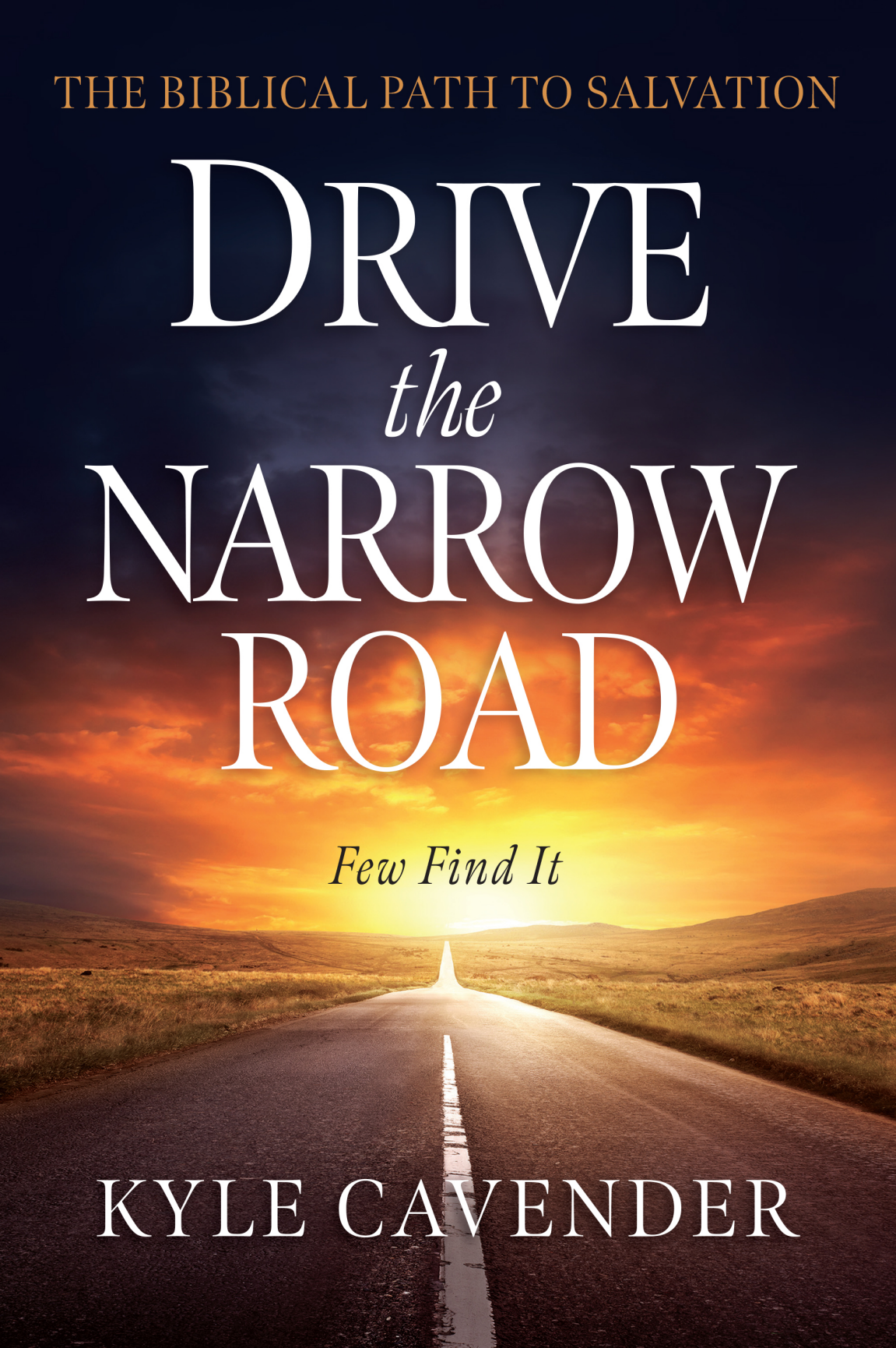
THE BIBLICAL PATH TO SALVATION

DRIVE *the* NARROW ROAD

Few Find It



KYLE CAVENDER

WHICH ROAD ARE YOU ON?

Jesus warned that the road to life is narrow and only a few find it.

In a culture that often substitutes comfort, tradition, and religious activity for true discipleship, Christ's warning remains as urgent as ever. Biblical salvation is far more than a label, a prayer, or a momentary decision. It is the transforming work of God that produces a life of obedience and perseverance through surrendered, repentant faith in Christ.

MANY ASSUME THEY ARE SAVED.

FEW HAVE EXAMINED THEIR LIVES AGAINST SCRIPTURE.

BUCKLE UP FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT DRIVE YOU WILL EVER TAKE!



KYLE CAVENDER lives in East Texas with his wife, Brittany, and their three children. After twenty years of professing Christianity, he assumed he was saved until he finally opened a Bible and discovered he was completely lost.

Based on his own spiritual awakening, Kyle points readers to the biblical path that every person must take to truly follow Christ and be saved.

**Ideal for personal study or small-group discipleship.*

ISBN 979-8-9956681-0-7

Drive the Narrow Road

The Biblical Path to Salvation

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Few find it.

Kyle Cavender

Drive the Narrow Road: The Biblical Path to Salvation

Copyright © 2026 by Kyle Cavender

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form without prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NASB) taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.Lockman.org

Scriptures marked KJV are taken from the KING JAMES VERSION (KJV): KING JAMES VERSION, public domain.

All emphasis in Scripture added by the author.

Published by Kyle Cavender
www.narrowroad.life

ISBN 979-8-9956681-0-7 (Softcover)
ISBN 979-8-9956681-2-1 (eBook)
ISBN 979-8-9956681-1-4 (Audio)

First Printing, 2026

Printed in the United States of America

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

—Jesus Christ

(Matthew 7:13-14, NIV)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

To my awesome kids Bo, Kinsley, and JP:

I pray that this book will help you to better know God and experience the life change that comes as a repentant follower of Jesus Christ our Lord. I hope that you do not have to experience as many "Car Wrecks" as I have; but if you do, just know that it's God's loving discipline trying to lead you back to the Narrow Road. Keep your focus on eternity and what matters in this life by abiding in Christ and bearing much fruit. I love you so much, and He loves you even more.

Love, Dad

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.
(3 John 1:4)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Table of Contents

How to Use This Book ..... **ix**
Note from the Author ..... **x**
Introduction ..... **xv**
Drive Illustration Key ..... **xxvi**

PART I: MY STORY ***1***
Chapter 1: My Drive Off the Narrow Road **2**
Chapter 2: My Drive On the Narrow Road **18**

PART II: ESTABLISHING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD ***45***
Chapter 3: Trading in a Tricycle for a Dream Car **46**
Chapter 4: Starting the Engine **68**
Chapter 5: Fueling the Engine **86**

PART III: GROWING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD ***103***
Chapter 6: Engine Maintenance **104**
Chapter 7: Engine Maintenance **122**
Chapter 8: Engine Maintenance **141**
Chapter 9: The Service Station **157**

PART IV: RESTORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD ***179***
Chapter 10: Exits and Road Hazards **180**
Chapter 11: Exits and Road Hazards **195**
Chapter 12: Engine Lights **213**

PART V: SUSTAINING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD ***235***
Chapter 13: Radio Signals and Stoplights **236**
Chapter 14: The End of the Road **255**

©2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

PART VI: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS *273*
Your Drive **274**
A Final Request **276**
My Closing Prayer **278**
Appendix A: The Sword of the Spirit for Battling Sin **280**
Appendix B: Warnings About Falling Away and Perseverance **289**

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

How to Use This Book

This book is intended to function as an in-depth Bible study. You can enhance your experience by keeping a Bible or Bible app nearby so you can look up the referenced Scriptures throughout your reading.

Individual Study

Because of the depth of content, it's recommended that you pace yourself. Depending on your reading speed, you may choose to read one chapter per day or one chapter per week. Try to focus on one chapter at a time so you can reflect on what God is teaching you.

Small Group Study

For small group studies, participants are encouraged to read the Note from the Author, Introduction, and Chapters 1–2 before the first group session. From there, consider covering one chapter per session. Chapters 2–14 include reflection questions that can be used for group discussion. Chapters 10 and 11 are best combined into one longer session, since the reflection questions for both chapters are located at the end of Chapter 11.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • FreeBook

Note from the Author

For many years, I lived with a quiet frustration. I couldn't understand why some people at church didn't seem to struggle with sin the way that I did. I believed everything I was supposed to believe. I believed Jesus was the Son of God. I believed He died on the cross for my sins. I prayed "the prayer" and asked Jesus into my heart. I was baptized at a young age and told by the pastor that I was saved.

I always wanted to be a good Christian, but for some reason, it just wasn't happening. Something felt off, and I couldn't put my finger on it. Eventually, I just settled in and rationalized. Maybe I was just different. Maybe it was my personality. Maybe I just liked to have fun more than other churchgoers. Did it even matter since we were all saved by grace anyway?

I would go to church when it was convenient to my schedule, but any Bible I owned was collecting dust on a shelf somewhere out of sight and out of mind. I may have had a childlike faith in God, but the truth was that I did not know Him. By the grace of God, I was finally humbled and awakened from my many years of spiritual apathy to a new biblical understanding. I came to realize that I had been deceived by Satan.

As a starting point, I want to preface what I've written in this book with the description of Jesus found in John 1:14:

> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,* ***full of grace and truth.***

While it is evident that Jesus is full of grace, it needs to be stated to our modern church culture that He is also full of truth.

© 2025 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

I point this out because without paying attention to His truth, people like me will minimize the destructive nature of their sin while abusing the grace of the gospel. For some readers, there may be parts of this book that feel too full of truth and not enough grace. For others, however, the truth found in the Bible will serve as the much-needed wake-up call that I experienced when I finally began to read it. Part of that wake-up call came from these words of Jesus:

> *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* (John 15:4-10)

© 2020 NT Covenant Free eBook

The old saying is sometimes true: it takes one to know one. Because I spent so many years professing Christianity without abiding in Christ, I easily recognize what that looks like. I've lived it. Therefore, it has become painfully obvious to me that there are multitudes of self-proclaimed Christians attending church that don't abide in Christ, don't bear fruit, and don't keep His commandments. I don't say this out of a self-righteous spirit, but out of loving concern for their eternal destination.

Much of our modern church culture has embraced a seeker-sensitive model that often values comfort over conviction, social interaction over spiritual depth, and attendance over true discipleship. By softening sermons, entertaining crowds, and often elevating pastors above Scripture, churches have enabled generations of biblically illiterate lost sheep, including myself at one time. I was a product of this seeker-sensitive movement, but I needed something much different. I needed a sleeper-sensitive experience because I was dead asleep in my sins and untouched by the hard truths of God's Word. I did not need to be made comfortable: I needed to be awakened by Scripture.

I claimed to be a Christian for more than twenty years before I ever opened a Bible and studied it. In doing so, I was risking my eternal life. I did not take God seriously enough to read His Word, and I was misguided in thinking that church attendance was enough. Knowing what I know now, I'm deeply concerned for those trapped in spiritual apathy and deception because of misunderstandings about salvation. I was once there, and it's a terrifying thought that we can go our entire lives believing we are saved, only to hear Jesus say, "I never knew you."

> *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"* (Matthew 7:21-23)

It's my hope and prayer that this book will guide every reader to instead hear the words: *"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master"* (Matthew 25:21).

© 2026 Kyle Covington FreeSoBook

For that to happen, I urge you to approach Scripture with the utmost humility.

If you are locked up in pride, convinced that you already have all the answers apart from God's Word, then this book will be a waste of your time (Proverbs 11:2; Psalm 25:9). In hindsight, I can say this plainly: I did not know God until I studied His Word with humility. Our cultural assumptions and natural ways of thinking often get turned upside down by God's Word because His ways are so much higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).

This book is my attempt to fill the large gaps of biblical truth that shallow church experiences left wide open in my life and in the lives of countless others. It's a deep dive into the journey we are all on, a journey that ends in either eternal life or eternal separation from God. I am sharing what I desperately wish someone had shared with me when I was younger. It would have spared me a great deal of self-inflicted heartache.

My aim is that the illustrations in this book will bring clarity to what Scripture teaches, so that all readers will wake up to its truth and develop a zealous, all-in, life-changing passion for knowing and following Jesus Christ.

> ***Wake up**, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.* (Revelation 3:2-3)

© 2025 Kyle Covington Free eBook

Introduction

"O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!"
(Psalm 39:4-5)

Whether we realize it or not, each and every one of us is on a spiritual journey. When we are eight years old, it feels like life is going a slow eight miles per hour. When we are forty-eight years old, it feels like life is going forty-eight miles per hour and the years keep flying by as the speed increases. The older we get, the more sobering the brevity of life becomes. During this short journey through life, we are either on a path getting closer to God or on a path getting closer to the world. The eternal ramifications are joyous or disastrous, depending on which path we take.

I was involved in church for twenty years after being baptized, but I didn't know God or His Word the way that I should have. In hindsight, I was a spiritual baby drinking milk instead of eating solid food.

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.
(Hebrews 5:12-14, NIV)

© 2020 Kyle Carpenter • Free eBook

Are you *"acquainted with the teaching about righteousness"*? Have you trained yourself *"to distinguish good from evil"*? Do you truly know the Bible, what it says, and do you live in obedience to it? Do you understand how short our earthly lives are when measured against eternity, and how limited our time is to be made right in the eyes of God through Jesus?

Nothing is promised when it comes to how long we will live. As I write this, I am in my late forties, and I have already known several people from my high school and college years who have lost their lives. I'm sure most of them expected to grow old, yet the reality is that tomorrow is not promised to any of us. That truth should be deeply sobering.

I remember a few years ago when Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash. As the face of the NBA for many years, he seemed larger than life, and then he was gone in an instant. He and I were the same age, and his death served as an uncomfortable reminder that life is short. We don't know when our lives will end or when the Day of the Lord will come.

> *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.* (James 4:14, NIV)

> *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* (Hebrews 9:27-28)

Are you living your life in a way that is *"eagerly waiting for Him"*? The influences of the world and Satan constantly distract us from fixing our eyes on eternity and what truly matters. Scripture commands us to devote ourselves to God and to fight against our sinful nature. But this is not something we

© 2026 KVE Cavalier's Free eBook

can accomplish on our own. We need the power of the Holy Spirit, which God gives to those who repent and surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. Have you ever had any of the following thoughts?

- It feels like some people at church live such upright and holy lives compared to me. They must be wired differently, because they don't seem to care about having fun the way I do.
- Why do I keep struggling with the same sins without making any progress? I believe in Jesus, but I feel powerless to change.
- I'm constantly getting off course with God because of distractions or boredom or apathy.
- I pray sometimes, but it often feels like my prayers fall on deaf ears.
- I've tried doing all the "right" things, but my life doesn't seem any better. Why keep trying when I feel so deflated?
- If I'm being honest, my desires for having fun and pleasure outweigh my desires to please God. He will just keep on forgiving me, so why not have fun, right?
- I don't know why, but I lack motivation to read the Bible. It feels difficult, confusing, and overwhelming.
- Church often feels like a chore. I struggle to relate to people there and frequently feel insecure or judged.
- Church people seem weird to me. I don't want to surround myself with a bunch of weirdos.
- I'm a good person and I deserve to be happy. I don't need to change anything in my life because God is loving and therefore tolerant of my lifestyle.
- The church seems full of hypocrites who are no different from the rest of the world. So, what's the point?
- The mention of the Holy Spirit doesn't make much sense to me and the church's explanation is pretty vague.

© 2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

- At times, I struggle with doubts about whether the Bible is truly the Word of God.

If you've experienced any of these frustrating thoughts, you're not alone. I've wrestled with every one of them myself. If they sound familiar, my hope is that this book will help draw you closer to Christ. However, without recognizing the authority of God's Word, this book will not be effective in bringing you closer to Him. If you struggle with doubts about whether the Bible is truly the Word of God, then please consider the following statements.

The God Who Created You Will Guide You

If you believe that God created you, the world, the universe, and everything else that is seen and unseen, then is it really that hard to believe He could create a book for us through His appointed servants? God used written words intended to last so that generations of men and women could know His holiness, His love, His principles for living, and His will for our lives. God did not create us and then leave us here without guidance or hope. He gave us a thorough instruction manual for living because He loves us.

The Bible's Unity Is Hard to Dismiss

The Bible is made up of 66 books written by about 40 different authors from several different countries. They wrote in multiple languages over a span of roughly 1,500 years. Yet there is a consistent unity in its message that points toward Jesus Christ. That kind of miraculous unity is difficult to explain apart from divine inspiration. Read it for yourself and see the power of God at work.

©2020 Kyle Strother Free eBook

Its Reach Is Unlike Any Other Book

If God created a book intended for all people, wouldn't it make sense that it would become the most widely read and distributed book in history? The Bible is by far the most published book ever written. Several billion copies have been distributed worldwide, and that number continues to grow. Is that merely coincidence, or could it be part of God's plan?

Fulfilled Prophecy Is Hard to Ignore

Hundreds of biblical prophecies have been fulfilled. It's mind-blowing when you begin to study them, and I encourage you to do so. Two of the most compelling examples are found in Psalm 22:16–18 and Isaiah 53. King David described details remarkably consistent with crucifixion hundreds of years before it was invented and about 1,000 years before it happened to Jesus. He also described the casting of lots for garments, exactly what the Romans did with Jesus's clothing. Isaiah detailed what would happen to Jesus roughly 700 years before He came to earth. These God-given prophecies were fulfilled in Matthew 27 and Luke 23.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

It Remains Relevant Across All Generations

Even though the Bible is centuries upon centuries old, it continues to hold up as a powerful guide for life and remains relevant across all cultures and generations. Maybe God knew what He was doing after all when He created a timeless book. *"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever"* (Isaiah 40:8).

Human History Itself Points to Jesus

The calendar most of the world follows is built around the events recorded in the Bible. Think about that. Regardless of personal belief, the year everyone lives in is marked from the time of Jesus. Anno Domini, or AD, means "the year of the Lord." The time before Jesus is marked as BC, meaning "Before Christ." Human history itself is framed around what is written in Scripture. That is significant for all cultures and all generations.

Eyewitness Testimony Came at Great Cost

The New Testament authors recorded eyewitness accounts of the miracles Jesus performed, including His resurrection, so that we could know the certainty of what is taught. Nearly all of the apostles faced torture and death for proclaiming what they knew to be true. Paul, who wrote thirteen New Testament books, once persecuted Christians and approved of Stephen's death before encountering the risen Jesus (Acts 8-9). That encounter completely changed the direction of his life. He went from being one of Christianity's greatest enemies to one of its most devoted messengers, and he ultimately gave his life as a martyr for the gospel. These radical responses to Jesus make the Bible difficult to dismiss.

If the Bible is true, then your eternal destination depends on how you respond to it. It's far more than just another religious book. It's supernatural, authoritative, and eternally consequential.

Millions of lives have been transformed by its message, and to dismiss it as I once did is nothing short of foolishness. Betting eternity on human "truths" that constantly change with culture and time is a dangerous gamble. God's Word was given so that we would no longer be deceived, unstable, or "*carried about by every wind of doctrine*" (Ephesians 4:14). If your way of life is pulling you away from truly knowing God and leaving you

© 2026 Kim Clement • Free eBook

without a sure hope for eternity, then I urge you to submit to God's Word. Study it humbly. Let it confront you, correct you, and transform you. Your eternity is worth that effort.

It's easy to make excuses about how the Bible can seem confusing, but God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Instead, He desires for us to know it so that we can have a life-saving relationship with Him.

> *God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Timothy 2:4)

I promise that if you read and absorb Scripture with humility and just a small seed of faith, His words will prove true in your life.

> *Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.* (Proverbs 30:5)

Through His Word, God reveals Himself and His love more clearly over time as we devote ourselves to reading it. Much of Scripture is not that difficult to understand when we apply ourselves and take the time to seek out its context.

> *The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.* (Psalm 119:130)

If a simple guy like me can comprehend its life-changing message, then I'm pretty sure anyone can. If you don't have a study Bible that provides in-depth contextual notes to help you "unfold" God's Word, then I highly suggest you get one, and I recommend the Life Application Study Bible or ESV Study Bible.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • FreeBook

Church Is Not Enough

In an effort to keep church attendance high and avoid saying anything from Scripture that might disturb personal comfort, many modern churches have fallen into the habit of emphasizing messages that are easy to hear and easy to preach. They focus on love, grace, and self-help while neglecting essential biblical truths about sin, man's depravity, God's judgment, His will, the fear of the Lord, holiness, repentance, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This neglect often leads people like me not only to tolerate the very sin for which Jesus suffered and died on the cross, but also to become offended by the correction of sin rather than by the sin itself. From personal experience, I can say this is a very dangerous and dark place to be.

These days, it seems we live in a culture of churchgoers who are more interested in studying pastors than in studying the Bible. This leaves massive holes in the hearts of many who don't truly know God. Pastors and church leaders who are content to teach without emphasizing the urgent need for personal Bible reading leave their hearers vulnerable to stagnant spiritual growth. The Bible contains the full counsel of God, which is the complete truth He has revealed for understanding salvation and for living the Christian life according to His will. It's of eternal importance that we don't neglect the renewing of our minds through Scripture.

> *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2)

©2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

We cannot expect to stay on the Narrow Road while living in the darkness of this world without the light of God's Word to guide us.

> *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
> (Psalm 119:105)

The cherry-picked, easy-to-hear Scriptures that many of us are often limited to in church can lead to a serious misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches about salvation in its full context. Scripture calls believers to pursue a holy life through the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. There are eternal ramifications for how we respond to that calling.

The Drive Illustration

This book is centered on a biblical illustration that serves as a metaphorical map of the Christian journey. If you are anything like me, your first glance at the Drive Illustration might lead you to think, "What am I looking at, some kind of board game?" or "This looks strange." Stick with me. As the illustration is broken down and explained throughout the book, it will begin to make clear and meaningful sense. You can view the illustration following this Introduction, just before Chapter 1, or at narrowroad.life/drive.

This illustration is a resource designed to help you understand where you are, where you have been, and where you need to go in your relationship with God. Its intent is to guide readers toward devotion, purpose, and perseverance in Christ. To drive the Narrow Road is to abide in Christ and remain in God's will. Doing so leads beyond confusion and complacency into a transformed life marked by eternal purpose.

© 2026 Kyle Saylor • Free eBook

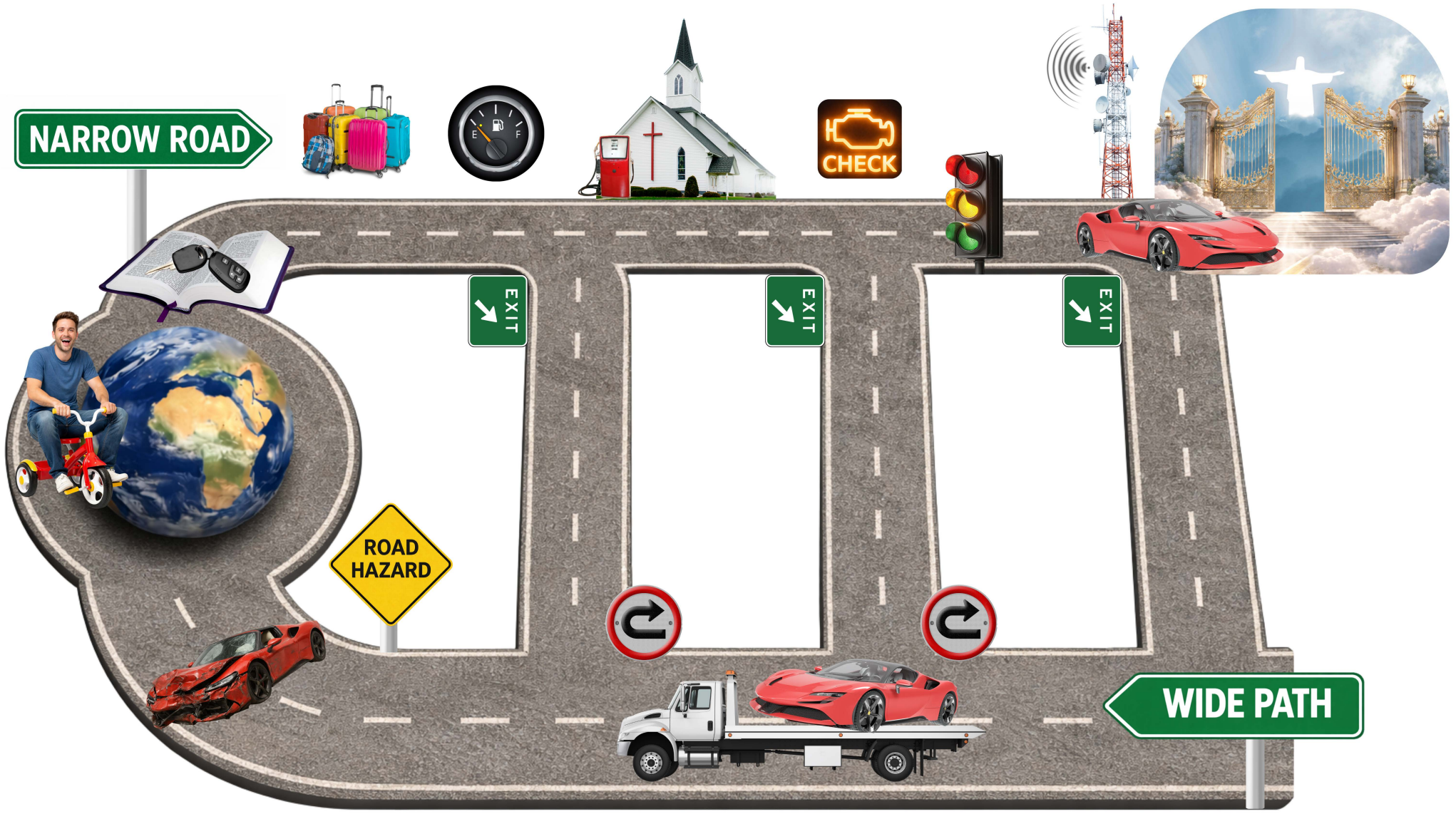
A key goal of the Drive Illustration is to help you gain a clearer understanding of the biblical principle of sanctification. To be sanctified is to be made holy like Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, transforming us from our sinful nature into a new nature that does the will of God. If we follow the guidance given to us by God in His Word, we will find ourselves on the Narrow Road. This path leads us toward holiness, purpose, love, joy, peace, and a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ that provides hope for eternity and the power to overcome this fallen world.

Are you ready to drive beyond …
spiritual apathy?
burdensome and habitual sin struggles?
being short-sighted with your eternity?
the pursuit of fleeting things?
a lack of peace?
a lack of love?
a lack of purpose?
a lack of hope?
your fears?
your doubts?
this dark world?

Buckle up for the most important drive you will ever take!

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. (Isaiah 35:8)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender's Free eBook



DRIVE THE NARROW ROAD

- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*
- **Wide Path** *Road of Rebellion*
- **Tricycle** *Life Without Christ*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*
- **Dream Car** *Faith in the Gospel*
- **Operation Manual** *The Bible*
- **Car Key** *Repentant Heart*
- **Engine** *Holy Spirit*
- **Fuel** *Devotion to God*
- **Tow Truck** *Satan*
- **Engine Maintenance** *Obedience*
- **Service Station** *Church*
- **Baggage** *Sin Struggles*
- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*
- **U-Turns** *Repentance Opportunities*
- **Road Hazard** *God's Discipline*
- **Car Wreck** *Consequence of Sin*
- **Engine Light** *Warning of Sinfulness*
- **Stoplight** *Test of Faith & God's Timing*
- **Radio Signal** *Holy Spirit Prompting*

Drive Illustration Key

Tricycle: Our spiritually dead existence apart from Christ, embracing our sinful nature and living according to our own way instead of God's way. A life of self-rule and rebellion against the gospel.

Tricycle Track: The world and everything under Satan's dominion. The place where we continually exercise our own will rather than living surrendered to Christ.

Dream Car: Faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only vehicle that can redeem us and carry us to the kingdom of God.

Operation Manual: God's Word, the Bible.

Car Key: A truly surrendered and repentant heart that puts God first. The only way to start the Engine.

Engine: Our relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Engine can only be started with the Car Key. It must be fueled to continue running and repaired when the Engine Light comes on.

Fuel: Acts of obedient devotion to God such as reading Scripture, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines.

Engine Light: A warning from the Holy Spirit that our sin has disrupted our relationship with God and requires attention.

Engine Maintenance: Holy habits of obedience that keep our relationship with the Holy Spirit healthy and strong.

Tow Truck: Satan, always seeking to take advantage and tow away those who break down after failing to fuel the Engine or ignoring the Engine Light.

© 2026 Kyle Commander Free eBook

Narrow Road: The path of abiding in Christ and walking in His will. A life where we are doers of the Word and not just hearers. A life that is sanctified to look more like Jesus.

Exits: Temptations from Satan that pull us off the Narrow Road and lead toward the Wide Path.

Baggage: Persistent sin struggles that make us more susceptible to taking Exits. By keeping the Engine fueled and repaired, we position ourselves to receive guidance and correction from the Holy Spirit as He sanctifies us beyond many of our greatest weaknesses.

Wide Path: The road of rebellion that leads away from the kingdom of God and back to the Tricycle Track.

U-Turns: Opportunities for repentance that take us back to the Narrow Road from the Wide Path.

Service Station: Church. A place to be spiritually refreshed, refueled, repaired, and held accountable through biblical teaching and Christ-centered community.

Road Hazard: God's discipline placed in our path to correct us and guide us back to the Narrow Road.

Car Wreck: The painful consequences of sin and the result of resisted or ignored discipline.

Stoplight: Tests of faith and God's timing. At times, we are required to wait and surrender to His will even through pain and suffering. We must strive to remain faithful by keeping the Engine fueled and resisting the pull toward any Exit.

Radio Signal: Promptings from the Holy Spirit that guide, warn, and direct us along the way.

© 2026 Kyle Schlender • Free eBook

PART I

MY STORY

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 1: My Drive Off the Narrow Road

Author's Testimony – Part One

© 2025 Ryle Cavender • Free eBook

Before breaking down the *Drive Illustration* in detail, I am going to share the testimony of my spiritual awakening, which I call *My Drive*. I hope it makes clear that this book is grounded in far more than theology alone. It's about a personal experience with God that transformed my life.

For the first two chapters, all parts of the *Drive Illustration* will be written in italics and may be referenced in the *Key* for clarification. Abbreviated references will be listed throughout.

The purpose of sharing my story is to show how powerful life transformation can be when we abide in Christ and how dysfunctional life can become when we drift off course and distance ourselves from Him. It's my hope that readers will learn from my mistakes and come to understand that God does not bless a lifestyle of disobedience. However, He does desire an intimate relationship with every one of us.

The more we embrace the gospel, the more we are freed from our *Baggage*, our struggles with sin and shame. As shame loosens its grip, authenticity becomes easier. The more authentic we are with our stories, the more relatable we become to others. So, here's my story with all the authenticity I can offer by holding nothing back.

College Chaos

- **Baggage** *Sin Struggles*

It was 2011, and I was meeting up with a good buddy of mine from college. He had moved out of state after graduation, so I had not seen him in many years. We spent the evening reminiscing about all the crazy times and stories from college that had taken place a little over a decade earlier. During a quiet moment in the conversation, he said, "Kyle, you know something? You are lucky to be alive."

I had never thought about it that way, but he was right. By the grace of God, I somehow made it through a chaotic season that left its scars. I have always tended to learn the hard way, but scars have a way of pointing us back to the truth. And it's the truth of Jesus that sets us free. The following stories help paint a picture of what my life looked like during that season.

It was 1998, during my freshman year of college, and I was riding with a group of buddies headed to Midnight Rodeo, the local country bar in Waco, Texas. We were meeting my roommate's brother and his friends, who had driven in from Corsicana for the evening. When we came roaring and screeching into the parking lot in a red and white lifted Blazer from the '80s, we definitely stood out. I was hanging halfway out the window, screaming at the top of my lungs, "What's up, boys?" as we spotted our friends huddled together in the parking lot.

Out of nowhere, a pint-sized police officer we had not seen emerged from the huddle. He sprinted toward us across the parking lot and, before we could even process what was happening, he jumped Spider-Man style into the driver's side window and yanked the keys out of the ignition. "Good evening," he said. "Have you boys been drinking alcohol?"

"Well, no sir," we answered. "We are not twenty-one, so we don't drink alcohol."

"I am going to need all of you to step out of the vehicle right now." The moment the door opened, no fewer than seven

© 2020 Kyle Calcaterra - Free eBook

empty beer cans spilled onto the concrete at his feet. That night, we all received our first alcohol-related tickets, though certainly not our last. Evenings like that were pretty typical during those years. Both my friends and I were completely out of control.

Another time, a buddy and I were sitting in his apartment on a Friday afternoon with no plans. “What are we going to do tonight?” I asked.

“How about we make some margaritas and invite some girls over?” he replied. It started with just a few girls, but about three hours later there were nearly fifty people packed into that small apartment. Before long, several police officers were at the front door, blocking anyone from leaving. One by one, everyone in the apartment received a ticket for Minor in Possession or Contributing to a Minor. That is, everyone except those who jumped out the second-floor side window. The guy in front of me lowered himself by hanging from the bottom of the window and then took off running across the courtyard without a single officer noticing or chasing him. Watching that, I thought to myself, no problem, I have this.

I have heard it said that the human brain does not fully develop until age twenty-five. I think I proved that theory on a regular basis back then, and especially on that night. I was wearing flip flops, and I was three sheets to the wind. Instead of lowering myself like the guy before me, I just jumped. I even caught a little air, which only made it worse. I landed feet first and then slammed hard onto the ground on my rear end. Every muscle in my back felt as if it had been stabbed with a steak knife.

As I stood up, bent over in pain, I noticed several officers standing in the stairwell. Thankfully, their attention was focused on writing tickets. I limped away and headed toward my apartment as fast as I could, though I must have looked like a ninety-year-old hunchback. I collapsed onto the couch in agony. One by one, other friends trickled in, each carrying either a

© 2016 Kyle Cuvelier - FreeEbook

ticket or a serious injury. One of them had broken his leg and was in a full leg cast the next day. All of this happened just to avoid getting another ticket one week before I turned twenty-one. Not my brightest moment.

- **Car Wreck** *Consequence of Sin*
- **Dream Car** *Faith in the Gospel*
- **Operation Manual** *Bible*

Now I am forty-eight years old, and I still deal with significant back problems. This was one of many *Car Wrecks*. You reap what you sow, and there are real consequences to living the way I was living.

Early Faith

I was raised in a Christian home in Plano, Texas, and my parents did a good job of pointing me to Jesus when I was a young child. Because I believed that Jesus died on the cross for my sins, I was baptized at eight years old after being introduced to the *Dream Car*. It was Sunday, October 26, 1986. I know the exact date because it's written in the small Bible that was given to me by the church.

After my baptism, that Bible sat on a shelf for the next twenty years like a trophy collecting dust, while I went on living my life and trying to be the best version of myself as a Christian. For the next two decades, the *Dream Car* rarely started and went nowhere.

I believe my parents had genuine faith. However, growing up, church was often treated as an optional convenience rather than something essential. We attended maybe half the time, depending on our schedule, and true Christian community was never a top priority. I was also never taught how important it was to read the *Operation Manual*, and I never saw my parents reading it themselves.

From a very young age, I tried to stop sinning through my own willpower. That approach became frustrating very quickly because no matter how hard I tried, I could not stop. Sometimes

© 2026 Five Coverdales Free eBook

it was just a cuss word or being mean to my little sister, but even then, I knew sin was present in my life and I wanted it gone.

What I did not realize was that there was a power outside of myself. Without that understanding, I felt hopeless to change. I was largely ignorant of the Holy Spirit and the Bible, even though I had been in church my entire life. Somewhere along the way, it seems far too many churches stopped clearly teaching repentance, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of reading the Bible in order to know God's will. That failure has created serious spiritual problems for my generation and the generations that have followed.

I paid a price for not having this knowledge. For most of my young life and all the way through my twenties, I was riding around on a *Tricycle*, stuck on the *Tricycle Track*. There were moments of conviction at church camp or a Fellowship of Christian Athletes event when I briefly started the *Engine* with the *Car Key*. I would stay on the *Narrow Road* for a short time, riding a spiritual high, before running out of *Fuel* and being hauled back to the *Tricycle Track* by the *Tow Truck*. Other times, I would simply take the first *Exit* back to the *Wide Path*, convincing myself it was not a big deal.

