

CHART YOUR COURSE



Finding Answers to Life's
8 Greatest Questions

How to Live Your Best Life in All Seasons

PASTOR ROB CARLSON

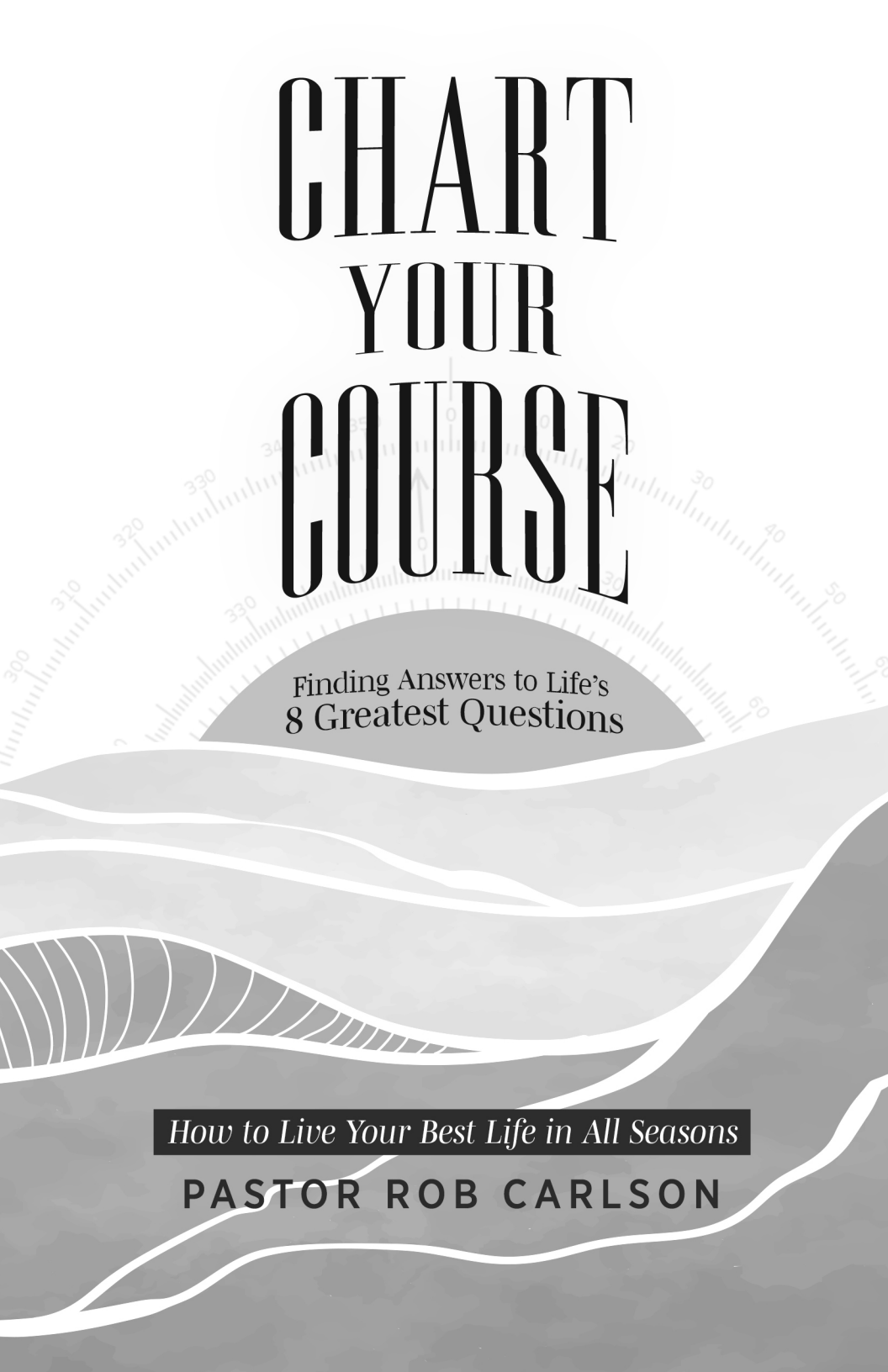


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INTRODUCTION

Chart Your Course

To chart is to “watch something with careful attention or to record something in detail.” There is no more important thing to chart in life... than our life. Yet, far too few spend any meaningful time “watching their life with careful attention,” much less “recording anything about their life in detail.” How could it transform and enhance our lives if we pivoted from a casual approach to a more circumspect and focused approach to living? What if we stepped up and “charted” how we think about, dedicate ourselves to, and practically do: Family, faith, fitness, finances, friendships, forgiveness, and more?

When we think of charting, we often think of doctors who “chart our health” and ship captains who “chart their journeys.” Many also chart their finances, food, and fitness! Even our cars have a service chart that when followed keeps them running smoothly. The dictionary uses words to describe charting such as: aligning, delineating, depicting, designing, diagraming, drafting, mapping, planning, and plotting. These words create a vivid picture of diligence, dedication, and commitment on the part of the one doing the charting. Details matter. Progress is monitored. The journey and the destination are both accounted for and evaluated regularly.

Our life matters more to God than we will ever know. He wants us to live our very best life. And to guide us, He has provided powerful life transformational principles in Scripture. We do well to follow them closely and think about them deeply. In fact, we’d be wise to chart our course in life by learning, monitoring, and evaluating our faithful application of these transformational biblical principles.

Noah

Everyone knows the story about Noah and the Flood. The ark, animals 2 by 2, the deluge, preservation of Noah's family, devastation of the world, the rainbow and fresh start, and more. But interestingly, I don't believe that most people have looked carefully at Noah's life to discover how profound his life lessons really are. A careful study of Noah and his journey shows us that Noah had a master plan for life. He may have learned it along the way, through the crucible of trials and uncertainty, but his life demonstrates a charted course. In fact, we can use Noah's experiences to build a master plan for our own life and chart our course.

Noah found the answers to life's 8 greatest questions, and he passes those answers on to us. Everyone is looking for the answers to life's greatest questions like:

- *Who am I?*
- *Why am I here?*
- *Where did I come from?*
- *Where am I going?*
- *What's my purpose in life?*
- *Do I really matter?*
- *Can I make a difference?*

Noah faced incredible odds. Think about it for a minute. Have you ever been tasked with resourcing the building of a really big boat? Me neither. I'm sure he experienced tremendous support and had everyone on board with him, right? Until they weren't. He certainly faced extraordinary uncertainty and ambiguity. After all, how does it make sense to build a ship in the desert where it never rains? Seems crazy, doesn't it? Noah was given the huge responsibility of saving the world and essentially becoming the father of the restart of creation. Consider the mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational strain he must have felt. It had to have left him scrambling and searching for high ground answers. Yet, through it all, he charted his course, stayed true to his responsibility, and completed his assignment.

When it Rains, it Pours

Life can often times be complex, uncertain, ambiguous, and incongruent. It can feel chaotic and out of control. It's not always coherent, predictable, and consistent. It is at times uneven, up and down, like the rolling seas. We can lose our bearings. Life can feel kind of like floating a boat you built, in a flood you didn't ask for, in the middle of a desert which makes no sense, and it all lasts a really long time.

So how do we dial down the confusion, find clarity, and create a compass/blueprint/map for living our very best life in all seasons? We all face many seasons in life. Some are stormy, some calm. Some are hard, some peaceful. Some are painful, others not so much. We face different seasons with regard to our journey through the ages of life from child to youth to young adults to middle adults to senior adults. Each season brings a new set of circumstances, realities, and responsibilities. We face various seasons in marriage, parenting, educational training, career advancement, spiritual growth, financial preparation, and more. Life comes at us fast and furious, like a torrential downpour and a rising flood. We don't always know where we are headed or how it will end.

No matter what season of life we find ourselves in, the Noah story provides us direction on how to find calm in the middle of the chaos and craft a life plan that produces deep insights into how to do life well.

To start, we need to slow down, take time to reflect, and think deeply. We need to evaluate our present life relative to our future hopes and dreams. What do we envision for our lives and families and faith and finances? To help us do that thoroughly and do it well, we must search, find, and chart answers to life's 8 greatest questions. This is the vital quest we embark upon in this study.

