

WALKING TOWARD
Eternity

Making Choices For Today



DARING TO WALK THE WALK

JEFF & EMILY CAVINS

Journal

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FROM THE AUTHORS

Welcome to *Walking Toward Eternity – Daring to Walk the Walk*. This study grew out of our desire to be more like Christ and to take practical steps to change in key areas. For most of us, lasting change is not easy. Experiencing change, even modest change, is what this study is all about.

This study is different from a typical Bible study. We have designed each lesson to use Scripture as a way to encounter Christ in meditation and prayer. As St. Augustine said, “When we pray, we speak to God; when we read the Scriptures, God speaks to us.” We hope that as you study God’s Word, your relationship with the Lord will deepen as you continue this intimate conversation with him.

Using the Scriptures and your journal, you will experience daily meditative prayer, which will allow God’s Word to work in you to instill the mind of Christ and to obtain the grace necessary for change. Group discussion time will provide community and support, and the lectures will help focus you and challenge you to take action. Because making personal changes can be difficult on our own, these discussion groups will also keep you accountable as you follow through on the commitments you make each week.

The most dynamic aspect of this study is that each week will end with quiet time spent in the Lord’s presence, where you will commit to one specific step that you will take. Your journal, group discussions, lectures, and actions will work together to help you grow in the virtues of love, forgiveness, humility, prayer, faithfulness, sacrifice, and thankfulness.

We are glad you can join us as together we dare to “walk the walk.”

– Jeff and Emily Cavins

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one

HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD



“If you would attain to what you are not yet, you must always be displeased by what you are. For where you are pleased with yourself, there you have remained. Keep adding. Keep walking. Keep advancing.”

– St. Augustine



“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We only have today. Let us begin.”

– Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)

“If a person meditates consistently on God, a complete revolution takes place in that person’s behavior.”

– Archbishop Fulton Sheen

“In the spiritual life you must take one step forward each day in a vertical line, from the bottom up.”

– St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Session One Outline

DVD Presentation: “Hearing the Voice of God”

This video session will introduce the Walking Toward Eternity program, explain the various parts of the program, and share what you can expect to get out of it. Add your notes to the talk outline below.

I. Goal of This Study

- a. Modest change – small steps
- b. Romans 12:2 – “Be transformed,” developing the mind of Christ

II. What Makes this Study Different

- a. An encounter with Christ in prayer
- b. Applying God’s Word in seven areas of virtue

III. Action is Required for Change

- a. Engaging the will
- b. Hosea 10:12 – “Breaking up unplowed ground”
 - i. 2 Kings 4 and 5
 - ii. Joel 2

IV. Tools for the Study

- a. Journal
- b. Bookmark
- c. Bible (RSV:CE or NAB) – “One you can live in”

V. The Process

- a. Four days each week
 - i. Engage with the topic

- ii. Meditate on the selected Scriptures
- iii. Practice *lectio divina*
- iv. Homework
- b. Meeting day
 - i. Learn to pray *lectio divina* as a group
 - ii. Share and grow
 - iii. Presentation (45–50 min.)
 - iv. Point of decision: three questions
 - a.) What is God putting his hand on in your life?
 - b.) What, specifically, is he asking you to do?
 - c.) When will you take the step?

VI. Background of *Lectio Divina*

- a. Pope Benedict XVI: *Lectio divina* is “key to new springtime of evangelization” (2008 Synod on Sacred Scripture)
- b. St. Augustine and St. Cyprian observed: In prayer, we speak to God; as we read the Bible, we can experience God speaking to us
- c. An excellent prayer resource: *Praying Scripture for a Change* by Dr. Tim Gray

VII. *Lectio Divina*: Example, Psalm 23

- a. **Read** (*Lectio*)
 - i. Look for details, gather facts, notice key words
 - ii. What does the passage say?
- b. **Meditate** (*Meditatio*)
 - i. Wonder about what it says