The result was an apathetic faith that neither feared the Lord nor understood the seriousness of sin.

After a while, I gave up on the idea of not sinning and settled for not sinning as badly as others. When I compared myself to those around me, I seemed like a pretty good kid. I did not get into much trouble, and I generally got along with people. Overall, I thought I was doing fairly well and considered myself a good person.

Insecurity Leads to Idolatry

When middle school arrived, I started noticing girls a little more. Before long, there was a school dance, and I needed a date. I asked one girl and received a quick "no thanks." I asked

© 2025 Kyle Covington FreeBook

another and got a very direct "no way." I asked a third and heard "no thanks" again. What the heck was going on? When I looked in the mirror, I saw a seventh-grade stud. My well-intentioned parents had done an excellent job boosting my self-esteem, but it had risen well above the reality of my situation. When others looked at me, they saw a brace-faced, fat kid with acne who had absolutely zero game with the ladies.

- **Tricycle** *Life Without Christ*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*
- **Engine** *Holy Spirit*
- **Car Key** *Repentant Heart*
- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*
- **Fuel** *Devotion to God*
- **Tow Truck** *Satan*
- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*
- **Wide Path** *Road of Rebellion*

After a few painful reality checks, my self-esteem took a fast nosedive, and deep insecurities began to take root. By my freshman year, I was still dealing with the braces, the acne, and the extra weight. Then I saw her … the hottest girl in school. I had gone to school with her for years, but something was different now. I could not stop looking at her, and I did my best to sit near her in class whenever I could.

Eventually, I reached a breaking point. Something had to change. I could not keep being this version of myself anymore. Getting my braces off was the first step and then football workouts helped me lean out a little. Once summer break came around, I decided to take everything up a notch. By the time school started back up, I had dropped thirty pounds and looked like a completely different person. I finally had the confidence to make a move, so I called her, which felt heroic at the time.

Up to that point, I had almost zero experience with girls and no idea what I was doing. I was basically an innocent twelve-year-old trapped in a sixteen-year-old's life. Naturally, I thought it would be a great idea to pursue the hottest girl I had ever known. Go big or go home, right? After about a month of talking on the phone, I somehow convinced her to go with me to the varsity football game. We had a great time, and the next day at school her friend walked up to me and said, "She likes you."

© 2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

I was on cloud nine. However, my lack of experience quickly became a problem. What started as a potential boyfriend role turned into a full-time position as her fallback, guy-buddy doormat, helplessly stuck in the friend zone. Over the next couple of years, I became her on-call source for attention and affirmation, somehow mistaking that arrangement for progress. Not great. I lost my mind over this girl with full-blown puppy love. The dynamic was basically Forrest Gump and Jenny, except Forrest had way better game than I did. His famous line summed up my decision-making perfectly: "Stupid is as stupid does."

After several months of hanging out as just "friends," I wrote her a note declaring my feelings and asking to be more than friends. Obviously, an excellent strategy. I cringe just typing this. To nobody's surprise, she replied, "I'm sorry, but I see you as just a friend," followed by a sentence no infatuated teenage boy is equipped to handle: "But you are the type of guy I want to marry someday."

Jackpot! At that moment, my brain completely shut down. Any reasonable person would have heard a polite rejection, but not this guy. Cue up Lloyd Christmas from *Dumb and Dumber* asking, "So you're telling me there's a chance?" I lost all dignity and common sense, letting myself be strung along for several more months because I enjoyed her company while she enjoyed the attention. All of it came at the expense of turning away interest from other girls because I only had eyes for her. Then one day, she left a note on my car saying she had a change of heart and wanted to meet me after work in the parking lot.

It felt like the big movie moment where the guy finally gets the girl. She walked up to me, and we kissed for the first time. My heart stopped. Then reality showed up. I had no idea how to kiss. Oh, crap. A few weeks later, she put me right back in the friend zone and was kind enough to tell my friends that it felt like she was kissing her brother. She also let it be known that she

© 2026 The Clever Mr. Friend Book

had a crush on another guy in our friend group. Finding all that out was quite the gut punch to my confidence and definitely not my favorite moment.

After investing nearly two years and most of my emotional energy in pursuing this girl, I finally walked away completely demoralized and permanently wounded. Pretty dumb, right? You are probably wondering why I am telling you all of this. I share it because it sets the stage for a major sin problem that began during those years. I was struggling with idolatry, trying to find my security in something other than God, which always fails. Instead of wising up and turning to God for security in my disappointment and hurt, I turned to another girl. That summer, a buddy of mine set me up with a girl he used to go to school with in a nearby town.

Idolatry Continued

She was a lot of fun to be around, and she liked me just as much as I liked her. We quickly became best friends. She was my true high school sweetheart, and she gave me all the affirmation and attention I had previously longed for but failed to receive. After a year of dating, we believed we were in love and began making life plans together. We talked about going to college, getting married, and having kids. We even had their names picked out. Everything was moving fast, and once again, God played no role in my decision-making.

I remember taking her with me to my church's high school youth group one Sunday. That was a new experience for her since she did not attend church with her family. That particular day, the youth group handed out promise cards that we were supposed to sign, pledging that we would not have sex before marriage. Looking back, I know the church was well-intentioned, but the approach still failed us. How was signing a card supposed to produce self-control? How was it supposed to help us overcome

© 2021 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

temptation? How was it supposed to change the hearts of two teenagers? To most of the world, premarital sex was treated as no more serious than saying, "I know I shouldn't eat that cupcake, but it's really no big deal."

What we needed was an understanding of the Holy Spirit, the fear of the Lord, and the consequences of sexual immorality. What we got was a card. Needless to say, signing that card as our last line of defense was about as effective as me trying to block a dominant pass rusher like Myles Garrett from sacking a quarterback.

After a year of holding out, I gave in. I told myself it was no big deal since she had convinced me we were getting married anyway. That marked the beginning of my spiritual life sinking like the Titanic after hitting an iceberg (Proverbs 5:22).

My First Major *Car Wreck*

When college started, it felt like everything was coming together. I was at Baylor, and she was ninety minutes away in Austin. No problem. We had this. I was all in, and she had me convinced that she was all in, too, by telling me she loved me every chance she got. For the first couple of months, everything seemed to be going well. We saw each other often, and our relationship felt secure.

Then, almost like the changing of a season, it happened. She joined a sorority and started spending time around a group of party girls. Not long after, she decided she needed to break things off so she could, in her words, "sow her wild oats." I was stunned by the suddenness of her change and the heartlessness of her demeanor. What about our life plans? What about the promises we had made? What about everything we had shared, including our virginities? Weren't we in love? How could she do this?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • FreeLook

- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*
- **Road Hazard** *God's Discipline*
- **Car Wreck** *Consequence of Sin*

I felt completely betrayed and rejected by the person closest to me. One moment my heart was in her hands, and the next it was torn to shreds. They say the first cut is the deepest, and for me, that proved true. To this day, I have not come close to experiencing the level of pain and trauma I endured during that season. It felt like the death of the person I was planning to spend the rest of my life with, except in some ways it was worse. I did not lose her because she died; I lost her because she tossed aside my heart, along with every promise she had made, as though they meant nothing.

To make matters worse, one of my closest friends attended school with her and regularly updated me on her new life of promiscuity. Each update felt like another turn of the knife. It was as if my worst nightmares were coming true. I was completely devastated. In the end, it felt like I had given my heart to someone whose character I never truly knew.

All the insecurities I carried from past rejection went straight to DEFCON 1. You reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7). At first, I blamed her for all the hurt I was feeling. In truth, I only had myself to blame. I had foolishly placed our relationship above God and turned it into an idol. I once again relied on someone other than Him for my security and identity. I took the *Exit* of premarital sex and never looked back. I chose to date someone who did not share the Christian values I had been raised with, even though I knew better (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). I ignored clear red flags because of unhealthy physical and emotional attachments rooted in sin.

This was my first major disciplinary *Road Hazard* that led to a significant *Car Wreck* in my life. The problem at the time was that I was not walking in community with believers who could help me recognize this heartbreak as God's loving correction. Instead, I was surrounded by wild fraternity guys

© 2025 KGE Cover for Free eBook

who encouraged me to man up and move on. Rather than turning to God in repentance, I felt sorry for myself and followed their lead by turning to alcohol and whatever fun I could find. I became obsessed with trying to fill the emptiness in my heart with the emptiness of worldly partying. If she was going to sow her wild oats, then so was I. I was deeply heartbroken and deeply depressed, but I covered it all up with drinking, laughing, and acting like a jackass alongside my friends (Proverbs 13:20).

Downward Spiral

Instead of setting healthy goals like reading the Bible in a year or getting involved in a church community, my goals revolved around partying. One semester I scheduled all noon classes so I could sleep in most days. My goal was to earn a B grade point average while doing no homework whatsoever. Another goal was to go out hard every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night for the entire semester. If a class required homework, I accepted that I would get a C. If a class did not require homework, I crammed the night before exams and usually managed to get an A. I accomplished these idiotic goals while hardening myself to sin daily. My goals, my values, my desires, and my life were completely out of whack, all in pursuit of meaningless things. I had lost sight of everything, including my purpose for living.

Even while living this foolish life, I still didn't think I was all that bad compared to most people. Some of the people I knew were sleeping with a different person every weekend. I would only sleep with someone if I was in a committed relationship. Some people were doing drugs. I would never do that, though I drank like a fish. My standards of morality were based on what the world said was acceptable because I had no idea what the Word of God actually said. The truth was that I was just as sinful as anyone else. I justified my behavior by comparing myself to

© 2020 WP Cavalier Free eBook

others instead of comparing myself to the holiness of Jesus. I had completely lost my way.

- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*

I lived like this for three years after the breakup, all the way into my senior year. I was just as hurt then as I was on the day it happened. At the time, Baylor, formerly a Baptist school, was well known for a culture where many girls attended to earn their "MRS" degree by getting married. As a result, reaching senior year without a future wife lined up came with a strong and unhealthy cultural pressure to find one. The last thing I needed during that season was to look for a wife, because I was living in chaos, far from the Lord, and extremely immature. I had not dated anyone in three years, aside from some casual, short-term flings.

Then one night, I noticed a beautiful girl sitting at a table in a bar. I sat down next to her, and we hit it off. Before the night was over, she was coming with me to my fraternity event the following weekend, and I was going to her sorority event. She resembled, and shared a similar beauty with, the girl who had kept me in the friend zone back in high school, reopening old wounds and stirring emotions that made her especially hard to resist. When I say our relationship was dysfunctional, I mean it to the extreme. We had some fun together, but we were like fire and gasoline, always on the verge of exploding. We could not have been any less compatible.

So why in the world would I marry her three years later? The answer is simple: I was still walking through life as a chaotic fool, far from the Lord, with absolutely no wisdom. Because I had already hardened myself to sexual sin by taking the *Exit* and going all the way back to the *Tricycle Track*, I had no convictions about premarital sex. The physical bond and the lust of my eyes made me addicted to her, even though I knew we were bad for each other. My friends knew it too, but I refused to listen. I was a prideful fool, blinded by my sin (Proverbs 12:15). After college, I had my own apartment and paid rent for moral optics,

© 2026 WE Cyndi Dar Freedom

but I only stayed there when we were fighting. In reality, we lived together at her place for a year, playing house and doing things our way instead of God's way.

After a couple of years of dysfunctional dating, she told me I needed to propose or she was going to break things off. Because of my unhealthy physical and emotional attachments, I did not want to lose the relationship; so I jumped into marriage without giving it much thought. God had no part in my decision to get married, and marriage can get rough very quickly when you're not on the *Narrow Road*. Like I said, we were like fire and gasoline, and I did not know the first thing about how to be a good husband. Lacking that wisdom, I did not love her well, and we were both incredibly selfish. As a result, it became difficult for her to give me the affirmation and respect I needed, and my old insecurities were dredged up day after day.

Two years into our marriage, I was done. The conflict and disrespect never stopped, and I was miserable. When she admitted that another man had been pursuing her, I am sad to say that I did not even care. I was so bitter and hopeless that I had all but given up. When I decided to move out, they began dating shortly thereafter, closing the door to any reconciliation.

Author's Note for the Married:

If you are struggling in your marriage, you do not have to be a fool like I was and walk through a painful divorce. Do not isolate. Seek out wise Christian counsel. Fully surrender your lives to Christ. He can redeem your marriage when you pursue Him wholeheartedly together on the *Narrow Road*. Put Him at the center of your life and see what happens in your marriage.

We made the disastrous decision to isolate ourselves in our dysfunction and did not share what was going on with anyone. In hindsight, authentic Christian community and wise counsel could have helped keep us from falling apart, but we were foolish and prideful (Proverbs 16:18).

© 2025 Tyler Chevalier - Free Ebook

Therefore, I added divorce to the long list of foolish choices that had brought me to the sinful, broken place where I found myself. It was another *Car Wreck* of my own making, the result of not walking wisely with the Lord.

- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*
- **Car Wreck** *Consequence of Sin*
- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*
- **U-Turns** *Repentance Opportunities*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*

Rock Bottom

This was a dark time. I was not right with the Lord, and I was on a downward spiral. I had taken all the *Exits* and none of the *U-Turns*. I was back on the *Tricycle Track* full time, living in darkness and dysfunction just like my college days. After the divorce was final, I thought the best thing I could do was get out of town, so I booked a couple of trips. The first was to stay with a college buddy in Denver. The second was a trip to Vegas with some friends.

On my first night in Denver, we went out to the bars like usual. A girl came up to me and was very forward. Before I knew it, in my drunkenness, we were making out in the bar, and soon after I got into a cab with her to go somewhere I didn't know. I walked into a penthouse suite at the top of a Denver high-rise, and sitting on the coffee table was a pile of cocaine, with a few guys hanging around. I was pretty sure they were drug dealers. After a few minutes, one of them handed me a condom and told me to have fun that night. What in the world was I doing? I was already barreling down the wrong road, but this was a whole new level for me. By the grace of God, I avoided doing drugs or sleeping with her, but with each passing day I was becoming more callous to sin and drifting deeper into darkness.

Then I went to Vegas. One night, we decided to go big. We got bottle service at a fancy club and partied all night. After drinking all day at the pool and then continuing at the club, we

© 2020 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

- **Wide Path** *Road of Rebellion*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*
- **Tricycle** *Life Without Christ*
- **Dream Car** *Faith in the Gospel*
- **Car Key** *Repentant Heart*

were in the perfect state of mind to make poor decisions. So, we went to a strip club. Because I had grown so callous to sin, it did not even bother me. This was just what guys did, right? Since we were celebrating my newfound single life, I took it even further and went to the back room, where things get extra shady. I had become completely hardened to sin, as the *Wide Path* and the *Tricycle Track* had become my playground.

On the cab ride back, the driver suggested a massage parlor. Why not? In my drunken and careless state, I continued piling one foolish decision on top of another. As I lay on the massage table at four in the morning, a woman offered a so-called special massage for an extra six hundred dollars. I was extremely drunk and impulsive, so I handed over the cash. Moments later, a guy could be heard shouting down the hallway, "It's a scam!" with heavy foul language mixed in. I immediately got dressed and walked out. Fortunately, because it was only a scam targeting drunk idiots like me, I was spared from crossing lines I would have deeply regretted.

As I stepped outside, I began thinking about God in my shame and accepted that I had just paid a six-hundred-dollar fine for being a sinful dirtbag. Looking back now, it's hard to fathom how far I had fallen. How in the literal hell could that innocent eight-year-old boy who proclaimed his faith before the church twenty years earlier end up like this?

This was my shameful rock bottom. This was God waking me up and wrecking the *Tricycle* I had been riding. All I had left was the *Dream Car*, if I could just find the *Key* to get it started.

© 2016 Kyle Coverdale Free eBook

Author's Note:

I'm sure my rock-bottom moment made some readers cringe, and you may be shocked that I chose to share it. For other readers, your own rock bottom may be just as dark or even darker. Either way, remember that God's grace is greater than all of our sin, even our worst sins.

I shared this so you can see the transformation that takes place from here. The ridiculousness of my life at that time does not define me, and it's not who I am today.

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!! (Romans 7:25, NIV)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 2: My Drive On the Narrow Road

Author's Testimony – Part Two

© 2026 Kyle Gardner - Free eBook

Back to the Service Station

The following Sunday, I started attending a new church. It was the first time I had visited the *Service Station* in the months since the divorce. I knew it was time to take a different path because doing life my way was not working. I wanted to turn to God, but I was lost and confused as to how to be a good Christian.

Years earlier, during the chaos of college, I found myself in the hospital watching my granddad decline before he passed away. Standing at his bedside, I remember telling him, "Grandad, I want to be like you someday," and I meant it (Matthew 5:6). He was the godliest person I had ever known. He served as an elder at his church and was respected by everyone who knew him. He was a genuine man of God who lived a holy and faithful life. I wanted to be like him, but I didn't believe it was possible for me. I believed the lies from Satan that led me to rationalize my way of life, convincing myself that I was just wired differently and couldn't change (John 8:44).

One of the first things I did at the new church was join a single guys' Bible study. I figured it would be a good place to meet men who were trying to live the right way. Before long, I started noticing something about the guy leading the study. He was about my age, but he seemed far more mature. He was almost how I imagine my granddad must have been at thirty.

- **Service Station** *Church*

From the outside, he seemed too good to be true—as if he had no sin in his life at all. I couldn't relate to him in the slightest, but I was intrigued. So, one day, with a healthy dose of cynicism, I asked him, "Hey man, how are you the way that you are? I don't get it." He paused, looked at me, and said, "Kyle, it's not me. It's the Holy Spirit in me." I had grown up in church, so I had heard about the Holy Spirit, but it was always a vague concept I didn't understand. He assumed I knew what he meant, and I didn't want to sound ignorant, so I nodded my head like it all made sense and we moved on.

My Biblical Awakening

Not long after that, still searching for answers, I started reading the Bible on my own for the first time. It didn't take long before I came across Galatians 5. This passage of Scripture rocked my world.

> *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.* (Galatians 5:16-21, NIV)

This got my attention. I went into the next room to show the passage to my roommate. We had grown up together in church,

© 2020 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

but we were both living worldly lives with little to no knowledge of the Bible. The Scripture describing the *"acts of the flesh"* felt like it was outlining our lifestyle word for word and warning that *"those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

I couldn't believe what I was reading. What about all the emphasis on John 3:16 that I had heard my entire life? I thought I was saved by simply believing in Jesus. I had been baptized. Had I misunderstood something? Was I really saved, or not? I started to panic and kept reading.

> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* (Galatians 5:22-25, NIV)

Even though the fruit of the Spirit was not evident in my life, I recognized it in my grandfather and the guy leading my Bible study. For the first time, things began to make sense as I pieced together the truth of Scripture. Then I came across this:

> *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*
>
> *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But*

© 2025 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:5-11)

At this point, it was clear that I was living according to the flesh and setting my mind on the things of the flesh. But how could I change? How could I have the Spirit of God dwell in me? I didn't want to be hostile to God. I wanted to please Him. So, I kept reading and came across this:

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

I had already been baptized, but it was obvious I was missing the "*repent"* part, and no one in my life had ever clearly and personally explained that to me. The verse stood out because it said that when you repent, you will *"receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* I wanted to change, but until that moment, I had never understood how any of this worked. This was my first real clue. As I kept learning, I began to see the deeper problem in my relationship with God: I was not all in. God wasn't interested in being just a part of my life. He wanted my whole life. He wanted the full devotion of my heart (Matthew 22:36-38).

I realized that I had never gone all in because I always kept at least one foot in the world. I came to understand that this was not acceptable to God. In fact, it placed me in opposition to Him. To truly find God, I realized I could no longer seek Him halfway. I had to seek Him with all my heart, and friendship with the world had to be left behind.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender's Free eBook

You adulterous people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

As I kept reading, I came across a shocking and frightening Scripture.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"
(Matthew 7:21-23, NIV)

© 2016 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

I remember thinking: "So, let me get this straight. There are people who prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles in His name who aren't saved? If they weren't saved, what did that mean for a sinful mess like me?" That realization was terrifying. One line in particular stopped me cold: *"but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* My immediate thought was, I need to figure out the will of the Father, and I need to figure it out right now.

As I kept reading, I continued piecing together truths I had never heard taught in church. How could I have attended church my entire life, been baptized, and never heard these things taught plainly? It was shocking. Reading the Bible for myself felt like taking off a blindfold I had been wearing for twenty years. I could finally see. I was driven to keep learning, not out of curiosity, but

out of fear. I was afraid that I had been living with a dangerous false assurance of salvation. And I was afraid that many people I knew were in the exact same place. Then I read this:

> *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*
> (Proverbs 9:10, NIV)

I realized that I had been going through life without the fear of the Lord. That explained my lack of wisdom and why I was reaping the consequences of my foolish decisions. As I kept reading, the weight of it all grew heavier, and I became increasingly unsettled. For the first time in my life, I had a healthy fear of God.

I began to understand that God was not playing around. He had sent His Son to die for my sins in order to rescue me for righteousness. He did not do it so that I could continue being friends with the world by living in rebellion and sin. Wanting to gain more understanding, I kept reading, and came across this:

> *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.*
> (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

> *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern*

© 2025 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him. (1 John 2:3-5)

I thought back to what I had read in Matthew 7: *"but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* Scripture plainly teaches that God's will includes our sanctification and that we must be transformed by the renewal of our minds in order to know His will. It also says that if we truly know Him, we will keep His commandments.

For years, I had claimed to know Him. I professed Christianity with my words, but my life told a different story. Scripture was now confronting me with a hard truth: if I truly knew Him, I would keep His commandments. I wasn't. According to God's Word, my profession was not just weak—it was false. Then I came across these verses:

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

... God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17, words of Jesus)

© 2026 Kyle Snyder Free eBook

- **Fuel** *Devotion to God*
- **Engine** *Holy Spirit*
- **Car Key** *Repentant Heart*
- **Dream Car** *Faith in the Gospel*
- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*

It felt like I was putting together a biblical puzzle, and for the first time, it was all starting to make sense. I began to understand that salvation and entrance into the kingdom of heaven required more than basic belief. It required a repentant and surrendered faith that puts God first—a faith that leads to sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture made it clear that doing the will of the Father begins with being born again of the Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is given to those who truly believe. However, I came to realize that true biblical belief involves repentance and surrender, which I had not experienced up to that point. God's Word, which is truth, works together with the Holy Spirit to sanctify and produce fruit in the life of a believer. As the mind is renewed through Scripture, a person comes to know the will of the Father. I came to realize that confirmation of salvation had nothing to do with a pastor telling you that you are saved. It had to do with the seal of salvation, which is the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). I was on fire now, and every word I read was proving true (Proverbs 30:5). With every page I read, more *Fuel* was being added to the *Engine*. I started to realize just how much I had been missing in my life. Because I hadn't been reading the Bible, I was missing the Word's power to sanctify me, and I wasn't renewing my mind to know God's will. Because I didn't understand the necessity of the *Car Key*, I had been going through life without even starting the *Engine*. I had foolishly wasted so many years proclaiming ownership of the *Dream Car* without actually driving it on the *Narrow Road.*

Without the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, I wasn't capable of doing the will of God. And because I lacked a genuine fear of the Lord and wasn't seeking Him with my whole heart, I was missing out on wisdom and an intimate relationship with

© 2026 Kyle Overdorf True eBook

Jesus. There was far more to Christianity than just going to church, praying a prayer, and believing. I had done all of those things, yet they had little to no impact on my life because I didn't understand what it meant to be born again by the Spirit. Up to that point, all I knew was the sinful nature. Once I eventually surrendered to Him as Lord of my life in repentance, I was then able to participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

It was overwhelming to realize how far off I had been from the truth. Even more sobering was recognizing that these same missing pieces were present in the lives of so many people I knew who also called themselves Christians. How many others, like me, were proclaiming the *Dream Car* without ever driving it anywhere? I suspect the number is much higher than most people think. As that realization set in, I began feeling frustrated and even resentful toward the churches I had been a part of. Why hadn't these things been talked about more clearly? I had a genuine, childlike faith at eight years old. I never doubted that Jesus was the Son of God who died for my sins. The problem wasn't unbelief. It was functional ignorance. I didn't know what I didn't know.

I had never understood how essential it was to read the Bible for myself. Jesus made it clear that I needed to abide in His Word, but that urgency had never really been emphasized to me in church or by my family.

> *"... If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:31-32)

That realization became a powerful lesson for me as both a parent and disciple maker. It also helped me understand what Jesus meant when He said the road to life is narrow and few find it.

© 2026 Kyle Coverdell Free eBook

- **Dream Car** *Faith in the Gospel*
- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13-14, NIV)

From that point forward, the Bible became a central part of my life, and it awakened me from being spiritually asleep. As I kept reading, I was shocked by how much of Scripture I had never been taught.

At first, I wondered if the problem was that I had not been listening. But over time, I realized I was not alone. Again and again, I have encountered long-time churchgoers who understood Scripture no better than I once did. Now that I am listening, I continue to be struck by how little emphasis many churches place on personal Bible reading, repentance, and the work of the Holy Spirit. As a result, countless people have little to no understanding of a genuine relationship with God or even salvation itself.

I was hooked. The more I read, the more God's truth sanctified me and renewed my mind to know His will. The Holy Spirit began convicting me of all kinds of things I had never been convicted of before. Slowly but surely, the power of my sinful nature began to weaken, and the fruit of the Spirit started to grow. Even so, Satan was still there, constantly trying to pull me off course, as he does with all of us.

© 2026 Kyle Covington • FreedomBook

Fighting My Baggage

Because of my past, I still carried a lot of insecurities and unresolved hurts. Satan knew which *Exits* to place in front of me to lure me off course. For nearly a year, I found myself stuck in a frustrating cycle, moving from the *Narrow Road* of God's will,

taking an *Exit* into sin, and then making a *U-Turn* of repentance, only to repeat the process again. Up to that point, I had been in the two serious relationships and had experienced only moderate attention from women. That changed when I showed up at the church singles group after my divorce. I was the new guy, and the single church women who were eager to be married started giving me attention like I had never experienced before.

This was the *Exit* I was too weak to avoid with my *Baggage.* Even though I had been growing spiritually, self-control was still underdeveloped in my life, and I was not prepared to withstand the temptations I faced. So, like the weak fool I still was, I stumbled by allowing myself into vulnerable situations. Because of my past insecurities, my need for affirmation, and the rejection I had experienced from women, this became the area where Satan's attacks were most effective, even in church.

Regrettably, my lack of self-control led me into several inappropriate physical relationships with women from church, and people were hurt as a result. I wasn't ready to take anyone seriously. I was still healing from a painful divorce, and my heart had become hardened toward sexual sin. Eventually, my name came up during a women's Bible study because of what had been happening, and word of my actions spread quickly. Not long after, I began hearing that some of the men from church I considered friends were done with me and no longer wanted to be around me. I guess I understand why because I was definitely not a good influence. Still, no one came to me directly or pointed me to Scripture. I was rejected and cut off without a single conversation. That wasn't helpful, especially for someone who clearly needed spiritual guidance and restoration (Galatians 6:1). Reflecting on this became a lesson for me in what not to do when helping a brother in Christ who is struggling with sin. It was a bad situation, and losing friendships because of my sinful reputation became yet another *Car Wreck* from a *Road Hazard*.

After about a year in that singles ministry, I tucked my tail between my legs and left for another church. By that point, it was

© 2026 Kyle Coyle All Rights Reserved

painfully clear that I had not gone all in with God. I wanted God's forgiveness, but I was still clinging to my sin and addicted to the affirmation of women rather than resting in my security in the Lord. I had grown significantly in knowledge and conviction, yet my life still did not fully reflect it. I was still drinking too much. I was still stuck in pride. I was still enslaved to lust and crippled by insecurity. I had learned the truth, but I had not yet fully surrendered my life to it (Romans 6:13). I was ashamed of the reputation I had earned at the previous church, and that shame produced genuine godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10).

- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*
- **Exits** *Temptations to Sin*
- **U-Turns** *Repentance Opportunities*
- **Baggage** *Sin Struggles*
- **Car Wreck** *Consequence of Sin*
- **Road Hazard** *God's Discipline*
- **Engine** *Holy Spirit*

All In, Finally

I decided that I was done with dating until my heart was right with the Lord. It was August of 2007, and for the first time, I went all in with God (James 4:7). This wasn't partial repentance or halfway surrender. It was full repentance. It was full surrender. For the first time, the *Engine* was running smoothly on the *Narrow Road*. This surrender looked different from my previous relationship with God. Having learned that His ways were far better than mine, I fully gave up control of my life. I no longer lived for myself, but made a conscious effort to live for Him and to follow His leading instead of doing things my own way (Matthew 16:24-25).

At the new church, I was placed in a small group of guys, and we clicked immediately. I was on fire for the Lord. For the first time in my life, I had real accountability to be in the Word, to flee from sin, and to put God first. If I ever started slipping, I knew I would lovingly hear from those guys with Scripture to back it

© 2025 Kyle Lavender • Free eBook

up. That was when I first understood the power and necessity of authentic Christian community at the *Service Station.*

Over the next few months, I was growing in the Lord at a rapid pace. For the first time in my life, I could sense the Holy Spirit leading me. Then one night, some of the guys from our small group went to Cowboys Red River, a large country dancing bar in Dallas. Several church singles groups from around the area would meet there one Saturday night each month for the local Christian meat market. That night, a buddy introduced me to a girl he knew from high school. As we talked, we realized that she had been in the same sorority as my sister. I then pretended to know how to country dance, and we kind of hit it off. I told her that my sister and I were throwing a Halloween party at my house the following weekend and that she and her friends should come.

The Halloween party was fun. I was dressed as Lieutenant Dangle from *Reno 911*. If you have not watched that show, it's probably best not to start. Basically, I was a cop wearing tight short shorts, tactical boots, and a dirty mustache. It was not a great look for having a serious get-to-know-you conversation with a girl, so I kind of steered clear of her out of embarrassment. If she thought I was an idiot, she would have been right.

When I brought up her name, my sister had nothing but great things to say about her. When I asked the buddy who had introduced us, he said she was "a catch." So I decided I should try to get to know her better, and we met up for dinner. From the minute I sat down with Brittany, I felt like I could be myself. I felt comfortable with her, and the more time I spent with her, the more attractive she became to me. It was not because of her physical beauty alone, but because of the way she carried herself and the obvious upright life she was living. She told me about the business she had started teaching little girls about Jesus through church-based cheerleading camps. She had been a cheerleader in college and launched the business right after graduating. It had grown to hundreds of campers each summer and she was leading many young girls to Christ. She

© 2026 KVP Covenant Preview Book

- **Service Station** *Church*
- **Radio Signal** *Holy Spirit Prompting*

was impressive to me in every way.

Unfortunately, the strong first impression did not go both ways. I started telling her about myself, and unbeknownst to me, she was losing interest. Apparently, my resume of being a divorced, heavy-drinking, hard-partying frat guy was not exactly her idea of Prince Charming. The following week, I shot her an email right before going to lunch with a coworker. As we were eating, he asked about the girl I had mentioned the week before. Being cocky and stupid, I confidently replied that things were going great and that we would probably be hanging out that weekend. At that exact moment my phone buzzed with her reply: "Sure, we can hang out this weekend, but just so you know, I am thinking of this as just friends, so we should make it a group outing with other friends." What?! Not the dreaded friend zone again!

I was drawn offsides. How could I have misread this so badly? As I thought it through, I began to see the problem. I had underestimated just how good of a girl she was. Why would someone who had lived uprightly before God most of her life settle for damaged goods like me? I could not blame her, but I was not ready to give up that easily. This was the first time in my life that I recognized a clear *Radio Signal* from God. That prompting made it clear that I should continue to pursue her and trust God with the outcome (Proverbs 3:5-6).

That night, I prayerfully sat down and typed a response to her. I acknowledged that I understood why she would not want to consider being more than friends with a guy like me. At the same time, I told her I was not the same person I used to be and that the Lord had done a mighty work in changing the course of my life. Even in the short time I had known her, I recognized special qualities about her. Because of my life experiences, I told her I valued those qualities more than most guys and hoped

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

she would give me a chance. She was unsure how to respond, so she sent my message to her mom to read. I immediately won her mom over with all the compliments about her daughter. Her mom then reminded her that she and her dad had backgrounds similar to mine, having both been divorced before marrying each other. So, she gave me a chance.

The next few months were awesome. She felt like my dream girl, and we became close. I could not find anything wrong with her, and at times it felt almost too good to be true. I struggled to hold back my feelings, and by February, the words "I love you" haphazardly came out of my mouth. I received an awkward "thank you" in return. Around that time, a girl at our church approached Brittany and asked, "Are you dating that guy over there?" while pointing at me across the church foyer. She then added, "Just so you know, he was a big-time drunk in college." When I heard about it later, I looked over at the girl and did not recognize her at all. Wonderful! Someone I did not even know was now spreading the word that I was a bad apple. As you can imagine, Brittany was thrilled to be my girlfriend after hearing that. Between that and the awkward "I love you" hanging over us, things started to go south.

She was five years younger than me and had not dated much. I had taken for granted just how different our paths had been. She became overwhelmed and impulsively broke things off with me more than once. She was confused, and it showed. After the third time she broke things off, it felt more serious, as though we were done.

© 2026 Kyle Coyner - Free eBook

Waiting at a Stoplight

Now I was confused, but the prompting of the Holy Spirit continued to make it clear that this was the woman I needed to pursue. After praying through it, God sent me a *Radio Signal* that led to a *Stoplight*. Instead of trying to control the situation,

I was called to sit back and wait. She was not ready to be serious with me. She needed time and space.

- **Radio Signal** *Holy Spirit Prompting*
- **Stoplight** *Test of Faith, God's Timing*

All of my friends, my parents, and my sister told me that I should move on. Brittany even told me to move on herself, and she got a cat to help keep me away because she knew I was allergic. Mean, right?

Normally, I would have listened to their advice and moved on without hesitation. I had been there and done that when it came to chasing someone who did not want to be with me. This time, however, it was different, because I knew something that everyone else did not. The Spirit made it clear in my convictions that I just needed to wait, so that is what I did. For two months, I did not speak to her. For two months, I was sweating it out, waiting for the *Stoplight* to turn green. Through consistent prayer and devotion to God, I became convinced that she would come around, but patience did not come easily.

I wanted to talk to her. I wanted to see her. Two months felt like an eternity. Then, the *Radio Signal* came in loud and clear. It was time to reach out to her. The *Stoplight* had turned green. I called her and asked if I could come see her. She still had her guard up, and said, "Okay, fine, but just so you know, we aren't getting back together." That did not faze me, because I was still very confident in the Holy Spirit's leading. I remember thinking, "famous last words." She was house sitting for her parents, about thirty minutes away. I prayed the entire drive. When I got there, I was so happy to see her, and I could tell she was happy to see me too.

She had been holding on to a "Prince Charming" version of who she thought she would end up with. She needed those two months for God to open her eyes and heart to see who He had for her. I knew it was me, and now she could see it too. What I didn't know at the time was that she had already written a note for me saying she wanted to get back together. She never had to

© 2025 Eye Opener Press LLC

give it to me. We got back together that day and have not broken up since. Unlike my past relationships, I did not make this one an idol. Instead, I put God first and trusted His leading, and He brought me right to her in His perfect timing.

As of this writing, I have been married to my dream girl for seventeen years. Other than my salvation, she is the greatest blessing of my life and an incredible mother to our three children (Proverbs 31:10-12). She is a daily, tangible reminder of the unmerited grace poured out on me. Just as I don't deserve her, I don't deserve the grace and mercy that flow from the cross. Before we got married, we made effort to do things God's way, not because we signed a "promise card," but because the Holy Spirit and the fear of the Lord guided and strengthened us. Our marriage has been richly blessed because we have kept Christ at the center of our relationship. I was going to say that I am a lucky guy, but upon reflection, it's not luck at all. I am a blessed guy because I finally made Christ the center of my life and surrendered to His ways instead of my own (Psalm 1:1-3).

I can confidently say that God does not bless disobedience. It's through obedience that we experience great blessing (Proverbs 3:33). For nearly twenty years after being baptized, I missed out on much of what God had for me because I spent most of my time on the *Wide Path* and the *Tricycle Track* of the world, doing things my own way. When I finally repented and went all in for God, everything changed.

That does not mean the *Narrow Road* has been free of difficulty. There have still been hard circumstances. But drawing closer to the Lord has been an incredible gift, and life has undeniably been smoother as I have stayed on the right path (Isaiah 26:7). During our engagement and the first few months of marriage, everything was going great, except for the cat allergies and claw marks from that mean cat of hers. I am a dog person, and that cat was just the worst. My prayers were eventually answered when the cat lost a battle with a coyote and was later replaced

© 2025 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

by three awesome little kids. After all those claw marks, he had it coming. Don't get too offended, cat people. Circle of life.