Life's 8 Greatest Questions

The key to living our very best life requires that we answer “life’s 8 greatest questions,” like Noah did. And then we must make them an anchor in our life by regularly evaluating and monitoring them along the way. Storms will come, winds will blow, floods will rise, and unpredictability will mount. But we can find clarity and certainty amidst the confusion and complexity of life by charting our course and creating what I like to call a “**Chart Your Course Life Plan.**” A plan that we build and dedicate ourselves to monitoring and evaluating regularly (monthly, quarterly, seasonally).

As we walk through the Noah story in Genesis 5-9, we see 8 crucial questions that his life asks and answers. These are the same questions that we must answer for ourselves now and going forward. What are the 8 questions we need to find answers for? Here they are:

1. Lineage: Why Am I Here? *The purpose question*
2. Legacy: What Difference Will I Make? *The commitment question*
3. Influence: Who Will I Impact? *The contribution question*
4. Virtue: How Integrous Will I Become? *The character question*
5. Reliability: Can I Be Counted On? *The accountability question*
6. Perseverance: Will I Persist? *The overcoming question*
7. Resilience: Will I Make a Fresh Start? *The courage question*
8. Finish: Will I Maximize My Opportunity? *The fulfillment question*

These 8 questions must be engaged regularly. Far too often we float through life. Just bouncing from one season to the next, one challenge to the next, one decision to the next, lacking any coherent life plan or well thought out life design. But what if we began to chart our course thoughtfully and thoroughly, watching and monitoring our life and growth incessantly? What if we created a well-designed life plan that could guide us in all seasons?

Regardless of the storms, changes, challenges, and uncertainties that blow our way, these 8 questions will help guide the trajectory of our lives no matter what comes our way. They help anchor the priorities, convictions, and principles that matter most in life. These 8 questions form the basis of the **Chart Your Course Life Plan** that we will be developing and interacting with often throughout this book.

To make the most of this journey, find someone or a group of people to embark on this life transformational voyage with. You'll be glad you did.

For more information on Small Groups, visit bcachurch.com/groups.

Memorize—Meditate—Reflect

The Bible often discusses the importance of planning, aligning, delineating, evaluating, reflecting, and mapping our lives. We are to meditate, think deeply, and reflect on our ways. God honors diligence but dishonors negligence. Memorize and ponder these powerful passages of Scripture.

Jeremiah 29:11

“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.”

Proverbs 16:3

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

Proverbs 19:21

Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.

Proverbs 3:5-8

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. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.

Psalms 25:4-5

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Colossians 3:23-24









Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Proverbs 4:25-26

Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.

Chart Your Course Life Plan

We will be focusing on developing, designing, and diagraming our **Chart Your Course Life Plan** throughout this book. Complete this gauge assessment for each question we'll be studying. Where are you today? If you are really clear and diligent in one area, give yourself a $\frac{3}{4}$ or Full. If you are struggling or need to fill up, give yourself a $\frac{1}{4}$ or Empty. Be honest with yourself and plan to regularly reassess (monthly, quarterly, seasonally).

	GAUGE
1 LINEAGE: Why Am I Here? <i>The purpose question</i>	
2 LEGACY: What Difference Will I Make? <i>The commitment question</i>	
3 INFLUENCE: Who Will I Impact? <i>The contribution question</i>	
4 VIRTUE: How Integrous Will I Become? <i>The character question</i>	
5 RELIABILITY: Can I Be Counted On? <i>The accountability question</i>	
6 PERSEVERANCE: Will I Persist? <i>The overcoming question</i>	
7 RESILIENCE: Will I Make a Fresh Start? <i>The courage question</i>	
8 FINISH: Will I Maximize My Opportunity? <i>The fulfillment question</i>	

ASSESSMENT GAUGE

Use this scale to assess yourself throughout the study

E — Danger Zone

$\frac{1}{4}$ — Improvement Needed

$\frac{1}{2}$ — Pay Attention

$\frac{3}{4}$ — Keep Going and Growing

F — Good



1

LINEAGE

Why Am I Here?

I will be at peace with who I am and Whose I am. I will not allow disappointments in my upbringing, family of origin issues, rejections and hurt, or any other such challenges to limit me in any way. I will not become calloused by hardships nor complacent due to unordinary privilege, ease, or comfort. I will live to fulfill God's **purpose** for my life.

DIG

Read Genesis 5:1-32

DISCUSS

1. What do you see here? What stands out? Why do you think this passage is included? Why is it important?

2. This long litany on lineage begs the question: What on earth am I here for? Each of the people mentioned in this long list had a story. Ask yourself, "What's my story? What's my purpose in life? What part am I to play?" How would you answer these questions?

DISCUSS

3. Note the reference to Adam's lineage in verse 1. He was made in God's likeness. It started so great but went bad so quickly. Why? Sin. What did Adam miss? Why did he disobey? Did he ever bounce back? Did he fulfill his purpose? Why or why not?

4. Notice the refrain of the phrase, "*and then he died.*" (vss. 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31). It pounds home the message that life is temporary. It lasts for a short season. Especially for us today as we don't live as long as they did in those days. For us, 100 years max. More like 90. Probably 80. The average age these days is actually 77.5. So having a finite amount of time should create a sense of urgency in all of us. We need to be fervent about maximizing our time and opportunity. What does this mean to you?

DISCUSS

5. Noah is mentioned in 5:28-32. Adam had a unique role to play as the first man. Noah also had a unique role to play as the first man after the reset. While it is important to know where you came from, I would argue that it matters more where you are going. Lineage can limit those who feel shortchanged. It doesn't have to. Or it can make those who have been blessed become complacent. It shouldn't. Where we have come from is one thing and a part of God's plan for our lives. We don't get to choose that part. But we do get to choose where we go from here. We get to choose our life's direction and determine our legacy. Discuss.

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

“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

DETERMINE

With each of the “8 Greatest Questions of Life,” complete the chart below. It is important to be brutally honest and evaluate clearly if we are going to grow and become the person God want us to be.

Chart Your Course: Lineage

Vital Question	Big Idea	How do I allow my past to limit me?	What course corrections do I need to make moving forward?	Ideas, impressions, implications <i>(Journal your thoughts here)</i>
1 Lineage: <i>Why Am I Here?</i>	Purpose			
2 Legacy: <i>What Difference Will I Make?</i>	Commitment			
3 Influence: <i>Who Will I Impact?</i>	Contribution			
4 Virtue: <i>How Integrous Will I Become?</i>	Character			
5 Reliability: <i>Can I Be Counted On?</i>	Accountability			
6 Perseverance: <i>Will I Persist?</i>	Overcoming			
7 Resilience: <i>Will I Make a Fresh Start?</i>	Courage			
8 Finish: <i>Will I Maximize My Opportunity?</i>	Fulfillment			

2

LEGACY

What Difference Will I Make?

I will develop a personal sense of urgency to accomplish God's plan for my life and become the person God envisions me to be. I will be **committed** to: 1) Dream God's dream for me. 2) Clarify the dream until it is unmistakably clear. 3) Share the dream with others so I will be held accountable. 4) Pursue the dream with my whole heart and being.

DIG

Read Genesis 9:1-17

DISCUSS

1. In verses 1 and 7, it says, "*Be fruitful and multiply.*" God is doing a restart on creation. Noah is the new father of the human race. God's hopes lie with Noah. Noah was God's chosen man to "get it right this time." How did he do? What does Scripture record? Was he faithful to fulfill his assignment in life? What is his legacy?

DISCUSS

2. What do the following scriptures record about Noah and his life and legacy? Where did he get it right? Read specifically Hebrews 11:7-8. What does this say about how he is remembered?

Scriptures that speak about Noah that are also interesting: 1 Chronicles 1:4 (genealogy); Isaiah 54:9 (promise); Ezekiel 14:14,20 (judgment); Matthew 24:37-39 (warning); Luke 3:36 (genealogy); Luke 17:26-27 (warning); 1 Peter 3:20 (water); 2 Peter 2:5 (condemnation).

3. God establishes his covenant with Noah. Look at Genesis 9:8-17 more closely. Generally speaking, a covenant is a promise between two or more parties to perform certain actions. It is similar to a promise. God’s covenant with Noah is God’s first covenant in the Bible and it is the only divine covenant where God promises “not” to do something. What is the promise here?

