some of these in your marriage. Spend deliberate time this week asking the Lord to show you everything you have done that has hurt your marriage. Write these down. This is not to shame you but to change you and clear your conscience with your wife.

With a humble heart, ask for her forgiveness about each issue. Say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Will you please forgive me?" Do not blame her or excuse your conduct. Just admit where you've failed. Don't demand a response; that's her business. Share with her your commitment to renew your intentional love for her.

Plan a special Gun Lap date or weekend to commemorate the beginning of a new lap together!

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her
(Ephesians 5:25).*

CHAPTER 6: In Shape for this Race

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Our physical health during our gun lap is of even greater importance than when we were young. How would you rate your health on a scale of 1-10?
2. How would you rate your attitude toward your health on a scale of 1-10 (1, you're not very concerned, and 10, you're aggressively pursuing good health)? What contributed to this attitude throughout your life?
3. What steps could you take if you think that something is not right regarding your health?
4. Many men who enter their gun lap find they're carrying less responsibility and thus, less accountability regarding godly living. They may feel like there is less at stake if they fall into sin. Why do you think this is so? Have you found this to be true?
5. As you learn of the cause of why some well-known men have failed in their later years, what comes to your mind when you think of how they fell?
6. No serious sin just happens. There is usually a crack in the foundation that may have been there for a while. If the enemy were to tempt you now, where would he aim his temptations?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- GROWING IN GRACE: Robert expounds on six traits in Titus 2:2 that should be true of older men. This week, reread his explanation of these traits. Which of these characteristics are the most challenging for you? Self-control, worthy of respect, sensible, sound in faith, sound in love, sound in endurance?

If you're bold, ask your wife to help you evaluate this. Ask God to show you a game plan for growth in these specific areas and take fresh steps. Remember, we can only grow with the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him daily for His help. Without it, you're toast.

*I discipline my body and bring it under strict control so that after preaching to others,
I myself will not be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27).*

CHAPTER 7: Free Time Isn't Really Free

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. In our gun lap, we have more discretionary time than we've had before. Does this free time excite you or discourage you? Does it challenge you or make you fearful?
2. The loss of a busier schedule can make us feel useless. The remedy for this is to find God's direction for your life—your calling for this gun lap season. Do you see this stage as an extended vacation, or are you looking for your next assignment from God?
3. What do you think God's assignment for you now?
4. God calls us to love our neighbors as His second greatest commandment. Have you connected with your neighbors throughout your life? What hinders most people from doing this?
5. Have you ever had a neighbor that loved your family well? What did they do, and how did it make you feel? What can you learn from them regarding how to love your neighbors well?
6. What's the first practical step you could take to simply get to know your neighbors?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- A NEIGHBOR PARTY: Set a date to have a neighborhood dinner or block party. You might title a written invitation as a "Get-to-know-your-neighbor" party and go door-to-door inviting them. Follow Robert's suggestions on pages 147-148. Pray fervently that God would use this first step to open the door to great community in your neighborhood for many years. See it as a first step and not a one-time event.

*For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement,
"YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF" (Galatians 5:14).*

CHAPTER 8: A Nice ROI

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Robert talks about mentoring as “one of your most important gun lap assignments.” Why do you think this is true?
2. Did you have someone who mentored you—formally or informally? Who were these mentors, and what did you learn from them?
3. Our gun lap should be our greatest opportunity for mentoring. We know more than we ever have (hopefully) and have years of experience (good and bad). Most younger men feel quite incompetent about how to be a man, and you have more to offer than you realize. What are some of your experiences and skills that you think you could help a younger man develop? Be humbly honest.
4. Most men feel incapable of mentoring because they’ve never been mentored. But it can be as simple as taking someone to lunch, asking questions, being a friend, and offering advice as God opens opportunities and praying for them. You’ll be surprised at what little effort it takes to really help a younger man. Right now, think of or share with your group the names of one or two men who you might begin to help in this way.
5. Robert’s brother said, “Mentoring has kept me from feeling old.” Why would this be true? What is the ROI for those who mentor?
6. Jethro told Moses to “Go in peace” as he mentored him. How important is it to encourage those you mentor? To let them know you believe in them and send them out with your blessing?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- **JOINING GOD IN HIS WORK:** God’s business is to raise disciples, and, as His followers, we’re His instruments to make that happen. This week, ask God to bring to your mind someone you can mentor. Call them and invite them to coffee or lunch. You don’t have to make it formal. You’re simply building a friendship. Tell them God put them on your mind, and you’d love to get to know them better. Ask lots of questions, comment on the potential you see in them, find out how you can pray for them, and set a date for your next meeting. Let the mentoring relationship evolve organically.

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).