- **Wide Path** *Road of Rebellion*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*
- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*
- **Engine Light** *Warning of Sinfulness*

By the way, we now have four cats. Clearly, I have lost control of the situation.

Engine Light Ignored

We were plugged in at church, and I was consistently reading the Bible. On the surface, everything seemed fine, but there was an *Engine Light* that I had been ignoring for far too long. It was the *Engine Light* of pride.

At that point in my life, I had experienced a level of career success that set me apart from most of my peers. I was the top producer at work, felt entitled, and did not represent Christ well at all. Most people resented me because I had the freedom to come in late, leave early, and skip meetings. I believed I had earned that flexibility because I was an original employee who helped build the company from a startup into a success. At the same time, my boss showed me a ton of disrespect. Rather than encouraging or rewarding me for what I had contributed, he was always trying to put me in my place as his subordinate. Over time, I got to where I absolutely hated working for him, but my financial success and comfort quietly became a prison I didn't know how to escape.

Instead of quitting, I responded immaturely. I fired back with disrespectful actions of my own, hiding behind the leverage of being the company's irreplaceable top producer. After several years of this tension, things finally reached a boiling point. He had had enough of me, even with my productivity, and I was done with him as well. After just three months of marriage, I was fired and suddenly unemployed. Because God disciplines those He loves, I entered a season of trials that tested me deeply and taught

© 2026 Kyle Snyder Free eBook

me important lessons (Hebrews 12:6). It did not take long for me to realize how much of an idol I had made of money and comfort. Instead of trusting God to provide, I spiraled into anxiety.

In the middle of that anxiety, I decided to start my own company, doing what I had always done in my career, only this time without a disrespectful boss. I worked nonstop, stress ate, and grew increasingly unhealthy. About six months into building the business, my former boss sued me over a noncompete. I had made a deliberate effort not to contact my old clients, but that did not seem to matter. He pursued the lawsuit aggressively, and from my perspective, it felt like he was trying to shut me down before the business ever had a chance to survive. I was already anxious before the lawsuit, so when it hit, my anxiety went through the roof. What started as an *Engine Light* of pride that I ignored turned into a *Road Hazard* of discipline that wrecked me when I was fired and sued. From there, I was forced to face a *Stoplight* in the form of an eighteen-month lawsuit that tested me.

For those eighteen months, I was an anxious mess. I went through depositions, responded to endless and ridiculous discovery requests, and completely lost my cool. I had never struggled with anger before, but I certainly did then. Everything that could have gone wrong seemed to go wrong. I had to fire my original lawyer for not doing his job, and in my first year of business I spent more than double my original capital on legal fees alone. If you have ever started a business, you know what a nightmare that was. My stress and anger were at all-time highs while my finances were at an all-time low. I was in a very dark place, and it felt like there was no end in sight.

Repairing the Engine

One day at church, someone suggested that I read a book called *Radical* by David Platt. I had never heard of him or the book. Up to that point, I could count on one hand the number of books I had

© 2016 Kyle Cleveland Free eBook

read since high school. I was not a reader, but that changed after reading this one.

- **Engine Light** *Warning of Sin*
- **Road Hazard** *God's Discipline*
- **Stoplight** *Test of Faith, God's Timing*
- **Engine** *Holy Spirit*

Reading that book woke me up to a proper biblical perspective on life and eternity. I had spent my entire life focused on the here and now instead of on the things that truly mattered. My company did not matter. My income did not matter. My career did not matter. The lawsuit did not matter. What mattered was my dependence on the Lord and my obedience to His commands. That realization brought deep conviction.

For most of my life, I had been far more concerned with worldly things than eternal ones. I was holding tightly to my money, my career, and my comfort. I was also consumed with anger toward my former boss. Even though I had grown significantly from the person I once was, I still needed a serious wake-up call. The lawsuit did exactly that by humbling me.

Through spending time in Scripture, it became clear that my connection to the *Engine* needed major repairs. My relationship with God was out of alignment and the Spirit was giving me an *Engine Light*. In my humbled state, I let go and gave everything to the Lord, my helper (Hebrews 13:5-6). I stopped fixating on the here and now and began setting my mind on eternity (Colossians 3:2). The anxiety faded away. Even while I was losing money, I persuaded my wife to donate some of the money she was earning to our church and to Christian organizations doing eternal work (2 Corinthians 9:7). Instead of continuing to fight in a ridiculous lawsuit, I chose to pursue peace (Hebrews 12:14). Against my lawyer's advice, I met with my former boss, and within twenty-four hours the matter was settled. I had the freedom to move forward and build my company. I have now owned my business for seventeen years, and it has been a tremendous blessing from the Lord.

© 2026 Life Overdrive Press LLC

It took time, but I was able to release my anger and forgive my former boss (Ephesians 4:31-32). Looking back, being fired and sued turned out to be for my good (Romans 8:28). The Lord used it to wake me up from pride, anger, idolatry, and anxiety and bring me back to spiritual health, with the *Engine* repaired.

Obeying the Word and living with a repaired *Engine* is far better than enduring the chaos of sin. When the *Engine* is running properly on the *Narrow Road*, life is marked by peace and purpose.

Stepping Up to Serve

Several years into our marriage, I had still never led or served in church. Whenever someone asked, "Who wants to pray?" my wife would grab my arm, raise it high, and say, "Kyle will!" That used to really annoy me and make me very uncomfortable.

She was hoping her husband would lead her well spiritually. Unfortunately, that guy had not shown up yet. I still cussed, drank too much, and loved to cut loose. I had no problem with dirty jokes and thought nothing of watching worldly shows filled with bad language and nudity because my conscience had become deeply calloused from spending so many years on the *Tricycle Track*. I was not as concerned about my witness as I should have been. All of this troubled my wife, but she realized she could not be my Holy Spirit. So, she handed it over to God and began praying for me.

Through her prayers, my growing devotion to the Word, and the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, my convictions and behavior began to change over time. I became convicted to stop drinking to drunkenness. I worked to clean up my language and my joking so that my life would better honor God. I stepped away from godless television shows and movies and began reading more Christian books that helped me grow in wisdom. Before long, I felt the pull of the Spirit to start leading somewhere in the church.

© 2020 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

- **Engine** *Holy Spirit*
- **Narrow Road** *God's Will*
- **Tricycle Track** *The World*
- **Radio Signal** *Holy Spirit Prompting*

Around this time, we took a trip with some good friends to a Caribbean beach resort. Our flight arrived first, so my wife went for a walk while I sat by the beach waiting for our friends to arrive. I know this will sound crazy, but something supernatural happened to me on that beach. It was the most direct *Radio Signal* I have ever received. I was having a quiet time with God, reading a Christian book and listening to Christian music. As I sat there staring out at the ocean, there was a sudden flash, and the beach disappeared. Instead, I found myself looking out at a large group of people from a stage. The Spirit made it clear that this was my future and that I needed to get ready. I am not a crier, but in that moment, I became overwhelmed with emotion. My thoughts were racing. How could this be? I could barely pray in public without my wife volunteering me. How could I ever be someone who stood on a stage speaking to a crowd for the Lord?

About that time, my wife and our friends walked up to find me sitting by myself, crying like a weirdo. I tried to explain the vision through a combination of tears and awkward laughter. I am fairly certain they all thought I had lost my mind. For a moment, I considered the possibility myself. I don't think so anymore. I am now convinced that the Lord transformed me from a lost, worldly sinner into His ambassador and a useful instrument for His glory (2 Corinthians 5:20; 2 Timothy 2:20-21). What began with me waking up from my brokenness and simply pursuing Him has led to far more than I ever could have imagined.

I have heard it said that God often equips us to serve where He has broken us. My first marriage and divorce certainly broke me, and marriage ministry is where I first felt called to serve. Having lived through a marriage without God and now a marriage with Him firmly at the center, I am able to help others in ways I never could have otherwise. Since that beach vision, God has steadily

© 2026 Kyle Cavender, Fire Look

equipped me to lead by placing me in various lay leadership roles. It began with leading marriage ministry small groups, then Sunday school classes, then men's Bible studies, and eventually I was appointed to lead the entire marriage ministry at my church. Most recently, I was led to write this book, something that has been deeply challenging and completely outside my comfort zone. Through it all, God has continued to grow me and work through me to draw others closer to Him.

When I first started leading the marriage ministry, I prepared an opening teaching that I presented to around seventy people. It was the first time I had ever taught on a stage in front of that many people, and it went terribly. None of my dumb jokes landed, and the whole thing was very awkward because I was so uncomfortable. Later that week, I went to lunch with my pastor and tried to confirm that it wasn't as bad as it felt. I asked, "So, how did you think my talk went?" Apparently, it was even worse than I thought. My pastor responded, "Kyle, there are just some people who should never get on a stage and talk in front of others." I started wondering, was the beach vision all just my imagination? Was I delusional or had I messed up by not relying on the Holy Spirit to guide me while I was speaking?

Over the next few years, through plenty of trial and error, I became more comfortable speaking and more encouraged by the Spirit. To my great surprise, that same pastor asked me to preach a Sunday sermon. December 7th has become a significant day in my life. In 2008, it was the day Brittany and I got engaged. In 2025, it was the day my beach vision was fulfilled. Nearly ten years after that vision, I preached a Sunday sermon in front of my entire church of about seven hundred people. (You can watch it at narrowroad.life/sermon.)

As I stood there speaking to the crowd, I remember thinking, "This is exactly what I remember the beach vision looking like." I felt like I was on fire with the Spirit speaking through me, and I had no fear. This time, when I asked my pastor how it went, the

©2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

response was very different. He was nothing but supportive and encouraging. It was obvious that he was pleasantly surprised. Honestly, so was I. Looking back on the beach vision, I guess God wasn't surprised. The overwhelming support and positive feedback I received from the congregation that day became a huge confidence builder for me. It still feels unbelievable, and my pastor has since said he wants me to do it again, which is just plain crazy considering how spiritually lost I once was.

That same divorced mess of a man that came stumbling back to church twenty years ago is now being used by God to bring people to Christ and help restore broken marriages. Brittany and I have now served in marriage ministry for thirteen years, and we have witnessed God do incredible, life-transforming work in the hearts of so many people. Throughout this testimony, I have tried to be authentic and honest in order to paint a clear picture of how lost and worldly I once was, even while attending church. In truth, it was probably worse than you think. I was a mess, but the Lord has done amazing work in my life. From everything I have learned and experienced, I am convinced that we all need more of the Word, more humility, more of a healthy fear of the Lord, more obedience to His will, and less of everything else. It has been an amazing journey, and I am excited to see where He leads me next as I eagerly wait for Him and finish my course (Hebrews 9:28; Acts 20:24).

If a broken, wheels-off sinner like me, can be transformed by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and God's Word, then I hope you can see that transformation is possible for anyone. Just as Jesus healed a blind man, He has also healed me. I know this much for certain: I was once spiritually blind, but now I see (John 9:25). This book and my transformation are nothing short of miracles from God. If you have ever known me personally, then you already know that to be true.

This book is far beyond anything I could have ever accomplished on my own. Quite honestly, I am not creative

© 2016 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

enough to come up with an illustration like this; and I have always hated homework, especially writing papers. The last thing I ever wanted to do was write a book, but the burden to write it came from something outside of me. As my former Bible study leader once said, “It’s not me. It’s the Holy Spirit in me.”

> *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20)

Thank you, Jesus! May I live a life worthy of the gospel.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Reflection:

1. How has my story been relatable to yours?
   - Did you grow up in church?
   - Have you overlooked Scripture?
   - Have you held a simple belief in Jesus without truly knowing Him?

2. Did my spiritual awakening through reading Scripture reveal anything new to you about Christianity that you had not considered before?

3. Are you born again? Has the Holy Spirit transformed you into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)?

4. Has my story stirred anything in you to draw closer to God? The rest of this book is designed to help you do just that.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

Author's Note:

Now that you have read my story, I want to invite you into the experience of truly following Christ on the Narrow Road. What follows is a breakdown of the *Drive Illustration*, a metaphorical map of the Christian journey. Everything presented is drawn directly from Scripture, and I believe you will find God's Word proven true through every step taken in obedience.

The rest of this book is a discipleship roadmap designed to lead you into an abiding relationship with Christ. These pages are filled with the biblical truth I missed during all those years I attended church without reading God's Word for myself. If some of the words feel heavy, that is intentional. Eternity carries weight, and I care too much about your soul to soften or dilute the truth. My hope is that you will read with an open mind, a humble heart, and an open Bible. There is a lot to absorb, so don't rush through it. Read slowly. Reflect carefully. Allow God's Word to do its work in you, because your response to the truth will determine not only the direction of your life in this world, but your eternal destination.

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

PART II

ESTABLISHING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

© 2026 Kyle Cleveland - Free eBook

Chapter 3: Trading in a Tricycle for a Dream Car

The Gospel

Wretched man that I am! Who will
deliver me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
(Romans 7:24-25)

© 2025 Ivie Cavender • Free eBook

The Problem: We Aren't Good

I think, if we are being honest, most of us tend to see ourselves as "a good person." This is especially true when we start comparing ourselves to the people around us. It's easy to justify our behavior by thinking, "At least I don't do this," or "At least I didn't do that." A common mindset becomes, "God is good, and so am I." But when we look at what the Bible says about mankind in comparison to the holy God of the universe, the picture changes completely (Romans 3:10-18).

> *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
> (Romans 3:23)

Anyone who is a parent or has spent time around a toddler sees this play out. Children don't have to be taught how to be selfish or defiant. Without instruction, they are quick to say "no," "mine," and "why" when authority gets in the way of

what they want. This happens because, as sinful human beings, we naturally want to do things our own way. From the moment we are born, sin is not something we have to learn. It's already present in our hearts (Psalm 51:5, Jeremiah 17:9).

> *"... For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."* (Mark 7:21-23, words of Jesus)

At first, this can be a hard truth to accept, but at our core we are sinful before a holy God and in need of rescue from ourselves, from Satan, and from the brokenness of this world. If you need proof that you are a sinner, look no further than the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). How many of those commands have you broken this year, this month, or even this week?

The truth is that while we are born alive physically, we are all born dead spiritually. Because we are born into sin, our only real hope is to be born again of the Spirit (John 3:3).

> *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.* (Ephesians 2:1-3)

> *But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*
> (Romans 8:10)

©2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - FreeBook

The Tricycle and Track

In the Drive Illustration, our spiritually dead existence apart from Christ, embracing our sinful nature, is represented by a Tricycle. The world is represented as a distracting, time-wasting Tricycle Track. Our sinful nature keeps us riding in circles on the playground of this world, spending our time doing what feels natural to us, living for ourselves instead of living for God.

While on the Tricycle, our spiritual immaturity is on full display. Instead of feeling embarrassed or ashamed about riding a Tricycle, even as full-grown adults, we often embrace it. We convince ourselves that it's normal and even good, all while missing out on something infinitely better.

> *When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life* ***will not inherit the kingdom of God****.* (Galatians 5:19-21, NLT)

Did you catch that last sentence? Did it get your attention? This is the Scripture that I brought up in my testimony that grabbed hold of me in a big way. The first time I read it, I panicked. I remember thinking, "How have I never heard this in Sunday school or from a pastor? Is this really saying that people who embrace a sinful life will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Then my mind went to John 3:16, a verse I had heard almost weekly in church and seen on signs at sporting events. That verse says that whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life. I had always understood that to mean my basic belief was enough, that God's grace covered me no matter how I lived. Was that true?

©2026 Kris Calvander • Free eBook

If these old beliefs of mine are anything like your own views on salvation, I encourage you to start reading God's Word for yourself. For a long time, I made the mistake of listening only to pastors instead of personally studying Scripture. Unfortunately, many churches today avoid teaching the harder truths found in the Bible, especially when it comes to God's wrath and judgment. Instead, the focus is often on grace and a simple message of believing in Jesus, which is easier to preach and easier to hear. While Scripture is full of God's grace, it also speaks often about God's wrath. It appears all throughout Scripture, including in the New Testament chapters that many people associate only with grace.

One clear example appears just a few verses after the familiar words of John 3:16, but we rarely, if ever, hear this verse preached in church, do we?

> *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* (John 3:36)

Scripture takes sin, judgment, and accountability seriously. Ignoring these warnings is unwise, and doing so weakens our understanding of why God's grace matters so much.

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh • FreeEBook

True Belief Changes You

To be direct, if you have claimed Jesus as your Savior and have been baptized without experiencing a born again, transformed life, it's possible that nothing more happened than your church clothes getting wet. A watered-down, Americanized version of salvation that says "just pray a prayer" or "ask Jesus into your heart" has become common in many church settings.

Because of this, many people have a false sense of security about their salvation. The world and Satan are very effective at keeping us distracted and apathetic toward the things of God,

especially when it comes to reading and knowing the Bible. When we don't understand what Scripture teaches, we become more likely to minimize our sin. Over time, this can lead to a hardened heart that becomes calloused to sin. This disrespects and abuses the grace we have been offered through the sacrificial death of God's Son. God does not take this lightly, and the Bible is clear that there are consequences.

> *For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Hebrews 10:26-31)

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh, Free eBook

According to the Bible, saved believers don't continue in deliberate, unrepentant sin. They walk in the light and have a faith that produces good works (James 2:14-26). The word "believe," as it's used in Scripture, means far more than simply agreeing with historical facts.

If we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins in the same way we might believe that Christopher Columbus discovered America, that belief will have little to no impact on how we live. The Bible teaches that true belief leads to the surrender of our lives to Christ and results in a real change in how we live as we follow Him. The gospel is not just something to believe in; it's something to obey (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Obedience does not earn salvation, but true saving faith produces surrender, and surrender produces obedience. The gospel is about a real relationship with God, and that relationship bears righteous good works through the power of the Holy Spirit when we put God first.

Our Sin & God's Holiness

God is holy and set apart in perfect righteousness, goodness, and purity. Sin is an offense against His holiness. It separates us from Him and stands in direct opposition to His will for us (Isaiah 59:2). Sin leaves devastation in its wake, affecting families, churches, cities, and nations. Because God is just and rules with perfect and holy authority, He cannot overlook or excuse sin as though it never occurred.

Think in terms of a bottle of water. If I handed you a clean bottle of spring water, you would gladly drink it. But what if I added a single drop of sewage to it? You would throw it out. In a similar way, our sin makes us unclean before a holy God. In His holiness, He will not allow sin into His presence, just as you would not drink contaminated water.

We cannot stand in God's holy presence unless we are cleansed from our sin, and we cannot make ourselves clean. No matter how hard we try to live righteously on our own, our best efforts fall short. Scripture tells us that our righteous acts, apart from God's power, are like filthy rags before Him (Isaiah 64:6). The only thing that truly cleanses us is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Apart from Him and His power, we are incapable of redemption, unable to be saved, and powerless to produce true righteousness.

God will punish all people who reject His offer of salvation by refusing to repent of sin and submit to Jesus as Lord. From the very beginning, when Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, punishment followed (Genesis 3).

© 2025 Kyle Cavanaugh • Free eBook

Scripture consistently teaches that sin leads not only to earthly consequences, but also to death and eternal separation from God.

Every sin committed against the holiness of God receives a just punishment. The only question is where that punishment falls. Either Jesus Christ took that punishment at the cross for those who follow Him, or God's wrath remains on those who live in rebellion against Him. This is not something to take lightly. Because of our sinful nature, we desperately need the salvation that God offers through Jesus.

There is a common misunderstanding that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament when it comes to judgment and grace. Scripture rejects that idea. In Malachi 3:6, God says, "I the LORD do not change." The same God who judged sin through the flood (Genesis 6-8), destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), and sent plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7-12) is the same God who brought judgment on Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament (Acts 5). God has always taken sin seriously, and so should we.

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

Wrath Is Real

Below are several passages from the New Testament. When I first read these Scriptures, I was shocked that I had never heard them clearly taught in church, especially since many came directly from the mouth of Jesus Himself. They produced a healthy fear of God that played a crucial role in awakening me from spiritual ignorance. Their powerful and piercing words caused me to wrestle with the deeply unsettling questions below.

> *He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.*
> (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, NIV)

Everlasting destruction for those who don't obey the gospel?

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.
(Matthew 13:41-43, words of Jesus)

Weeping and gnashing of teeth in a fiery furnace?

"*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*
(Revelation 21:8)

A lake of fire? A second death?

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.
(Romans 2:6-8)

Self-seeking lives that reject God's truth end in wrath and fury?

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to

© 2016 Kyle Cavendish Free eBook

enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where "'the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.' Everyone will be salted with fire.
(Mark 9:43-49, words of Jesus, NIV)

The worms that eat them don't die and the fire is not quenched? Everyone will be salted with fire?

"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!" (Luke 12:4-5, words of Jesus)

Take a moment to let all of that sink in. Have you ever heard these words taught at your church? To be blunt, I hope these words from the Bible scared the hell out of you. They certainly did that to me. In fact, they scared me straight off the path to hell and right into the grace of God. They also awakened me to my need to read the Bible for myself, because my church experiences were clearly not giving me everything I needed to know. Consider just how serious God views our sin and how we should respond. We must rightly fear the Lord!

This prayer of confession and repentance from King David in the book of Psalms is the only sane response when considering these truths from God's Word. If you are feeling convicted, take a moment to pray to God as David did in this Scripture.

Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.
(Psalm 38:3-4, 18, 21-22, NIV)

God's Will

Because of our sinful nature and the influence of the world, most of us assume that our lives exist to pursue whatever makes us feel good and happy. We tend to think that God wants us to be happy, right? Scripture, however, teaches that God is far more concerned with us doing His will and living holy lives through an abiding relationship with Him.

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46, words of Jesus)

We can call Jesus "Lord" all we want, but is He truly our Lord if we are not doing what He tells us?

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."
(Matthew 7:21, words of Jesus)

This passage is unmistakably clear. Those who do not do the will of God will not enter heaven because those whose lives reject the will of God show no evidence that they truly belong to Him. To know His will, we must deeply invest ourselves in Scripture, where God explains how we are to live. We are called to be sanctified in holiness as ambassadors for Christ.

© 2020 Kyle Overholser • Free eBook

It is God's will that you should be sanctified. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.
(1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7, NIV)

When man invented the smartphone, it was designed to function according to the will of its creator: to make calls, send messages, and perform specific tasks. Now imagine that phone refusing to operate as designed … insisting on doing its own will, recording videos at the worst times and sending them to your entire contact list. What would you do with a device that no longer serves its intended purpose and defiantly resists what it was made to do? Maybe throw it into a furnace of fire?

So it will be at the end of the age: the angels will come forth and remove the wicked from among the righteous, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
(Matthew 13:49-50, words of Jesus, NASB)

I definitely didn't hear Jesus talking like this in Sunday school lessons growing up, but this is how He speaks all throughout Scripture.

That is not a tame warning. God did not create us to do our own will, either. Like the phone, our purpose is defined by our Creator, not by the creation itself. Scripture is clear on this. It's not complicated. Yet in our pride, we often twist simple truth into something that serves our own sinful agenda.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20, NIV)

It's sobering how foolish, prideful, and outright sinful we can become when we are not pursuing the things of God. When we are not devoted to the Lord, basic logic and common sense become distorted by Satan and a corrupt world.

As we walk through the Drive Illustration, we will learn how to step away from the world and into God's will, experiencing the sanctification He desires for us through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)

The good news is that when we align ourselves with His will and pursue holiness, we experience something far greater than temporary, worldly happiness. We experience true joy, deep peace, and eternal fulfillment.

Additional passages on God's will: 1 Peter 2:15, 1 Peter 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Hebrews 10:36, John 6:40, 1 John 2:17, John 9:31

© 2026 KVE Covenant Free eBook

The Gospel Explained

Take a minute and try to answer this question: Why did Jesus choose to suffer and die when He could have easily saved Himself without any suffering at all? Is that difficult to answer? I am often surprised by how many churchgoers struggle to give a clear response to that question. It should be easy to answer, considering it's foundational to Christianity. I once struggled to

answer it myself, and if I'm honest, it was because I was lazy about reading the Bible. I had been taught that I simply needed to believe in Jesus in order to be saved, so I accepted that Jesus died on the cross without really understanding why He had to. That lack of understanding matters. Without it, we are far more prone to minimize our sin against a holy God and abuse the grace made available through Christ's sacrifice.

Here is a brief explanation to provide some context. In the time of Moses, God made a covenant with His people. They were required to live according to the Mosaic Law, recorded in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible, from Genesis through Deuteronomy). The law was demanding and revealed God's perfect holiness. Because sin separates humanity from God, the law required a system of animal sacrifice for the atonement of sins. Through repentance and confession, people were commanded to offer their best, unblemished animals on the altar (Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22). Sin against a holy God carries the penalty of death. Under the law, the death of the sacrificed animal fulfilled that penalty. The Old Testament law reveals our need for a Savior.

God knew mankind was powerless to live up to His law and His holiness. Out of His great love, mercy, and grace—and for His own glory—He established a new and better covenant through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:22, 9:13-15). This covenant makes it possible for sinners to be redeemed and declared righteous through one final and perfect sacrifice, the blood of God's only begotten Son. The Old Testament system of sacrifice pointed forward to and was fulfilled in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Jesus is the true Lamb of God, without blemish, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He lived the sinless life we are incapable of living and obeyed God the Father by taking our place on the cross and enduring the punishment our sins deserve (Philippians 2:8). Three days later, He rose from the dead, proving He is the Son of God, fulfilling prophecy, conquering death, and offering eternal hope to all who follow Him.

© 2025 Kyle Coyan All Rights Reserved

Because of God's love for us, we have hope through Jesus and the promise of eternal life with Him. We can avoid His wrath and be forgiven of our many sins through genuine, repentant faith that leads to the surrender of our lives to Jesus as Lord. Read the good news, also known as the gospel, in the Bible:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!
(Romans 5:8-9, NIV)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:4-10)

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. For our sake he made him to

©2021 KJE Corporation • Free eBook

be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 21)

In our sinful nature, we can become extremely complacent, going around in circles on the Tricycle Track of the world, living for ourselves and our pleasures. That path leads nowhere, except to a constant hunger and restless search for something more. We will always come up empty until we realize that the gospel of Jesus Christ is that "something more" that gives life true meaning and eternal hope. In the Drive Illustration, faith in the gospel is presented as a free, priceless Dream Car. It's not earned; we receive it freely through faith in Christ. It's far better than spending our lives pedaling in circles on a dinky Tricycle that never truly satisfies.

At salvation, an exchange takes place. We give up the Tricycle and the Track for a Dream Car. This Dream Car is a gift from God Almighty, who is not only a God of justice, but also a God of grace and love. When we accept the gospel by faith, turn away from the world, repent of sin, and surrender our lives to Jesus as Lord, everything changes. God forgives our sins and gives us the Holy Spirit, adopting us as His children and making us heirs to His eternal kingdom.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)

That is the best exchange any of us could ever hope for. The Dream Car is given freely, but we have the responsibility to accept it, repent, and surrender our lives to Christ. We are then

© 2026 Tyler Caywood | Free eBook

empowered by the Holy Spirit to persevere in God's will on the Narrow Road that leads to the kingdom of heaven.

"The gospel changes heaven's courtroom from a criminal trial to an adoption ceremony."[1]
—Matt Smethurst

Our Response

The night Jesus was arrested, just before His crucifixion, He prayed to God.

> *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*
> (Luke 22:42-44, NIV)

Jesus was sweating drops of blood over what He knew was about to happen. There is a rare medical condition known as hematidrosis in which extreme distress or fear can cause a person to sweat blood.[2]

Beyond the physical suffering He was about to endure, Jesus was also overwhelmed by being temporarily forsaken by His Father (Mark 15:34). Scripture teaches that Jesus existed in perfect unity with the Father from the beginning (John 1:1). If Jesus was this troubled knowing His abandonment would be temporary, lasting only a few days, how much more fearful should we be at the thought of facing God's wrath and being separated from Him for eternity? Jesus was that fearful even though He

© 2025 Mb Cavender Free eBook

[1] Matt Smethurst, X post, April 13, 2022.
[2] "What is Hematidrosis?" WebMD, April 7, 2024.

knew the final outcome for Himself would be resurrection and eternal kingship. We should be absolutely terrified at the thought of eternal separation from God.

Once we truly fear God as our rightful authority, understand his holiness, humbly recognize what our countless sins deserve, and grasp the depth of God's grace shown through Jesus, how could we possibly remain the same? Out of love, Jesus traded places with us on the cross and took the punishment we deserve. Out of love, we are called to respond by making Him Lord of our lives and stepping down from the pedestal we so naturally place ourselves on.

Our loving Creator calls us to flee from our sinful nature and abandon the world, the Tricycle and the Track. He calls us to take hold of the gift of salvation by faith in Jesus, the Dream Car, and to draw near to Him on the Narrow Road through a relationship marked by loving devotion and obedience. If you have not wholeheartedly done this, don't wait another moment. Today is the day to draw near to Jesus and surrender your life to Him as Lord.

© 2022 Kyle Cavanaugh - FreeBook

Our Purpose & Identity

Once we have taken the steps to be adopted as a son or daughter and made an heir to the kingdom of God, we should begin to see things differently. When we are on the Tricycle, going around in circles, we are distracted by worldly things. But when we are in the Dream Car on the Narrow Road, we begin to see the true reality of our existence. We are given one life. One opportunity. Do we want to waste it on worldly and sinful things, or do we want to make our lives count for God's eternal kingdom?

From a worldly standpoint, it's hard to imagine anyone living more of a dream life than Tom Brady. He is wealthy,

good-looking, dates supermodels, won more Super Bowls than any other player, set every meaningful quarterback record in the NFL, and now announces football games. To many men, he represents the pinnacle of success. In a November 6, 2005, interview with Steve Kroft on the television program *60 Minutes*, after winning his first three Super Bowls, Tom Brady made a revealing statement:

> **Brady:** There's times where I'm not the person that I want to be. Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, "Hey man, this is what it is." I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: God, it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me?
>
> **Interviewer:** What's the answer?
>
> **Brady:** I wish I knew. I wish I knew…[3]

Twenty years later, Brady has continued the search for something greater by winning four more Super Bowls, earning hundreds of millions more dollars, and becoming one of the most famous people in the world. When he dies, what will matter?

> *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* (Mark 8:36, words of Jesus)

When you die, what will matter?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender – Free eBook

[3] Steve Kroft, interview with Tom Brady, *60 Minutes*, CBS News, November 6, 2005, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TA4_fVkv3c.

"There is nothing more tragic than to come to the end of life and know we have been on the wrong course."[4]
—Watchman Nee

The rest of this book is about getting on the right course and staying there.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

[4] Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977).

Reflection:

1. Does a proper, healthy fear and reverence of God Almighty, your creator and highest authority motivate you to turn away from the things of this world and take refuge in Him? (Nahum 1:2-8)

2. Does the grace of God in Christ move you to renounce worldly passions and become zealous for good works that honor Him? (Titus 2:11-14)

3. What is a better representation of your life?
   - Someone riding in circles on the Tricycle Track of a sinful world, wasting time and accomplishing nothing for God while rarely thinking about eternity.

   - Someone driving a priceless Dream Car on the Narrow Road, striving to grow closer to Jesus with eyes fixed on eternity.

© 2026 Kyle Lavender • Free eBook

4. What sins, thoughts, or worldly lifestyle choices are you holding on to that might be keeping you from leaving the Tricycle behind? (Romans 6:10-23)

5. Have you truly surrendered your life to Jesus with the full devotion of your heart, and are you certain that if you were to die tonight, you would be in heaven?

© 2026 Kyle Castleman • Free eBook

If you cannot answer this question with a confident and emphatic "yes," then I encourage you to get on your knees right now and pray for God to restore you to Himself. Ask Him to give you the strength of the Holy Spirit to leave the world behind and begin living for Jesus in a surrendered life of obedience. Below is a powerful example from King David of how to humbly approach God in prayer.

> *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I*

shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:1-12)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 4: Starting the Engine

Surrender & Repentance

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
(Acts 2:38)

© 2026 Kyle Snyder • Free eBook

In Chapter Three, we learned about the incredible opportunity to trade in our Tricycle for the Dream Car. Unfortunately, many people do that and then quickly lose interest when they realize they have a Car that they can't figure out how to start. Discouraged, they eventually give up and return to what is easy, comfortable, and familiar … a Tricycle.

The modern-day church, in many places, often presents the gospel in a way that resembles a car dealer wheeling Dream Cars off the lot to crowds of spiritually immature children who don't know how to drive. Without proper guidance and discipleship, these Cars are often abandoned. If those who were sold on the Dream Car were also taught the importance of opening and reading the Operation Manual, they would quickly discover that the Key to starting the Car is a surrendered, repentant heart. Without repentance, the power of the Dream Car is never revealed, and people remain exposed to God's wrath instead of receiving His salvation.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done." (Romans 2:5-6, NIV)

Knowing that we are offered a free Dream Car is not the same as getting in and driving it. In the same way, knowing about Jesus is not the same as abandoning the world in repentance and surrendering to Jesus as Lord. When gospel presentation is reduced to simply believing in Jesus without the full message of Scripture, it often leads to confusion and frustration. If the Dream Car never starts, Christianity can feel like a cruel joke, full of false promises about a life-changing power that always seems out of reach.

There is a drastic difference between proclaiming belief in Jesus and truly following Him. Scripture clearly explains that salvation requires more than a basic belief in Jesus. We must also demonstrate that we believe the words of Jesus by obeying all that He spoke about repentance.

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; ***repent and believe*** *in the gospel."*
(Mark 1:14-15, words of Jesus)

... unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.
(Luke 13:5, words of Jesus)

"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that ***repentance for the forgiveness of sins*** *should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem ..."*
(Luke 24:46-47, words of Jesus)

© 2025 Kyle Coverdale • FreeBeDom

"Bear fruits in keeping with repentance … Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3:8-9)

Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. To turn to Christ is to turn away from the sin that He died for. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of repentance and the call to flee from worldly wickedness. Any presentation of the gospel that leaves out repentance is incomplete, a practice that has become commonplace in many churches today. Repentance is not merely saying "I'm sorry" after sinning or getting caught in sin. It's a change of mind about sin and about who truly rules our lives. It's choosing God's ways over our own and turning from the ways of the world to humbly surrender to Jesus as Lord for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus said that He suffered, died, and rose again so that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed to all nations. True followers of Christ go all in on the Dream Car and seek to turn away from sin. We are called to no longer be slaves to sin but to instead be slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18). We die to sin and live for righteousness in response to what Jesus did on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). With a repentant heart, we receive the Car Key that starts the Engine of the Holy Spirit. Once the Engine is running, real transformation begins. This is how we receive a new heart, put on the new self, and become a new creation.

*And I will give you **a new heart**, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put **my Spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender, Free eBook

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*
(Ephesians 4:22-24, NIV)

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is **a new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

So, the big question now is this: Have you truly repented, or are you clinging to the worldly lie that you were just "born this way" and cannot change? The truth is that we were all born this way, in our sinful nature, enslaved to the desires of the flesh (Titus 3:3). The gospel does not excuse our sin; it confronts it and calls us out of it through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is precisely why Jesus said we must be born again.

*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
(John 3:3)

Claiming belief in Christ without a repentant life really is like owning a Dream Car that won't start. It sits unused, collecting dust, accomplishing nothing. Did God Almighty allow the blood of His only begotten Son to be poured out so we would remain unchanged, unproductive, and comfortable in sin? Absolutely not. He did not save us to blend into a sinful, dying world, but to be transformed and to live holy lives (2 Peter 3:10-12). He wants us to get our Cars started so that we can drive on the Narrow Road in an abiding relationship with Him that leads to His kingdom.

© 2026 Kyle Cavelier - FreeBook

Biblical Salvation

If you keep bouncing back and forth between the Tricycle and the Dream Car, frustrated that the Car will not start, it's time to stop gambling with your eternity and make a decisive change. Without repentance, there is no salvation! If you have never experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, then you need to examine whether you have truly been born again (2 Corinthians 13:5). The church you attend now or the church you grew up in may not have made this clear, but the Bible leaves no room for confusion. We cannot live with one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom of God. True Christianity is an all-in calling that requires surrendering to Christ and turning away from the world.

Don't settle into apathetic complacency or listen to the satanic lies of our culture. Open your Bible and see for yourself that this is true.