The 5 major covenants in the Bible are: Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant, Mosaic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. Watch this video and read this article for more detail: bibleproject.com/articles/covenants-the-backbone-bible.

4. After the flood (9:28), Noah lived 350 years, a total of 950, then he died (9:29). In many ways, the covenant between God and Noah signifies a life of faithfulness, ongoing acts of obedience, and the fulfillment of his life purpose. That’s what I think of when I read this. A righteous, blameless, virtuous man fights the good fight

DISCUSS

and keeps the faith. It reminds me of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Why is consistent and regular faithfulness and obedience to God so important? Why must this be an essential part of your life and legacy?

5. Reread question 5 from lesson one. Then discuss again: What's more important, your lineage or your legacy? While both are significant, you only have control over one, really. Your lineage, the family you were born into, the disadvantages and advantages of your family of origin, and all the realities of how your life began is one thing. But what you do with it is another. The Bible is full of folks who started with humble beginnings and ran hard after God and "built" a legacy. Noah not only built a big boat, but he built an admirable legacy of faith and devotion to God. What does this mean to you?

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. — **PROVERBS 16:3**

DETERMINE

God had a purpose for Noah, and he has one for you and me. It most likely will not include building an Ark and rescuing mankind. But it is no less important to God, and must be important to us. Take a moment and put pen to paper (or fingertips to keyboard). Write out your life purpose as you understand it. How are you doing at building and fulfilling your legacy? Take some time to pray about it and discuss with God. Are you on track? If not, where do you need to get on track with God's plan for your life? You might want to share your evaluation and plan with a friend and get their honest feedback about what they think and where they believe you stand. Sometimes input from others can be more objective and invaluable.

Using the **Chart Your Course: Legacy** worksheet on the next page, map it out. You may not be on an Ark, but you need to think deeply about your desire to make a difference with your life. More importantly, where does God want you to go? Spend some time evaluating where you are and map out where you want to go and how you are going to get there. Write out your response in each box.

DETERMINE

Chart Your Course: Legacy

Vital Question	Big Idea	Where Am I Right Now?	Where Do I Want to Go?	Next Steps in Getting There
1 Lineage: <i>Why Am I Here?</i>	Purpose	Who am I and what is my life purpose?	What does this look like big picture and long term? Think finished product. Create a mental model.	What is my plan to grow and fulfill my life purpose? Think practical growth plan (1-3-5 years). Be specific. Education? Finances? Family? Faith? Other?
2 Legacy: <i>What Difference Will I Make?</i>	Commitment	Starting with the end in view, as of today, what do I want my life to look like?	What changes do I need to make to maximize the opportunities in the life God has given me?	What changes can I make now? This year? In 3 years? In 5 years?
3 Influence: <i>Who Will I Impact?</i>	Contribution	Who am I serving? Spouse, kids, grandkids, other?	How can I better influence others for God and for good?	Where do I need to grow so that I can become a more impactful mentor? Who will be my mentees?
4 Virtue: <i>How Integrous Will I Become?</i>	Character	Study these virtue lists: 1 Cor 13, Matt 5, Gal 5:22-23. Where am I strong? Where am I weak?	How virtuous will I become?	How will I get there?

DETERMINE

Vital Question	Big Idea	Where Am I Right Now?	Where Do I Want to Go?	Next Steps in Getting There
5 Reliability: <i>Can I Be Counted On?</i>	Accountability	Do others say I am reliable, accountable, responsible? How? Explain.	What does total reliability and accountability look like for me?	What do I need to do and what habits do I need to form that will help me grow?
6 Perseverance: <i>Will I Persist?</i>	Overcoming	How well do I do with adversity? Am I too quick to give up? Or am I quick to persevere? Describe.	What does mature perseverance and persistence look like? Who comes to mind that I can model my life after?	What are some growth steps that I can employ that will strengthen my resolve and grow my perseverance muscle?
7 Resilience: <i>Will I Make a Fresh Start?</i>	Courage	There will be more than one time in life where I need to find the courage to start over. Where is my courage meter at right now?	What does courageous resilience look like to me? Create a mental model to run after. (Think about Abraham, Moses, Joseph, and Noah.)	What are one or two courageous steps you can and need to take to become the best version of yourself? Think about your relationships, work, health, faith, and more. Be specific.
8 Finish: <i>Will I Maximize My Opportunity?</i>	Fulfillment	How are you doing at living your best life today and every day, maximizing the opportunity God has given you?	What does maximizing my life look like in my marriage, family, finances, faith, etc? Describe what a fulfilling life means to you.	Where do you need to raise the bar and fight through complacency and callousness to maximize your life and find greater fulfillment?

3

INFLUENCE

Who Will I Impact?

I will not miss the opportunity to **contribute** to the growth and advancement of others. I will make it my life's aim to impact the people in my life by living an exemplary Christ-following life. I will teach my kids judiciously, encourage my spouse lovingly, mentor others carefully, serve others faithfully, and make a difference in the lives of people in my world.

DIG

Read Genesis 7:1-4

DISCUSS

1. Look especially at verse 1. Why did God choose Noah? Before we can influence others for God and for good we must be good and be godly. Many people talk the talk. Too few walk the walk. To you, what are the marks of a good and godly person? Be specific.

2. It's not lost on me that Noah was dialed in. His first and most important relationship was with God. And it was strong. His second most important relationship was with his family. He literally saved their lives by building an Ark and bringing them on board. Our responsibility to care for our family is without question. In fact, God commands it all over Scripture. This includes, specifically, doing

DISCUSS

everything we can to bring our families on board the “Ark of Faith.” We need to help them understand who God is and why serving Him completely is by far the best life to live. Discuss.

3. The Ark was a safe place. It was a lifeboat. It meant safety, hope, help, encouragement, support, love, devotion, and much more. Noah provided this for his family in a very literal sense during the flood. Now our floods in life are much different than Noah’s Flood, but they are floods just the same. Traumatic episodes, tragic losses, overwhelming obstacles, financial troubles, and physical setbacks are just a few of the things we face. Our families need to be a safe place. A haven where each member can find their way, work through their issues, and be helped and encouraged along the way. How has this been true or not true in your own family experiences? How about your extended family growing up or your immediate family now? What were the results? What have you learned from these experiences that you can pass along to others and, in so doing, contribute to their lives?

4. Influencing our children and impacting their lives for God and for good must be our highest priority. It’s God’s ideal (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Colossians 3:21). Consider the seasons of your life and that of your children. Our kids need something special in each season. What love and support do your kids need and what can you provide

DISCUSS

during these influential seasons in their lives? And what does that look like to you?

- Ages 0-4: Early childhood and toddler nurturing.
- Ages 5-12: School age protection and fun.
- Ages 13-18—Teenage support and guidance.
- Ages 19-29—Young adult celebration and encouragement.
- Ages 30 and beyond—Adult relationship and caring concern.

5. God also wants us to serve and give of ourselves to impact those outside our family. How are you presently serving others? Mentoring others? What's one way you could step up and contribute to others more? Influence and serve and mentor others more? Brainstorm ideas with yourself and with a group of people who know you well. What ideas surface? Write them down. Pray about them. Experiment with a few of them. Then roll with those that resonate with you most. God wants to use you more than you realize.

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. — **PROVERBS 19:21**

DETERMINE

You have much to give. God wants to use your gifts, strengths, and abilities to serve others and bring strength to their lives. It starts with your family. But God wants you to go even further, impacting and influencing others for God and for good.

Chart Your Course: Influence

Who can you mentor by helping them find answers to life's greatest questions? Make a list of three people you can walk with for a meaningful period of time and work with them in finding answers for their life using the **Chart Your Course Life Plan** described in this book. Start with the following steps.

STEP 1: Lineage

Find someone to encourage, another to teach, and a third to rescue. Help them leverage their lineage by embracing Paul's Power Principle found in Philippians 3:13-14. Paul didn't live in the past, he learned from it. We don't live in the past, we learn from it. Paul also made the most of every opportunity in the present so he could maximize his future. Paul's Power Principle said plainly—"Be properly related to your past, present, and future." Write your three names below.

STEP 2: Legacy

Share your **Chart Your Course: Legacy** worksheet from lesson two with 3 people and have them write and share theirs with you. Then work with them to advance their plan.