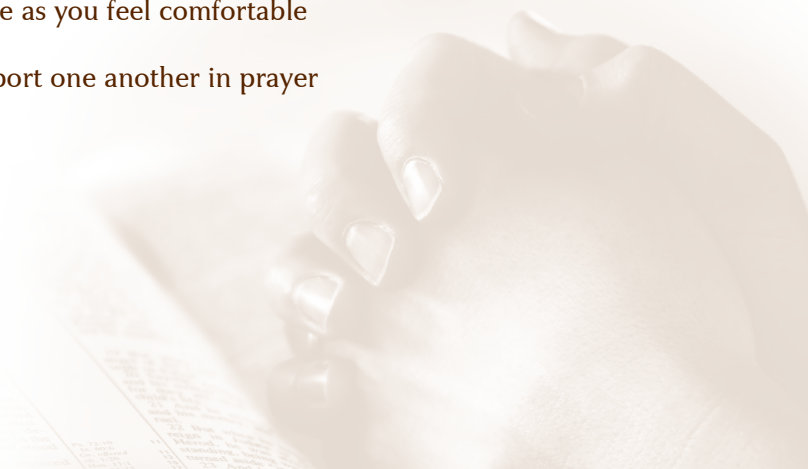
- ii. Engage your mind, don't empty it
 - a.) Isaiah 31:4 – a lion “meditates” (*hagah*) over its prey
- c. **Pray** (*Oratio*)
 - i. What does this mean to you?
 - ii. Respond to God in your words
- d. **Contemplate** (*Contemplatio*)
 - i. The result, the fruit – rest in God's presence
- e. Put it into practice (*Operatio*)

VIII. Hearing God's Voice Today

- a. CCC 142, 143 – Submit intellect and will to God; the obedience of faith
- b. Believe that God speaks today
- c. Believe you are capable of hearing him speak to you
- d. Be involved in the Scriptures
- e. Insight from Father Toups
- f. Example: Philip (Acts 8)

IX. Conclusion

- a. Each week, facilitator will ask, “Did you make the change?”
 - i. Share as you feel comfortable
 - ii. Support one another in prayer



Group Discussion

During this time you will get acquainted with others in your small group and learn more about the materials and home study portion of the class.

Small Group Assignment

Facilitator _____

Phone and/or email _____

Location _____

Walking Together

This study is designed to assist you in moving toward real change in your life through prayerful daily meditation on Scripture. The others in your small group are on the same journey. After you have studied each topic, Jeff Cavins will encourage you to take one concrete step to put into practice what you have learned and create change. Starting next week, the facilitator of your group will ask a simple question at the beginning of each discussion time: "Did you take the step?" A simple "yes" or "no" is all that is needed, but you may share more as time allows.

We all know how difficult change can be. Please remember to pray for the others in your group.

How to Use This Journal

1. Home Preparation: Days 1 to 4

This journal will guide you on your daily “walk” as you prepare for the days you meet with your group. The study you do at home is less about learning than it is about hearing from God in his Word, letting that Word come into contact with your life and responding to God in prayer. It is important to spend a small amount of time each day – fifteen to twenty minutes should be sufficient – rather than doing it all at once or at the last minute.

Four days of prayerful reading are outlined for each session. Every day, you will be prompted to think in a different way about the virtue under discussion that week.

Day 1: Meaning

The first day’s questions help you discover the meaning of love, forgiveness, humility, or another virtue. Sometimes you will be asked to contrast the dictionary definition or the world’s definition with what the Bible says. You may be asked to reflect on how you have experienced this virtue in your life. You will be provided with several Scripture verses to read and think about. Linger over this exercise, allowing the verses to penetrate your mind before recording what stands out to you.

Day 2: Importance

The second day takes this same virtue and turns your focus to why it is important. Are these arbitrary qualities, or does possessing and practicing them make a meaningful difference in life? What might life be like without them? As in Day 1, you will be prompted to read Scripture to learn God’s view on the matter. Once again, take time to savor God’s Word; don’t simply taste it and move on.

Day 3: Practice

The third day is similar to Days 1 and 2, but the questions build on what you have already read and ask you to consider what this virtue looks like in practice. Along with the brief list of verses you are given to read carefully, you will be presented with a longer passage from the Bible that illustrates the virtue in action. You then will be asked to begin thinking of how your own life measures up and to note whether something is standing in the way of change.

Day 4: Praying Scripture for a Change

After three days of thinking about a virtue, Day 4 asks you to enter into a deeper, more personal encounter with the passage that has meant the most to you that week. Using *lectio divina*, you will be asked to prayerfully meditate on your chosen Scripture passage, listening to hear the voice of God speak to you and responding to him in prayer. After the group discussion and DVD presentation, you will once again pray – this time deciding on and committing to the step you will take toward change. (The instructions for *lectio divina* are on the following page.)