> *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* (1 John 2:15-17)

> *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with* ***all your heart****.* (Jeremiah 29:13)

Have you ever tasted something so disgusting that it made you throw up? Scripture says that a life marked by apathy toward God—a life that is not all in—is like worthless lukewarm water that Jesus will vomit out of His mouth when He returns to judge.

© 2020 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

He cannot stand the taste of lukewarm faith, and neither should we.

> *'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth ...'*
> (Revelation 3:15-16, words of Jesus, NASB)

If the trajectory of your life is not moving toward doing God's will and giving Him glory through a zealous and devoted life empowered by the Holy Spirit, then you must honestly question whether you are truly saved. Lukewarm faith is worthless to God, and He will not tolerate it in our lives. If this feels heavy, it should. Eternal things are weighty, and your eternity hangs in the balance based on how you respond to the truths of Scripture.

God lovingly made a way of salvation by giving up His Son for sinners like us so that we could be born again. In response, He calls us to do His will and to live as sacrificial, holy instruments for His glory. In light of eternity, anything Jesus asks of us is worth obeying to gain Him and the eternal inheritance He has prepared for us.

> *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.* (1 Peter 1:3-4)

© 2026 Kyle Covington - Free eBook

Giving Up the Tricycle

When we claim to own the Dream Car, but don't even know how to start the Engine, we look like hypocritical fools to the outside world. If our lives are not being transformed by the power of

the Holy Spirit, then there is no evidence that we belong to Christ. Taking the Lord's name in vain is not limited to careless words. It also happens when people claim His name while living in open contradiction to His calling. This kind of hypocrisy makes Christianity unattractive and robs God of the honor He deserves. Paul once rebuked Jewish believers in the early church for this very reason: "*The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you*" (Romans 2:24). Their hypocrisy caused those outside the church to dismiss the faith altogether. Many professing believers today, myself included at one time, live out the same inconsistency.

Imagine a woman being asked out by a man who claims to own a multimillion-dollar dream car. He talks about it constantly and tells everyone, including her, how incredible it is. But when he shows up for the date, he arrives on a toddler's tricycle and tells her to hop on. He explains that he prefers the tricycle because it's just easier. He never bothered to read the operation manual, so he never learned how to start the car. She must be impressed.

Is this not exactly what many churchgoers do when they claim to be Christians while never opening the Bible to understand what a relationship with God actually looks like? That should alarm us. How do you think God feels about that?

We all desperately need a ride on the Narrow Road that leads to God's kingdom. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can take us there. We will never arrive by pedaling a worthless Tricycle through our own effort. If the Dream Car never starts, we are still dead in our sins and headed for everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9). We show that we belong to Christ through lives marked by repentance, obedience, sacrifice and love. Our lives should run counter to who we once were when we were controlled by the flesh. True followers of Christ fight against sin by the power of the Holy Spirit and leave their Tricycles behind.

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - FreeBook

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:16-17, 24)

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:13)

Defining Sin

In light of all this, how can we truly repent of our sins or be sanctified if we don't spend time in God's Word to learn what He actually calls sinful? If you have not read the Bible and have instead relied on the opinions of the world to define morality, then you likely don't understand the standard of holiness that God calls us to. The world is ultimately under God's authority and will be judged by Him. Using any source other than Scripture to define sin and righteousness is dangerous (Isaiah 33:22). When we don't use the Bible as our guide, we are making up our own rules and essentially inventing our own religion. And if we are making up our own rules, then who is the god we are really serving? Is it God Almighty, our Creator, or a distorted version of a god shaped to fit our comfort and sin (Romans 10:3)?

Many, if not most, self-proclaimed Christians believe the Bible is true, but the giant problem for so many of them is that they don't actually know what is written in it. If you have not read the Bible, you likely don't understand how sinful we all are or how much grace we truly need. God's standards don't align with our standards. He is calling us to live differently from the world. He is calling us to holiness. Read the Scripture below

© 2020 Live Dare Love Free eBook

and evaluate how it differs from what our Christian culture often views as acceptable.

> *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*
>
> *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It's shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it's said:*
>
> *"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead,*
> *and Christ will shine on you."*
>
> *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs*

© 2020 Kye Covington • Free eBook

from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Ephesians 5:3-20, NIV)

Are you surprised by how the Apostle Paul characterizes the life of faith in Ephesians 5?

Not a hint of sexual immorality.

No impurity.

No greed or idolatry in the pursuit of riches.

No bad language or dirty jokes.

No partnering with immoral, disobedient people.

No mentioning secret, sinful stories.

No getting drunk.

This can't be right, can it? It feels like the majority of self-proclaimed Christians I've known—including myself at one time—have dived headfirst into many of these things in everyday life. When I first read this passage, it was eye-opening. The Apostle Paul warns, "*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient* (verse 6)." As I reflected, I realized how deeply deceived I had been by worldly influence. One sin after another was listed, many of them once woven into my everyday lifestyle.

© 2021 Kyle Coverdale Free eBook

I had no idea how much I was failing God by simply living as a product of the world. It's sobering to acknowledge how many well-intentioned churchgoers regularly pursue these same things in our culture today.

Maybe we should consider that God, the Creator of the universe, actually knows what is better for our lives than we do. He tells us He has something dramatically superior to worldly pleasures in store for us if we surrender our lives to Jesus, follow Him, and obey Him in love.

It is written: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

When it comes to respecting authority, we often behave like small children who refuse to listen to a parent warning them not to touch a hot stove. Only after getting burned do we begin to realize that the warning was rooted in love, not restriction. Our Lord is a loving Father who wants what is best for our lives, and He offers blessing through obedience. His instructions are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). They protect us from the damage and pain caused by sin. If you have been burned enough times in life, like I have, and you honestly compare your consequences with what God's Word teaches, it starts to become obvious that God knows better than we do. He gives us loving and extensive wisdom in Scripture that leads to life rather than death.

On the surface, many biblical commands feel like a killjoy to earthly pleasure. In reality, they point us toward a far greater and eternal joy found in honoring God through obedience. The Bible is a big book, and it's filled with clear instruction about God's standards for living. What we have just reviewed comes from only a small chapter in a small book, Ephesians 5. What else might we be missing in God's Word that stands in contrast to what the world celebrates as acceptable? If we want to keep the Engine running, we must be willing to identify our sin and turn from it. Repentance is not a one-time event. It's a way of life, a daily posture of submission to God's Word and to the authority of Christ, one that denies our sinful nature and leads us toward life (Luke 9:23-24).

As the presence of the Holy Spirit grows in our lives, we begin to see the layers of our sinfulness gradually peeled away. We are often surprised to discover that the depth of our depravity goes far beyond what we once believed. In time, we come to

© 2025 Copyright Free eBook

understand that we have no claim to righteousness apart from Christ. All righteousness is given to us through genuine, repentant faith in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. The closer we draw to God, the more clearly we see that we are completely doomed without the gift of the gospel (Psalm 130:3-4). This realization deepens our understanding of and appreciation for God's amazing grace and love through the gospel.

Rationalizing Sin

For some reading this book, you may still be rationalizing your way of life, believing there is no way all of this can really be true. I once believed that as well. I was so deceived and comfortably entangled in a sinful lifestyle that I could not comprehend that I was on a path toward eternal separation from God. After all, everyone around me was living the same way, and we were all "good" people. We could not all be doomed, could we? Surely God would not send us to hell for living the way most of the world lives. So I ignored the warnings and continued in the same lifestyle of worldly, unrepentant rebellion. It was no different than the serpent speaking to Eve in the garden.

> *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.*
>
> *He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ..."* (Genesis 3:1-4)

© 2025 Kyle Kavanaugh - Free eBook

The serpent's lie in the garden is still whispered in our ears today through a culture influenced by demonic forces that is fully enslaved to rebellion against God's ways. The world says it's no big deal and that you will surely not die if you continue:

- having premarital sex,
- feeding a porn addiction,
- embracing a homosexual lifestyle,
- cheating on your spouse,
- loving money and pursuing it with idolatrous greed,
- taking what is not yours because you feel you deserve it,
- surrendering to drunkenness or drug addiction.

My question to you is this: Are you really willing to bet your eternal life on worldly whispers that dismiss the Word of God?

I was hardened by sin. I was a slave to sin. I was blinded by sin, minimizing and excusing it. I had surrendered to a lifestyle of rebellion. Satan had me exactly where he wanted me, completely deceived. But God's Word and the Holy Spirit broke me free, and they can do the same for anyone who humbly surrenders to Jesus as Lord. From a place of love, I want to say something bluntly, something I wish someone had been bold enough to say to me when I was enslaved by sin.

Humble yourself before the Word of God and wake up! Fear the Lord, who is your Creator and rightful authority. Don't continue down a path that is damaging your life and hardening your heart. Surrender to Jesus as Lord instead of surrendering to your sin. Who do you think you are to live in defiance of God Almighty? Do you really believe you can make up your own rules? Humble yourself before Him now, before it's too late. Woe to you if you disregard the Word of God. I implore you to be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20).

© 2026 KYE Copyright Free eBook

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!
(Isaiah 5:20-21)

The Bible is clear on these issues. Scripture repeatedly identifies the sinfulness of the lifestyle choices mentioned above. Here is one passage that addresses all of them directly and carries a serious warning.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

This is not an exhaustive list, but I bring up these specific lifestyle choices because they are among the primary struggles that harden the hearts of many people in our society, often leading to blatant and unrepentant rebellion. Rationalizing these sins keeps many self-proclaimed Christians from living fruitful lives and instead places them on a path toward destruction. If sexual immorality, pornography, homosexuality, greed, dishonest gain, or a lack of sobriety have enslaved your life, don't lose hope. The very next verse in this same passage makes it clear that change is truly possible.

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
(1 Corinthians 6:11)

© 2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

If you are enslaved to life-draining sins, I urge you to take them seriously and stop rationalizing them away. You must stop surrendering to these sins and allowing them to lead you into a lifestyle of rebellion. Instead, you must begin surrendering to Jesus as Lord. These enslaving sins don't lead to life. They lead down a path toward eternal destruction. Stop holding on to them as though they are precious. Don't let them own you. There is only one thing truly worth holding on to, and that is the divine power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Step away from the schemes of the devil and step into the Dream Car. Surrender these sins to Christ in repentance and start the Engine. Drive away from them as quickly as you can and don't look back. Trust me when I tell you that you will not regret it. I left behind sexual immorality, the love of money, and alcohol abuse. Whether you realize it or not, you are enslaved to something … and you always will be. I assure you that a life enslaved to Jesus is far better than a life enslaved to sin.

© 2025 Kyle Overholtzer Free eBook

> *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*
>
> *Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you*

reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:16-23, NIV)

We all struggle with sin and fall short. The answer to overcoming these struggles is not willpower, but the work of the Holy Spirit, made available through true repentance and loving devotion to God.

"Repent and turn away from all your offenses, so that wrongdoing does not become a stumbling block to you. Hurl away from you all your offenses which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why should you die? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. *"Therefore, repent and live!"* (Ezekiel 18:30-32, NASB)

I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:10)

© 2025 Kyle Overholt - Free eBook

Reflection:

1. After reviewing what the Bible teaches about repentance and the Holy Spirit, can you say you are living a repentant life shaped by the Spirit's transforming power? Examine yourself (2 Corinthians 13:5).

2. One way to examine ourselves is to read Galatians 5:19–23.
   - List the works of the flesh:
   - List the fruit of the Spirit:
   - Which parts of your life align with the Spirit? With the flesh?

3. If Christ returned today, would He find you driving the Dream Car on the Narrow Road or would you be somewhere on the Tricycle Track? Have you been claiming Christianity while remaining unrepentant and committed to a sinful course? How?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

4. Imagine your fiancé tells you before the wedding that he or she will be faithful 90 percent of the time but share a bed with someone else the other 10 percent. Would you still marry this person after hearing that? Of course not! How do you think Jesus feels when we give a part of ourselves to the sinful things of this world? Jesus gave everything for you. Is there anything in your life that you love too much to give up for Him?

5. When the Apostle Paul wrote to early Christians, he said that Christ was their life. What does that mean?
   - Read Colossians 3:4 & Romans 14:7-8. Is Christ your life? Do you truly belong to Him? How does your life demonstrate that truth?

6. If you are feeling convicted that you need a change of heart towards Jesus, please consider the wisdom of this prayer below. In submission to God, strive to make a habit of praying prayers like this authentically from your heart so that God will heal and change you through the Holy Spirit.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!
(Psalm 139:23-24)

© 2026 Vye Caverno for Free eBook

Chapter 5: Fueling the Engine

Devotion to God's Word

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)

© 2026 Ivie Cavender - Free eBook

When we first start the Dream Car and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we often experience a spiritual high and a new passion for Jesus. We floor the gas, excited by our new life in Christ, but over time that excitement can start to fade. Before we realize it, the Car runs out of Fuel. This is why the apostle Peter teaches that new or immature believers must grow in their knowledge of God's Word, just as newborns grow by drinking milk. Without spiritual growth, we remain immature, like toddlers attempting to operate an adult vehicle. When we neglect the Operation Manual of Scripture, we quickly drift off course.

> *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.* (1 Peter 2:2-3)

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the need for consistent devotion to God. In the Drive Illustration, Fuel represents that

devotion. The more we Fuel the Engine of the Holy Spirit, the closer we draw to God as we travel the Narrow Road. When devotion becomes inconsistent, our relationship with Him grows casual and eventually distant. God jealously longs for our devotion, but we are often easily distracted by the things of this world.

> *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?"* (James 4:4-5)

The Holy Spirit is active in those who possess a repentant and surrendered heart that seeks to follow Christ in loving obedience. When we refuse to abide in Christ and instead remain attached to the world, we become disconnected from the Spirit's work in our lives.

> *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for* ***apart from me you can do nothing****.* (John 15:4-5)

Jesus Himself said that apart from Him we can do nothing. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot travel the Narrow Road. We may still be sitting in the Car, but if the Engine is out of Fuel, it will go nowhere, leaving us stalled in our spiritual growth. It's shocking how little some churches speak of the Holy Spirit, considering He is fully God and the source of life-changing power that transforms us to look more like Jesus. For

©2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

many who claim Christianity, the Holy Spirit has unfortunately become nothing more than a vague concept. However, when we encounter someone truly filled with the Spirit, the difference is unmistakable.

For His power to be active in our lives, we must abide in Christ daily by living fully for Him. God reveals Himself when we start the Dream Car, but we must remain devoted if we expect it to keep running. When we feel distant from God, we should first examine whether we have neglected our devotion to Him. His Word is available to us every day, inviting us to draw near.

> *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* (James 4:8)

Don't Get Towed

We must be aware that as we drive down the Narrow Road, we have an enemy. The Tow Truck of Satan is always lurking, looking for someone to tow. If we run out of gas and find ourselves stranded on the side of the road, the Tow Truck will take advantage of our apathy and drag us back to the Tricycle Track. Satan's goal is to wipe out the progress we have made on the Narrow Road and tow us back into his influence. When I reflect on my life, it's painfully obvious that every time I have lacked devotion to God, I have drifted back toward worldly things.

> *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* (1 Peter 5:8)

Jesus warned that Satan is a thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). That is exactly what he attempts to

© 2025 Kyle Cavender • FreeBook

do when he gains hold of us and drags us back into the world. He kills our witness, steals the progress we have made, and ultimately seeks to destroy us if we remain there instead of returning to the Narrow Road. When we fail to follow what the Operation Manual says about drawing near to God, we place ourselves at risk. Each time we lose focus and are towed back into the world, the power of the Holy Spirit is absent, and our hearts harden just a little more toward the things of God. Over time, we can become increasingly callous to sin (Ephesians 4:18-19). For this reason, it's extremely dangerous for our hearts to ever return there (Hebrews 3:12-14). Therefore, whatever you do, don't run out of Fuel! Stay in God's Word, and devote yourself fully to Him.

Biblical Illiteracy

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major event in our time, but a far more dangerous pandemic has been spreading through modern America: biblical illiteracy. As fewer people read God's Word, our society drifts further from Him. Because this neglect is so common, it's easy to dismiss it as no big deal, but don't be deceived. You will one day face God's judgment, and it will matter greatly whether you have known and obeyed His Word. Ignorance of Scripture and complacency toward it leave us vulnerable to destruction.

> *"... For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them;*
> *but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."* (Proverbs 1:32-33)

There are many areas of the world where devout Christians are brutally persecuted. We rarely hear of this in America, but people are literally being tortured and murdered for simply

© 2026 Kyle Reindler • FreeBook

possessing a Bible. Many Christ followers risk their lives every day just so they can have access to God's Word because they understand its value. Meanwhile, in our culture, Bibles sit unopened and forgotten, gathering dust on shelves. If we devoted even a fraction of the time we give to entertainment, sports, social media, and politics to pursuing God's Word, our hearts and minds could be transformed. Instead, many remain distracted and captive to the things of this world, exactly as Satan intends.

There are consequences for this, and the state of our culture makes that clear (Proverbs 14:34). Scripture warns that when people claim to know God but refuse to honor Him or submit to His Word, the result is inevitable spiritual and moral collapse.

> *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.* (Romans 1:21-22, 28)

Professed Christians who don't know or follow Scripture are a major contributor to the growing dysfunction and spiritual sickness of our society. God has not left us without guidance. He has given us abundant wisdom for living if we will read His Word and obey it. When Scripture is ignored, we inevitably replace God's truth with our own rules and assumptions. That never ends well (Deuteronomy 8:11-20, Psalm 9:17). In many ways, the Word of God has been lost in our culture much like it was in the days of ancient Jerusalem. In the reign of King Josiah, God's Word was found after being forgotten for many years, and Judah faced severe consequences for abandoning it (2 Kings 22-23). We should expect the same in our own culture if we continue

© 2025 Kyle Covington Free eBook

to neglect Scripture rather than submit to it in obedience. The good news is that God's Word is still fully accessible in our Western culture. Anyone can pick it up and read it at any time. In the midst of this spiritual sickness and dysfunction, pray for a revival of God's Word in our society. Pray that our leaders would turn from the culture of rebellion and once again answer to God and His Word.

Regardless of what happens, we can take heart knowing that Jesus has overcome the world and that we belong to His heavenly kingdom when we follow Him in surrender. Even if America and Western culture fall apart, His eternal kingdom remains unshakable.

> *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.* (Hebrews 12:28)

Illiterate Church

I had been a fairly consistent churchgoer my entire life, but I was biblically illiterate until my late twenties. As I grew in my faith through years of reading Scripture, the Lord placed me in various lay leadership roles within the church. In those roles, I have repeatedly learned that many, if not most, church members today have a very limited knowledge and understanding of Scripture. For example, I once led a small group of married couples through a biblical marriage course. During one session, I asked if anyone was familiar with the story where Jesus appears to Saul on the road to Damascus while he is actively persecuting Christians (Acts 9). This was the same man who would later become the Apostle Paul, completely and radically transformed by Christ. Not one of the twelve church members in that group had ever heard or read this account. Paul's letters carry far greater weight when this context is understood (1 Timothy 1:12-16). I asked the

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

question because I did not learn this story myself until my late twenties. Like many people, I once treated church like a social club rather than a place of discipleship.

On another occasion, I was leading a men's Bible study. One day I asked, "I think we all believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but can anyone explain why He had to die when He could have rescued Himself?" What followed was complete silence. I waited several minutes for a response. No one could provide an answer. That moment raised serious concern.

Eventually, I brought the many examples of biblical illiteracy I had observed to senior church leadership. Their response was revealing. They seemed largely unaware that the problem was widespread and were unsure how to address it. By most modern measures, this megachurch was highly successful, with strong attendance and baptism numbers. However, from my position serving deep in the trenches, it had become painfully clear that the church was falling short in discipleship by failing to intentionally and regularly encourage its members to read and know the Bible for themselves. From that point forward, it became a Spirit-led mission of mine to awaken people to the necessity of reading Scripture.

© 2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

Knowledge Is Power

Many people in our culture say they have never heard God speak to them. This belief often leads to frustration and causes some to question God's very existence. The truth, however, is that God has spoken to all of us abundantly. We fail to hear Him not because He is silent, but because we are unwilling to listen. Too often, we are stubborn, lazy, or distracted … unwilling to open the Bibles that sit untouched on shelves right in front of us. Instead, we readily listen to and allow our thinking to be shaped by the opinions of celebrities, politicians, and athletes who know nothing of God. This is literally one of the dumbest things

we could ever do. The Bible is called "the Word of God" for a reason. Through it, God speaks and makes Himself known to us. His wisdom, His truth, and the meaning of life are all within reach on its pages. Scripture is powerful beyond any other words ever written.

> *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
> (Hebrews 4:12-13)

There is an old saying that knowledge is power. There is no knowledge more powerful than the supernatural wisdom found in the Bible. Satan understands this, which is why we are constantly bombarded with worldly distractions designed to pull our attention away from it. What distractions do you need to minimize or remove from your life that are preventing you from spending time in God's Word? Consider the value of the wisdom you may be forfeiting by neglecting Scripture.

> *The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.* (Psalm 19:7-11)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

Until we understand the value of something, it's difficult to make a meaningful investment in it. Do you truly recognize the value of God's Word? Scripture makes it clear that only those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). There is no reliable way to consistently know and follow God's will apart from His Word, and there is no way to be a disciple without abiding in it (John 8:31-32). We must approach knowing the Bible as though our eternal lives depend on it, because they do. Not only our lives, but the lives of others who may be saved through what they hear from us when we learn and faithfully share His truth.

> *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.* (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV)

Reading the Bible nourishes our souls, and without it our spiritual lives become starved (Matthew 4:4). To be equipped as servants of God, we must invest ourselves in the God-breathed Scriptures, which train, correct, and prepare us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). These writings are trustworthy, grounded in eyewitness testimony, and inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:16-21).

When we humbly acknowledge that we don't have all the answers and that we need guidance, God's Word saves us from the world and from ourselves (James 1:21). Reading Scripture is good, and we must not grow weary in it. When we dedicate ourselves to it, we reap a harvest of wisdom that blesses our lives (Galatians 6:9). We must pay close attention and actively engage with Scripture so that we don't drift away from its truth (Hebrews 2:1). As believers, we know that reading the Bible is the right thing to do. When we become apathetic and neglect it, we sin against God (James 4:17). Our time on earth is short, and we need wisdom to live carefully in an evil world. If you

© 2025 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

lack biblical wisdom, ask God to give it to you. He promises to answer that prayer generously when it's offered in faith without doubt (James 1:5-8).

It's my strong opinion that it would be far better for a person to read the Bible daily for themselves than to hear 10,000 church sermons. Biblical preaching has real value as a supplement to Scripture and helps us better understand doctrine, but nothing can replace a humble, devoted relationship with God's Word itself. If we truly desire to know and follow God, reading His Word must be a priority.

Have you ever been told about a show you had to watch but kept putting it off because you were too busy? Then one day you finally start it and find yourself glued to the screen for hours, wondering why it took you so long to get to it. Suddenly, you have time for the next episode and cannot wait to continue. Reading the Bible can be much the same, moving from apathy to passion, if you give it a real chance. The difference is that Scripture is a matter of eternal life and death, while a television show is not.

If we are to be men and women of God, we must value His Word and pursue it. Allow the psalmist's praises below to take root in your heart as you grow in your understanding of the need to be passionate about God's Word. Pray that, like David, you would become a man or woman after God's own heart who desires to do all of His will (Acts 13:22). There is purpose, blessing, and life in following God's ways, which are far higher than our own (Isaiah 55:8-9).

> *In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.*

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore, my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments.
(Psalm 119:14-16, 97-104, 111-112, 129-131)

© 2015 Kyle Coverdale • FreeEBook

If you are struggling to develop the habit of studying the Bible, think of it like going to the gym to build spiritual muscle. At first, it may feel like a chore, but over time you will begin to see its impact on your life. With consistency, you can reach a place where you hunger for it and look forward to taking it in. Reading the Bible is foundational to knowing God, and there is nothing wiser you can do with your time.

What People Need to Hear

I am not a pastor, but I have come a very long way from the biblically ignorant churchgoer I once was. I wrote in the introduction that it often takes one to know one; so I can say with

certainty that there are masses of biblically ignorant people—just as I once was—regularly attending churches. Over time, I have come to understand what many of these people need to hear from pastors in order to be moved to read the Bible for themselves. This is exactly what I needed to hear, but never did. Pastors, please consider saying something like this at the end of every sermon. Church attendees, please read the following as though your pastor said it at the end of every sermon.

Sermon Closing Statement

"I want to challenge each of you to verify everything you just heard today with Scripture. Don't just take my word for it. Take God's Word for it.

Let me also say this plainly. If your only interaction with God's Word is hearing a message from me on Sundays, then you are spiritually starving yourself when you could be feeding daily on the truth of Scripture.

Please hear this: Jesus said that only those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven. How can we possibly do the will of the Father if we don't even know His Word? We must read the Bible as though our eternal lives depend on it, because they do. And not only our lives, but also the lives of those around us who desperately need to hear the truth.

If you need a study Bible, please take one on your way out as our gift to you. We love you too much to allow you to walk through life in a state of biblical ignorance. If you have questions about what you are reading, please reach out to me or to our elders.

©2026 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

May God bless you as you read, understand, and live out His Word."

I realize this message is quite different from the normal church closing, but I believe pastors would be surprised by the impact it would have on the biblical literacy and spiritual health of their churches. I challenge your church to try this after every sermon.

Some Advice

If you have been around church for very long, you have probably heard someone say something like, "Make sure you have a Paul and a Timothy in your life. A Paul to pour into you and a Timothy for you to pour into." While this is good advice, it can sometimes leave people with the impression that they cannot truly understand the Bible unless a mentor comes along to explain it to them. That belief is a huge mistake, and it's one of the reasons biblical ignorance continues to thrive.

To this day, I have never had a mentor help me understand Scripture. I am not special. I simply opened the Bible and started reading. I did not need to find my own personal Paul because I already had Paul, the actual Paul who wrote much of the New Testament. He is right there on the page, available to all of us. There is no better teacher to disciple you than the one who learned directly from Jesus Himself. This is not to say that mentors are a bad thing. They can be incredibly helpful. But you don't need one to begin knowing God's Word today. Don't wait around for guidance from someone else if you already have the Holy Spirit to guide you. Open the Bible and start reading what Paul wrote. Here is a list of his letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

© 2020 Five Oysters Free eBook

When I first started reading the Bible, I began in Matthew and read through the New Testament. I would choose one book per month and read it repeatedly, making sure I understood it before moving on. After that, I read through the Old Testament. That approach worked well for gaining an initial foundation and familiarity with Scripture. As my reading became more established, I settled into a plan that has served me well ever since. I keep one study Bible on my desk and another by my bed. I try to read before opening my computer in the morning, and if I get sidetracked, the Bible waiting by my bed reminds me to read before going to sleep. Each day, I read one chapter from the Old Testament, one chapter from the New Testament, and one chapter from the wisdom books of Psalms, Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes. This usually takes about fifteen to twenty minutes.

For this plan, I recommend starting in Genesis, Matthew, and Psalms, continuing your way through the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the wisdom literature (Psalms-Ecclesiastes). When you reach the end of each, start over and cycle through it all again. Keep this pattern going for the rest of your life as you equip yourself with the knowledge of God's Word. If you make Bible reading a discipline in your life with a humble heart, I promise you will be amazed by what you have been missing.

"Ignorance of Scripture is the root of all error and makes a man helpless in the hands of the devil."[5]
—J.C. Ryle

Tip*:* If you sometimes struggle with reading, like I do, try absorbing Scripture by listening through a Bible app on your phone. This can be done during car rides, while working out, or when taking a walk. It allows you to make time for God more easily throughout the day. At the same time, make sure you also

[5] J.C. Ryle, *Needs of the Times* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1879).

© 2026 Ryle Covenant Free eBook

have a reliable study Bible with notes to help you understand context and answer questions. The ESV Study Bible and the Life Application Bible are both excellent tools.

A Parable

A man and a woman become engaged to be married. They love each other and are fully committed to one another. One day, the man is called overseas for duty. While he is away, he writes many letters to his fiancée in an effort to stay close and remind her of his love. Over time, she becomes distracted by the busyness of life and begins setting the letters aside, telling herself she will read them later. After all, he will not be home for a long time. Eventually, she meets another man who is nearby and gives her constant attention. Day by day, her thoughts of her fiancé grow dimmer as her affection is slowly redirected. Had she read the letters, she would have been reminded how deeply her fiancé loved her and how good he was for her. Upon his return home, the first thing he sees is a stack of his unopened letters lying on the table. Then he sees something even more devastating, a wedding announcement declaring her marriage to another man. He is heartbroken.

This is the same story that plays out between God and many who profess to be Christians. We begin in a relationship with Him and say that we want to be His. He gives His letters to us (the Bible). We become busy and distracted and stop reading them. In that distance, our hearts slowly drift, and we find ourselves increasingly attached to the world. One day, Jesus will return. The question is this: Will you be married to the world, with your mind set on earthly things, or will you be eagerly awaiting His return because you read His letters and devoted yourself fully to Him (Philippians 3:19-20)?

© 2025 Kyle Gardner Free eBook

Reflection:

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
   - Describe a time you've tried to drive through life without the Operation Manual, allowing the wavering opinions of others to shape your worldview.

   - Describe a time you recognized God's Word directing your steps through the unwavering truth of Scripture.

2. Read John 8:31-32. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "I don't read it at all" to 5 "abiding" as Jesus describes, how would you describe your relationship with God's Word? Why did you rate yourself as you did?

3. Read James 4:17. If you believe spending time in God's Word is the right thing to do, what excuses have kept you from doing so? Are you convicted that this is something you need to prioritize in your life? Are you sinning against God by continually neglecting what you know you should be doing?

© 2020 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

4. Read the warning in Matthew 7:21. Apart from reading God's Word, how can you know the will of God? Do you recognize the eternal value and importance of knowing God's Word so that you can understand and follow His will?

5. Are you willing to make time during your day to study the Bible and give it the reverence it deserves as the Word of God Almighty? Read Psalm 119 to gain a deeper understanding of how we are called to honor and revere His Word.

6. What is your game plan to schedule time for His Word every day? Ask someone in your life to hold you accountable to this and consider joining a group Bible study.

© 2021 Clyde Cavender • Free eBook

PART III

GROWING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Chapter 6: Engine Maintenance

Holy Habits, Part 1

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
(1 Peter 1:14-16)

Holiness matters to God, and holiness should matter to you.

> *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.* (Hebrews 12:14, NIV)

Let's read that again, out loud: *"Without holiness no one will see the Lord."* Another way of saying this is, "Without sanctification, no one will see the Lord." Throughout Scripture, we are repeatedly called to *make every effort, stand firm,* and *persevere* in holiness and devotion to God so that we may be sanctified by the Spirit. That means we are called to not be moved from the Dream Car or the Narrow Road.

> *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking*

© 2025 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

forward to this, ***make every effort*** *to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.* (2 Peter 3:13-14, NIV)

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who ***stands firm*** *to the end will be saved.* (Matthew 24:12-13, NIV)

You need to ***persevere*** *so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, "In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay."* (Hebrews 10:36-37, NIV)

If we don't *make every effort*, *stand firm*, and *persevere* in devotion to Him as Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit will not be active in our lives as it should be. As a result, we will lack the intimacy with God that we were created to enjoy. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we are unable to grow in the holiness and sanctification that are God's will for our lives.

Being a Doer of the Word

If we draw near to God through devotion, He promises to draw near to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit (James 4:8). But devotion must be more than simply reading our Bibles. What good is it if we don't also devote ourselves to obeying what Scripture says? Scripture repeatedly warns against hearing truth without responding to it in obedience.

For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (Romans 2:13)

In much of today's American church culture, Christianity has been reduced to casually checking a few religious boxes.

© 2020 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

We attend church when it fits our schedule, hear a handful of verses, sing a few songs, scroll through some inspirational posts, and assume that makes us Christians. But going through these motions without genuine devotion leads to emptiness. Following Jesus is not a passive existence, and the biblical picture of the Christian life looks nothing like the watered-down version that blankets our society. Scripture repeatedly issues a call to action, obedience, and devotion. A casual approach to faith inevitably produces apathy. When we are not abiding in a real relationship with Him, our Christian experiences can feel like watching commercials on a TV show we cannot fast forward through. If we are honest, we are often eager to get back to our worldly lives instead of sitting through another dull Christian experience. It should not be this way!

When we grow dull of hearing, our spiritual growth stalls and we remain immature (Hebrews 5:11-14). Are you a doer of the Word—bearing fruit through obedience and pointing others to Christ—or are you merely a hearer? Are you rooted in good soil, or does your heart need to turn back toward God (Mark 4:1-20)? The fruit—or lack of it—in your life will answer those questions for you.

> *A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits*.
> (Matthew 7:18-19, words of Jesus)

Most people who proclaim Christianity know they are supposed to do certain things like read the Bible and go to church, but it must be more than the equivalent of knowing we need to change the air filters or mow the lawn. We must approach our devotion to God with humility rather than pridefully glossing

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh | Free eBook

over the things He calls us to do. Otherwise, we will not have the armor of God needed to stand against Satan's schemes.

> *Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* (Ephesians 6:13-17)

The armor of God does not simply appear when we claim to follow Christ. We must train ourselves for godliness and build spiritual strength in preparation for the battles of life (1 Timothy 4:7-8). As we set our minds on the things of the Spirit and sow to please the Spirit, God forms His armor within us through sanctification, developing it through habitual obedience and perseverance (Romans 8:5-11, Galatians 6:7-8).

Holy Habits

Just as daily habits like brushing our teeth or exercising keep our bodies healthy, there are holy habits that keep our spiritual lives healthy and fruitful. What habits shape your life? Are they feeding spiritual growth or fueling sin? Have you been running out of Fuel on the Narrow Road, or are you continually abiding in devotion?

Spiritual maturity includes a sober awareness of our own corruption and a healthy fear of what we are capable of apart from the Holy Spirit. Left to ourselves, our willpower is insufficient. We desperately need to create habits of obedient devotion to

©2025 Kyle Covington Free eBooks

God so that we are not left fighting life's battles in the weakness of the flesh. The rest of this chapter and the next two explore holy habits of devotion that serve as Engine Maintenance for our relationship with the Spirit. These spiritual disciplines teach us to abide in Christ, train for godliness, sow to please the Spirit, and be doers of the Word so that we may be clothed in the armor of God.

To be clear, these works don't earn salvation. Jesus alone secured salvation at the cross. Rather, a desire for obedience is evidence that the gospel has taken root in our lives, transforming us to look more like Jesus and drawing us closer to God. These practices are not rooted in fear, but in joyful obedience. The gospel frees us from sin so that we may pursue holiness. What follows is a list of holy habits that serve as foundational steps of discipleship for all followers of Christ to pursue in obedience.

© 2025 Kyle Lavender | Free eBook

Practice Humility

Humility is the example Christ gave us to follow on the cross (Philippians 2:3-11), and it may be the most important character trait we must develop in our relationship with God. Throughout Scripture, God consistently values humility and opposes pride. Without humility, we place a barrier between ourselves and God that stunts our spiritual growth, hinders our prayers, and leaves us vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Humility becomes possible when we come to terms with who we are and who God is. Consider all the sinful, unholy, and corrupt thoughts and actions throughout your life that rightly deserve God's wrathful judgment. When measured against a holy God, we have much to be ashamed of. God knows everything we have ever done or thought, and He sees even deeper corruption than we see in ourselves. Yet in spite of this, our loving Heavenly Father sent His one and only Son to die sacrificially for our sins so that we could be freed from both sin and shame. True redemption should move us

forward into a life of humility, where we recognize our place as rescued sinners.

Another way humility grows in us is when we consider the mighty power God has displayed through His creation. When we step back and reflect on all He has made, our perspective begins to shift. Consider the trillions of stars and planets in the universe (Isaiah 40:26), the millions of species of animals on the earth, the countless trees and plants, the billions of people made in His image, and the sustaining power of the sun. Creation has a way of putting us in our proper place before God.

> *Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be," declares the Lord. "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."* (Isaiah 66:1-2)

When we truly grasp who God is, we begin to see ourselves rightly. God Almighty is awe-inspiring. He made the heavens and the earth, and everything belongs to Him. How could we approach such an amazing God without humility? True humility requires lowering our view of ourselves and continually placing Jesus on the throne of our lives. False humility remains self-focused, but true humility is God-centered. As we grow in humility, we learn to trust that His ways are far better than our own.