STEP 3: Influence

Build a group (or two) and spend the year discipling, mentoring, strengthening, and building them up. Use this book as a guide and add other resources you find helpful. Make this a priority and commit to it.

DETERMINE

STEP 4: Virtue

Write out a virtue “character statement” using scriptures like I Corinthians 13, Ephesians 5:22-23, Matthew 5:3-10, and Micah 6:8. What does it look like to LiveLoveLead like Jesus? Be specific. Help your group(s) do the same.

STEP 5: Reliability

Create a list of 5 or more vital responsibilities you want to excel at and work with your group in evaluating how well you are doing with each. Dependability, responsibility, and accountability are important “abilities.” But what does this look like in real life? There are deep implications when it comes to doing what we say and saying what we do. Our follow-through with our family, finances, health, work, and faith in God are just a few areas where this is crucial. Discuss how to move forward in each of these 5 areas with your mentee or group (family, finances, health, work, faith). Be specific. Help your group do the same.

DETERMINE

STEP 6: Perseverance

Rising above and overcoming disappointment and adversity in life is immensely important. So many people get derailed when bad things happen. It's understandable, but we need to find ways to rise above difficulties. What have you had to endure? Work through? Rise above? How did you respond? What steps did you take to overcome your challenges? Where are you now? What were the steps or processes that helped you persist and overcome? Write it out and share it with three others and have them do the same with you.

STEP 7: Resilience

Demonstrating courage by being willing to make a fresh start or take a fresh approach to something is important if we are going to grow through regret and failure. We will all experience things in life that don't go perfectly. We will fall down, but we need to fall forward. In those moments, we need to decide if we are going to stay down or get back up and try again. Talk about the quality of resilience with three others and have them share their story with you. Then, each of you find another three and encourage them forward. How can you become more resilient?

DETERMINE

STEP 8: Finish

Paint a picture of what a fulfilling life looks like, then pursue it. Iterate where needed, adjust and adapt to new realities, but keep pursuing it. Write out your dream and include specific areas of your life such as: Faith, Family, Future, Finances, Fitness, Friendships, and even Forgiveness (righting wrong relationships). You might add some other areas as well. Then share it with others and have them do the same with you. Remember, if we don't have a target, we probably won't hit it.

4

VIRTUE

How Integrous Will I Become?

I will make biblical ethics, virtue, and **character** development a huge priority in my life. I will seek above all to *LiveLoveLead* like Jesus. I believe deeply that to do good I must first be good. Virtues like kindness, compassion, empathy, integrity, patience, forgiveness, and more, really matter to God and must matter to me.

DIG

Read Genesis 6:1-13; 7:5

DISCUSS

1. Walk through this passage and make a list of no less than 5 observations. What stands out to you and why? Ask: 1) What does it say? 2) What does it mean? 3) What does it mean to me? These are the questions I like to ask each time I study a Bible passage.

2. God talks about the wickedness of man in chapter 6 verse 5. And how the *“human heart was only evil all the time.”* It reminds me of Jeremiah 17:9, which says, *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”* What does this mean to you? Now read Jeremiah 17:10. What does this tell you about God’s judgment of a

DISCUSS

wicked heart? Read Genesis 6:11-13 one more time for good measure.

3. Read verses 6 and 7 again. Wow! These are show-stoppers. God regretted that he had made man. Does this mean He is surprised that man turned so evil? Does God get surprised? After all, He knows all things. Or does it mean He was deeply disappointed that man chose to turn from God and to sin. I think so. That said, man is given a free moral choice to choose God or reject Him. And God is deeply sorrowful when mankind chooses the latter. Unpack this personally and with a group.

4. The verse that stands out like a bright star on a dark and foreboding night is verse 8. *“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”* Read also verse 9. What does it mean to be righteous? Blameless? Walk faithfully? Be specific. What other scriptures come to mind? I think of Job who in Job 1:1 is described as being *“blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil.”* Noah’s virtue shined bright in a dark world. Job’s shown bright in a sea of heartache. Both men answered the call, stood the test, and honored God. Think about

DISCUSS

this. Talk about this with someone.

5. What are the major “virtues” passages in the Bible? What comes to mind? Make a list and read through them. Ask God to help you grow in virtue. Aim high to be virtuous, integrous, of high character, and immensely ethical. What is your passage list? Read the scriptures and write down each individual virtue you see. *Hint:* Include I Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:22,23, Matthews 5:3-10, and Micah 6:8. Think also about the virtues opposite the vices listed in Proverbs 6:16-19. What other passages and virtues would you add to your list?

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

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. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. — PROVERBS 3:5-8

DETERMINE

Sadly, there often is very little difference between those who espouse Christ and those who do not. It is shocking that far too often they look the same, sound the same, voice the same messages of contempt, and spew the same condemnation. But God demands we be blameless and righteous like Noah. We need to be good before we can do good. It starts by devising and adhering to a strict code of ethics.

Chart Your Course: Virtue

Using your virtues list generated in question 5 on the previous page, restate all 8 questions as virtue affirmation statements. I've given one example for each for you to consider. Now create your own version, something personalized to you that will inspire you to reach high like Noah did. This needs to be an essential and core component of your **Chart Your Course Life Plan** if you are going to *LiveLoveLead* like Jesus.

Virtues are defined as “behaviors showing high moral standards.” Who we are at our core matters greatly. We must be good before we will consistently do good.

Lineage: Why Am I Here? (Purpose)

- I will live knowing who I am, Whose I am, and why I'm here.
 - Write your virtue statement here:
-

Legacy: What Difference Will I Make? (Commitment)

- I will commit daily to accomplishing God's particular purposes in and through my life.
 - Write your virtue statement here:
-

Influence: Who Will I Impact? (Contribute)

- I will live to serve God first, others second, and self third.
 - Write your virtue statement here:
-

DETERMINE

Virtue: How Integrous Will I Become? (Character)

→ I will make every effort to authentically become the person God wants me to be.

→ Write your virtue statement here:

Reliability: Can I Be Counted On? (Accountability)

→ I will work hard with a sense of urgency to fulfill and complete my responsibilities—faith, work, home, finances, and more.

→ Write your virtue statement here:

Perseverance: Will I Persist? (Overcoming)

→ I will do hard things, not give up, overcome trials, and honor God with my life.

→ Write your virtue statement here:

Resilience: Will I Make a Fresh Start? (Courage)

→ I will not shrink back from recognizing mistakes and regrets and embarking on a fresh start with a dedication to do better.

→ Write your virtue statement here:

Finish: Will I Maximize My Opportunity? (Fulfillment)

→ I will aim my entire life to complete my task, finish the race, and fulfill my God-given assignments.

→ Write your virtue statement here:

5

RELIABILITY

Can I Be Counted On?

I will be a person of my word. I will say what I mean and mean what I say. People can count on me. I will be responsible, **accountable**, and dependable. I will follow through and carry out my responsibilities with care. I will hold myself accountable and be accountable to God and others.

DIG

Read Genesis 6:14-22

DISCUSS

1. Details matter. There are a lot listed here. Building an ark in the middle of the desert where it doesn't rain is an amazing assignment in the first place. But to dial in all the details of this assignment is most impressive. It says here that *"Noah did everything just as God commanded Him."* Said not once but twice. Why is it important for God to be able to count on us? People often ask, "Can I count on God?" That answer is an obvious yes. The bigger question is, "Can God count on me?"

2. Noah was obedient. Take a closer look at Genesis 7:5,9,16 and 6:22. What stands out as you read these verses and consider Noah's assignment? To say it was easy would be to miss the point by a wide margin. It was hard. But Noah was faithful. Consider your own life. Where do you need to be more faithful? How can you demonstrate

DISCUSS

greater obedience? Why is obedience so important to God and to the development of our faith? Obedience is not legalism; it's surrender. Obedience answers the question, "Who is truly Lord of my life—me or God?"

3. Talk about the importance of reliability in family relationships and all relationships (work, friendships, extended family, business, and more). Reliability, dependability, accountability, doing what you say and saying what you do, follow through—are all so vital if you are to establish trust with others. Noah could be counted on. Can you? Brainstorm at least 5 keys to being reliable, accountable, responsible, and dependable. How can you make your most important "ability" your "reliability?" Where you say what you mean; and you mean what you say!