Optional Further Reading

Days 1 to 3 each close with a list of additional verses. These are for optional reading, if you have time and want to explore the topic more. Feel free to use a Bible concordance to find even more verses, if you desire.

Notes for Group Discussion

Space has been set aside on each day's page for discussion notes. At the top is a question that summarizes the theme for that day (for example, "What is love?" at the far right of Session 2, Day 1). You need not answer the question at home; it will be used later to guide group discussion of what you have gleaned during the week. The extra space will allow you to add insights you gain that day from other group members.

2. Meeting Day

Each week on your meeting day, a small group discussion and the DVD presentation will help prepare you to take the first step toward walking in a particular virtue. The "Meeting Day" pages of your journal are designed to help with this process.

Small Group Discussion

To help you recall what you have been reading and thinking about that week's topic, you will begin with a brief group exercise of *lectio divina* on a passage that gets to the heart of the topic. Praying with *lectio divina* in a group is a bit different than praying with it in solitude. (Directions for leading a group discussion in *lectio divina* can be found on page 12.)

The majority of the small group time will be spent discussing the insights you have gained. Four general questions are provided that summarize the goals of day. They are repeated on appropriate pages to minimize the need to flip back and forth in your journal during discussion.

Several additional questions are offered to answer if there is time remaining.

DVD Presentation

An outline of the DVD Presentation is included in your journal. Feel free to take additional notes there as desired.

Quiet Time in the Lord's Presence

At the close of the DVD presentation, you will be asked to spend time in quiet prayer – before the Blessed Sacrament if possible – asking the Lord three questions:

- What are you putting your hand on in my life?
- What specifically do you want me to do?
- When?

My Step for the Week

The last journal page for each session contains a “contract” of sorts on which you may record the specifics regarding the step you have determined to take the following week. Write it down and ask God for help as you dare to “walk the walk.”

Instructions for *Lectio Divina* (“Divine Reading”)

Choose a brief portion of Scripture to meditate on. Spend a few moments in a quiet place preparing your heart and asking God to meet you in his Word. Follow these steps to praying with the Scripture passage you have chosen:

1. **Read** (*Lectio*): Slowly read the verse(s), looking for details. Notice key words; verbs and nouns; anything repeated, compared or contrasted. What does the passage say? Write down words or phrases that stand out to you.
2. **Meditate** (*Meditatio*): Mentally “chew” on key words or images to extract their meaning. Let the words sink in and take hold. What do those words mean? Write down what you discover.
3. **Pray** (*Oratio*): Pay attention to the way your meditation connects with your life and respond to what you find. Talk to God (not “at” him) about this.
4. **Contemplate** (*Contemplatio*): Savor being in God’s presence.
5. **Resolve to Act** (*Operatio*): Make a practical resolution by which you hope to walk in the virtue you have been reading about as Christ does.

Leading a Group Exercise of *Lectio Divina*

Choose three people to read the passage out loud and respond as described below. If time allows, practice with your group using Ephesians 3:14-21.

1. Open with prayer.

Facilitator: Pray in your own words or with these: “Lord, open our minds, our ears, and our hearts, that we may be transformed by your Word.” Sit together quietly for a few minutes, quieting your hearts and preparing to hear the living word of God, spoken to you.

2. Read (*Lectio*):

Reader 1: Read the Scripture passage out loud slowly, thoughtfully.

Group: Listen prayerfully. What did you hear? In the following silence, speak aloud the word or words that stood out to you.

3. Meditate (*Meditatio*):

Reader 2: Read the same passage again, slowly.

Group: Listen prayerfully while reflecting on how Christ is speaking to you through the text. Allow the Word to speak into your heart, to touch your life. What is he saying to you? Speak it briefly into the silence that follows.

4. Pray (*Oratio*):

Reader 3: Read the passage slowly a final time.

Group: Listen quietly to God speaking to your hearts; respond silently to him. After a few minutes of silent prayer, you may share with others what is in your heart (optional).

5. Contemplate (*Contemplatio*):

Group: Spend several minutes of quiet rest in God’s love.

6. Close with the Our Father or other prayer.