> *He must become greater; I must become less. The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.* (John 3:30-31)

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (Romans 11:33, NASB)

God expects us to walk in humility, and when we humble ourselves before Him, He makes Himself known to us. He teaches us, extends grace, and listens to us when we approach Him humbly. Pride, however, creates distance. If we remain stubborn in pride, God will either humble us through discipline or allow our hearts to grow hardened. God hates pride. For followers of Christ, humility is not optional; it's our destination. The only question is how we choose to get there. We can humble ourselves willingly through obedience, or God will humble us through correction. Speaking from many ridiculous "learn-the-hard-way" experiences, I have found that obedience is far better than discipline.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
(Matthew 23:12, words of Jesus)

Scripture teaches that humility plays an important role in our prayers being heard by God.

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

In humility, we are able to be taught the ways of the Lord.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. (Psalm 25:9)

© 2026 Kyle Covender Free eBook

God delights in the humble and pours grace upon them.

> *For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.* (Psalm 149:4)

> *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* (1 Peter 5:5-6)

Humility allows us to represent Jesus well by obeying God as servant-hearted followers, as seen in the life of the Apostle Paul. God valued humility in Paul so deeply that He allowed what Paul described as a thorn in his flesh to keep him from becoming conceited as God's chosen instrument (2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Acts 9:15). Even when circumstances are painful or difficult, if they humble us, they place us in a better position to remain in right relationship with the Lord. Let's be a people of humility so that we may receive all that God has available to us in eternity.

> *The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.* (Proverbs 22:4)

© 2026 Kyle Covington FreeBook

Practice Love

We often define love as something we feel, but when it comes to obeying God, love is an action. Practicing love can be challenging, especially when our feelings resist it. How, then, do we go about loving others when we don't feel like it? For starters, we look to what Jesus says in the Bible and allow the Spirit of God to convict our hearts.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
(Matthew 22:37-39, words of Jesus)

We are directly called to love God and love our neighbors. How exactly do we go about loving God?

"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."
(John 14:23-24, words of Jesus, NIV)

© 2016 KJS Copyright Free eBook

Loving God begins with treasuring and delighting in who He is as our Heavenly Father and in what He has offered us through Jesus. Loving God also means obeying His commands found in Scripture. The more we focus on the gospel and what Jesus has done for us on the cross, the easier it becomes to obey out of love. Each day, we must reflect on the amazing grace we have been given so that we can prepare our sinful, prone-to-wander hearts for obedience. A combination of a healthy fear of God Almighty and a humble appreciation for Christ's sacrifice should naturally lead us to express our love for God through obedience.

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. (1 John 4:19-20)

How do we love our neighbors—even our enemies and those who annoy us? First, we must acknowledge that every person

is created in the image of God and therefore possesses intrinsic value (Genesis 1:27). Second, we must recognize that all of us stand on equal ground in our desperate need for God's grace and mercy (Romans 3:10-12). Third, we must remember that, out of His love for us, Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Yes, this includes the sins of the horrible bosses you've had, the reckless driver who cut you off on the highway, the loud political commentator bashing Christianity online, your enemies, and even the person trying to sell you essential oils and knives in a pyramid scheme. We are called to love them all.

> *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"*
> (Matthew 5:43-47, words of Jesus)

© 2026 Kyle Conniff - Free eBook

Love is more than superficial talk. Love is action (1 John 3:18). Love is meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return. Love is extending kind words even when we don't receive them. Love is sacrificing our own wants and needs to meet the needs of others. Love is choosing our battles and refusing to be easily angered. Love is patiently embracing people who are different and making them feel valued by including them. Love is encouraging others. Love is speaking truth in a loving way that draws people closer to Christ.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
(1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13)

Love is not merely insisting on getting our point across or sharing truth at all costs, regardless of how it's received. In fact, the Bible teaches that truth shared without love sounds like a clanging cymbal to the ears of others. For truth to be heard, it must be filtered through a spirit of love. Faith, truth, and sacrifice without love don't accomplish God's purposes for our lives.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

© 2025 We Empower Free eBook

Most importantly, our Lord and Savior, who loved us so deeply that He suffered and died for us, has told us what He wants us to do. He calls us to love, and He shows us how to love. The more we devote ourselves to Him and abide in His love, the more natural loving others becomes.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you,

that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.
(John 15:9-14, 17, words of Jesus)

"Do not waste time bothering whether you love your neighbor; act as if you did."[6]
—C.S. Lewis

Practice Grace and Forgiveness

Grace and forgiveness are often difficult for us in our sinful nature, especially when we have been deeply wronged. However, once we truly understand the love of Christ and humble ourselves before a holy God, grace and forgiveness become far more attainable. Jesus speaks directly to the issue of forgiveness in a parable:

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

© 2020 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

[6] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 131.

"At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." (Matthew 18:21-35, NIV)

©2025 Kyle Cavender's Free eBook

Imagine someone forgiving a debt that could never be repaid, something like a trillion dollars, and then watching the forgiven debtor have the audacity to persecute someone who owes him twenty bucks. Is that any different from us accepting

God's grace for our countless sins while refusing to extend grace to those who sin against us?

We have committed innumerable sins against a holy God, yet we often struggle to forgive even minor offenses committed against us. In our sinful pride, entitlement, and failure to grasp reality, we act as though we are somehow owed repayment. What we actually deserve for our sins against God is to be nailed to a cross. What we receive instead is grace and forgiveness, because Jesus took that punishment for us. The calling is clear. If we are to accept His grace, we are commanded to forgive always. Forgiving is letting go of an offense while surrendering any perceived right to be repaid. Remaining bound by unforgiveness is like holding ourselves hostage, and Scripture makes it clear that persistent, unrepentant unforgiveness carries eternal consequences.

> *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Matthew 6:14-15, words of Jesus)

When we cling to resentment, demand justice on our own terms, or believe we are owed something, God sees us as the unforgiving servant in the parable. Holding ourselves hostage through unforgiveness is foolishness. When we release our grip on entitlement and choose to forgive, we are free to move forward in peace.

Jesus is the only fulfillment we need in this life. His grace is enough. When we foolishly seek satisfaction through repayment or retribution from people who can never meet our deepest need, we imprison ourselves in unforgiveness. I held myself hostage for several years when I refused to forgive my former boss who I felt had deeply wronged me. When I finally surrendered my desire for payback, I was released from the absurdity of it all

© 2024 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

and returned to a right relationship with God. It led to a peaceful existence, free from the resentment that had been weighing me down. In the process, God made me more aware of this man's desperate need for grace. Through the conviction of the Spirit, I began praying for him instead of resenting him (Matthew 5:44).

Jesus teaches us that we are not to retaliate when wronged (Matthew 5:38-40) because He is sovereign over justice. It's not our role to ensure that every wrong is made right. That belongs to God alone. Our calling during our short time on earth is to be ambassadors for Christ. We live out that calling by seeking peace, trusting God with justice, and obeying our Lord through forgiveness.

> *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:*
>
> > *"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;*
> > *if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.*
> > *In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*
>
> *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
> (Romans 12:17-21)

If you are harboring resentment toward anyone, now is the time to obey your Lord, let go, and allow God to be enough for you. Maybe it's a spouse or a parent who has hurt you and let you down. Maybe it's a coworker or your boss. Maybe it's someone who has hurt your child. Regardless of who it is, God has made His will clear in His Word. He requires us to forgive. We don't have the right to believe we are above forgiveness. While others sin against us, we continue to stumble and sin against God and against one another. That is who we are. We

© 2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

are sinners. Our only hope is found in the grace and mercy made possible through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."[7]
—C.S. Lewis

With our eyes fixed on eternity, we must let go of the ways we have been wronged and entrust them to God. His justice will be carried out according to His will, not ours. Don't miss the beauty of forgiving others. Through forgiveness and peacemaking, God is glorified as our light shines before others. As born again, redeemed followers of Jesus, our purpose and calling are to make Him known. One of the most powerful ways we do this is by putting forgiveness into action and actively seeking peace. Forgiven people develop compassion for others in their sin. They feel pity for sheep without a shepherd and empathize with sinners, understanding the brokenness in everyone and our shared need for mercy in Christ. When we forgive, ongoing criticism fades, and resentment is released.

Forgiven people cancel debts because they know the debt God has canceled for them. Grievances may not be forgotten and trust may be lost, but offenders are no longer owed repayment. They are instead shown grace.

> *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* (Colossians 3:13, NIV)

© 2026 Cruciform Free eBook

[7] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 115.

Reflection:

1) Being a Doer of the Word

- Read James 1:22–25. Are you genuinely applying what the Word says to your life?

- In what specific ways can you become a better hearer and doer of the Word?

2) Humility

- One of the most powerful passages in Scripture that puts us in our proper place of humility is found in Job 38. After enduring severe testing, Job questioned God in a way that revealed a lack of humility. God's response is sobering. Take a couple minutes to read this chapter and imagine His words being spoken directly to you.

- Where do you struggle with pride in your life—work success, wealth, appearance, athletics, academics, parenting, marriage, knowledge, popularity, or something else?

- In what specific ways can you grow in humility before God?

- In what specific ways can you display humility toward others in order to better represent Christ?

© 2020 Ivie Cavender - Free eBook

3) Love

- How does your life reflect the love of Christ?

- Toward whom in your life do you need to grow in love and what does that look like in action?

- Since obedience is a significant expression of loving God, where are you currently lacking in obedience?

4) Grace & Forgiveness

- In what areas of your life have you accepted God's forgiveness but struggled to extend forgiveness to others?

- Is there anyone in your life you need to forgive?

- What is keeping you from offering forgiveness?

© 2026 Kyle Covenden's Free eBook

Chapter 7: Engine Maintenance

Holy Habits, Part 2

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.
(2 Timothy 1:9, NIV)

© 2026 Kyle Lavender • FreeBook

Prayer

When I was growing up in the ’80s and ’90s, my favorite athlete was John Elway. I had his posters on my wall and nearly every football card I could find. The ultimate birthday gift was his jersey or a football with his autograph. He was my hero, and when he finally won the Super Bowl, I responded with nothing but honor, praise, and celebration. If you could have put me in a room with him when I was in middle school, I probably would have frozen or completely lost it from excitement. Getting the chance to talk with him would have been unforgettable.

If you could choose one person to sit down and talk with, who would it be? How excited would you be for that conversation? Now compare that excitement to how you feel about speaking with the God of the universe in prayer. As I grew older and reflected on this, it became deeply convicting. I gave far more honor, attention, and admiration to a human being who played a sport than I ever gave to God. God is the Creator of every

athlete, every sport, and every celebrity that has ever existed. He is God Almighty, seated on His throne in heaven. Should it not be an emotional and spiritual privilege to speak with Him? It's pretty sad how easily we show more interest in people who don't even know us than in the Lord Jesus, who knows everything about us and willingly died for us.

One of the most common struggles I had in my younger years was the feeling that my prayers were not being heard. Prayer often felt like a one-way conversation, as if I were simply talking to myself. In reality, it was one-way because I had not thought carefully about how I was approaching God. I treated Him like a genie whose role was to fix my circumstances rather than as a holy God with whom I was called to have a relationship. I was indifferent to holiness and focused almost entirely on my own desires while walking in unrepentant sin. I had no awe of Him, no fear of Him, and no humility before Him. I offered little praise and not nearly enough gratitude for what Christ had done on the cross. I was mostly apathetic toward God and consumed with my worldly problems, giving little thought to eternity. How could I expect a holy God to listen to or answer my prayers when I approached Him with such little reverence (Isaiah 59:1-2)? My prayers were centered on myself, not on Him.

> *The* LORD *is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.* (Proverbs 15:29)

This is how I used to pray. Maybe it sounds familiar to your own prayers. "Dear God, please help me get a better job with more money (though I had no intention of tithing). Please help me get the girl I want (though I had no intention of remaining pure). Please help me be healthy and lose weight (though I drank too much beer and lacked discipline). Please help me improve my work life and get along better with my boss (though I regularly disrespected him)." Do you see what is wrong here (Proverbs

©2026 Kyle Overholt Free eBook

28:9)? As a starting point, prayer should never be casual when we are speaking to God Almighty, our Creator and Lord.

> *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.* (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

> *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.* (Hebrews 12:28-29)

Are you in awe of God? Do you view Him as a consuming fire, worthy of honor and reverence? Can you grasp the reality that we have been given the privilege of speaking directly to the God of the universe? When we truly stop and consider it, this is an astonishing gift. Jesus gives us clear instruction on prayer:

> *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* (Matthew 6:6)

Before we go any further in discussing prayer, let us do exactly what Jesus instructs. Let us go into our rooms, shut the door, and speak directly to our Father in secret.

> Our God,
> Please forgive us for the times we fail to honor You and glorify You as we should. Give us understanding in how we are to approach You in prayer. You are holy and worthy of all praise, for You are above all things. Help us see how weak we are in our flesh and how desperately we need Your strength. Teach us to pray according to Your

©2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

will. Help us to abide in Christ and to grow in holiness by being both hearers and doers of Your Word.
In the precious name of Jesus, amen.

The best example we could ever follow is Jesus Himself. If we want to understand how to pray, we must look closely at how He prayed and how He taught others to pray (Hebrews 5:7). Consider His words on prayer:

> *"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*
> (Matthew 6:7-13)

In good times and in bad, in seasons of blessing and seasons of trial, we are called to pray.

> *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

> *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess*

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:13-16)

There is a song I love by Matt Redman called "Your Grace Finds Me" that captures what a life of constant prayer should look like. The lyrics repeat,

I'm breathing in Your grace and breathing out Your praise.
I'm breathing in Your grace and breathing out Your praise.[8]

That is the kind of prayerful existence we should strive for, a continual dependence on God marked by gratitude, praise, and awareness of His grace in every moment.

"To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."[9]
—Attributed to Martin Luther

© 2026 Kyle Covington's Free eBook

Evangelism

Imagine discovering that you have terminal cancer with no hope for survival. Then one day, you are introduced to a possible cure and decide to try it. The cure completely heals your body, and you return to full health. What an incredible feeling it would be to be healed. Now imagine that every person you have ever

[8] "Your Grace Finds Me," written by Matt Redman, Jonas Myrin, and Jason Ingram © 2013 sixstepsrecords LLC and Capitol CMG, Inc. https://www.worshiptogether.com/songs/your-grace-finds-me-matt-redman.
[9] George Sweeting, *Talking It Over*, September 1, 1979, p.88 (Attributed to Martin Luther, not verified).

known comes down with the very same terminal cancer you once had. What kind of person would you be if you refused to boldly share the cure that saved your life?

Judgment is coming for all of us. If we are not covered by grace through the blood of Christ, we will face the holy wrath of God. We are called to share the good news of Jesus, whose saving power forgives and heals the cancer of sin that exists in every one of us. Yet so often, we find ourselves hesitant or timid when confronted by the pressures of culture. We fear rejection. We fear being labeled judgmental, intolerant, or worse. Do you answer to people, or do you answer to God Almighty? Do you have the love of Christ in you? If so, then sharing the truth of the gospel is how you can show that love to others.

We should not fear scoffers. Instead, we should fear God and boldly proclaim the truth that Christ transforms broken sinners into born-again, new creations and offers a better way of life focused on eternity. If you have truly seen and heard the life-changing work of Jesus in your own life, then—like the apostles—you should find that you cannot help but speak about it.

© 2025 Kyle Covenant Freedom

> *So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4:18-20)

> *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?* (Psalm 118:6)

When you read through the Bible, do any of the early Christian writers come across as timid to you? They boldly proclaimed the truth even when it cost most of them their earthly lives. Do the

words of Jesus, Paul, Peter, or John seem timid in any way? If not, then why are so many Christians, and even Christian leaders, timid today when it comes to sharing the truth that can eternally save souls? Could it be that our church culture has drifted away from God's truth and God's will by neglecting to read or follow what the Bible actually teaches? Could it be that we are more concerned with comfort than with obedience? Could it be that many professing believers who consistently shrink back from God's truth do not actually have the Holy Spirit in them?

I would argue that the softened gospel presentation common in many churches today is evidence of timidity. When we leave out the fear of the Lord, repentance, being born again of the Spirit, and the necessity of reading the Bible to know God's will, we create a filtered-down gospel that is far more comfortable to present. It becomes a message of "just believe in Jesus" that does not truly rescue, but instead offers false assurance. Timidity is not the example we are called to follow. If we are right with God, then we have been given power by the Holy Spirit, and it's our calling to use that power boldly in love (Acts 1:8).

> *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*
> (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV)

© 2025 Live Covenant Free eBook

"I love those that thunder out the Word.
The Christian world is in a deep sleep.
Nothing but a loud voice can waken them out of it."[10]
—Attributed to George Whitefield

Jesus calls His followers to boldly proclaim the gospel in its full biblical message, including belief, repentance, and obedience

[10] *The Christian Treasury* (Edinburgh), 1847 (Attributed to George Whitefield as the earliest verifiable printed edition).

through being born again of the Spirit. If you have been transformed by the power of God, then you possess a truth that so many in this world do not. Don't stand by and watch as people in your life harden their hearts and choose the Wide Path that leads to destruction. Time is short. The truth must be shared. Take heart in this: God will be glorified whether the truth is accepted or rejected, for every knee will bow before Him and every tongue will confess Him as Lord (Romans 14:11-12). Our responsibility is not the outcome, but obedience. We are called to represent Christ well through righteous living and faithful witness. Allow Him to use you to make Himself known. If you have shared the truth in love, then people are without excuse. One day, when you stand before Jesus, will you have been someone who faithfully and boldly proclaimed the truth or someone who shrank back in fear and chose comfort over obedience?

Evangelism is a holy habit that followers of Christ are called and held responsible to practice as they live on mission for Him.

> *Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* (Proverbs 24:11-12)

> *... For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* (1 Corinthians 9:16)

Evangelism is not limited to those around us. It's for the entire world. We are called to much more than local gospel sharing. Jesus commands us to "*make disciples of all nations*," which means Christians are called to reach every people group on the planet.

© 2026 KYE Covenant Free eBook

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

This means that you and I are called to respond. God may call you to go to the other side of the world to make disciples, or He may call you to be a sender who supports those who go. Either way, as a follower of Christ, you are not called to be passive. You are called to participate, either as a goer or a sender. If you sense the Spirit convicting you to go, seek wisdom and guidance regarding places of spiritual need. If you don't feel called to go, consider how you can faithfully support missionary work through prayer and financial giving. An estimated 3.4 billion people have never heard about Jesus or the gospel.[11]

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:14-17)

What is truly exciting about making disciples of all nations is that in doing so, we participate in God's redemptive plan and

[11] "2025 Christian Missionary Statistics," Nations Outreach, February 3, 2025, https://nationsoutreach.org/blog/christian-missionary-statistics/.

the return of Jesus. Scripture tells us that the proclamation of the gospel to all nations precedes the end of this dark world.

> *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*
> (Matthew 24:14, words of Jesus)

Examine yourself in light of this truth and step forward in faith and obedience. If you have not been heeding the call to evangelize, ask God for direction. As we are transformed through sanctification by the Holy Spirit, leading people to Jesus becomes a source of deep purpose, joy, and reward—all with our eyes fixed on the eternal prize of life with Christ. If you don't know where to start, it can be as simple as giving someone a study Bible and sharing how God's Word has impacted your own life.

Much of our everyday conversation revolves around our jobs, hobbies, families, television shows, current events, or sports. What if we intentionally shifted our small talk toward God's Word? What if we spoke openly about what we are reading in Scripture? Imagine conversations beginning like this:

"Have you ever read about Paul on the road to Damascus? It's incredible."

"Have you ever read about Daniel's visions of the end times? They are fascinating."

"I was just reading Proverbs and realized how much wisdom it contains. I wish I had read it earlier in life."

"I read the book of James last night, and it was deeply convicting. Have you ever read it?"

"The more I read the Bible, the more I realize how much I didn't know. I wish I had started sooner."

I have personally witnessed someone come to Christ simply by overhearing a conversation I was having about the Bible at

© 2016 Kyle Reynolds Free eBook

a child's birthday party. What began as curiosity quickly turned into a sincere pursuit of God, and I eventually had the privilege of baptizing that person. It was an incredible experience, and it all started with a simple conversation centered on God.

I have learned that when we make ourselves available as instruments in God's hands, share our stories of transformation, talk openly about Scripture, speak about Jesus, and represent Him well in love and righteousness, God works powerfully in the hearts of others. The more we equip ourselves with God's Word, the more effective we become at sharing truth and living as a godly example. The good news is that we don't have to rely on our own strength. We can trust the power of the Holy Spirit to do the heavy lifting as He draws hearts to Christ.

> *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.* (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, NIV)

> *But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.* (1 Peter 3:15)

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

From the perspective of the Drive Illustration, many nonbelievers have never actually seen a Dream Car driven by anyone. They may have heard about it, but it feels more like myth or fantasy than reality. That changes when a true follower of Christ comes driving by, living a visibly transformed life that points to a better way to live. Once we make the transition from the Tricycle to the Dream Car, we are assigned as mandatory Dream Car salesmen. A life filled with the Holy Spirit becomes the most powerful form of salesmanship. When people see someone living with love, peace, purpose, humility, and joy that

cannot be explained by circumstances, the message becomes undeniable. The gospel is most compelling when it's not only spoken, but lived.

"Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor."[12]
—Attributed to Charles Spurgeon

Giving

In American culture, we are constantly bombarded with the message of the "American Dream." On the surface, it appears innocent and even inspirational. Beneath it, however, lies a deep stench of greed and materialism that has become the driving force of life for many self-proclaimed Christians. If we were to judge by the priorities of much of the American church, one might conclude that Christ followers are reading a Bible that says something like this:

- Thou shalt buy the biggest house and the nicest car thou can afford or cannot afford and watch from a distance while the homeless, hungry, and poor struggle through life.
- Thou shalt prepare diligently for a comfortable early retirement by prioritizing 401(k)s and IRAs before meeting the needs of the poor or advancing the mission of Christ's church.
- The wise person will stockpile wealth for luxurious comforts instead of investing in things of eternal value.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

[12] Charles H. Spurgeon, "A Sermon and a Reminiscence," *The Sword and the Trowel*, March 1873.

- The blessed person will pursue greatness through increasing net worth while millions of people lack food, clean water, or even a Bible to read.

That, of course, is not what God's Word says. Jesus teaches plainly:

> *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*
> (Matthew 6:19-21, 24)

If you live in the United States, you likely fall into the category of "rich," given that 47% of the world lives on less than $6.85 a day.[13] The Apostle Paul provides clear instruction to the rich:

> *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*
> (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

[13] World Bank, *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024: Pathways Out of the Polycrisis* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2024).

James speaks even more bluntly:

> *Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.* (James 5:1-5)

Scripture repeatedly connects obedience, generosity, and eternal reward:

> *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.* (Proverbs 3:9)

> *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many*

© 2025 Kyle Covington's Free eBook

expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

Jesus Himself shows that genuine faith is evidenced by compassionate giving when He describes the final judgment:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

© 2025 KVE Covenant Free eBook

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

There are eternal rewards for obedience. The question is simple: Where is your heart? Is it focused on acquiring wealth and possessions, or on serving God's purposes on earth? The holy habit of giving is an act of worship that shapes a generous heart set on things above. Are you investing for just the unpromised remaining years of this short, temporary life, or for the infinite years of a promised eternal kingdom? To be blunt, one is a wise investment and the other is very short-sighted and foolish.

One day, you will meet Jesus Christ face to face. When that day comes, how will He judge your stewardship of the resources He entrusted to you? Are your treasures stored on this perishing earth or in His eternal kingdom? Are you a sheep or a goat? As followers of Christ, we are called to be prayerful, wise, and generous stewards. We must remember that none of it truly belongs to us (Psalm 24:1). When deciding where to give, discern carefully. From personal experience, I can confirm that not every organization that calls itself Christian is committed to honoring God. Consider whether an organization merely talks about God or genuinely glorifies Him. Do they boast in their own accomplishments, or do they point to what God has done?

© 2025 Eye Opener Free Book

Are they focused solely on earthly outcomes, or on matters of eternal significance, including the eternal destiny of souls? For suggestions on God-honoring organizations, visit narrowroad.life/resources.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."[14]
—Jim Elliot

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

[14] Jim Elliot, *The Journals of Jim Elliot*, ed. Elisabeth Elliot, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1978), 174.

Reflection:

1) Prayer

- Is your prayer life better described as a rare occurrence or as a consistent daily practice? How often do you pray?

- When you pray, do you approach God casually as though He were a genie meant to grant your wishes, or do you approach Him with the reverence and awe He deserves as your Almighty Creator?

- How would you honestly describe your prayer life? Read Isaiah 59:1–2 and John 9:31. Describe a time when your prayers felt like a one-way conversation. Describe a time when you knew God was listening to your prayers.

- What practical steps can you take to make prayer a consistent daily habit that deepens your relationship with God?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender – Free eBook

2) Evangelism

- When was the last time you shared the good news of Jesus Christ with another person? Are you walking in bold obedience to God in the area of evangelism, or have you remained timid and silent?

- Are you responding to Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations" as a goer or a sender? If so, how? If neither, what is holding you back?

- Who is one person in your life who does not know God and with whom you can share the hope of Christ?

- Challenge: Commit to starting with that person, then continue walking in obedience with the next person, and the next, for the rest of your life.

© 2026 Kyle Lavender • Free eBook

3) Giving

- Do you faithfully give to your local church?

- Do you sacrificially give to those in need and support Christian ministries as a cheerful giver?

- Are you investing your resources in God's eternal kingdom, or are you primarily building up your own temporary kingdom on earth?

- Do you view your money as your own, or as something entrusted to you by God for faithful stewardship?

- What possessions, comforts, or priorities might God be calling you to surrender so that you can give more sacrificially?

Chapter 8: Engine Maintenance

Holy Habits, Part 3

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us,
guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
(2 Timothy 1:14)

© 2020 Kate Lavender • Free eBook

Guard Your Mouth

My big mouth has gotten me into trouble more times than I can count. The impulse of a quick tongue, saying whatever is on my mind, has come back to bite me throughout my life. Some of my greatest regrets are tied to careless words that damaged relationships, impacted my career, and severely harmed my witness as a follower of Jesus. Guarding my tongue has been one of the greatest challenges of my spiritual life, and I imagine you can relate. Because we all share a sinful nature, the tongue is a struggle for every one of us. James recognized this clearly:

> *For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So*

also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:2-10)

© 2021 Kyle Coulter • Free eBook

We all stumble in many ways, including what we say. An untamed tongue is a serious problem. We must recognize how dangerous our words can be to our own lives, the lives of others, and our Christian witness. With our tongues, we can either lift people up or tear them down.

I once had a teammate from high school football who was an awesome athlete. He went on to play Division I college football and even earned Freshman of the Year honors in his conference. He was a beast on the field, but more than that, he was a genuinely good guy whom I respected. While hanging out during a college break, he shared that he planned to pursue a career in the NFL. That was the moment my tongue got me into trouble. Although I thought highly of him, my impulsive and sinful mouth blurted out, "Don't you have to be taller to play in the NFL? I doubt they would consider you at your height." Who was I, an experienced NFL scout? I had a clear opportunity to encourage him and speak life into his dream. Instead, I spoke carelessly and tore him down. I don't recall seeing him again

after that conversation, and I still regret my words decades later. The moment made no sense, yet it perfectly illustrates the danger of an untamed tongue. It truly is a fire, capable of setting ablaze friendships, careers, ministries, and marriages.

> *One who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.* (Proverbs 21:23, NASB)

Another story had a very different outcome. After going through a painful divorce in my late twenties, I began spending time in the singles group at a very large megachurch. It kind of felt like a meat market of late-twenties and early-thirties singles looking to get married as soon as possible. I began hosting regular get-togethers at my place with people from the church. I was making friends, and we were having a lot of fun. Unfortunately, those gatherings involved an abundance of alcohol and quickly spiraled into me having several inappropriate physical relationships with women from church. It was wrong, and I knew it was wrong, but I was too spiritually weak with my Baggage at the time to exercise self-control.

After a few months, the singles minister reached out and asked if I would meet him for lunch so he could get to know me. I am sure he had heard rumors about what was going on, though he certainly did not know the full extent of my behavior. He would have been justified in confronting me or questioning how I was corrupting his singles ministry. Instead, he said something that has stayed with me to this day: "Kyle, I wanted to get to know you because you are having a significant impact on our singles group. I hear your name often, and you seem to be well-liked. You appear to have a gift for bringing people together and connecting with others." I remember thinking, "Where is this going? Is the hammer about to drop?" Then he asked, "Have you ever considered how you might use that gift for the kingdom of God?" I was caught completely off guard. At that point in my

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

life, I had not considered much of anything other than how I could have a good time. My honest answer was simply, "No."

It took me a little while to get my act together, but that encouragement stayed with me. It helped me to see that I was indeed gifted and that I had a purpose beyond just having a good time. I had a purpose for God's kingdom. I am thankful to this day for the way he chose to speak to me. That conversation could have easily gone another way into scolding and discouragement, but because this man of God understood the power of the tongue, he used his words wisely.

> *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* (Ephesians 4:29)

Recently, I came across a video from more than twenty years ago, from a time before I was truly following Jesus. Back then, I would have said I was a believer, but I clearly did not know God, and it showed up in my life in a big way. The video was from a road trip to California that I took with a buddy. I sat down to watch it with my wife, having forgotten how ridiculous I once was. While parts of it were humorous, much of it was difficult to watch because of my speech. I was cursing constantly, dropping the f-bomb along with several other choice words, and my joking was definitely inappropriate. Let's just say my wife was not impressed. Based on what she knows about my past, she often says she would not have given me the time of day back then. I don't blame her. Looking back on those years, and many others like them, I hate how I carried myself and the things that came out of my mouth.

To be fully transparent, the sinful speech habits formed in my younger years still surface from time to time. I hate that they do, but I now recognize them because the Holy Spirit has convicted my heart. Over the years, I have worked hard to improve my

© 2022 Kyle Coyner • FreeBook

speech in an effort to honor God, but I still have a long way to go. What unsettles me most is realizing that the video was only a small glimpse of the many sinful things I said years ago that I had completely forgotten about. How many other careless words have come out of my mouth that I no longer remember? That question becomes especially sobering when I read Jesus' words:

> *"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."* (Matthew 12:36-37)

That passage hits me like a punch to the gut. It helps me understand why Isaiah responded the way he did when he first stood in the presence of the Lord. I imagine my own first words before God may sound similar.

> *And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"* (Isaiah 6:5)

Reflecting on my speech has revealed, perhaps more than anything else, the depth of unholiness in my heart and the massive amount of grace I desperately need (Romans 7:24-25).

> *What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.*
> (Matthew 15:18, words of Jesus)

One thing that truly makes me sick is when I impulsively use the Lord's name in vain. It also grieves me when I hear others do the same. That reality led me to ask an important question: why is the name of Jesus Christ the one most often used in

© 2026 Kyle Cavender, Free eBook

vain? Why not Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius, or some other religious figure? It's almost always Jesus Christ. For me, that observation actually strengthens my faith. It reinforces what Scripture teaches about the unique authority of Jesus Christ and the spiritual opposition directed against Him. Using the Lord's name in vain is a direct violation of one of the Ten Commandments and is something we must take seriously (Exodus 20:7). We cannot claim to revere God while casually or carelessly using His holy name. I have had to confront this sin in my own life, as it was rooted in ungodly habits formed long ago. Yet the conviction I now feel is also evidence that the Lord is at work in me. As followers of Christ, we must make it our practice to honor His name as holy and refuse to use it in vain.

When it comes to controlling our words, sometimes the wisest response is to simply remain silent or walk away. That has often been difficult for me as an extrovert, but there are moments when I really need to muzzle my mouth. Learning when not to speak is often just as important as learning what to say.

> *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.* (Proverbs 10:19)

> *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.* (James 1:19)

In our modern age, typing fingers have become an extension of the tongue. Text messages, emails, and online comments can quickly turn into witness-destroying weapons in the hands of the enemy. We must handle these tools with care and develop the discipline of thinking before sending. Social media, in particular, has become especially problematic, as a lack of restraint over the tongue often carries over into typing fingers and can leave a permanent mark on our reputations. If you struggle with controlling your words as I do, I want to offer some advice that

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

has served me well: consider stepping away from social media. While there can be benefits to social media, even in ministry, the constant exposure to wickedness and the temptation to say something reckless often outweigh those benefits. Hundreds of well-intentioned ministry posts can be undone by a single careless word. It's dangerous territory out there.

We must guard our tongues, our fingers, our words, and anything else that causes us to sin. It's easy to want the last word online. It's easy to hit the submit button after typing an impulsive, angry rant that damages your reputation and harms your Christian witness. Unless you have consistent control over your words, stepping away may be the wisest choice. For me, it has been one of the best decisions I have made. I am less distracted by the things of this world, less tempted to speak carelessly, and far less concerned with what others think of me. That freedom has allowed me to focus more clearly on what Jesus thinks. For me, this has been a practical way to "guard my ways."

> *I said, "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle."* (Psalm 39:1)

I believe every follower of Christ should regularly ask God for help in this area, because controlling our speech is a constant challenge in our flesh. As we fuel the Engine and continue down the Narrow Road, let us make every effort to guard our mouths as the Holy Spirit sanctifies us.

> *Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!* (Psalm 141:3)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

Guard Your Heart

Earlier in the book, it was established that the human heart is naturally sinful. To combat this, we must make a deliberate effort to guard our hearts from the things of this world that lead us into sin.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:23, NIV)

Prior to following Jesus, I had many friendships that led me into sin. Scripture teaches that we are not to partner with unbelievers in ways that divide our loyalty to God (2 Corinthians 6:14). While we are called to associate with unbelievers by letting our light shine in a dark world (Matthew 5:16), we are called to avoid close, influential relationships that draw our hearts away from Christ. Consider the five people you spend the most time with. Their character is likely shaping yours.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.
(Ephesians 5:6-8)

I personally had to distance myself from many worldly friends once I began truly following the Lord. This was not a pleasant experience, but it was necessary. Several of those friendships consistently influenced me toward worldly behaviors

© 2026 Kyle Reinhardt - FreeEBook

such as heavy drinking and womanizing. Creating that distance was not only for my own good, but for theirs as well. By making it clear that I no longer condoned a worldly lifestyle, they could see that something had genuinely changed in me. That clarity opened the door to spiritual conversations. It wasn't that I turned my back on them. Rather, by keeping those relationships at arm's length, I was able to prevent their influence from sidetracking my journey on the Narrow Road.

> *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*
> (1 Corinthians 15:33)

We must also guard ourselves against wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15-20). Just because someone professes to be a Christian does not mean they truly are. Confidence, charisma, or even leadership within a church does not automatically indicate good fruit or faithful teaching. Scripture calls us to test the spirits and to examine whether the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the work of sanctification are present as evidence of genuine salvation (1 John 4:1-6). Make sure you are being led by genuine, faithful followers of Christ.

Beyond evaluating who we associate with, we must also guard our hearts against worldly influence. Consider the lyrics of the music you listen to and the content of the shows, movies, and books you consume. When sexual immorality is glorified on screen, it dulls our sensitivity to what God calls unholy. When vulgar language fills our ears, it inevitably influences the words that come out of our mouths, damaging our witness as followers of Christ. What we repeatedly

Suggestion:

I highly recommend filtering apps like VidAngel and Clearplay. They remove foul language, sexual content, and other worldly elements, allowing you to continue enjoying entertainment without spiritual compromise.

© 2026 KVP Covenant Free eBook

see and hear shapes our hearts. For this reason, we must be very careful about what we allow into our minds so that our hearts don't become hardened toward unrighteousness.

> *Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.* (Psalm 119:37)

We don't want our hearts to grow dull because our eyes and ears have become closed off to the things of God. When we continually feed ourselves on the things of this world instead of the things of God, we slowly distance ourselves from Him without even realizing it. Jesus warned of this very condition:

> *For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.* (Matthew 13:15)

We must also guard ourselves from situations that lead us into temptation. If you struggle with alcohol, you should seriously consider avoiding bars. If you struggle with gluttony, a buffet may not be the wisest place to be. If you struggle with lust, certain gyms or pools where immodesty is common may need to be avoided. If you struggle with gambling, a casino is not where you belong. The principle is simple: don't set yourself up for failure by letting your guard down. Jesus calls us to cut off temptation at its source (Matthew 18:7-9).

To guard our hearts, we must intentionally fill them with the things of God rather than worldly influence. This requires a daily commitment to God's Word and the fellowship of His people so that we are not taken captive by empty and deceitful philosophies (Colossians 2:8). Our focus must remain on eternal things that are true, pure, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8).