4. Build an ark in the desert? Who would do that? Noah. In obedience to God's command. Was he mocked, belittled, ridiculed? Probably. Did he ever question what he was doing? Maybe. I mean, building an ark in the desert where it never rains would give one pause. But he soldiered on, completed the task, saved his family, and fulfilled God's assignment for his life. Noah did a hard thing. In life, we are called to do hard things. What hard thing is God calling you to step up to in this season? Forgiving someone, rebuilding your marriage,

DISCUSS

getting out of debt, re-establishing your faith, improving your parenting skills, advancing your career, finishing your education, making time to serve others, or something else? We do hard things as people of faith and followers of Christ. Obedience requires it.

5. How do you go about holding yourself accountable? It really starts with personal responsibility. Personal discipline and self-leadership are crucial if we are going to live our best life. Managing our tongue, managing our money, managing our time, managing our duties, and managing all aspects of our life requires care and focus. While we all know this, why do some display it and others ignore it? What are the crucial characteristics of a self-disciplined life? How do the people you most admire hold themselves accountable? What scriptures and Bible greats come to mind on this subject and why?

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty. — **PROVERBS 21:5**

DETERMINE

With regard to reliability, where are you right now? Are you growing or not? Where does your gauge read? Assess each of the questions in the **Chart Your Course Life Plan** from the perspective of reliability. (Rate yourself E, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, F)

		GAUGE
1	LINEAGE: Why Am I Here? <i>The purpose question</i>	
2	LEGACY: What Difference Will I Make? <i>The commitment question</i>	
3	INFLUENCE: Who Will I Impact? <i>The contribution question</i>	
4	VIRTUE: How Integrous Will I Become? <i>The character question</i>	
5	RELIABILITY: Can I Be Counted On? <i>The accountability question</i>	
6	PERSEVERANCE: Will I Persist? <i>The overcoming question</i>	
7	RESILIENCE: Will I Make a Fresh Start? <i>The courage question</i>	
8	FINISH: Will I Maximize My Opportunity? <i>The fulfillment question</i>	

Chart Your Course: Reliability

For each of the 8 vital questions, clearly state the dream you have for your life, what you believe deeply, and what your next step(s) need to be in order for you to progress toward your dream.

- Affirmation—Believe it (what I believe deeply to my toes)
- Aspiration—Dream it (where I want my life to go)
- Ambition—Do it (what steps I need to take now)

The goal here is to state yourself clearly in each and then hold yourself accountable regarding clear and compelling next steps. You will want to complete this chart often as your priorities will remain the same but also change. In other words, your affirmation and aspiration will be consistent, but your ambition may adjust depending on your

DETERMINE

season and what's happening in your life. For example, your health may need to become a priority if it isn't—eating right and exercising, etc. But in the next season, your major focus may need to be making more time for your spouse or kids, etc. And so on. This process is never one and done. It is ongoing for our whole lives. And must be reviewed and renewed on a regular basis (monthly/quarterly/seasonally).

Considerations

As you complete the worksheet on the next page, be sure to do three things: a) State what you believe clearly, using examples below as a guide. b) Describe your dream plainly, so it is unambiguous. c) Create a process of steps that will lead you from where you are to where you want to go.

Lineage: I will be at peace with who I am and Whose I am and not allow disappointments in my upbringing, family of origin, or any other such challenges to in any way limit me.

Legacy: I will develop a personal sense of urgency to accomplish and become the person God envisions for my life. I will do 4 things: Have a dream, Clarify the dream, Share the dream, and Die for the dream.

Influence: I will not miss this opportunity to impact others. I will live an exemplary Christ-following life. I will teach my kids judiciously, mentor others carefully, encourage my spouse lovingly, and make a difference in the lives of others and in the world.

Virtue: I will make biblical ethics, virtue, and character development a huge priority in my life. I will seek above all to LiveLoveLead like Jesus. I believe deeply that to do good I must first be good. Virtues like kindness, compassion, empathy, integrity, patience, forgiveness, and more, really matter to God and must matter to me.

Reliable: I will be a person of my word. I will say what I mean and mean what I say. People can count on me. I will be responsible, accountable, and dependable. I will follow through and carry out my responsibilities with care. I will hold myself accountable and be accountable to God and others.

Persevere: I will persist through adversity. When I face troubles and challenges, I will keep the faith and endure. I will not give up or give in. I will step up and step forward and keep going. I will rise above and overcome.

Resilience: I will choose to bounce back from defeat. I know that my failures are not final and can become stepping stones to future growth. When I make mistakes, I will learn from them and will demonstrate the courage to start again and not allow regret to fester and derail me.

Finish: I will start with the end in view and make each day a day of opportunity to live well and purposefully with the end goal in mind. Finding fulfillment in life is found in being and doing the right thing in obedience to Christ each day.

DETERMINE

Vital Question	Big Idea	Affirmation: My Belief <i>(I believe strongly...)</i>	Aspiration: My Dream <i>(I desire strongly...)</i>	Ambition: My Next Step <i>(I will now...)</i>
1 Lineage: Why Am I Here?	Purpose			
2 Legacy: What Difference Will I Make?	Commitment			
3 Influence: Who Will I Impact?	Contribution			
4 Virtue: How Integrous Will I Become?	Character			
5 Reliability: Can I Be Counted On?	Accountability			
6 Perseverance: Will I Persist?	Overcoming			
7 Resilience: Will I Make a Fresh Start?	Courage			
8 Finish: Will I Maximize My Opportunity?	Fulfillment			

6

PERSEVERANCE

Will I Persist?

I will persist through adversity. When I face troubles and challenges, I will keep the faith and endure. I will not give up or give in. I will step up and step forward and keep going. I will rise above and **overcome**.

DIG

Read Genesis 7:17-24

DISCUSS

1. Focus on verse 17. For 40 days, the rain kept pouring, and the floods kept rising. The number 40 is an important number in the Bible. Where else does it appear? We often see that the number 40 is associated with God doing something significant or preparing for something new. At this point, Noah doesn't know how the story will end. The waters were becoming more and more prevalent and powerful in real-time. Noah was in a storm like no other. How did he keep the faith and power through? How do you keep the faith and power on when you face storms of your own? A persevering faith is a mature faith. What does that mean? What does a persevering faith look like?

DISCUSS

2. Sometimes, “when it rains, it pours.” No truer than in the Noah story. The flood was huge, the downpour torrential, and the devastation complete. *“Everything on the face of the earth was wiped out,”* verse 23 says. We have the benefit of looking back on the biblical account. Noah lived it in real-time. How did he deal with the uncertainty of his situation? More importantly, how are we to overcome the storms we face in life? Take a moment and write down 5 biblical principles that share how we are to navigate life’s storms and challenges.

3. Read the following Scriptures. What do they teach us about living a persevering life? See Romans 5:3,4, 15:13, James 1:2-4, 1:12, Hebrews 10:36, 11:1, 12:1-3, Philippians 3:13-14, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, and Proverbs 4:25-26. Look back at the five principles you wrote down in question two above. Do these verses add, subtract, or change any of those principles? Take a moment and rewrite your five perseverance principles in light of these and other scriptures.

4. Life is full of ambiguity and incongruence. We all want clarity and certainty. Life is not always so kind. But God is always kind and He is for us, lives in us, goes before us, walks beside us, and will never leave us nor forsake us. What does this mean to you? God has given us His Spirit to live within us. The very power of God is in us through

DISCUSS

His Spirit. What does that reality mean to you and what can it mean to all of us when we face our own floods and storms?

5. Jesus said in John 16:33, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* The Bible is full of men and women who had to overcome. Think about the stories of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Esther, Ruth, Peter, Paul, and James. And so many more. Each of them shows us how to develop a mature, persevering faith. It is important to decide in advance how we will face life’s adversities. Because storms will come. But they do not have to sink us. We can rise above and overcome. God is with us. He will be our Ark. And carry us through to the other side of our pain, discouragement, and difficulty. Discuss.

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. — PSALM 25:4-5

DETERMINE

While persistence is one of the 8 vital questions that must be answered in its own right, we also must persevere through the other 7. What does this mean and what does this look like? For starters, take a look at the 8 greatest questions again. Few would say that their tank is full in all 8. Most of us would admit we need to keep fighting forward in all 8, experiencing greater growth and maturity. That's called perseverance.