CHAPTER 9: Running with a Limp

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. Most people have a “limp” in certain areas of their lives. These may be physical issues that have occurred, experiences from the past, or current challenges. What are the things that you would consider “broken places” that you’ve experienced in your journey?
2. “Bones are actually stronger in the broken places ... we can actually be tougher because of our impediment” (pg. 177). What do you think this means, and do you agree?
3. Share some of the specific benefits or life lessons you’ve learned from the challenging issues you’ve faced in the past or are facing now.
4. The Apostle Paul embraced his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12). In fact, he came to even “boast” in his weakness, saying that he was “well content” with his thorn. Why do you think Paul was able to speak with such confidence, and how can we?
5. Robert said about our “limp” that, “We could worry. We could gripe and complain. We could carp to everyone and try to make them as miserable as we are ... or we could embrace the inevitable and thank our Father for blessing us with yet another opportunity to tell others about this special encounter with deity.” What would it take for you to get there?
6. Have you been willing to share with others the circumstances of your limp and what God has done? Share this with the group. If you have not yet done so, would you ask God to give you opportunities to see this used for His glory in the lives of others?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- TURNING THE TIDE: Set aside an hour with the Lord. Spend time writing down the primary things in your life that may have given you a limp ... a difficult relationship, a marital problem, a prodigal child, a business reversal, a physical problem, etc.

In prayer, ask God to reveal what He has taught you through each of these experiences and write these lessons down. The apostle Paul said, “In EVERYTHING give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We thank Him, not specifically for the pain or tragedy but for how He has and will work it all together for good.

Carefully walk through each area, giving thanks for what God has done with your limp. Ask Him to help you view these things through the lens of His sovereignty and purposes. Commit to not whine or complain about them in the future, but to embrace the will of God for your life and to use these things for His glory.

Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses so that Christ’s power may reside in me (2 Corinthians 12:9).

CHAPTER 10: Living to Make Christ Known

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. It's easy for believers to become complacent about lost people—to forget their eternal destiny. Do you find yourself assuming that people around you are doing fine? That they are not “going nowhere, lying on the floor of the forest, having fallen ... rotting and disintegrating,” as R.C. Sproul said? Why do we lose this compelling reality?
2. Why do you think most Christians don't tell others about Jesus?
3. Robert said that sharing Christ with others has become “fun.” Is this your view of witnessing to others? If not, share the word you would use to describe witnessing. What do you think most people would say?
4. Do you agree with Robert that God can use all kinds of witnessing? Sharing with people you don't know versus building long relationships? A quick offer to pray for a stranger or a spontaneous gospel presentation versus a long friendship? Is one of these better than another?
5. Do you see encounters with people each common day as “divine appointments?” What shift would need to occur for this to be your daily thought?
6. What are simple, “on-ramp” phrases you use, or you've heard others use, that help you begin spiritual conversations?
7. Is there someone God has specifically laid on your heart—perhaps a relative or friend—with whom you know you need to have a gospel conversation? Maybe someone you've avoided? If so, consider in your own heart or ask the group to pray with you about this.

YOUR NEXT STEP

- MAKING CHRIST KNOWN: Find a spiritual partner (perhaps your mate) and take a 30-day challenge.
 - Ask God to help you see people every day as He sees them.
 - Pray daily like the Christians of Acts 4:24-31 that caused them to “be filled with the Holy Spirit” and go out to “speak the word of God with boldness.”
 - Look for opportunities each day for these conversations.
 - Share with your spiritual partner every week about these spiritual conversations.

But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24).

THE GRASS CATCHER: Oh, One More Thing

CONTEMPLATING THE RACE

1. We all long to leave behind a spiritual legacy. What kind of spiritual inheritance would you like to leave to your children and grandchildren? Be specific, not vague.
2. We all want a “quick fix” to leave a significant inheritance for our family. But it takes a “patient acquisition of virtue,” as Eugene Petersen says. What adjustments can you make in your gun lap to leave a better spiritual inheritance for those behind you regardless of what you have NOT done in the past? Again, be very specific.
3. Do you, like Robert once did, have a dim or rigid view of holiness? What comes to your mind when you hear this word?
4. To be holy is to be like God. To be set apart, different from the run-of-the-mill self-absorbed person. What do you think a genuinely holy person would look like?
5. Who is someone you know who seems to fit a good, biblical description of holiness? What are the 2-3 dominant characteristics of their lives?
6. Robert quotes his wife, Nancy, saying, “From earliest childhood, I remember thinking that holiness and joy were inseparably bound to each other.” Would your children give this description? If not, how could you help change their opinion of holiness in your gun lap years?

YOUR NEXT STEP

- **GETTING OUT OF THE BLOCKS:** Races are often won or lost by how runners start. For this last week, spend time looking through each “YOUR NEXT STEP” section of each chapter. Write out a “Spiritual Gun Lap Plan” for this next year, and then review it (adjusting it as needed) each week to make sure you’re staying in your lane. And ask God to give you the wind of His Spirit at your back, sustaining your strong pace for His glory.

*Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written,
“You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16).*

MY GUN LAP RACE-PLAN

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
 7. _____
 8. _____
 9. _____
 10. _____
-