© 2025 Kyle Cavender FreeEbook

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Practically speaking, guarding our hearts involves pursuing influences that shape our thinking toward Christ. Scripture is foundational, but the wisdom of godly people should also be intentionally sought. God-honoring books, sermons, songs, and podcasts can feed us spiritually and help form us into effective ambassadors for Christ. I have personally benefited from making reading a regular part of my life over the past sixteen years. Before that, I could count on one hand the number of books I had read since high school, and none of them were spiritual. Books written by wise and experienced followers of Christ revealed how much I still had to learn about life and Scripture. They motivated me to keep pursuing wisdom and to immerse myself more deeply in God's Word. Recommended resources such as these are available at narrowroad.life/resources.

When paired with consistent Bible reading, this practice has been a game-changer for my spiritual growth. I have learned how vital it is to pursue wisdom while training myself to view every aspect of life through the lens of eternity. When we do this, we don't lose heart, and we gain understanding and purpose that bring honor to our Savior.

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree

© 2019 Kyle Coyle | Narrow Road Life

of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed. (Proverbs 3:13-18)

A Final Thought on Holy Habits

You might be asking, "What if I practice all of these 'holy habits' but still feel far from God?" To be clear, simply checking boxes will not keep the Engine running. In fact, it will not even get the Engine started. What must come first is a sincere, humble, and healthy fear of God, marked by a surrendered and repentant heart that responds to the gospel with both faith and obedience. If you still feel stuck spiritually, consider returning to Chapters 3 and 4 to honestly examine whether you are fully surrendered to Jesus as Lord. Are you putting Him first? Take time to examine yourself. Ask whether pride or disobedience is present in your life. Consider whether there is anything you still need to confess and repent of before God. Persisting in unrepentant sin exposes a heart that does not fear the Lord and treats the gospel as insignificant. How could we possibly be right with the Lord if we intentionally continue in the very sins Jesus had to die for (Hebrews 10:26-27)?

Turn away from your sin and draw near to God with a clear conscience and a desire for a relationship. If we approach the Bible, church sermons, or spiritual books merely as self-help tools—without repentance, reverence, and obedience—then we are only spinning our wheels. If we want to truly know God and drive with Him on the Narrow Road, we must be fully surrendered to Him as Lord of our lives. We must reach a point where our sin burdens us so deeply that we surrender it all to the Lord. That is where healing and restored fellowship with God begin on the Narrow Road.

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand

© 2026 Kyle Snyder Free Stock

was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psalm 32:3-5)

Think of it like a game of poker. If we truly believe we hold the winning hand in following Christ, then we should push in all of our chips with confidence and joy, knowing that the greatest prize in human history is about to be won: eternal life in the presence of our loving God. If you have not pushed in all of your chips, ask yourself why. Do you truly believe that God offered His Son to rescue you from your sin? Do you truly believe that Jesus is Lord? If so, that belief demands the surrender of every part of your life, all the chips you have. What good is a winning hand if you refuse to play it? Eternity will prove that there is no regret for those who go all in by loving Jesus and living for Him.

Perhaps you are struggling to push in all your chips because you have not seen enough to be fully convinced. If so, consider the eyewitness accounts of the apostles and the power and consistency of their testimony in Scripture. Consider the countless saints throughout history whose lives have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. If nothing else, consider my testimony from Chapters 1 and 2. I played games with God for many years. I was hesitant to go all in, clinging to the things of this world out of ignorance. Learn from my mistakes. Let the consequences of my past life serve as an example of what not to do, and let my life since surrendering to Christ show you that this is all very real and truly transformative. Can you imagine writing a book like this after failing God so miserably? Me neither. Yet here we are. I have been completely changed through my relationship with God and you can be changed too. If you haven't, I am pleading with you to take the leap of faith and go all in with God. Give up your sin. Give up the things of

Copyright Free eBook

this world that you are prioritizing over Him. You won't regret it. The only regret will be that you didn't surrender your life to Him sooner.

The truth is that this is not merely a game of cards. It's a matter of eternal life and death. Stop playing with fire. Push in all your chips, your hopes, your dreams, your hidden pet sins, your career, your finances, your worries, your fears, your pain, and your excuses, and allow the power of God to take over your life. Spend time in His Word and let Him speak to you through it. God's Word had such a profound impact on me that it finally won me over and led me to surrender fully. I know it can do the same for you.

Pray for a proper fear of the Lord. Pray that you would grasp the depth of His love shown through the gospel so that you would respond with joyful obedience. Pray that the Holy Spirit would take hold of your heart and lead you faithfully down the Narrow Road to eternity. Change may not happen immediately, but as you commit to staying on the Narrow Road by walking in His will, you will be amazed at what happens in your life.

© 2026 Kyle Covington - Free eBook

Reflection:

1) Guard Your Mouth

- What is an example of something you have said that later came back to haunt you?

- What did that experience teach you about the power of your words?

- In what ways can you be more intentional about using your words to encourage and build others up?

- Do you struggle with self-control in texts, emails, or on social media?

- Would it benefit you to take a break from social media or step away from it entirely?

- Do you feel conviction over foul language or taking the Lord's name in vain or are you hardened to these sins?

- What practical steps can you take to better guard your mouth and honor God with your words?

© 2020 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

2) Guard Your Heart

- Write the names of the five people closest to you. Do your relationships with each of these people encourage Christian transformation or conformity to the world?

- How can you be wiser and more intentional about who has influence over your heart?

- What kind of music do you listen to?

- What movies or television shows are you watching?

- What books, podcasts, or other media are shaping your thinking?

- By each of the resources you wrote down, use a "+" for those that honor God or a "–" for those that are influencing you towards worldly living.

- What specific changes can you make to better protect your heart and renew your mind?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 9: The Service Station

Church

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
(Hebrews 10:24-25)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Church Involvement

Here is an honest confession. If Scripture did not command believers to participate in Christ's church, I might not have even been a part of one because of the resentments I carry. My tendency to be critical of the church is deeply personal. In hindsight, it's shocking how poorly I was discipled by most of the churches I attended, and I know I am not alone. Multitudes of people who attend church, or once did, have little to no understanding of what the Bible actually teaches. The reality of this deeply burdens me. How does that happen? How can churches enable it and allow it to continue? It's difficult for me to understand how the church can drift so far from its biblical mission when

its primary calling is clear: to make disciples of Jesus Christ by faithfully teaching the Word of God.

I could write an entire book on how far most American churches have drifted from Scripture, and maybe someday I will. But that is not the purpose of this chapter. Instead, this chapter focuses on getting things right by identifying the role we, as individual believers, play in building up God's church so that it reflects His disciple-making design.

Maybe you carry resentments toward the church for the same or different reasons. Regardless of how you feel about church, whether positive or negative, church involvement should be a nonnegotiable part of life for every follower of Christ. Just because many people have distorted God's intentions for His church by picking and choosing what will be taught and followed does not give anyone an excuse to dismiss it. After all, the church was Jesus' plan. How can we truly be followers of Christ if we are willing to dismiss what He intended for us to be a part of?

I have learned that when I focus on my own calling within the church, my attitude changes. The more I participate in the role God has given me, the more I benefit from and genuinely enjoy being part of His church. And as each member does their part, the church becomes more effective at accomplishing God's mission. In the Drive Illustration, church is the Service Station. It's a place to be spiritually refreshed, refueled, repaired, and held accountable through biblical teaching and Christ-centered community. Without it, we will struggle to remain on the Narrow Road.

Unfortunately, in our culture a large number of self-proclaimed believers view church as an optional convenience. For many, it's simply a way to feel less guilty about a lifestyle choice or a lack of devotion to God. For others, it's nothing more than a social gathering with other "good people." Many find church attendance difficult because of the hypocrisy they see everywhere, or because someone in the church sinned against

© 2025 Skye Covington Free eBook

them and caused real hurt. Others avoid church altogether because they feel judged, unworthy, or ashamed of their lifestyle.

Some of us will go to church and sit next to people who seem socially awkward or just plain weird. They might sing so loudly that it distracts you, or shout, "Amen!" after every sentence the preacher says. They may talk about supernatural things or come across as overly charismatic or simply different. That alone can be enough to make someone decide never to return, assuming everyone in church must be strange.

To be fair, church is not the only place in the world with weird people. Have you been to a Walmart lately? If you're willing to go back to Walmart, you should be willing to go back to church. Would you stop going to restaurants because you once had a weird waitress? Of course not. Don't stop obeying God's call to be part of His church just because someone weirded you out. Stay consistent and find your people. The more involved I've become in church, the more I've realized that the people I once thought were weird weren't nearly as strange as I first imagined. And even if they are, God loves them, and so should we. By the way, if you can't figure out who the church weirdo is, it's probably you. Or maybe it's me. Just kidding... sort of.

© 2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

Now that we have cleared away some of the excuses, let us address some misconceptions about church in today's culture. For starters, every single person who attends church, serves in church, or preaches in church is a broken sinner in desperate need of God's grace and mercy (Romans 3:23). Not one of them—ourselves included—is even close to perfect, and we should never expect them to be.

> *Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."*
> (Luke 5:31-32)

Church should be viewed as a spiritual hospital, filled with sick patients seeking a cure for their sin. You don't walk into an emergency room and wonder why there are injured and broken people everywhere. In the same way, seeing sinners or hypocrites in church should not turn you away. It should remind you of everyone's need for God's mercy, including the person you see in the mirror.

"Church attendance is as vital to a disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood to a sick man."[15]
—Attributed to Dwight L. Moody

Other people's sins have nothing to do with your personal relationship with God, so don't let them become an excuse for disobediently avoiding His church. That would be like refusing to go to the gym because there are out-of-shape people there. The truth is, the moment any of us walk into a church, it becomes a little less perfect, because in our flesh we bring nothing to God but sin. Yet the more we participate in and grow within His church, the closer we draw to a perfect Jesus, who lovingly removes sin from our lives and shapes us to be productive for His kingdom. God's Word is clear that we are not to neglect gathering with His people.

> *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ***not neglecting to meet together****, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*
> (Hebrews 10:24-25)

© 2026 Kyle Coverdale - Free eBook

[15] Dwight L. Moody, *Talks to Christians*, Moody Publishers, 1958, p. 81. (Earliest identifiable book that printed his quote. Attributed to Moody.)

When Church Feels Intimidating

While churches are often packed full of flawed and hypocritical people, they can still feel intimidating to outsiders because of a handful of perceived "holy roller super-Christians" who seem too good to be true. It's easy to feel out of place and insecure when you are new to church or returning after a long absence. Believe me, I get it. I have been there. It's easy to look around and wonder how some people appear to walk in such righteousness and discipline compared to yourself or the crowd you once ran with. For a long time, that was a mystery to me. I could not understand how they seemed so good compared to me, even though I believed the same things about Jesus they did. That intimidation kept me at a distance. In hindsight, it shouldn't have.

Sometimes when a worldly person who is trying to get right with God is brought into a group of more mature believers, things can get awkward. When I decided to return to church as a newly single person after my divorce, I was invited by some people from the church singles group to go out and watch the NBA Finals. I was nervous but excited to get to know everyone as we sat at a large table of about fifteen people. It already felt uncomfortable meeting all these people that I assumed were way better Christians than me, and then something happened that took the awkwardness to a whole new level. Over at the corner table across from us sat a couple making out in an over-the-top fashion. They went on for an uncomfortably long time while all of these churchy people stared in disbelief at what they were witnessing at the local Buffalo Wild Wings.

After a few minutes, I got up to use the restroom. As I walked past the couple, they immediately stopped kissing and the guy shouted at the top of his lungs, "Cavender! What's up, bro?!" Oh … no … You have got to be kidding me. He was a wild fraternity brother of mine, thrilled to see me after all these years.

©2023 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

We hugged, caught up for a moment, and then I headed toward the restroom, afraid to even glance back at the church table. My first thought was, "Welcome back to church, Cavender. This is going to be awkward." In many ways, it can be compared to the first time you walk into a gym. If you show up sixty pounds overweight and can barely lift a small amount of weight, it can feel intimidating when the person next to you looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger. What's easy to forget is that "church Arnold" had to start somewhere too. It took time, discipline, and consistency for him to get to where he is. When you see someone at church who seems far beyond you in their faith, don't be intimidated. Be motivated. Understand that he or she is simply further down the Narrow Road than you. Be encouraged by what lies ahead as you continue walking that same path.

I am willing to bet that the spiritually mature people in your church want nothing more than to help you grow stronger in your walk with Christ. In humility, many of them would tell you that if they can grow spiritually, so can you. Those are the people you want to befriend, learn from, and lean on for encouragement. The only difference between you and them is that Arnold might be a lot more gifted at bicep curls than you could ever be. On the other hand, you might be way more gifted at cardio. In the same way, a gifted pastor may be far more effective at preaching than you could ever be, while you may be far more effective at empathizing with others and serving them. We all have spiritual gifts. The key is developing them through discipline and obedience so that we can faithfully fulfill our roles in God's kingdom.

> *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in*

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Tate LLC

proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:4-8)

Don't Just Go to Church. Be the Church!

If you think you are too full of faults and sin to serve God, consider the following: Moses was a murderer with a speech impediment, yet God used him to lead His people out of Egypt and to write most of the Torah. David committed adultery and premeditated murder, yet he wrote many of the Psalms and was described as a man after God's own heart. Paul persecuted Christians, imprisoned them, and approved of their deaths, yet he became an apostle who wrote much of the New Testament. The twelve disciples of Jesus were mostly uneducated, ordinary men, yet they boldly spread the gospel, and it continues to spread today because of their obedience.

Years ago, I was a hurt, prideful, heavy-drinking, divorced, lustful fool who walked into church completely broken and intimidated by the perceived super-Christians. Now, by God's grace, I find myself in a place where He has led me to write a book about drawing closer to Him. It still amazes me. Many times throughout this process I have asked, "Who am I to write anything, considering I was once so far gone?" And each time, the Spirit has whispered back the thought in my head, "You are an ambassador for Christ and an instrument for His glory, so get back to writing."

Who you are at this moment does not define who God can make you for His kingdom. No matter how many dents, dings, and breakdowns your Car has had, God specializes in restoring what is broken and making it run like new. He uses flawed

© 2020 IVP Customer Free eBook

people all the time to accomplish great things for His glory. So don't just go to church. Be the church!

> *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.* (Romans 12:11)

Consider that the church is described in the Bible as the body of Christ. Is that something to neglect, or is it something to serve, nurture, and strengthen under Christ's authority? We cannot truly follow Jesus while ignoring our role within His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). The church is God's primary means for believers to serve Him together in unity.

> *After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body.* (Ephesians 5:29-30, NIV)

When our church experience is reduced to listening to a sermon once a week, it's the equivalent of going to the gym once a week just to watch someone else work out. That kind of disengagement neglects not only our spiritual health but also our role in the body of Christ. It's the equivalent of causing the body of Christ to be missing a limb. How do you think God feels about believers who handicap His church through apathy (Revelation 3:15-16)?

I remember how frustrated I was as a high school football player when I rode the bench and stood on the sidelines during my junior year. It really bothered me. Then I finally became a starter my senior year, and it was awesome. Being off the sidelines and in the game felt like being released from prison. It was exciting and fulfilling. I even made second team all-district, 1996 for the Plano Wildcats. I know, I know, very impressive. Be sure to ask for an autographed football if you see me. The sad part is that back then, I was completely satisfied with sitting on

© 2025 The Covenant Tree eBook

the sidelines when it came to church. A meaningless high school football season mattered more to me than the God-given purpose for my life. How dumb is that? How many of us are focused on some other game instead of the only one that truly matters?

Sitting on the church sidelines for years led me into apathy. Over time, that apathy made it easy to feel detached, as if my involvement did not matter. I wasted so many years that should have been devoted to God and used by Him to make an impact. I regret that deeply. But when I finally woke up from that apathy, I went all in serving in church. Through those serving experiences, I started growing rapidly in my faith and began building spiritual muscle like a little mini-Arnold. I was amazed at what I had been missing, and I started to realize that the perceived holy roller super-Christians were really no different from me. They had just been on the Narrow Road longer than I had. If you are sitting on the sidelines of church, don't waste another minute. You will not regret stepping into the biggest game of your life, the game you were created for: glorifying God by serving His kingdom and living on mission. When we serve out of joyful obedience for all that Christ has done for us, we become part of something far bigger than ourselves: His body.

We often make excuses that we are not ready or equipped to serve. But once we become followers of Christ, we are called to step forward in faith and jump wholeheartedly into serving Him. Even when we feel in over our heads, God works through us to accomplish His purposes. Every believer is uniquely gifted to serve and is empowered by the Holy Spirit to do meaningful work. Mature believers don't become mature by sitting on the sidelines. It's the serving that matures you. You may make mistakes along the way, but it's better to serve and stumble than to never serve at all. Don't fear mistakes. Learn from them. Pursue God, obey His call, and use the gifts He has given you so that you can grow and strengthen the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

There are helpful online surveys that can assist you in discovering your spiritual gifts. Some are posted at narrowroad.life/gifts. Once you have an idea of where you are gifted, seek out church leadership to find where you can serve within the body. Over time, you can develop those gifts and become a powerful instrument for God's glory. One aspect of serving that has been especially beneficial to my growth is placing myself in roles where I am heavily relied upon. If I don't show up, it's a problem. If I don't set a good example, it's a problem. If I don't equip myself with God's Word, it's a problem. By stepping into these responsibilities, I have found the best accountability I could ever ask for, and it has helped me grow immensely. Put yourself in a position of service where you are relied upon, and it will grow you, too.

> *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
> (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

"It is only serving God that is doing immortal work; it is only living for Christ that is living at all."[16]
— Charles Spurgeon

© 2026 KYE Coyner • FreeEbook

The Challenges of Serving

Maybe you haven't served in a church ministry before. If that's the case, I thought it might be helpful to share some of my serving experiences to help you know what to expect and hopefully guide

[16] Charles H. Spurgeon, "Living, Loving, Lasting," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol.12 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866).

you away from making some of the same mistakes I've made. While serving the Lord through various church ministries has been a joyful journey, it has not always been smooth. Serving in ministry and spiritual leadership have often felt like trial by fire for me. One thing I learned quickly is that you cannot make everyone happy. My heart in ministry has always been to help people draw closer to Christ, but at times my strong personality has gotten in the way of being effective. I have had to learn humility. I have had to grow in love for others. I have had to recognize that being strong in certain spiritual gifts does not excuse neglecting areas of weakness. I have also learned that some people process emotions and truth very differently than I do.

Serving and leadership in the church can sometimes be confusing and frustrating. I have experienced moments where I offered biblical truth and received completely opposite reactions. Once, while leading a Sunday school class, I shared Scripture about sin, the fear of the Lord and God's wrath. Afterward, a woman thanked me and said it was exactly what she needed to hear. Later that same day, I received a call from someone else who strongly criticized me, saying I was going to scare people away from church and that he was leaving the group because of me. When I asked if I had said anything that was not in the Bible, he said no, but that did not seem to matter. It was confusing.

Another time, two close friends of mine faced major tests of faith when they both learned around the same time that their newborn babies had Down syndrome. I met with each of them separately to offer encouragement and shared what I would have wanted someone to say to me in that situation. I told them, "God has you, and He has plans for you and your child. This may be His will for your life to draw you closer to Him." One friend thanked me and said it was exactly what he needed to hear, and our friendship grew stronger. The other told me it was the worst thing I could have said to him, and he soon distanced himself from me. At the time, it was confusing. I eventually learned that

© 2025 Kyle Covington Free eBook

sometimes people just want you to listen. You don't always have to provide advice or answers. Sometimes you just need to be there for them.

These confusing experiences taught me that none of us will ever minister perfectly. We all have blind spots and weaknesses. We will sometimes fail. Everyone is different, and you will never make everyone happy. Criticism and even persecution are part of serving the Lord. But when our hearts remain focused on loving God and loving people, He continues shaping us into more effective servants over time. I have seen that clearly in my own life as the Lord has softened my heart toward people with personalities very different from mine.

There were many times in my early church life when I honestly wanted nothing to do with certain people that I considered weird, awkward, or lacking social skills. God had to break me of that attitude. Whether through leading marriage ministry, Sunday school, or Bible studies, I quickly learned that I had no control over who walked through the door.

One experience stands out. A guy once joined my Sunday school group who was extremely negative, grumpy, and cynical. Socially, he felt very strange to me. After a few weeks, I had little interest in building a relationship with him. Around that time, I had been announcing an upcoming semester of our church's marriage ministry. I was responsible for assigning the small groups, and when I found out he and his wife had signed up, I made the executive decision to ensure he was not placed in mine.

By the end of that ministry cycle, he approached me and asked if I would mentor him through a twelve-step program he realized he desperately needed. God has a sense of humor. I could have made countless excuses, as it was one of the busiest seasons of my life. But the Spirit made it clear I needed to walk with him through this. So I became the mentor for the very

© 2026 Iyke Covington - Free eBook

person I had tried to avoid, meeting with him almost weekly for nearly a year.

As time passed, I learned about the deep trauma he had experienced growing up. Suddenly, much of his behavior made sense. Watching God soften his hardened heart was incredibly rewarding. At the same time, God was softening mine. That experience taught me I needed to become more loving, more patient, and more empathetic. I needed to see people through the lens of Jesus rather than through my own preferences. Many ministry experiences like this have shaped me into a better servant of Christ. I am thankful God has made me less of a church snob and more loving like Jesus, because I desperately needed that change. I share all of this to encourage you to love people well in your serving and to work through relational obstacles in an empathetic way.

Don't Drive Alone

Because I have been broken enough by God's discipline in my own life, I am now deeply aware of how much I need church community and accountability. I know that when my sinful heart is left in isolation, it has the potential to become a ticking time bomb, just waiting to explode into sin. In my experience, those who intentionally avoid church community often lack a full awareness of how broken we can become and how much support we all need to walk in the light as followers of Christ. We were never meant to drive alone. One of the greatest hindrances to discipleship in our churches is when people don't get plugged into authentic, Christ-centered community.

> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* (Hebrews 3:13)

© 2025 Kyle Cavender • TrueNorthLook

As you read the next few chapters, you will see that our journeys are often filled with obstacles. We need help and support to persevere in Christ so that we don't run out of Fuel alone on the side of the road. Without community, we are far more vulnerable to being towed back to the things of this world or drifting from the Narrow Road onto the Wide Path. All it takes is giving in to a single temptation to get off course. We need community to help carry one another's burdens when we face the trials of life (Galatians 6:2). We need encouragement to do what is right, and we must be willing to encourage our Christian brothers and sisters in return. We need accountability to remain in the Word, to stay on the Narrow Road, and to resist embracing the values of this world. How can we truly serve the body of Christ while remaining isolated from church community? Isolation is a form of selfishness, and it leads us away from wisdom.

> *Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.* (Proverbs 18:1)

Look at Jesus. Did He isolate Himself? No. He lived in close community with the twelve He had chosen. When He faced moments of deep anguish, He invited His closest friends to be with Him and openly shared His sorrow with them (Matthew 26:36-38). If even Jesus did not choose isolation, who are we to believe we can thrive on our own? We need community, and who we surround ourselves with matters. When you surround yourself with wise followers of Christ, you are far more likely to live as a wise follower of Christ. When you surround yourself with fools, you are far more likely to live like a fool and suffer harm (Proverbs 13:20).

A word of advice: when seeking out community, be careful not to fall into the trap of joining a group that functions more like a social club than a place of spiritual growth. If the group you are part of is not drawing you closer to the Lord and helping

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

you walk in holiness, it's worth prayerfully considering whether you should find another one.

The Right Church

When getting involved with a church, it's of utmost importance to verify that it's doctrinally sound and aligned with the Word of God. Unfortunately, some false teachers and churches have drifted away from what Scripture clearly teaches (1 Timothy 1:5-7). Don't settle for a church that simply tells people what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). Protect your heart and mind by finding a church that stands firmly on the biblical teachings of Christ and the full counsel of God's Word. Believers have had to exercise vigilance about these things since the very earliest days of the church, and we still need to do it today. Paul once visited a small city called Berea and attempted to minister to Jews in the synagogue. Rather than accepting his message blindly, they carefully examined the Old Testament Scriptures to confirm that what Paul was teaching was true. The example of the Bereans remains instructive for us today. We must exercise the same discernment and ensure that our churches are faithfully teaching the truth. Don't automatically trust pastors simply because they speak with confidence or authority. Trust the Word of God above all else; and as you grow, you will be more and more able to make sure the church you belong to does the same.

> *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* (Acts 17:11)

A church should be more concerned with discipleship and the faithful preaching of God's Word than with entertaining an audience. Biblical discipleship must take priority over an

© 2025 Kyle Snyder Ministries

emphasis on attendance numbers. Scripture should be the primary ingredient of the church, leading believers to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). With this in mind, I want to share something I learned through my own church experiences.

As I became more involved in church life, I began to pay more attention to how churches allocate their resources and whether their spending reflects biblical priorities. Often, a shocking amount of money is spent on things that hold little eternal value. While I have no issue with using quality tools—such as a sound system—to honor God, a serious problem arises when a church prioritizes hundreds of thousands of dollars on production while many in the congregation don't read the Bible for themselves. As my understanding of Scripture deepened, I felt a strong conviction about this imbalance. Looking back on my own journey to Christ, churches did very little to disciple me. I was primarily discipled through my own commitment to reading a study Bible that provided helpful context and clarity. Because of this, I became passionate about ensuring that everyone in my church had access to a study Bible. My favorites are the Life Application Study Bible and the ESV Study Bible, but there are many great versions available.

It quickly became clear to me that making study Bibles available often had a greater eternal impact than many of the things churches commonly spend money on. When people are given a nice leather-bound study Bible, they value it. When they hear how deeply it has shaped someone else's life, they become curious. When pastors use the giving of Bibles as a tool to emphasize the necessity of reading Scripture, people are stirred to action. And when individuals begin reading the Bible for themselves, their lives are transformed. It's my hope that churches would prioritize placing the Word of God into people's hands rather than spending resources on things that don't matter for eternity. Once you realize the difference a study Bible makes, I encourage you to challenge your church to ensure that every

© 2025 Kyle Cayton - Free eBook

attendee owns and knows how to use a study Bible so that the word of Christ dwells in them richly (Colossians 3:16).

The mission of the church extends far beyond filling a building. Churches are called to make disciples. Read the Great Commission of Christ:

> *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19-20)

Too often today, churches seem to rush past the command to make disciples of all nations, move quickly to baptize for the sake of metrics, and then skip the call to teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded. Make sure the church you attend is not skipping any part of this calling. It's estimated that over three billion people in the world have never heard the name of Jesus.[17] When I first learned this, my immediate reaction was disbelief. With so many churches—especially in America—how could this be? Sadly, the reality is that many churches are not fully carrying out Christ's Great Commission. Look for a church that's doing its part to reach all nations: one that partners with organizations that are actively working to reach unreached people groups and to invest resources accordingly.

In summary, church should be a place where believers grow in spiritual maturity alongside others striving to do God's will. It should be a place of mutual encouragement and accountability to God's Word. It should be a place where we gather to sing praise and worship to our Creator and give thanks for what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. It should be a place where we

© 2025 Kyle Coverdale - Free eBook

[17] David Platt, David Burnette, "Why Unreached People Groups Are Hard to Reach," Radical, April 5, 2024, https://radical.net/article/unreached-hard-to-reach/

gain wisdom from those further along in their faith so that we can pass that wisdom on to others. It should be a place where we serve God using the spiritual gifts He has given us. Church is more than a building. It's born-again brothers and sisters in Christ joining together as one body to accomplish great things for God's kingdom and for His glory.

> *I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (Matthew 16:18)

Make sure you are making regular stops at the Service Station during your Narrow Road journey.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Reflection:

1) Church Involvement

- What is your current church situation? If you have a church home, how involved are you?

- Are you merely attending a church, or are you actively fulfilling your God-appointed role in the body of Christ? Remember, do not just go to church. Be the church.

- If you are not currently connected to a local, biblical church, what steps will you take to commit and become involved?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

2) Spiritual Gifts and Service

- How are you using your spiritual gifts for the kingdom of God? Are you serving faithfully, or are your gifts lying dormant?

- If you are unsure of your spiritual gifts, what steps will you take to discover and develop them? (Spiritual gift surveys are available at narrowroad.life/gifts and mature believers who know you well may be able to share some insights on where you are most equipped to serve.)

3) Pursuing Christian Community

- Who are the closest believers in your life, those who truly know you and speak truth into your life?

- Are any of them farther along on the Narrow Road than you are?

- Are you intimidated by their spiritual growth or encouraged by it? Why?

- If you are not walking in intentional Christian community, what specific steps will you take to build meaningful relationships? Don't drive alone!

4) Commitment to God's Word

- Are you confident that your church is centered on the faithful teaching of Scripture? Why or why not?

- Are you blindly trusting your church to feed you truth, or are you feeding yourself spiritually? What steps can you take to equip yourself to test what is being taught against Scripture?

- When you have a specific question or concern, do you know how to find the answer in Scripture? If not, do you have a mentor or spiritual leader who can help you develop this skill?

© 2016 Kyle Cavender • FreeEBook

5) Making Disciples

- How is your church participating in the Great Commission?

- What role do you personally play in making disciples locally and globally?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

PART IV

RESTORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

© 2026 Kyle Cavender FaceBook

Chapter 10: Exits and Road Hazards

Temptations and God's Discipline, Part 1

The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
whoever guards his way preserves his life.
(Proverbs 16:17)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Baggage, Exits, and U-Turns

When we begin the Narrow Road journey, we all carry worldly habits formed before following Christ. In the Drive Illustration, Baggage represents the sin struggles that weigh down our Dream Cars and slow our spiritual growth. As we continue down the Narrow Road, that Baggage begins to lighten. The longer we abide in Christ, the more our character changes, shifting from naturally pursuing sinful desires to increasingly pursuing God's righteousness.

In the Drive Illustration, Exits represent Satan's temptations to leave the Narrow Road for the Wide Path. He knows exactly what Baggage we are carrying and targets our areas of weakness. When we take an Exit, we step into sin and depart from God's will. Yet by His grace, we are immediately offered a U-Turn of repentance. When we confess our sin and turn back, we are restored to a right and abiding relationship with the Lord as we return to the Narrow Road (Zechariah 1:3, 1 John 1:9).

However, if we ignore these U-Turns and persist in willful defiance on the Wide Path, we invite serious consequences (Proverbs 21:16). Sanctification is meant to be a continuous journey, but it often becomes delayed and painful when we take our eyes off the Narrow Road and give in to temptation.

> *Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*
> (Proverbs 4:25-27)

© 2016 Kyle Covington - Free eBook

Throughout our journeys, every one of us experiences seasons of struggling with sin because we decided to take an Exit. Sometimes we quickly recognize our error and wisely take the U-Turn. Other times, we foolishly pass by those opportunities and remain on the Wide Path. This is why it's so important that we don't drive alone, and remain willing to receive loving rebuke from fellow believers (Proverbs 12:15). We need the guidance and reminders of our Christian brothers and sisters, because it's easy to drift away from the Narrow Road.

> *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Road Hazards and Car Wrecks

All it takes is one Exit, followed by repeatedly ignoring U-Turns, for us to lose sight of the fact that we are headed in the wrong direction. Because of His love for us, God will not allow us to remain on a path away from Him indefinitely without correction.

Eventually, He brings Road Hazards of His discipline into our lives, sometimes resulting in a painful Car Wreck.

> *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*
> (Hebrews 12:7-11, NIV)

As painful as God's discipline can be, it's far better than facing His wrath. When we submit to it, discipline produces a harvest of righteousness and peace in our lives. However, if we remain stiff-necked and ignore God's correction, persistent rebellion can harden our hearts and lead to spiritual ruin (Proverbs 29:1).

> *The Lord detests the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue righteousness. Stern discipline awaits anyone who leaves the path; the one who hates correction will die.* (Proverbs 15:9-10, NIV)

Much of the Old Testament records a repeated cycle in the history of God's people. They rebelled, God disciplined them, and some returned to Him. When rebellion persisted, things never went well for long. The repetition of this pattern serves as a warning and we should learn from their example (1 Corinthians

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

10:6-12). We desperately need to remain on the Narrow Road by abiding in Christ and learning from God's discipline.

> *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.*
> *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*
> *I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.*
> *If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.*
> *I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.* (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75, 92)

At some point in our Christian journey, most of us experience a similar cycle. We turn away, experience discipline, and are given an opportunity to return. Although we know we should remain on the Narrow Road, we often convince ourselves that a small detour is not a big deal. God confronted this mindset through the prophet Jeremiah.

> You went after worthless things and became worthless.
> You have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, for broken cisterns that hold no water.
> You have done this to yourself by forsaking Me when I was leading you the right way.
> (Jeremiah 2:5, 13, 17 paraphrased)

To be clear, temptations are permitted by God, but they do not originate from Him. Temptation arises from Satan and his demonic forces, appealing to our sinful nature and seeking to lure us away from holiness and sanctification. Though temptation can feel overwhelming, God always provides a way out through the power of His Word and the Holy Spirit so that we can keep

© 2026 Kyle Covington FreeBook

driving straight or take a U-Turn. However, when sin is allowed to take root and fully mature, it brings death.

> *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* (James 1:13-15)

Satan even tried to tempt Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). Each time, Jesus responded by quoting Scripture from memory. The Bible refers to the Word of God as the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). Jesus wielded that sword skillfully, and we must do the same. As followers of Christ, we need to know God's Word and store it in our hearts. Without it, we are basically just holding the handle of a sword without the blade. That is not going to accomplish much in fighting against Satan's temptations. From personal experience, I find that any temptation has far less effect on me if I've recently been in the Word. By abiding in His Word, we have the strength and power to overcome.

> *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* (Psalm 119:9-11)

Read 2 Samuel 11-12 to see how David, a man after God's own heart, became fully entangled by sin. If an anointed man of God like David can fall prey to temptation, then you better believe any of us can.

© 2025 Kyle Compton Free eBook

The Battle of Our Lives

The journey down the Narrow Road is nothing short of an all-out war (Ephesians 6:12). The world lies under Satan's influence, and we live behind enemy lines, facing daily attacks from demonic forces (1 John 5:19). Every Exit presents an opportunity for destruction in our lives. If we are not actively fighting sin, our flesh will surrender without resistance. Satan and his army relentlessly deceive and attack at our weakest points, seeking to pull us off the Narrow Road and rob us of the abundant life Jesus offers.

The following is not an exhaustive list of struggles, but it highlights some of the most common temptations in our culture. Identify where you are most vulnerable, and pick up the sword of the Spirit by memorizing the Scriptures in Appendix A to fight the battles that target you.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

Substance Abuse

Imagine a man who has struggled with alcohol and drug addiction but, by God's grace, has remained sober for a long period of time. He begins to feel confident that he has overcome these issues, even as his walk with Christ has become apathetic and casual. Then one day he has a really stressful day at work, where his boss tells him that his job is on the line. As he leaves work for lunch, he begins reflecting on how his marriage and home life are also struggling. It all becomes too difficult and burdensome, to the point that he just needs to take a break and breathe for a minute. Then suddenly there is the Exit sign from Satan, offering a twelve pack of ice-cold beer if he will just take the Exit now. Unprepared to fight off the temptation, he takes the Exit. Because he is driving alone with no church community, he has no one in his life to call for help or to hold him accountable. He starts with just a couple of seemingly innocent beers and

feels relaxed for the first time in a long while. This leads him to go right past the next few U-Turns. Before he knows it, he is drinking beer number twelve while on the phone with his old drug dealer, with several missed calls from his wife and his boss.

God disciplines those He loves, and to keep His child from going further down the Wide Path, He allows a Road Hazard to wreck the Car. The figurative Car Wreck plays out through an arrest for public intoxication, the loss of his job, and the painful confrontation with his wife after promising her this would never happen again. Thankfully, the discipline wakes him up and draws him back toward abiding in Christ the way he should. Sadly, he now finds himself right back in the struggle he had worked so hard to avoid. That is how Satan operates. He targets us where we are most vulnerable. Some possible Car Wrecks of alcohol and substance abuse include legal trouble, loss of employment, loss of relationships, ongoing addiction, and health problems.

If only this man had been prepared to wield the sword of the Spirit by memorizing Scripture, he would have been able to use God's Word, just as Jesus did, to thwart Satan's temptations. Equipped with these truths, he could have driven past the Exits and avoided the Road Hazards altogether.

This sin struggle is not foreign to me. I have definitely had an unhealthy relationship with alcohol at different times in my life. In fact, just recently, God opened my eyes to some things related to this subject. In college, I began abusing alcohol regularly with the intention of getting drunk, and I created a reputation for myself as someone who drank far too much. I was dealing with a lot of heartbreak and hurt, but I also genuinely liked to drink. It was fun to me, and if I'm honest, I still enjoy drinking for similar reasons in social settings today. The difference now is that I carry conviction from the Holy Spirit about getting drunk. The problem is that "drunk" can become a subjective term with an ever-shifting boundary line once rationalizations begin to take root.