So with this in mind, and before we look more deeply at perseverance all by itself, take a moment and review where you believe you are in each of the following 8 questions from the perspective of perseverance. Is your perseverance in each of these 8 areas “full” or “empty?” Why or why not? Have you given up? Are you on course? After completing the gauge, determine the top two that require your undivided attention if you are going to advance in experiencing your best life. In other words, what two will need your greatest focus and perseverance? Complete the gauge for each question. Are you close to “full” or closer to “empty?”

GAUGE

1	LINEAGE: Why Am I Here? <i>The purpose question</i>	
2	LEGACY: What Difference Will I Make? <i>The commitment question</i>	
3	INFLUENCE: Who Will I Impact? <i>The contribution question</i>	
4	VIRTUE: How Integrous Will I Become? <i>The character question</i>	
5	RELIABILITY: Can I Be Counted On? <i>The accountability question</i>	
6	PERSEVERANCE: Will I Persist? <i>The overcoming question</i>	
7	RESILIENCE: Will I Make a Fresh Start? <i>The courage question</i>	
8	FINISH: Will I Max My Opportunity? <i>The fulfillment question</i>	

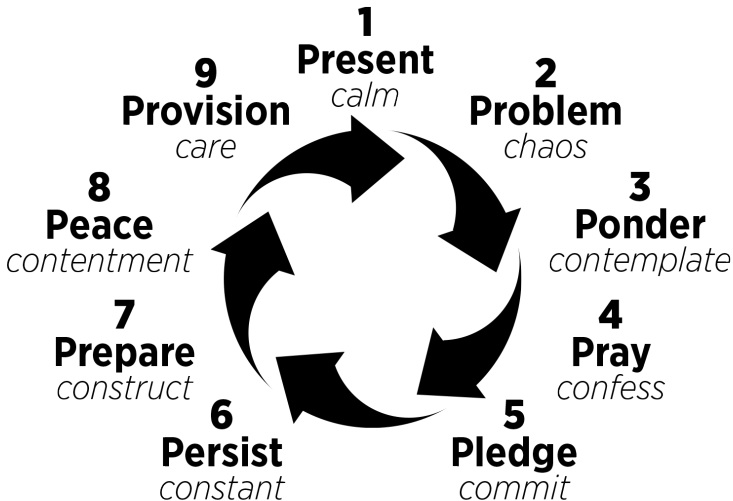
DETERMINE

Chart Your Course: Perseverance

Now let's look closely at one of the strengths we need most in life — perseverance. What is the process you go through in overcoming and rising above problems? We all face adversity. Troubles are a part of this life. But why do some overcome while others are overrun? Being able to rise above ruin and being able to successfully overcome life's obstacles is a key means of maturity and growth in life. And it is a crucial key to living our best life. What is your process in dealing with difficulty? Take a moment right now to write out how you persevere through problems.

PROCESS OF PERSEVERANCE

Here is a biblical process of perseverance practiced often in Scripture. Take a moment and reflect on this visual.



DETERMINE

Here are key scriptures for the process of perseverance illustrated on the previous page:

1 > Present

*Before the storm, there is **calm** and confidence.*

Philippians 4:13—*I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

1 Chronicles 16:11—*Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.*

2 > Problems

*The storm hits, and there is **chaos**.*

1 Peter 5:7—*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

John 14:1—*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.*

3 > Ponder

*Our heads and hearts are spinning as we **contemplate** what is happening.*

James 1:12—*Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*

Psalms 46:1-2—*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea...*

4 > Pray

*We **confess** our need for God's help and strength.*

Philippians 4:6-7—*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:19—*And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*

5 > Pledge

*We **commit** to trust God and lean forward in faith.*

James 1:2-4—*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

Romans 15:13—*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

DETERMINE

6 > Persist

*Our faith is **constantly** in Christ.*

Hebrews 12:1-3—*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Romans 5:3-4—*Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

7 > Prepare

*We ask God to help us **construct** a plan to go and grow forward.*

Romans 12:12—*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Philippians 3:13-14—*Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

8 > Peace

*We turn to God for peace and **contentment** as we deal with our suffering.*

John 16:33—*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

John 14:27—*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

9 > Provision

*We know that our God is a God of **care** and compassion.*

Philippians 1:6—*...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Lamentations 3:22-24—*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."*

PERSONAL APPLICATION

What trouble and pain have you recently endured? Which step in this process are you in right now? Ask God to help you as you deal with your pain, addiction, grief, financial setback, divorce, troubling health news, loss of job, rejection, or other.

7

RESILIENCE

Will I Make a Fresh Start?

I will choose to bounce back from defeat. I know that my failures are not final and can become stepping stones to future growth. When I make mistakes, I will learn from them and will demonstrate the **courage** to start again and not allow regret to fester and derail me.

DIG

Read Genesis 8:1-22

DISCUSS

1. Notice Genesis 8:1. It says, *“But God remembered Noah.”* We see God stopping the rain, sending a strong wind, and causing the waters to recede. After a reasonably long period of time, Noah is able to stand on dry ground again. The phrase, *“But God remembered Noah,”* particularly jumps out to me. It is easy to feel like we have been forgotten. Or to feel that because of our mistakes, we are no longer worthy of God’s remembrance. But the Bible says he *“loves us with an everlasting love”* and will never ever abandon us. So when the storms of life rage—whether as a result of our own mistakes or as a result of things outside of our control—be encouraged to know that He always remembers you. He sees us. He knows us. He cares about us. He has a great purpose for our lives. And He always remembers us. What does this mean to you? What other Scriptures come to mind that speak to this truth even more? Make a list.

DISCUSS

2. Challenging seasons in life can last a relatively long time. We are eager for bad things to be over quickly and for good things to last forever. But life is not always that way. It says here in verse 5 that *“on the first day of the 10th month, the tops of the mountains become visible.”* Noah’s flood experience took a while. And so do some of ours. Take a moment and think deeply about your own life. Think about seasons of transition, seasons of change, seasons of trial, and seasons of uncertainty. What is true about each of these seasons? What is important to keep in mind as we walk through these seasons? One is that God is with us just as He was with Noah. Discuss.

3. When I think of transitions, I often think of Joshua 1:2,5. Moses died, and now, possessing the Promised Land was squarely on Joshua’s shoulders. Transition can be hard. Transitions can create more questions than answers. But Joshua found strength in the Lord. God’s promise to Joshua is God’s promise to us. *“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* Talk with your group about transitions you have had to face in your life and how God has been with you during that difficult season.

DISCUSS

4. I like the part of the story about the birds. Noah had to try a few iterations with a few different birds before he found his way forward. I find a lesson or two in this part of the story. Noah was facing a new day. A new direction for him and his family was unfolding. He was trying to determine his next best steps. And so he tried a thing or two with the birds. As he did, he learned more about what was ahead. What about you and me? Is it time for a new direction in your marriage? Do you need to take the lead by making a new and fresh commitment to your spouse? How about your life, faith, finances, healthy relationships, fitness? Do you need a fresh start? A new beginning of some kind? Noah is on the brink of a new beginning. Where do you need to start anew? Renew your commitment with God? Step up and step out—step by step—iteration by iteration—and move forward with God’s plan over your own plan? It’s a big question, and one most people are unwilling to face honestly.

5. Verse 20 talks about Noah building an altar to the Lord. He expresses gratitude for the faithfulness of God in his flood journey. Gratitude is an antidote to worry and despair. It takes our minds off of our own frailty and places it directly on the person and power of God. What role does gratitude play in your life? Would you say you consistently express your gratitude to the Lord? How might it strengthen your faith and resolve if you expressed gratitude faithfully? God makes a promise to Noah in verses 21-22. The Bible is full of promises God has made to you and me. We have much to be thankful for. Make a list of what you are grateful for. And then make a list of Bible verses that describe the many promises of God.