©2025 Kyle Cavanaugh, Free eBook

For several years, I felt comfortable drinking as long as it did not lead me into sin. I would say that most of the time it did not. However, there have been occasions where my ongoing struggle with loose lips has been magnified by the loss of inhibition that alcohol provides. Careless words come out of my mouth even more easily after I have had some drinks. Recently, I prayed that God would help me with this area of my life, and I was honest with Him that I like to drink. I had not really experienced any major consequences, but a couple of Scriptures began weighing on my heart.

> *All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things build people up.* (1 Corinthians 10:23, NASB)

> *Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.* (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Alcohol is permissible, but it's certainly not always beneficial for my physical or spiritual health. I believe it qualifies as something that can contaminate both body and spirit, and I wouldn't say that it has been helpful in perfecting holiness in my life. The reality is that Jesus had to die on the cross even for the small percentage of times when I sinned in relation to alcohol. That was a problem, and it needed to be addressed.

God answered my prayer in a way that did not initially feel so great. My doctors determined that I needed medication long-term because of a heart condition that runs in my family. One unexpected discovery was that this medication does not interact well with alcohol and can cause liver damage. At first, this frustrated me. Then God impressed a truth on my heart that I could not ignore. Suddenly, I found myself deeply concerned

© 2025 Kyle Coverdale • FreeBook

about limiting alcohol because I did not want to harm my physical health. I sensed God asking me, "Where has this concern been all these years when it came to perfecting holiness out of reverence for Me?" I was convicted. It felt like a gut punch. I had been far too careless with alcohol for far too long when it came to honoring God. Thankfully, God gave me guard rails through a physical health necessity that now also serve as guard rails for my spiritual health.

I share this because I know I am not alone in my rationalizations with alcohol. Anything that leads us into sin needs to be cut off (Matthew 18:7-9). Even though this has been frustrating at times, I am grateful for the guardrails God has placed in my life to help me cut off this area of sin. Something to keep in mind, especially if you are a young person or a parent: research has consistently shown that individuals who begin drinking alcohol at an early age are at a significantly greater risk of developing alcohol dependence later in life.[18] For that reason alone, young people should think carefully before taking their first drink.

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to battle the temptations of substance abuse.

Sexual Immorality

When I read the story of Adam and Eve, I sometimes think they had it easier than we do. All they had to do was avoid one tree. They could eat from every other tree in the garden. Today, the challenge feels almost opposite. When it comes to sexual purity, Scripture tells us that we are permitted one tree, a spouse of the opposite sex. Every other tree is off limits. That is a far more

[18] "Get the Facts About Underage Drinking," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, last updated January 2026, https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/underage-drinking.

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh - Free eBook

difficult challenge. We are surrounded by sexual temptation at every turn. Satan has gone on the offensive with sexually explicit Exit Signs that are nearly everywhere. He often attacks in seasons of loneliness, rejection, insecurity, or hardness caused by past sin. What's worse is that our culture glorifies sexual immorality far more than it glorifies God and even suggests that marriage is merely a social construct. The Bible says otherwise (Mark 10:6-8).

When I was growing up, the common question was how far someone could go around the bases before crossing the line into sexual sin. The truth is that we should not even step into the batter's box. This is one of the clearest Scriptures that captures God's standard for sexual relations:

> *But among you there must not be **even a hint** of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, because these are improper for God's holy people.* (Ephesians 5:3, NIV)

The Car Wrecks of this sin take many forms. Unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, emotional trauma, broken homes, pornography addiction, and lasting regret are just a few. God designed one man and one woman as the foundation of a healthy family. Children need both a father and a mother, according to God's design. The results of ignoring this are evident. Fatherless homes are associated with higher rates of crime, incarceration, substance abuse, school dropout, teen pregnancy, and psychological struggles.[19] Sexual immorality clouds judgment. It can be an adulterous affair that tears a family apart, a one-night stand that leads to pregnancy, or premarital sex that rushes people into marriage without wisdom. When sex becomes central to a relationship instead of Christ, destruction

© 2026 The Covenant Free eBook

[19] "The Father Absence Crisis in America," National Fatherhood Initiative, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic

often follows. Simply put, God does not bless sexual immorality. This sin does not only damage individual lives. It can affect children and even future generations. Through years of marriage ministry, I have seen countless families devastated by sexual sin. These wounds are not confined to spouses. Children carry them as well.

Pornography deserves direct attention. It is undeniably a form of sexual immorality, and Jesus makes it clear that looking with lustful intent is adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:28). Pornography numbs God's design for intimacy, rewires the brain, and can lead to sexual dysfunction. Much of what is viewed online is directly connected to exploitation and trafficking. When viewing pornography, it's worth remembering that the person on the screen is someone's child, sibling, or spouse. God made that person in His image and not for your sexual gratification. If pornography is part of your life, today is the day to stop. If you stumble again, immediately take the U-Turn. God is powerful enough to help you overcome this sin. Abide in Him and stay on the Narrow Road so that the Spirit will grow your self-control.

> *For just as you presented the parts of your body as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your body's parts as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*
> (Romans 6:19, NASB)

© 2026 Kyle Cavaliere Free eBook

If you are single, ask yourself how you are doing with sexual purity. One day, you may want marriage and a family. Consider whether you desire a spouse who is emotionally healthy, sexually pure, and free from the damage of sexual sin. Hold yourself to the same standard. Don't cheat before you meet. You will not regret it. The world will label you extreme, foolish, or a Bible-thumping prude because it does not want to confront its own guilt (John 3:20-21). Don't give in. God will not shield us from

the consequences of disobedience in this area. If you desire a blessed marriage, begin prioritizing purity today.

Honor God, your spouse, and yourself with your body. I did not do this in my past, and it remains one of my deepest regrets. The shame and heartbreak were real, but so is the healing Christ provided. If you think purity is a lost cause and no longer possible because of past failure, that is a lie from Satan to keep you from getting back on the Narrow Road. Purity is about repentance, obedience, and honoring the One who died for you. Obedience protects us from consequences that harm both ourselves and others. Avoid the Exits at all costs. It's never worth it.

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to battle the temptations of sexual immorality.

Lying

Do you struggle with lying? This sin can be a slippery slope. We start with one lie, which leads to another, and before long lying can become more and more commonplace in our lives. Jesus calls Satan "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44), while He calls Himself "the Truth" (John 14:6). As believers who desire to model our lives after Christ, telling the truth should matter to us in every area of life. Lying, or living a lie, follows the example of Satan and stands in direct opposition to what Jesus represents.

By God's power, we can reverse course and stop lying. One of the Lord's Ten Commandments addresses lying because it deeply displeases Him (Exodus 20:16). The Car Wrecks associated with this sin often include loss of trust, broken relationships, and a damaged reputation. God cares about our character and desires that we represent Him well. We cannot do that with a dishonest tongue or a dishonest life. Store Scripture in your heart so that when you speak or respond to others, you are prepared to bypass any temptation to lie.

© 2025 Vine Covington • Free eBook

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to battle the temptations to lie.

Distraction and Apathy

It's incredibly easy these days to get sucked into the culture of American comforts and pursuits. We constantly indulge in smartphones, social media, television, movies, sports, concerts, video games, political news, travel, fishing, golfing, and the list goes on. There is no shortage of things to distract us from living the lives we are called to live. While these activities are not inherently sinful, they can act as a barometer of our spiritual condition. Satan continually bombards us with Exit Signs of comfort, entertainment, and pleasure to pull us off the Narrow Road and distract us from what truly matters. When we allow these things to take priority over our relationship with God and our responsibilities to Him, we begin drifting back toward the world.

As followers of Christ, most of us know that we should go to church for fellowship, worship, spiritual nourishment, and to fulfill our roles in the body of Christ. Yet it's amazing how easy it can be to bypass church or other spiritual commitments when an Exit Sign tempts us to sleep in, be lazy, or choose something more pleasurable in the moment.

I am a huge football and baseball fan. Historically, it has been very easy for me to skip church or Bible study if there was a big game I wanted to watch. In the past, if something church related interfered with my social time or relaxation, it was usually a deal breaker. One thing I have learned is that distraction and apathy both feed selfishness. The more selfish we become, the more unlike Christ we become. When we prioritize worldly pleasures over serving God, we inevitably grow distant from Him. He must come first, and He is clear about this.

© 2025 Five Covenant Free eBook

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.
(Matthew 22:37-38, words of Jesus)

Evaluate the condition of your heart against the following symptoms:

Am I pursuing holiness, showing reverence and loving the Lord through obedience when I _____?

- regularly sleep in or go to sporting events instead of going to church,
- binge watch hours of television instead of reading the Bible,
- slip in and out of church unnoticed and never get involved in the body of Christ,
- spend all my money on personal pleasures instead of stewarding some toward God's kingdom,
- prioritize old worldly friendships instead of cultivating strong Christian ones,
- become selfish with my time instead of being a faithful friend,
- grow lazy at work instead of giving my best effort for the Lord.

© 2020 Kate Cavender • FreeeBook

Do any of these apply to you? When we fall into apathy, dysfunction often follows. The Car Wrecks are often very painful. These may include a struggling home life, divorce, career setbacks, strained relationships, shallow Christian community, or a damaged reputation. Worst of all is becoming distant from God, which leaves us vulnerable to a hardened heart.

As someone who was once extremely apathetic and distracted, I can offer some biblical advice for how to overcome

this. When you find yourself apathetic, remember your call to fear the Lord and that you will give an account for how you have lived (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Jesus warns that He will spit the lukewarm out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). When you find yourself distracted, fix your eyes on eternity and the brevity of life. Set your minds on things that are eternal (Colossians 3:2). We are short on time. Make your life count for what has eternal value, because *"you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes"* (James 4:14).

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to battle the temptations of distraction and apathy.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 11: Exits and Road Hazards

Temptations and God's Discipline, Part 2

Do not set foot on the path of the wicked
or walk in the way of evildoers.
Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from
it and go on your way.
(Proverbs 4:14-15)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

In Chapter 10 we looked at several of the most common Exits. Here are a few more that often entangle believers, along with the discipline and consequences that follow when we ignore God's warnings.

Stealing and Greed

I am about to confess something that is both embarrassing and ridiculous. When I was in middle school, let's just say the girls were not exactly drawn to my braces, acne, and husky looks during those awkward years. Since girls were not part of my world back then, I replaced that deficiency by nerding out and becoming obsessed with baseball cards. The craziness all started one day when my mom took me to the grocery store. While she shopped for groceries, I shopped for baseball cards. In the early 1990s, the baseball card industry was booming. Stores had shelves full of them. My mom would usually buy me one pack, but one pack was never enough. I wanted more and more.

Back in those days, Starter jackets with big pocket pouches in the front were very popular and I had a Dallas Cowboys one that I wore everywhere. I would look both ways, check for cameras, and shove a big box of cards into the pouch. Each box held about twenty-four packs and was probably worth around a hundred dollars. I would casually walk out of the store with my mom as if nothing had happened. When I got home, I would lock the bathroom door and start opening packs. It felt like a rush. I did this more than once, and eventually I pulled my friends into it. It spiraled quickly. I even started scamming neighborhood kids with terrible trades and selling cards for far more than they were worth. My heart was becoming greedy, deceptive, and hardened. It was the first time I can remember sin truly entangling me.

The stealing and cheating character of my heart eventually showed up in other ways. I got caught skipping classes and cheating on tests. That did not go well when the principal called home. My dad had been a teacher, coach, principal, and drug counselor. He was a strict disciplinarian. I feared my dad enough to tone down my behavior, but the spiritual darkness in my heart remained because I lacked a proper fear of the Lord. A couple of decades later, I told my dad about the baseball cards. He was shocked and said he felt like a failure as a father. That hurt, because it was not his fault. It was mine. I valued and pursued worldly things more than I valued and pursued God. I sometimes wonder how different my life might have been if I had pursued the Holy Spirit with the same intensity that I pursued worthless pieces of cardboard.

Even though I was never caught for stealing the cards, those sinful choices led to more sinful choices later in life. Greed can take control of a heart and make stealing feel almost addictive. It promises a rush but always leaves you empty. The Car Wrecks of stealing may include a hurt reputation, loss of trust, a physical altercation, arrest, a criminal record, or prison. God will not shield us from the consequences of disobedience in this area.

© 2026 The Covenant Tree eBook

Maybe you have never shoplifted like I did. Maybe you have never robbed a bank or stolen a car. But have you cheated on your taxes? Used someone else's account password to avoid paying for your own subscription? Failed to return something you borrowed? Kept something that was sent to you in error? Going even broader, have you stolen someone's time by being chronically late? Taken credit for work you did not do? Stolen honor that belonged to someone else? There are many ways to steal. It may be easy to rationalize these things in the culture we live in; but if we belong to Christ, we are not of this world. We are called to be set apart in holiness … to treat others the way we want to be treated (Luke 6:31), even if no one ever knows about it but you and God. That means living by a different standard as followers of Jesus.

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to battle temptations to steal or be greedy.

Gluttony

1 Corinthians 6:19 calls our bodies a "temple of the Holy Spirit." While the immediate context refers to sexual immorality, the broader biblical principle is that we are to honor God with our bodies. Drug use, alcohol abuse, and gluttony can all violate that calling. Since we have already covered sexual immorality and substance abuse, let's address the one that seems to be most commonly overlooked by Christians: gluttony. Gluttony is over-indulgence. It's a desire of the flesh that can harm us and dishonor God. In America, we have an abundance of almost everything, especially food. Many of the things that taste the best are the worst for us, and living in constant abundance tests our self-control.

For me, it's pizza, Mexican food, and ice cream where I am most likely to take the gluttony Exit. I can consume shocking amounts of chips before the fajitas even arrive. I grew up in

© 2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

a family with poor eating habits where I was allowed to eat whatever I wanted, and I became obese during elementary and middle school. I hated how I looked, but I did not want to change how I ate. Football and working out helped me grow out of that stage, but the temptations and habits never fully disappeared. In seasons of undisciplined living, I have gained weight and slipped back into unhealthy patterns.

The Car Wrecks of gluttony can be serious. Heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, increased cancer risk, physical limitations, and shortened lifespan are real possibilities. One of the strongest motivators for health can be remembering that we represent God with our bodies. By honoring Him, we can feel our best, function at our best, and serve Him more effectively. Neglecting our health can shorten our window of opportunity to let our lights shine.

Consider how we are called to be a light to the world. Should we not strive to be our best as ambassadors for Christ? The world often carefully selects people who look and feel their best to represent products that will not matter in eternity. How much more should we seek to represent our Lord well by taking care of ourselves?

I say this knowing full well that I have struggled deeply with food. Before the COVID pandemic, I was in about the best shape of my life. I had a routine of eating healthy and going to the gym daily. When I began working from home, that routine disappeared. The gym was no longer on my way home and the pantry full of kid snacks became far too accessible. Foods I normally would not touch became constant temptations, and I slipped into unhealthy habits again. Within months, I had gained about twenty-five pounds. My clothes stopped fitting. My bloodwork showed high cholesterol. My kids started complaining that I was eating all their snacks. Not great. The real wake-up call came when my son jokingly left a library book about manatees by my bed with a note that said,

© 2025 Kyle Cavanaugh • Free eBook

"Read this book about yourself." When I showed my wife, I half expected her to say something like, "Oh honey, you're not a manatee." I got no such reassurance. Just laughter. It's funny as long as you're not the manatee. Fortunately, us manatees are known to have thick skin.

I eventually got disciplined in my habits again, but years later I am still fighting to lose that extra weight. As you get older, your metabolism slows down, and it takes far more effort to maintain your health. Younger folks, take note. One day it may feel like you are training for the Olympics just to lose one pound, only to see it return if you so much as smell a cookie. Honoring God with our bodies is a far better path than indulging the flesh. The closer we draw to Him, the more we experience the fruit of the Spirit, including self-control. I am making great progress in this now, and the reason is my desire to honor God with my body. That desire comes from the Holy Spirit within me.

On the flip side of this, we must guard against pride and vanity. Once you have gotten into good shape, it's easy to swing from gluttony to the idolatry of appearance. Remember that God does not look at outward appearance but at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). If gluttony is not your struggle and you are in great physical shape, remain humble so that your spiritual life stays healthy as well.

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to battle the temptation of gluttony.

© 2025 NE Covenant Press eBook

Cultural Rebellion

This section may not earn me many popularity points in today's cultural climate, but our society is drifting away from what the Bible clearly teaches, and many self-proclaimed Christians are drifting right along with it. Followers of Jesus are called to hate what God calls evil and to stand up for what He calls good (Romans 12:9, Ephesians 5:11). That is not harshness, bigotry,

or intolerance, as our culture might claim. That is obedience to God Almighty.

Depending on who you surround yourself with and what voices you consistently listen to, you will form a worldview. The question is whether that worldview submits to God's authority or is being shaped by godless, worldly influences that damage your witness and distance you from Christ. Are you being conformed to the pattern of this world, or are you renewing your mind through the Word so that you can discern the will of God (Romans 12:2)? The father of lies and his servants are skilled at disguising themselves as righteous (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Words like "love," "freedom," and "tolerance" are often redefined in ways that blur the line between darkness and light for those who are not abiding in Christ. If we truly want to follow Christ, we cannot allow culture to influence us away from what God has clearly spoken.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

The Cultural Rebellion of Abortion

One of the clearest examples of rebellion in our culture is abortion. Scripture teaches that every human being is created in the image of God and that He forms life in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16). From the very beginning, human life bears His imprint and belongs to Him. The command is clear: "*You shall not murder*" (Exodus 20:13). An unborn child is not a political talking point. It is not tissue. It is not a problematic inconvenience to be solved. It is a human life bearing the image of its Creator. When that life is intentionally ended, something sacred and precious is destroyed. Our culture calls this "choice." Scripture calls it sin.

The god of this world, Satan, blinds minds (2 Corinthians 4:4). That blindness is evident when what should be unthinkable becomes normalized and defended. When we redefine the killing of unborn babies as healthcare and convenience as compassion,

we are no longer thinking biblically. The scale of abortion in the United States is staggering. Over 1.14 million unborn children were aborted in the United States in 2024 alone; and since 1973, more than 67 million unborn children have lost their lives in the United States, and an estimated 1.8 billion worldwide.[20] That should not be met with indifference. That reality should grieve us.

This is not about political parties. It's about obedience to God. Followers of Christ cannot remain neutral where innocent life is concerned. The Car Wrecks from this sin of cultural rebellion include heartbreak, emotional trauma, guilt, and lasting regret. Yet, be sure to note that this is not a sin beyond the reach of grace. For anyone who carries the weight of abortion in their past, the cross of Christ is sufficient even here. Repentance leads to forgiveness. Forgiveness leads to restoration. But repentance requires calling sin what it is.

*See Appendix A for Scriptures that speak of God's care for life in the womb and examine whether your view of abortion aligns with His.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

The Cultural Rebellion Against God's Design for Sex and Identity

Another example of cultural rebellion against God in our time is the rise of gender ideology and the celebration of sexual identities that depart from His design. What previous generations understood to be a rejection of biblical teaching is now widely promoted as something that must not only be tolerated but celebrated (Isaiah 5:20). Scripture is clear that God created humanity male and female (Genesis 1:27) and established marriage as a covenant between one man and one

[20] Number of Abortions - Abortion Counters, Life Matters TV, as of February 12, 2026, https://www.numberofabortions.com/

woman (Genesis 2:24). The New Testament repeatedly warns that sexual immorality, in its various forms, is rebellion that separates people from God apart from repentance. No one has the authority to redefine what God has already defined.

In many public spaces today, lifestyles that contradict God's design are openly glorified, while biblical convictions about sexuality are increasingly marginalized. Words like "love" and "inclusion" are often used to justify what Scripture calls sin. But love does not mean affirming rebellion against God. True love calls people to repentance and restoration. When individuals build their identity around desires rather than around Christ, confusion and instability often follow. A culture that rejects God's design for sex and identity should not be surprised when it experiences the Car Wrecks of brokenness, relational dysfunction, deep emotional turmoil, and suicidal hopelessness. Distance from God never leads to human flourishing.

Every person is worthy of dignity and compassion. But compassion must not require moral compromise. Followers of Christ must hold firmly to God's Word while extending grace to those who struggle. Some who misunderstand this teaching will label it hateful or bigoted and blaspheme what they don't understand (Jude 1:10, 16, 19); but Scripture is not a collection of personal opinions. It is the Word of God, which is truth (John 17:17). When we speak the truth God has revealed in His Word, with a desire to see people rescued from sin, we are not acting in hatred. We are acting in love.

Many who struggle with these sins say they were "born this way," and in one sense, that is true. All of us were born with sinful natures. Our temptations may differ, but our condition is the same. The solution is the same for every one of us: surrender, repentance, and new birth through the Holy Spirit. Salvation and transformation don't come through affirming sin, but through repentant faith and sanctification in Christ. If you are living in rebellion to God's design, or celebrating what He calls sin, this

© 2026 The Covenant Tree eBook

is a call to turn. The Lord's mercy is real. His forgiveness is available. But repentance is necessary.

*See Appendix A for Scriptures to help you battle the temptations surrounding sex and identity.

Why Does This All Have to Be So Hard?

If you're like me, you might be asking why God makes this all so difficult. Why can't we just have a Narrow Road without all the Exits? In reflecting on this, I believe it's because God desires for us to choose Him and love Him over everything else. He desires that His lordship be lived out in our lives, yet He gives us the freedom to choose.

When I was dating my wife, she broke up with me a few times because she wasn't sure about me (crazy, right?). I couldn't force her to stay in a relationship with me. It was her decision to make and I'm certain she could have had her choice of many other guys. But if our relationship had been forced, I wouldn't feel nearly as loved. Knowing that she chose to marry me makes our relationship far more meaningful and significant. In the same way, God desires that His bride, the people of His Church, choose Him freely and love Him above anyone and anything else, especially above our sin. He wants us to know Him, trust Him, and discover that His ways are infinitely better than the ways of this fallen world.

Following Christ after His loving sacrifice on the cross for our sins so that we may live with Him forever in paradise is an overwhelmingly compelling choice. It stands in stark contrast to the alternative of facing eternal destruction in a lake of fire. Yet this choice becomes less obvious when, instead of God's Word and His love, we allow the father of lies and the deceitfulness of sin to fill our hearts.

Even before they were tainted by sin, God gave Adam and Eve the opportunity to choose a relationship with Him by

© 2023 Kyle Cupp Free eBook

obeying his instructions regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God wants to be put first. With all the options we have in this fallen world to choose something other than Him, our loyalty or lack thereof is revealed by the choices we make (the Narrow Road vs. the Wide Path). Do we choose to love the world or do we choose to love Him?

> *For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.* (Proverbs 5:21-23)

> *Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die.* (Proverbs 11:19)

What a powerful reminder these Proverbs are as we journey through life! The Lord watches us continuously as we choose whether to follow Him or something else. If we desire to live wisely, we must keep this truth before us in every decision we make. As we continue down the Narrow Road and devote ourselves to doing His will, obedience becomes more natural. When we trust in Jesus and allow Him to direct our paths, we discover that His burden is light and that obedience brings rest to our souls (Matthew 11:28-30).

© 2025 Live Oak Tree eBook

FOMO vs. Fear of God

I don't know about you, but I sometimes get frustrated about missing out on good times. I struggle with "FOMO," the fear of missing out. The truth is that sin can often be fun and full of temporary pleasure. When I see people cutting loose and drinking heavily with laughter, it takes me back to my younger years, and it can still be tempting. I remember being at the center

of the social scene, stirring up foolishness and trying to have as much fun as possible without thinking twice.

I won't sugarcoat it. When we get serious about following Jesus, things change. There is a social cost to representing Him well. These days, my obvious commitment to the Lord can make some people uncomfortable. I understand it, but sometimes it feels like the moment I mention Scripture or invite someone to a Bible study, I'm quietly removed from the "fun invite list." As a social person, that can be hard. But I remember how I once treated the more mature, serious Christians the same way when I was in party mode and not making God a priority. I totally misunderstood their pursuit of holiness. I guess I shouldn't be surprised at how things have shifted, but that doesn't mean it's easy.

Over time, I began noticing that some friendships changed as I took my faith more seriously. Conversations became less frequent, invitations slowly faded, and there seemed to be a quiet distance that had not existed before. I do not always know the reason. Maybe some struggle to reconcile who I used to be with who I am trying to become. In some cases, people simply lack conviction and have little interest in changing their lifestyles to pursue a deeper walk with God. Whatever the reason, those changes have been painful at times. Rejection and distance in friendships are never easy, especially with people you genuinely love and have remained loyal to for many years.

As enjoyable as partying, heavy drinking, and worldly pleasures may feel in the moment, they are not worth the distance they create between us and God. We must let go of the past and look toward eternity with an undivided heart. I cannot envy those who prioritize worldly pleasure over a right relationship with God. I must live in the fear of the Lord.

> *Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.* (Proverbs 23:17)

© 2026 Kyle Coyle | Free eBook

Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (Psalm 86:11)

For every friendship that has drifted, God has graciously provided others centered in Christ. These friendships have more depth, more godly conversations, and greater encouragement toward discipleship. They help keep me in check when I sin, and they are a huge blessing. It's good not to feel alone on the Narrow Road. Sin may be enjoyable for a moment, but it's temporary and destructive. God's commands are not meant to kill joy but to protect it. True joy is found in obedience, a clear conscience, and eternal peace. Let go of FOMO and fear the Lord instead. Do not return to what once enslaved you (2 Peter 2:19-22). When we properly fear the Lord, we are driven away from sin and drawn into refuge with our loving God. Stand firm in righteousness. This is not merely about right and wrong. It's about life and death.

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Learn to Mourn Sin

Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matthew 5:4). As followers of Christ, when we fall short of God's standards and find ourselves in sin, it should lead to conviction and mourning. When our hearts are aligned with God, sin should grieve us because it grieves Him. We should never be casual or flippant about what required the cross. Every sin deserves the death penalty that Jesus took upon Himself. Sin is always a tragedy worth mourning. Yet we do not mourn without hope. Christ has wiped us clean before the eyes of God. When we grieve our failures, we cling to His discipline, His comfort, His love, and His promise of transformation. We move forward taking sin seriously, while leaving shame behind because Jesus carried that shame for us.

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (James 4:9-10)

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

When I struggle, I picture Jesus hanging on the cross in my place. He paid for that sin. The last thing I should ever do is minimize what cost Him so much. Remembering this brings me back to a right response instead of the foolishness of rationalizing my sin. God takes sin seriously. So should we. And because of Christ, we can move past our mourning forgiven, restored, and determined to walk the Narrow Road as heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7)

© 2016 by Covenant Free eBook

Remember to Pray

Something I need to be reminded of all the time is my need to abide in Christ. That is why I bring it up so much in this

book. We must always remember that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Knowing this, we must rely on His power and not our own. A primary way of doing this is by going to Him in prayer for His strength to overcome sin.

> *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* (Matthew 26:41, words of Jesus)

We need prayer in every part of this journey. We need prayer to avoid the Exits. We need prayer for the strength to return from the Wide Path when we fail. We need prayer to endure the pain of discipline. We need prayer to confess our sins. We need prayer through the mourning of our sin. And we need prayer to persevere on the Narrow Road.

Always make prayer a habit on your journey, but keep in mind that unrepentant sin will hinder your prayers (Proverbs 28:9, Psalm 66:18).

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Reflection (Chapters 10 and 11):

1) Where Will You Be When the Master Returns?

- Read the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:36–51 and Luke 12:35–48. Where do you see yourself in these passages?

- Read 1 John 2:28. Where will you be on your journey when the Master returns? Will you be on the Narrow Road, the Wide Path, or the Tricycle Track?

©2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

2) A Major Warning from Jesus

- Read the words of Jesus in Luke 16:19–31. How does the regret of the rich man in torment affect you?

- What warnings should you take seriously from his story?

3) Exits and Baggage

- What Exits have you taken, or do you continue to take?

- What is your Baggage that leaves you most vulnerable to temptation?

- What practical steps can you take to cut off those temptations?

- Are you making effort to use the sword of the Spirit by memorizing Scripture to fight your specific struggles?

4) Rationalizations versus U-Turns

- Do you rationalize your actions by comparing yourself to others, or do you measure your life against what God instructs in His Word?

- Have you taken U-Turns through repentance and confession, or have you continued down the Wide Path in stubbornness?

5) Surrendering to God or Sin

- Read Romans 6:16–23.

- When tempted, we either surrender to God or to sin, and we become slaves to whatever we surrender to. Would you say you are living as a slave to sin or as a servant of righteousness?

- What specific things can you do to help you surrender to righteousness more and more?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

6) God's Discipline

- Describe a time that you experienced a disciplinary Road Hazard that led to a Car Wreck in your life.

- What did the discipline teach you?

- How are you now experiencing the peaceful fruit of righteousness in your life as a result? (Hebrews 12:11)

- Looking back, have you experienced a Car Wreck that you did not recognize as God's discipline at the time?

- Were you walking in Christian community, or were you driving alone?

- What is God teaching you now as you reflect?

© 2023 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

7) Wide Path Rebellion

- Read the words of Jesus in Mark 13:32–37. What changes do you need to make in your life to be awake when Jesus returns?

- If you are continuing on the Wide Path, what will it take for you to U-Turn?

- If you ignore the warnings of Scripture and continue toward the Tricycle Track, please know that you are heading for either a painful Car Wreck or a hardened heart. You don't need to wait for discipline to wake you up. Listen to the truth and return to the Narrow Road while there is still time.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 12: Engine Lights

Repairing What Sin Damaged

Since we have these promises, beloved,
let us cleanse ourselves from every
defilement of body and spirit, bringing
holiness to completion in the fear of God.
(2 Corinthians 7:1)

© 2026 IVP Copyright Free eBook

The previous chapter addressed "Exit Sign" sins, premeditated responses to temptation where we knowingly choose our own will over God's will. This chapter turns to unintentional sins, or what Scripture calls "hidden faults." These are not blatant acts of rebellion, but subtle failures that often go unnoticed. We may not even realize they are present until we sense that something is not right in our relationship with God. Hidden faults are often rooted in ignorance, spiritual immaturity, the impulsive weakness of our flesh, and varying degrees of hardness of heart. They quietly creep in, flowing from our sinful nature and slowly creating distance between us and God. Left unchecked, hidden faults infiltrate our lives and damage our connection to the Spirit—the Engine that gives us the power to keep moving forward on the Narrow Road.

> *But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my* ***hidden faults****. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.* (Psalm 19:12-13, NIV)

In the Drive Illustration, the Engine Light represents conviction from the Holy Spirit that something is not right in our relationship with God. It serves as a warning that unintentional sin has crept in. When we begin to feel distant from God and our momentum down the Narrow Road starts to slow, it's often an indicator that the Engine Light is on. If we delay responding, what began as a warning can turn into Engine failure, leaving us stranded on the side of the road. When that happens, we become vulnerable once again to being towed back to the world by Satan.

This is yet another reason we must never drive alone. Every believer wrestles with these kinds of sins. To keep our Engines running properly, we need the support, accountability, and biblical wisdom of our Christian brothers and sisters. Throughout our journey on the Narrow Road, our sinful nature wages war against the desires of our renewed hearts. The Apostle Paul describes this inner conflict in the following Scripture:

> *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.* (Romans 7:15-20)

These sins differ from the examples in the previous chapter because they are not premeditated. They arise from ignorance, impulse, or a hardened heart and are often difficult to recognize apart from a steady intake of God's Word and the wisdom of fellow believers. The instructions in the Operation Manual help

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

us repair the Engine and restore our relationship with the Lord. As the Spirit brings conviction through the Word, we are led to repentance. That repentance awakens us from the sinful funks we so easily drift into and allows our drive down the Narrow Road to continue.

Ignorance and Impulse

As an immature, self-proclaimed follower of Christ, I used to get irritated by the "holier-than-thou" church crowd. They did not cuss. They avoided drinking. They frowned at my version of fun. If a church girl acted overly proper and rigidly moral, I found it boring and incompatible with my lifestyle. If churchy people were uncomfortable with my foul language, partying, and sexual immorality, I simply avoided them. All the while, I believed I was walking by faith in my own ignorant version of Christianity. Obviously, I had issues and a hardness of heart.

I had real faith in Jesus, but I had little conviction because I lacked knowledge of what God's Word actually said about sin, and I was hardened by a worldly lifestyle. I knew what churchy people said, but that wasn't enough to convict me. I didn't understand how sinful I was. I only sensed that something was off in my relationship with God. I felt distant and recognized the dysfunction in my life. That was my Engine Light blinking. Unfortunately, many church attendees today are conditioned to just frown upon sins instead of clearly articulating what the Word actually says about them. As a result, biblical truth can begin to feel like nothing more than opinion instead of divine authority.

I was instinctively dismissive of the church goody-goodies, and I didn't respect their "opinions" of right and wrong because they felt so unrelatable to me. At the time, it felt like I lived on a different planet from them. Meanwhile, the worldly people

©2025 River Wonder Publishing

I did relate to lived just like I did, so my behavior felt normal and justified. I was clearly ignorant, but the church crowd did me no favors because they rarely, if ever, backed up their actions or opinions with the authoritative Word of God. They simply snubbed their noses at me and the sins I was committing. As a result, I felt like I didn't belong. How many people drift from God because of this dynamic? The disconnect between a baby believer who lacks conviction and a mature, convicted believer can be bridged when truth is spoken from God's Word with gentleness and love. Immature believers need humble, biblical correction, not self-righteousness. When I finally encountered God's Word personally, conviction came quickly. I saw the Engine Light clearly. I recognized my unholy actions and the walls I had built between myself and the Lord. As my heart began to change toward sin, those walls started coming down. Fellowship was restored before the Engine reached total failure. Unintentional sins will vary from person to person based on one's knowledge of what is sinful. However, if we aren't careful, unintentional Engine Light sins can develop into rebellious Exit Sign sins. Once we know what is true and righteous from God's Word, we then have a responsibility to submit ourselves to that standard.

© 2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

Godly vs. Ungodly Mechanics

We all fall short from time to time. While it's not okay to get comfortable with falling short, it should be understood that we all do. Because of this, it's important not to be condemning of our brothers and sisters in Christ. It's like opening the hood of my Car in front of a mechanic and having him tell me how stupid I am for messing up the Engine and not knowing how to fix it. How am I supposed to fix a Car if I've never learned anything about it? How am I supposed to correct my sinful behavior if I don't know what the Operation Manual says? I need knowledge, grace, encouragement, and patience from the mechanic, not condemnation.

If a mechanic treated you like this, you would most likely go to another mechanic, right? What if the next mechanic treated you the same way, and then the next one did too? Eventually, you would probably try to fix the Car on your own. If you lacked the patience or understanding to fix it, you might just give up on the Car and go back to a Tricycle. That is the danger of self-righteous condemnation without grace in our church circles. Experienced spiritual mechanics who have knowledge need to pass that knowledge on in love instead of getting frustrated with a spiritual toddler who has never learned anything. When Christ was hanging on the cross, He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

It's important to remember that we are all in different places on our sanctifying Narrow Road journeys, and some of us truly don't know what we are doing. We all started somewhere, and we all needed grace to learn. Good, humble mechanics deal gently with the ignorant and wayward because they are aware of their own weakness (Hebrews 5:2). Encouragement to stay devoted and remain in the Word is a big deal because the world is always pushing against us. We need the encouragement and the biblical wisdom of our brothers and sisters in Christ to help push back against worldly influence and sin. As you mature in your faith, do all you can to be a helpful and encouraging spiritual mechanic equipped with godly wisdom. His Word must dwell in us richly so that we can be effective in helping others grow.

© 2026 Kyle Cayanan - Free eBook

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.
(Colossians 3:16)

Sneaky Engine Light Sins

While there are obvious, habitual worldly sins that the Word convicts us of in our spiritual immaturity, such as drunkenness, foul language, and sexual immorality, there are others that sneak up on us more subtly. These sneaky sins can affect us even when we are spiritually mature and knowledgeable of God's Word. Our fleshly weaknesses, life stressors, and circumstances can quietly pull our hearts into unhealthy places. When the Engine Light comes on, we are called to respond. We can't draw closer to God while stubbornly ignoring His warning. Once the Spirit reveals that something is not right, we have a responsibility to address it. If we refuse, His discipline may lead to an Engine breakdown. We must be aware of these sins so we can confess and repent of them, allowing our Engines to be fully repaired to operate smoothly on the Narrow Road. The following is not an exhaustive list of unintentional Engine Light sins, but these are common ones that can surface in different seasons of life.