DETERMINE

Even God wanted a do over. Draft one of his Creation was a bit less than desired. Man had chosen poorly and so God said to Noah I want to try again. While being resilient is not a term we use for God, it is a necessary quality for us. Because not everything will go as planned in life. We need to bounce back. Try again. Make a fresh start. So don't throw in the towel. Show some courage. Take a moment to evaluate where you are this week using the **Chart Your Course Life Plan** gauge below. It's okay if progress is slow and failure feels common. If you get bucked off the horse, get right back on. If you fall down 6 times get up 7. Remember, failure is not final and regret doesn't have to be the end of the story. Try again. Believe again. Trust again. Write a new chapter. Change your story.

Complete the gauge below with resiliency in mind. Where are you showing resiliency in designing and living your best life? Where do you need to show more resiliency? Have you given up in one area or another in your life? Have you accepted failure and stopped trying? Where have you become complacent or calloused? Be honest with yourself. Ask someone close to you to give you feedback and be honest with you, as well.

		GAUGE
1	LINEAGE: Why Am I Here? <i>The purpose question</i>	
2	LEGACY: What Difference Will I Make? <i>The commitment question</i>	
3	INFLUENCE: Who Will I Impact? <i>The contribution question</i>	
4	VIRTUE: How Integrous Will I Become? <i>The character question</i>	
5	RELIABILITY: Can I Be Counted On? <i>The accountability question</i>	
6	PERSEVERANCE: Will I Persist? <i>The overcoming question</i>	
7	RESILIENCE: Will I Make a Fresh Start? <i>The courage question</i>	
8	FINISH: Will I Max My Opportunity? <i>The fulfillment question</i>	

DETERMINE

Chart Your Course: Resilience

Where do you need to demonstrate a “no quit” attitude. Where do you need to try again? Try better? Work harder? Have you quit growing in your marriage? Accepted failure on your job? Given up on your education because it was too hard? Stopped growing in your faith? Where have you settled for mediocrity? Have you allowed yourself to create a very low bar for yourself in one area or another? Now is the time to bounce back and become more resilient than ever. Don’t settle for failure or the status quo. Grow! Try again. Believe!! God is with you and will help you!

Vital Question	Where Do I Need to Demonstrate Resilience? <i>(Think of one area of your life as prompted by each question)</i>	What does a fresh start and the next necessary iteration look like?	Ideas, impressions, implications <i>(Journal your thoughts here)</i>
1 Lineage: Why Am I Here?	How can I better fulfill my purpose?	Next step up:	
2 Legacy: What Difference Will I Make?	Where do I need to demonstrate greater commitment?	Next step up:	
3 Influence: Who Will I Impact?	Who can I influence and bless more than I am?	Next step up:	
4 Virtue: How Integrous Will I Become?	Where am I compromising? Where do I need to step up in character?	Next step up:	

DETERMINE

Vital Question	Where Do I Need to Demonstrate Resilience? <i>(Think of one area of your life as prompted by each question)</i>	What does a fresh start and the next necessary iteration look like?	Ideas, impressions, implications <i>(Journal your thoughts here)</i>
5 Reliability: Can I Be Counted On?	Where do I need to become more responsible? <i>(Faith, family, finances, etc.)</i>	Next step up:	
6 Perseverance: Will I Persist?	Where do I need to show greater grit?	Next step up:	
7 Resilience: Will I Make a Fresh Start?	Where do I need a fresh start? Where can I get better? <i>(Faith, communication, money management, relationships, forgiveness)</i>	Next step up:	
8 Finish: Will I Maximize My Opportunity?	It's easy to become lethargic. Where do I need to engage more?	Next step up:	

DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. — COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

8

FINISH

Will I Maximize My Opportunities?

I will start with the end in view and make each day a day of opportunity to live well and live purposefully. I will stack days, weeks, and months of purposeful living. **Fulfillment** in life is found in being and doing the right thing in obedience to Christ each day.

DIG

Read Genesis 7:6-15

DISCUSS

1. Noah is 600 years old (see verses 6,11). That's older than you and me! We don't live that long these days, but many of us will live for a relatively long period of time. We need to ask ourselves early and often: "Will we maximize our time and opportunities? Will we be a good steward of the time and opportunities God has given us?" At 600, Noah is given a really big assignment. Basically, to save the world and be the author of God's creation restart plan. And he fulfills that assignment gallantly. Will we fulfill our calling? God has called us into a relationship with Him. He has called us to be His representatives in the world. And He has also called us to use our gifts to serve others. Are we fulfilling His call? Do we need to step up and if so how?

2. The Bible says to redeem the time. One way we do this is by having a strategy for life. Create a Chart Your Course Life Plan. Regardless of age, life station, or life experience, God wants us to embrace a

DISCUSS

life of urgency to be about His purposes. Read Ephesians 5:15-17 and Colossians 4:5. What do these verses say, mean, and mean to you? Will we make the most of every opportunity? What does it mean to make the most of every opportunity? Where in our life do we need to embrace this challenge more judiciously (serving, giving, authentic living, finances, relationships)?

3. Notice what Paul says in the following scriptures: Acts 20:22-25, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Galatians 6:9-10. There are two parts to finishing well. 1) Paul's part focuses on the closing years of his life. Not giving up before the finish line. 2) But there is a second part that I think is vital. Finishing well requires that we live each day well while we are young and in mid-life, not just older. The decisions we make and the paths we take contribute toward a fulfilling and God honoring life. This doesn't mean we can't find forgiveness for bad choices and wrong paths taken. But making the most of every opportunity requires that we construct a well-lived life each day. One that we can look back on in our older years with joy and gratitude. A house is built brick by brick. A fulfilled life is lived day by day. In other words, we are building the essence of our lives every day and in every season. We are becoming who we will be each day. What stands out most to you in these passages?

4. Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Some think this passage is only relevant for those later in life. After all, Paul shared this when he was an older man. But that couldn't be further from the truth. To wait until you are older to consider this is foolish. Like waiting to save for retirement

DISCUSS

until you... retire. Like compounding interest, life compounds. Good seed bears good harvest, bad... well, bad. Like Stephen Covey says, “start with the end in view.” Determine what kind of a life you want to have lived and decide to live it now! We need to stack days and months and years and decades of faithfulness. Not perfection. But progress. Moving forward in our faith and life.

5. Hebrews 11 is often called the “hall of faith” or the “hall of faithfulness.” Read it right now and make notes of each person listed and why they were considered faithful. What is their story? Now think about your story. Are you faithful to God’s commands? Are you living a life devoted to becoming more and more like Him? Where do you need to grow in faithfulness especially? Is *LiveLoveLeading* like Jesus your primary aim in life? How can it become more of a priority for you? We all want to hear well done good and faithful servant like we read about in Matthew 25:21. What kind of a life do we need to build in order to hear those words? And how will “finding answers to life’s 8 greatest questions” help us live a God-honoring and faithful life? Which of the 8 questions stands out to you most and why?
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DEDICATE

Take time to memorize and internalize this verse.

Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. — PROVERBS 4:25-26

DETERMINE

Someone once talked about the difference between what is said on our resume versus what is said at our funeral. On a resume we talk about our qualities as we want them to be portrayed. At a funeral others talk about our qualities as they really are.

Living a fulfilling (full and filling) life is constructed each and every day. We don't simply get to the end of life and start thinking about this. Rather, we think about it early, often, and always. We stack days of faithfulness upon weeks, and weeks upon months, and months upon years. We will never be perfect but we must seek to be faithful and obedient to God. This is the path to the most fulfilling life. The one pleasing to the Lord. But it doesn't happen by chance. We must dedicate ourselves to pursuing it daily.

Throughout our study we have talked a lot about finding answers to life's 8 greatest questions. You completed a **Chart Your Course Life Plan** gauge at the beginning. Now let's do one with the end in mind. Where do you need to specifically focus in this season? The bottom line is that growth in all 8 must be a lifelong pursuit. Reassessed monthly, quarterly, and seasonally. Take a moment now and complete the following gauge and reflect on progress made and next steps needed.

		GAUGE
1	LINEAGE: Why Am I Here? <i>The purpose question</i>	
2	LEGACY: What Difference Will I Make? <i>The commitment question</i>	
3	INFLUENCE: Who Will I Impact? <i>The contribution question</i>	
4	VIRTUE: How Integrous Will I Become? <i>The character question</i>	
5	RELIABILITY: Can I Be Counted On? <i>The accountability question</i>	
6	PERSEVERANCE: Will I Persist? <i>The overcoming question</i>	
7	RESILIENCE: Will I Make a Fresh Start? <i>The courage question</i>	
8	FINISH: Will I Max My Opportunity? <i>The fulfillment question</i>	

DETERMINE

Chart Your Course: Finish

Building a better tomorrow requires building a better today. Finishing well requires continuing strong each day. Like Noah. The **Chart Your Course Life Plan** gauges and worksheets that we have completed throughout this study have helped point us in this direction. But we must continue the process by reassessing ourselves rigorously and vigorously (monthly, quarterly, seasonally).

I often pray for myself, my family, and others using the 7 topics you see in the grid on the next page:

- **Mentally**—that we have the mind of Christ
- **Physically**—for protection, health, healing
- **Spiritually**—that we know Christ and obey Him fully
- **Emotionally**—for emotional protection, healing, and strength
- **Relationally**—for strong marriages, families, and relationships
- **Virtuously**—for goodness, godliness, character, and integrity
- **Financially**—for provision, generosity, work, and wise money management

Sometimes we need to get right mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, virtuously, or financially. We can get off track and need to get back on track. Or maybe we've never been in alignment with God's ideal in the first place and need to get dialed in with God's plan for our lives. Throughout our study we have sought to answer life's most vital questions. Noah has provided us with a poignant illustration. His example screams off the pages of Scripture: "**Chart Your Course.**" By using life's 8 greatest questions, as illustrated by Noah and the Flood story, we have sought to create a map for designing our very best life. As we come to a close in our study, I want to invite you to complete the grid on the next page. As we think about the 8 vital questions that we need to answer, I also think about the 7 major areas where God wants to help us grow. When you intersect both the questions and growth areas in your life, what does God reveal to you? What do you need to pray about? Where do you need to grow? How can you grow? What is your very next step in each?

DETERMINE

	Mentally	Physically	Spiritually	Emotionally	Relationally	Virtuously	Financially
Lineage: Purpose							
Legacy: Commitment							
Influence: Contribution							
Virtue: Character							
Reliability: Accountability							
Perseverance: Overcoming							
Resilience: Courage							
Finish: Fulfillment							

CONCLUSION

To chart is to “watch something with careful attention or record something in detail.” There is no more important thing to chart in life... than our life. Noah inspires us to stop and take personal inventory. To consider Life’s 8 Greatest Questions in Life as we seek to design our very best life.

In this study we have looked at these “8 Greatest Questions” from 8 vital vantage points as we have created a personalized **Chart Your Course Life Plan**. We’ve measured and monitored progress and noted next growth steps. Life can be fuzzy and foggy. **Charting Your Course** can bring clarity and confidence that help us know we are on the right track heading in the right direction.

Thank you for embarking on this life-long journey of self-evaluation and growth with me. In the introduction we completed an initial **Chart Your Course Life Plan**. I’d like for you to do it now at the close of our study to see what has changed and where you need to apply extra focus. And as you do, remember this: becoming the person God wants us to be requires ongoing assessment—regularly, monthly, seasonally.

GAUGE

1 **LINEAGE: Why Am I Here?**
The purpose question



2 **LEGACY: What Difference Will I Make?**
The commitment question



3 **INFLUENCE: Who Will I Impact?**
The contribution question



4 **VIRTUE: How Integrous Will I Become?**
The character question



5 **RELIABILITY: Can I Be Counted On?**
The accountability question



6 **PERSEVERANCE: Will I Persist?**
The overcoming question



7 **RESILIENCE: Will I Make a Fresh Start?**
The courage question



8 **FINISH: Will I Max My Opportunity?**
The fulfillment question



SMALL GROUP TIPS

Want to use this devotional book with your Small Group? Here are some tips for using this guide in a group setting, a sample meeting agenda, and some tips for leaders.

1. This devotional book is a guide, not a rulebook! Don't worry if the group responds to a session unexpectedly. Sometimes the most honest, authentic, and beneficial conversations come up spontaneously. If you or someone else has additional discussion questions, use them!
2. Open and close each session with prayer – for each other, your time together, and for wisdom, insight, and growth to occur each week. Track your group's requests so you can keep them in your prayers and follow up on them. Feel free to share contact info to help you connect during the week.
3. Have fun! Be encouraged to spend time with each other outside your "scheduled" meeting time. The more time you spend together, the better friends you will become, and greater growth will occur! Have a party, invite each other for dinner, use your imagination!

EXAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

1. Have food as people arrive. (15 minutes)

You certainly don't have to prepare a full meal every week, but having snacks such as dessert and coffee can help make everyone feel welcome! The early church often gathered and enjoyed eating together. We should too! It helps to break down barriers and eases people into conversations.

2. Share about your week. (15 minutes)

After people have snacks and are settling in, let them share about their week! This is a great time for fun icebreakers. This doesn't have to be a deep conversation, but it's a chance to let everyone know what has been happening since you last met.

3. Discussion time. (45-60 minutes)

Whether you jump right into discussion questions from the weekend sermon, start to read Scripture, or turn on a video, this is the central part of the group. Start promptly, no later than 30 minutes into the group time, to ensure enough time to talk.

4. Pray and close. (5-10 minutes)

Ask for prayer requests or praise reports and pray for the group before dismissing. Feel free to use the prayer log in each chapter to see how God is working in everyone as the group continues to meet!

GROUP LEADER TIPS

CONFIDENCE

It's normal to be nervous!

Leading a group isn't complicated, but it can be intimidating if this is your first time! Remember, God is in control and excited to use you. As you serve by leading this group, you will be blessed, and you will be a blessing to others.

Be yourself!

God uses a variety of people in the Bible to accomplish amazing things, and He does this while using their individual gifts and personalities. Don't try to be someone you are not. Be authentic, and don't worry if you make a mistake or don't have an answer! Please feel free to contact a pastor if you need advice.

You're not alone.

The members of your group all have unique skills. Some of them may even enjoy the opportunity to help you! Whether it's finding someone to bring snacks, take attendance, or email out weekly prayer requests, you shouldn't do everything by yourself. Look for opportunities for others to serve the group, and don't be afraid to ask them to step up.

CHARACTER

Spend time with God.

Pray regularly for your group members and for God to be present when you meet. Celebrate when prayers are answered!

Invest in your people.

Everyone in your group has a story and is searching for a community. Spend time talking about their lives, dreams, struggles, and successes. This is often a great way to begin each group session before starting videos or discussion.

CLARITY

Set clear expectations.

At your first group meeting, it's wise to set some ground rules for the next few months so everyone knows what to expect. Some standards for all BCA Groups are no alcohol during Group meetings, avoiding bringing sick children to the group, etc.

Encourage participation.

Remember, you shouldn't do all the talking! A general rule of thumb is that leaders should talk no more than 25% of the time. Let people take turns leading the discussion questions and reading the Scripture. Of course, it may take time for everyone to feel comfortable opening up and talking, and that's okay. Be patient when asking questions - allow people to share when they are ready and thank them for their input. Preparing your answers ahead of time to prompt conversations is helpful.

Maintain the atmosphere.

For many people, joining a group is a big step of faith! Sharing personal details about their life with people they have just met may also be a bit scary. Be sensitive to group members who are not ready to talk, pray, or do anything yet. Everyone is at a different stage in their faith journey, but God is working in them in ways we can't always see! It's essential that people feel comfortable sharing as much or as little as they can and knowing that no judgment is present. It's equally important to ensure that everyone gets a chance to participate and that no one person controls the conversations.

CONSISTENCY

Set a schedule and stick to it.

The best way to foster growth in a group is to be consistent. Many people have busy schedules, so knowing what to expect each week is helpful! Set a schedule, and don't cancel group meetings. People set their expectations of the group based on your availability and willingness to "stay the course." Show them that they are a priority! Even if only one other family comes, God will be present, and you'll still build that relationship.

LIFE'S 8 GREATEST QUESTIONS

LINEAGE: *Why Am I Here?*

LEGACY: *What Difference Will I Make?*

INFLUENCE: *Who Will I Impact?*

VIRTUE: *How Integrous Will I Become?*

RELIABILITY: *Can I Be Counted On?*

PERSEVERANCE: *Will I Persist?*

RESILIENCE: *Will I Make a Fresh Start?*

FINISH: *Will I Maximize My Opportunity?*