© 2020 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

Engine Light: Pride

Repairs: Humility and Grace

Pride is one of the sneakiest sins for a Christ-follower. As we draw closer to God, we typically become more righteous by His power and strength. The danger is that righteousness can quickly turn into prideful self-righteousness if our hearts are not deeply rooted in Christ's humility and grace. It's easy to play the comparison game with those around us. When we see dysfunction in others and compare it to our own lives, which may appear more put together, we can quickly become proud, convincing ourselves that we are wiser or more righteous than they are. When that happens, the Engine Light will eventually come on, letting us know that something is not right. We should greatly fear pride in our lives.

It's the equivalent of my eight-year-old bragging that he can dunk a basketball like Michael Jordan after I have lowered the rim and lifted him up on my shoulders. God must laugh and shake His head at us sometimes. It's only through Him that we have the ability to be righteous or wise, yet we so easily forget that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Jesus gives an example of self-righteous pride in a parable:

> *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Luke 18:9-14)

We must never forget that without Christ's righteousness, we are nothing. Without His grace, we are dead. When we begin to elevate ourselves instead of Christ, the Engine starts to shut down. To repair the Engine, we must pray against pride and humbly remember all that Christ has done for us on the cross. We must remember that we are broken people saved by grace, and apart from abiding in Him, we are still fully capable of greater brokenness. Christ-followers are blessed with the sanctifying Holy Spirit by His amazing grace. Therefore, we should extend that same grace to others. Stand firm in humility and grace to avoid the Engine Light of pride.

© 2026 Lyle Cayton | Free eBook

Engine Light: Anger

Repairs: Surrender, Patience, Love, Grace, and Forgiveness
Anger is another Engine Light sin that can sneak up on us and infiltrate our lives. It's a widespread and common struggle for many followers of Christ. Deep-rooted hurts and traumas can cause us to live with anger that kills communication, damages relationships, and drains our joy. We can easily justify our anger instead of working to heal from it. It can lead to depression and irritability, causing us to make a big deal out of little things that are unrelated to the deeper issues. To be clear, not all anger is sinful. God expresses righteous indignation (Psalm 7:11), yet He is slow to anger (Psalm 103:8). When dealing with anger, we must first discern whether it's righteous or sinful. Righteous anger flows from aligning our hearts with God's and becoming angry at what angers Him. It's rightly expressed in response to sin and injustice and in hating what God hates. Child abuse, stealing, lying, murder, injustice, racism, abortion, and sex trafficking all fall into this category. There are appropriate ways to respond to these evils, including supporting and aligning with Christian organizations that stand for God's truth.

On the other hand, when we are consumed with anger over personal offenses and lack a spirit of patience or forgiveness, we enter into sinful anger that can take control of our lives. This kind of anger is not from God but is a trap Satan uses to make us ineffective for His kingdom. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged His listeners to take anger seriously. In fact, He placed it on the same level as murder.

> *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and*

© 2025 Kyle Cavender's Free eBook

whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." (Matthew 5:21-22)

Jesus has made it clear that we are to let go of our anger and not respond with angry insults toward others. This does not come naturally to us. Historically, I have found it very easy to snap at someone who has wronged me and feel completely justified. However, as I have drawn closer to God through sanctification by the Spirit, my responses have changed. When I am wronged now, I often respond differently. Instead of snapping externally, I turn inward. I try to think about the ways I have wronged others in my life and the grace that God has shown me. That reflection leads me to extend grace and forgiveness instead of anger. It keeps me calm and slows my responses. It helps me remain patient and prevents me from becoming ineffective as an ambassador of Christ.

Now, don't get me wrong. This is not easy because the sinful nature is still there. I am absolutely still capable of snapping at someone when my heart is not right with God or when I am having a rough day. But when my habits of devotion to Him are active, my responses tend to be filled more with grace than anger.

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV)

As mentioned in my testimony, I was once severely and unjustly wronged by a guy I used to work for. Because of pride, arrogance, and anger, both of us allowed the situation to spiral into a dark place. It became so intense that it led to a lawsuit against me that lasted eighteen months. The situation produced deep anger and bitterness in me that essentially shut down my Engine. For a long time, I rationalized my anger as justified

© 2026 Kyle Snyder Free eBook

instead of recognizing that it was keeping me from drawing closer to God. Unfortunately, just as Satan intended, my being consumed with anger certainly did not point this person to Jesus. Instead, it only fueled the flames of contention. Thankfully, as I read the Bible, I began to realize that my attitude was wrong (James 1:19-20). Scripture brought conviction, which led to repentance and healing from my anger. It enabled me to forgive this person and move forward in life (Ephesians 4:31-32). After all, who was I not to forgive in light of all the grace and forgiveness God has poured out on me? That realization was freeing. It helped me see that Jesus died for this person, too. I needed to chill out, pray for him, and surrender my anger instead of continuing to let it run unchecked.

> *A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.* (Proverbs 29:11)

If you ever find yourself consumed with anger, fight it by being consumed with Jesus instead. Admit your unrighteous anger and confess it to the Lord (1 John 1:9). Anger becomes unrighteous when we choose to hold onto it instead of forgiving the person who wronged us. Don't minimize it or shift the blame. Deal with it, and don't let it gain a foothold in your life. Slow down and think before you respond or speak. Create new habits of response by focusing on the grace God has given you. Persevere in abiding on the Narrow Road so that the strength of the Spirit can heal your heart and produce righteous responses.

Unresolved anger leads to bitterness. Bitterness leads to hatred, and hatred leads to all kinds of dysfunctional and sinful behavior. We are called to turn from hatred and love one another as Jesus loves us, proving that we are His disciples.

> *"... A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love*

© 2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
(John 13:34-35, words of Jesus)

If you're like me, you might be asking, "What about justice for the wrongs done against me?" The answer is that God has you covered. Surrender it all to Him, because at the end of the day, it's not our job to obtain justice. It's His.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:19-21)

Surrender all your anger, frustration, and feelings of injustice to God, and remember that He is sovereign over every circumstance. We can let go and choose to trust the Lord while leaving the outcome to Him. When we focus our lives on representing Christ well and living for Him, anger tends to take a back seat to love. That love leads to greater understanding of others. By seeking to understand, we often realize that the people who offend us simply don't know the Lord or are distant from Him. When people don't know Him, we should not expect their behavior to be righteous. We should expect it to be worldly. When we encounter sinful behavior that offends or hurts us, we have a choice. We can drown in anger and become ineffective ambassadors for Christ, or we can display the grace, patience, and forgiveness that point people to Him. Overcoming anger while displaying the goodness of God is a powerful testimony of His work in our lives. Stand firm in patience, love, grace, and forgiveness to avoid the Engine Light of anger.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

Engine Light: Idolatry

Repairs: Worship of God alone

Historically, whenever the term idolatry came up, I pictured primitive people bowing down to some kind of statue, like a golden calf. Because of that, I used to think idolatry did not really apply to my life. I would hear people say that a sports star or movie star was their idol, and it always sounded harmless. The problem is that the Bible does not treat idolatry as harmless.

As a kid, I used to live and die with John Elway and the Broncos, along with Nolan Ryan and Bo Jackson. I definitely gave them far more of my attention than I gave to God. The truth is, idolatry absolutely applies to us today, and it takes many forms. Anything we prioritize over God falls into that category. It could be our careers. It could be a dating relationship. It could be our children. It could be kids' sports. It could be our marriages. It could be money or materialism. It could be coveting something we do not have. It could be food. It could be our favorite sports team or television show. It could be politics. It could be worshiping at the altar of self on social media. It could be comfort. I have struggled with all of these, and I know I am not alone.

> *Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.* (Jonah 2:8, NIV)

Get honest about this. Is there anything you are currently prioritizing over God that might be keeping you from drawing closer to Him? Is there anything consuming your thoughts and time more than He is? If we are skipping church, neglecting the Bible, avoiding Christian community, or lacking time to serve the body of Christ because other things are coming first, then something needs to change. If we want the Engine running smoothly on the Narrow Road, He must come first above

© 2026 Kyle Cavender | Free eBook

everything else. Is the Engine Light blinking? If you are feeling distant from God because your attention is focused elsewhere, it's time to do something about it today (1 John 5:21).

When we become entangled in idolatry, it can turn our lives upside down. If we are getting our security or identity from something or someone other than God, we should expect a wake-up call, because He will not tolerate it. I had some major idols in my younger years, and I can tell you from experience after encountering His discipline, God takes idolatry very seriously. His Word confirms this. Consider the first two commandments from the Ten Commandments:

> *"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God."* (Exodus 20:3-5)

The Engine repair for idolatry is to let go of our idols, put God first, worship Him alone, obey Him, and live for Him as Lord of our lives (Ezekiel 14:6). We must release the things of this world if they are holding us in bondage or distracting us from drawing closer to Him. Nothing is more important than our relationship with the Lord. We cannot depend on others to make us happy or secure. We cannot be fulfilled by any person other than Jesus, because we were made for Him. He will not settle for less than all of our heart, soul, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5, Joel 2:12). Confess to God anything you have been putting ahead of Him. Pray for the strength of the Holy Spirit to help you let go of whatever it is and to place it far below Him where it belongs. Recall all that Jesus did for you on the cross. Nothing else comes close to being as important as He is, because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through

© 2020 Kit Cavender Free eBook

Him (John 14:6). Turn from any idols and fully surrender to the Lord as your highest priority in life so that your Engine will run smoothly.

Engine Light: Ungratefulness and Entitlement

Repairs: Thanksgiving to God

There are many examples in the Bible of people that were ungrateful to God. The first that comes to mind is when the Israelites were in the wilderness. They had witnessed the plagues against Egypt (Exodus 7-11). They had experienced freedom from slavery. They had seen the Red Sea parted and had been led by God in a pillar of fire and cloud (Exodus 14). Yet even after all of this, they failed to trust Him and grumbled about what they did not have.

After their complaints, they received miraculous bread from heaven and as much quail as they could eat. Then they grumbled again, saying they were thirsty, so God allowed Moses to bring water from a rock (Exodus 16-17). Time and again, God provided for their needs, and time and again, they put Him to the test by complaining and refusing to trust Him. Have you ever felt like you deserved more? Like you were entitled to something better? Me too. However, the truth is that the only thing we really deserve is to have all of our sins exposed and to be hung from a cross. You know what Jesus deserves? Not the cross. Yet He took it for us because He loves us. What He deserves is our eternal and unwavering gratitude.

Speaking of Jesus, there is a story where He healed ten lepers and only one returned to say thank you (Luke 17:11-19). Can you imagine being miraculously healed from the disease of leprosy and not thanking Jesus afterward? Those nine guys must have been some seriously ungrateful jerks. But in comparison, when was the last time we thanked Jesus for rescuing us from the even greater disease of sin? Instead of thanking Him, we

© 2025 Live Counter • Feedback

often complain. What have you complained about this week? Your job? Your income? A coworker? Your spouse? Your health? Traffic? A slow waiter? That clueless teenage umpire who called your kid out and cost your team the all-important Little League game? Does he even know the rules? Okay, maybe that last one is just me. What do you tend to complain about most? For me, it's usually when I am tired from everything on my to-do list or dealing with some physical pain. My wife especially enjoys listening to me complain about my back, my feet, or whatever else is hurting that week. She thinks I am a wimp. Getting older is really fun when your body starts breaking down. There I go complaining again.

The truth is that Jesus has met our deepest needs. We don't need to complain. We need to thank Him continuously for what He has done. He rescued us from certain death and the wrath we deserve. He has given us hope for eternity and something far better than this broken world that tempts us to complain. One day, God will wipe away every tear, and there will be nothing left to complain about. Paul's words in the following passage can help repair the Engine Light of ungratefulness in our lives.

> *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*
> (Philippians 4:11-13, NIV)

You have probably heard the New King James Version quoted: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It's the verse we often see on T-shirts, bumper stickers, and gymnasium walls. As a kid, I thought it meant I could become a professional athlete. Unfortunately for the Dallas Cowboys, it

© 2024 Kyle Coverdale - Free eBook

turns out I was wrong. More than thirty years without a Super Bowl could have been different if that verse meant what I thought it meant. That verse is not about athletic success (or any other kind, for that matter). It is about Christ giving us the strength to remain content and grateful regardless of our circumstances. If we are abiding in Christ, His Spirit will help us look past what we don't have and be thankful for what we do have. More importantly, we will be reminded of all that we have in Him. He is all we need, and His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9).

> *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

To repair our Engines, we need to find contentment in what we do have instead of what we don't. Let us thank Him for the roofs over our heads, the clothes on our bodies, the food on our tables, our families, our friends, our churches, and our livelihoods (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Even if we lack some of those things, we still have so much to be grateful for. We have our loving Heavenly Father and the beauty of His creation. We have a Savior who took our place on the cross to give us victory over sin (1 Corinthians 15:57). We have the Holy Spirit and the Word to direct our paths. We have hope in the kingdom of heaven and eternal life.

© 2016 Kyle Coyotmt Free eBook

> *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.* (Psalm 136:1)

Engine Light: Worry and Fear

Repairs: Trust in the Lord

When you look around our world today, it seems that there are countless things that can cause us to worry. Will I get into that

school? Will I close that deal? Will the scan come back positive for cancer? Will I be able to pay my bills this month? Will I get that promotion? Will my child make the team? Will the stock market crash? Will Brittany break up with me again and get another cat? Scary stuff!

What causes you to worry or feel anxious? Take a minute to read Matthew 6:25–34.

Historically, I have had a tendency to worry about my health and my career. Over time, as I have grown closer to the Lord, I have learned to trust Him, and those worries have faded considerably. On the wall in my office, I keep two verses that serve as reminders of God's promises so that I don't fall into the trap of anxiety.

> *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*
> (John 16:33, words of Jesus)

> *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6-7)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

At the end of the day, worry often reveals a sinful lack of trust in the Lord and His plans for us. Much of our sinful fear is rooted in a desire to remain in control. Whenever we are consumed with worry and unsettled in our thoughts, that should be an indicator that the Engine Light is on. When this happens, we must surrender our worries and trust the Lord so that the Engine can be repaired (1 Peter 5:7). An example we can learn from is the story of Jesus walking on water with Peter.

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:22-33)

The moment Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the wind, he became afraid and began to sink. How often does this happen to us? When we take our eyes off Jesus, eternity, and our purpose, we can quickly sink into fear and anxiety over circumstances that are firmly under God's sovereign control. If we trust Him without doubting, we can live joyful and purposeful lives free from anxiety, which seems almost as miraculous as walking on water these days. Another example we can learn from is the story of Mary and Martha when Jesus came to visit them.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

© 2026 Kyle Overholser Free eBook

Have you ever known someone like Martha, worried about a to-do list? I know I can be that way. I can become so overwhelmed by what needs to be done that I neglect spending time with the Lord. Martha could not look away from her list, even with Jesus right in front of her. Mary understood what mattered most. Her primary focus was Jesus. Everything else was secondary. Martha had anxiety. Mary chose the "good portion" of joy and peace that comes from sitting with Jesus. Are you Mary or Martha today?

> *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.* (Isaiah 26:3)

We'll talk more about how the Lord trains us to overcome worry and fear through testing in the next chapter.

© 2026 Kyle Snyder • Free eBook

Failing vs. Failure

If you are currently failing God in sin, don't give up and label yourself a failure. The grace of God is greater than all your sin. In John 8, a woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus and accused, with the question of whether she should be stoned. After Jesus dismissed her accusers, He said, *"Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more"* (John 8:11). She had failed greatly by sinning against God and against her own body, but she was not a failure. Jesus overcomes our failures with His grace, but He also calls us to *"sin no more."* That is the call of repentance, and it's the path that keeps us from becoming defined by failure. If Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, then we have a responsibility to obey Him as Lord. When you fall down, get back up. Take the U-Turn. Repair the Engine. Get back on the Narrow Road. True success is persevering on the Narrow Road to the end (Matthew 24:13).

Reflection

1) Spiritual Mechanics

- Describe a time you felt encouraged by a spiritual mechanic.
- Describe a time you felt condemned by one.
- How did those experiences affect you?
- Are you willing to allow others to speak truth into your life when needed?
- When someone has lovingly pointed out sin in your life, how did you respond?
- How can you be more gracious and gentle when you address sin in others? Are you careful to speak biblical truth with gentleness and grace, or do you come across as opinionated and condemning without pointing to Scripture?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

2) Engine Light Sins

- What Engine Light sins are present in your life?
- How have you been responding to the Engine Lights?
- What specific repairs need to be made?

- Describe the last time you sensed conviction from the Holy Spirit?

- Are there any unintentional sins you have dismissed because they seem insignificant? Remember that Jesus had to die for all sins, even the unintentional ones.

3) Battling Sin

- As you have drawn closer to the Lord, what progress have you seen in your battle against sin?

- If you have not seen progress, describe how that could indicate that you are still rationalizing sin instead of surrendering fully to Christ.

- Do you rely on your own strength, or on the power of the Holy Spirit, to battle sin? If your own strength, how can you make a change?

- Are you bringing your struggles honestly before God in prayer?

- Have you invited accountability from other believers?

© 2026 Kyle Covington Free eBook

PART V

SUSTAINING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

© 2026 Kyle Cavender FaceBook

Chapter 13: Radio Signals and Stoplights

Spirit Promptings and Tests of Faith

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
(James 1:12)

© 2020 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Radio Signals

Have you ever been driving through a rural area trying to find a song on the radio, only to hear one you like coming in with static? The closer you get to the radio tower, the clearer the music becomes. In the Drive Illustration, a Radio Signal represents a prompting of the Holy Spirit. The closer we drive toward God's kingdom on the Narrow Road, the clearer those Signals become, free from the static interference of the world and our sinful hearts.

> *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."* (Isaiah 30:21, NIV)

Radio Signal promptings give us specific direction that always aligns with Scripture. They lead us toward Christlike actions such as giving to the poor, serving others, and loving like Jesus. They move us to pray for someone and help us know

what to say when we need to speak faithfully for Christ (Luke 12:12). They guide us to comfort those who are hurting. They draw us toward repentance, peacemaking, and forgiveness. They convict us when we say something we should not have said. They nudge us to take U-Turns back to the Narrow Road when we foolishly take an Exit. They help direct our paths so that we can walk in God's will and make wise decisions. Sometimes they create an uneasy feeling that warns us to step away from a troublesome situation. Other times they bring peace and joy when we are aligned with His will. The farther we drift from the Radio Signal, the more static fills our ears. When headed the wrong direction, the noise of the world and the pull of our sinful hearts begin to distort our judgment.

In my younger years, when I was far from the Lord, my decisions were almost always disconnected from Him. I jumped into relationships, friendships, and jobs without any true Signal from the Spirit. Unsurprisingly, I made many foolish choices. But things began to change as I traveled further down the Narrow Road. Several years ago, my family faced a major life decision. We were living in a large suburban community and were generally content. I was very involved in church, and we had great friends. During that season, we purchased a recreational property in the middle of nowhere. It was perfect for hunting and fishing, and I loved it. For the first time, I experienced a taste of rural life.

One day, I felt a stirring in my spirit, a Radio Signal. Suddenly, I had a strong desire to move my family from the suburbs to a smaller rural town. I had lived in the Dallas suburbs my entire life, and I had no idea what small-town living would even look like.

When I brought it up to my wife, I expected resistance. She had grown up in that community. Her family was there. We were settled. But to my surprise, she had felt a similar stirring. She was open to moving.

©2015 by Lysa TerKeurst FreeEbooks

Around this same time, I started getting really frustrated with the megachurch I attended that would definitely be described as seeker-sensitive. Looking back, I believe cultural Christianity was widespread. By cultural Christianity, I mean professing Christian faith outwardly while lacking the inward transformation and ongoing obedience that result from being born again. That had been my own condition for nearly twenty years. Biblical illiteracy was also rampant, and it often felt like I was on an island as the only person I knew who identified these things as problems. I felt like I was constantly swimming upstream, holding convictions that were rarely shared by others in leadership. When I brought these convictions to leadership, I often felt unheard because nothing ever changed. A pastor friend of mine had recently left that church. When I voiced my concerns, he told me he had left for the exact same reasons. He encouraged me to meet with another pastor who had also departed. During lunch, that pastor said something I will never forget: "Kyle, you should be somewhere you are celebrated for your faithful convictions, not just tolerated." He shared that the same convictions from the Spirit had led him to leave. The Radio Signal was clear. It was time for a change. I knew I was supposed to leave the church. The only question was whether we were also leaving the town.

After a few weeks of searching, my wife narrowed our options to a couple of small towns. We visited properties and found one that checked every box. It was the perfect place to raise our kids in the piney woods of East Texas. To make it work, we would have to sell both our home and our rural property. We made a contingent offer, meaning both would need to sell before the deal could move forward. We prayed and asked God to make His will unmistakably clear. I specifically asked Him to put obstacles in our path if this was not His will, or to make the road smooth if it was. Within forty-eight hours of listing both properties, we received full-price offers on each. That isn't normal. The Radio

© 2026 Kyle Coverdell. Free eBook

Signal was coming in loud and clear. Everything happened so quickly that we didn't even have time to tell friends and family before the move became official. Yet despite the magnitude of the decision, I felt complete peace.

Prior to moving, we began searching for a church in the new community. I looked online to see whether any local churches participated in the marriage ministry program we had been involved with for years. Only one church in the area offered it, so we visited. During our first visit, I asked about the program. They told me it had stopped during COVID and that no one was currently leading it. Once again, the Radio Signal was unmistakable. I shared that I had led in the same ministry at our former church for years, and they immediately invited me to help restart it. Within a month of moving, the program was up and running again. Over our first five years, roughly 240 couples have gone through it. We have witnessed broken marriages restored and families redeemed. The church leadership team did not know me at all, yet by God's hand they immediately trusted me to lead. From the beginning, they have consistently encouraged and supported the convictions God has placed on my heart, which has served as a continual confirmation of the Lord's direction in our lives. They have also backed me in the launch of men's ministry initiatives and a new Sunday school group.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Looking back, the Radio Signals clearly led us to this community and church to accomplish what He had prepared for us to do. It has been an incredible experience of walking in His will and seeing the fruit of His direction in our lives. I have learned that yielding to the Spirit requires a heart of submission wherever and whenever He leads. We must trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). In order to hear the Radio Signals clearly, we must repair Engine Lights, bypass Exits, and fully Fuel the Engine. When

we delight in His ways, He faithfully establishes our steps, even when we encounter adversity at a Stoplight.

> *The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.*
> (Psalm 37:23-24)

Stoplights

I can't stand stoplights. I especially dislike the busy ones where you know it's going to take three times longer than normal. I sometimes sit there thinking to myself, "Why do the other cars get to go while I just sit here forever? What's the deal? This makes no sense, especially when the cars in front of me and behind me are piled up but there are absolutely no cars going the other direction. Turn green already! Seriously? Who should I call about this? Never mind, it just turned green. Time to go hit the next stoplight."

That's life, isn't it? Patience doesn't come naturally, but after a while we get used to Stoplights and accept that they are part of the journey. In the Drive Illustration, Stoplights represent trials and tests of faith that cause us to hit the brakes. They represent situations when we are forced to wait on the Lord in His timing. These tests of faith and seasons of waiting are God-given opportunities for us to demonstrate that He is indeed Lord of our lives and to grow in our trust of Him. God allows hard times and difficult circumstances to reveal whether we will stay the course on the Narrow Road. In those moments, our faith in the Lord—or lack thereof—is made evident.

When life gets difficult, will we Fuel the Engine with devotion to keep it running? Will we stay at the Stoplight or take an Exit? Will we trust in God and depend on Him even when things are tough? Will we wait on Him? Hard times often remind

© 2020 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

us that life is short and that we should live wisely. They refine us like fire and help us to look to life beyond this world. They develop our character to look more like Jesus in the way that He trusted and obeyed God the Father in all circumstances at all costs (Philippians 2:8). We often learn more from God during difficult and painful times than happy and comfortable times. If you trust God during the good times, then trust Him through the difficult times as well, because He uses both for our good.

> *When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other.* (Ecclesiastes 7:14, NIV)

The Sufficiency of Grace

When it comes to being tested by God, I believe these trials are meant to promote humility, dependence upon Him, and a focus on eternity. When we humbly understand our rightful place in this world and recognize that we deserve nothing but His wrath, we begin to value and cling tightly to His undeserved grace, which is sufficient for us. When we lose the perceived control of our lives, it humbles us and reminds us that God is the one in control and sovereign over every circumstance. When we have nothing left to hold onto but hope in Christ, we learn that His grace is sufficient. We can rest in His grace and sovereignty even when it feels like our earthly lives are falling apart at a Stoplight because He is trustworthy.

Have you ever been tormented by a figurative thorn in the side? Maybe it's a health issue. Maybe it's a rough marriage. Maybe your kid is having all kinds of problems. Maybe it's financial struggles. Maybe it's a horrible boss or a harassing enemy. The Apostle Paul dealt with a "thorn." It was never explained exactly what it was, but he was trained by the thorn to stay humble and depend on the Lord by resting in the sufficiency

© 2026 Ivie Graham • Free eBook

of His grace. I've heard it said that when dependence on the Lord is the goal, then weakness is an advantage.

> *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you**, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Paul, the man of God, prayed three times for the thorn to be removed. God's answer was essentially no. His grace would be sufficient, the thorn would keep Paul humble, and Christ's power would be displayed through Paul's weakness. As Paul faithfully depended on Christ, his testimony would encourage others. One day, however, the thorn would no longer matter because Paul would enter God's eternal kingdom, where every tear would be wiped away (Revelation 21:4).

Paul learned that he could ride the power of Christ all the way to the finish line by accepting that His grace was sufficient through every Stoplight.

> *And God is able to make grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.* (2 Corinthians 9:8)

I think we have a hard time seeing grace as sufficient because we feel like we are deserving of an easy and comfortable life.

© 2023 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

When things don't go our way, it doesn't come naturally for us to trust the Lord without grumbling and begging Him to fix things we don't like. It's definitely good to pray, but sometimes we need to adjust our expectations because God may be showing us that we need to be more satisfied with His grace than anything else. I've been on a personal journey for about the past decade dealing with several annoying, painful physical ailments. They drive me crazy sometimes. My spine is completely jacked up with bulging discs at all levels from car wrecks, from falling off a ladder, and from stupid things I did in my youth. I've had major neck surgery and that same surgeon told me it's just a matter of time until I have my lower back operated on as well. I've got a torn shoulder labrum on one side, a torn rotator cuff on the other, a torn hip labrum, a torn meniscus in my knee, and I was recently told that I may have to get surgery on both of my feet. All of these ailments remind me that my body is pretty much made of glass, but by His power my soul can be strong even when my body is weak. Like Paul, I often pray for healing, but I've come to rest in the sufficiency of His grace.

When I deal with the Stoplight of physical pain, I have tried to make a habit of leaning into that grace which has brought me closer to Christ. I always have a choice in the pain. I can sit around and whine (which I've done plenty) or I can prepare my soul for eternity knowing that this broken worldly body will one day be replaced with a new heavenly body (Philippians 3:20-21). Through my physical struggles, I really feel like God has helped me to be grateful for what I have and not to worry about what I don't. Maybe I have to avoid playing basketball or golf now, but I can still walk and do a lot of things. It could be a lot worse and it probably will be one day. Therefore, I have to keep my eyes on the prize of eternity and accept that I don't deserve anything while recognizing that I am so blessed to receive His abundant grace. Without His grace, I would eventually be burning in an eternal fire, so I'll accept my ailments and be thankful.

© 2026 Kyle Coverdale Free eBook

I've learned that pain humbles and shapes us. It makes us vulnerable and almost forces us to be dependent upon the Lord. When we are at our most broken and desperate places, we have a choice: Jesus or nothing. Some of us will unfortunately choose things that amount to nothing (alcohol and drug abuse, partying, sexual immorality, and other worldly pleasures) and spiral into dark places, while those walking righteously choose Jesus and find deliverance. I've had several experiences in life where I foolishly chose nothing because my heart was unrepentant. Let me assure you that relying on nothing doesn't go very well. I've also had times that I was walking with Him in right relationship and was delivered as His Word promises. That is a much better experience.

> *When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.* (Psalm 34:17-19)

Deliverance from a trial will make us more resilient to persevere to the end. It will also prepare us to give comfort to others in their pain because we've been comforted by the Lord in our own pain (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). The following Scripture is one of my favorites to help us all keep our eyes on the prize no matter how badly our bodies are wasting away.

> *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

© 2026 We Covenant Free eBook

Eternal Perspective

When we struggle through tests of faith, we need to see them for what they are. They aren't punishment. They aren't abandonment. They are God's way of loving us and helping us see life in the context of eternity. We are often foolishly short-sighted in our flesh and don't see things through the lens of eternity the way God does. Think about the absolute worst thing that could happen to you today and imagine that it actually happens. Now ask yourself a question: Will this terrible thing matter in 10 years? Will it matter in 100 years? 1,000 years? How about a billion years? If you are a follower of Christ, you should consider how insignificant most things that happen during this temporary life really are compared to our eternal glory with the Lord. When we make a habit of seeing everything through the lens of eternity, we build greater peace into our lives and don't panic the moment things don't go our way. If we endure an entire lifetime of pain and suffering, it will feel small when viewed through the lens of eternity in His kingdom.

"God uses suffering and impending death to unfasten us from this earth and set our minds on what lies beyond."[21]
—Randy Alcorn

Seventy to eighty years on this temporary earth will feel very small when looking back from eternity (Psalm 90:10). I believe that one day in eternity we may laugh about how we completely lost our minds over things that didn't truly matter.

I imagine the conversation going something like this:

> —Remember that time I had a total meltdown after losing my job and getting sued? I thought I might not ever recover.

[21] Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), xix.

©2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

—Remember when everyone was terrified about pandemics and wars? It felt like the world was ending.

—Remember how sad it was every time one of my favorite dogs died?

—Remember when Granddad suffered in the hospital and we stood by his bed in tears before he passed away?

—And now? From this side of eternity, it all feels so different, doesn't it?

—Can you believe how consumed we were by those temporary moments? How short-sighted we were when we forgot that life in the world was never the destination?

This is all just speculation, of course, but I sometimes imagine conversations like that around a heavenly campfire, with my granddad smiling, my favorite dogs by my side, and not a single cat in sight because I think we all know where they go. Just kidding … sort of.

In eternity, we will look back with perspective on these momentary struggles and pains and realize how amazing and blessed it is to be with God forever. We will reflect on how the hard times drew us closer to Him and be eternally grateful.

Remember that this broken worldly life is but a vapor or mist while His perfect kingdom is eternal (James 4:14). Therefore, let's embrace the struggles with the eternal hope, joy, and patience that the Lord provides through our faith. Read these words from Jesus and let them sink in:

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:25)

© 2026 Kat Lavender - Free eBook

In the context of what Jesus is saying here, do suffering and painful circumstances encourage us to love our worldly lives more, or to hate our lives in this world?

When we are sidetracked by falling in love with the things of this world, it takes our attention away from Christ and His kingdom. Therefore, when pain and suffering come along, God often uses them as a favor to our souls. We can view them as good for us because they help us let go of worldly things and desperately cling to eternal things. Thank the Lord for the hard things that bring us closer to Him as we keep our eyes and hearts focused on what truly matters in eternity.

> *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* (Romans 8:18)

© 2025 Kyle Scavender • Free eBook

Building on Rock or Sand

During the storms (Stoplights) of life, you will either weather them or fall. What makes someone able to withstand a storm? Jesus spoke directly on this.

> *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."* (Matthew 7:24-27)

When we place our foundational faith in something other than the Lord, we set ourselves up for failure by building on sand instead of the rock. Do you place your faith and security in a spouse or someone you are dating? Do you place your faith and security in your job or finances? Do you place your faith and security in a pastor? Human relationships can fail. Jobs can come to an end. Pastors are sinners who can stumble. If you are placing your faith and security in something or someone other than the Lord, you will not be prepared for the storms of life.

Jesus tells us how to be prepared. We must hear His words and do them. We cannot consistently hear His words if we aren't reading the Bible. We won't do His words unless we trust Him. If our faith and trust are in something else, then we must redirect it toward Him so that in full, humble surrender we will be equipped to do His will. Once we are aligned with His will, we are set up to persevere no matter what comes our way, with our eyes fixed on eternity.

> *The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.* (Psalm 37:39)

Trusting and Waiting on the Lord

If you've ever been rocked to your core by a life circumstance, the most natural reaction can often be anger toward God. How can we trust Him when our world is falling apart? What makes Him trustworthy when things are not going our way? It's hard to trust someone you don't know. Do you know Him? Do you know His Word? Do you know His righteous character? If you do, then you know He never lies and always keeps His promises (Titus 1:2). Trust Him not because circumstances go your way, but because His character is faithful and unchanging.

If you struggle to trust the Lord, talk to believers who truly know Him. They can testify to His faithfulness and the

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

transforming work of the Spirit in their lives. The more we experience His grace, discipline, healing, and goodness, the easier it becomes to trust Him as our loving Heavenly Father.

> *And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.* (Psalm 9:10)

Trusting the Lord also means waiting on Him. Life is full of Stoplights. Waiting for test results. Waiting for healing. Waiting for justice. Waiting for direction. In truth, our entire lives are an exercise in waiting on the Lord and the coming of His kingdom.

> *The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.* (Lamentations 3:25–26)

When tested, we are called to wait without grumbling (Philippians 2:14), give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18), and pray through suffering (James 5:13). We persevere by holding our confidence firm to the end, demonstrating that we have placed Him as Lord of our lives through faithful obedience. God is not bound by our timelines, but He is always faithful. Sometimes we must wait even unto death. Healing may not come on this side of heaven, but we will eventually have imperishable bodies (1 Corinthians 15:52-54). Justice may seem delayed, but it will prevail. We may lose loved ones far sooner than we think we should, but our mourning will one day give way to eternal joy.

> *Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!* (Psalm 27:14)

© 2025 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

"I am sure that God keeps no one waiting unless He sees that it is good for him to wait."[22]
—C.S. Lewis

Representing God Well

Radio Signals and Stoplights can often coincide. For example, Noah was commanded by God to build an ark, but then he had to patiently and persistently obey (and probably endure the ridicule of his neighbors) for several decades at the Stoplight of construction before it was completed and the promised flood arrived (Genesis 6-9). His obedience worked out pretty well for him. On the other hand, Jonah was prompted to go to Nineveh, but when he refused, God gave him the opportunity to rethink his choices in the belly of a fish (Jonah 1-4). Not great. Sometimes waiting and being tested goes well. Sometimes we mess it up. However, the Stoplights and Radio Signals are always for our good. The more we experience them, the more we learn that this is true.

When prompted and tested, we need to remember that how we respond determines whether we bring glory to God. People of the world are watching. When you claim the name Christian, eyes are on you to see how you handle yourself under trial. Will you give up and unleash irrational, worldly emotions, or will you lock in on your faith and trust in the Lord? Will you be the one who falls away on rocky ground or the one who perseveres on the good soil?

> *As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and*

© 2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

[22] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 9.

when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.
(Matthew 13:20-21, words of Jesus)

To get our hearts prepared for the trials that are sure to come, we can look to the example of believers who came before us. The Apostle Paul experienced brutal persecution, but he was definitely on the good soil and persevered. His faith was strong because he had his heart set on eternity with Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.
(Philippians 3:8)

Paul counted everything of this world "as rubbish" compared to what he was to gain with Christ in eternity. If we are followers of Christ, we must remember that this is not our home because our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). We must realize that we are temporary strangers and exiles in this world, but Christ will one day take us away and rescue us from all the darkness, sadness, and brokenness of this place. Therefore, we need to get past the anxiety and ungratefulness we so easily fall into. We need to increase in humility and keep the Engine running at the Stoplights. If we do this, our reward will be great for representing Christ well, and our faithfulness can lead others to trust Him. Even when we suffer, we can rest in God's will, knowing that all things work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious

© 2020 Kyle Snyder • Free eBook

than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

After Jesus died, Mary Magdalene went to His grave and wept (John 20). The resurrected Jesus came up to her and said, "Why are you weeping?" In the same way, we should ask ourselves, "Why am I weeping when Jesus has been raised from the dead and has overcome the world (John 16:33)?" Just as He has risen, we will also rise. Therefore, we can now live with joy no matter the circumstances and begin persevering instead of weeping.

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. (James 1:2-4)

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh Free eBook

Reflection:

1) Radio Signals

- What Radio Signals (Holy Spirit promptings) have you experienced in your life?

- How exactly did the Spirit lead you?

- If you are having trouble thinking of any, consider what might be keeping you from receiving the Signals clearly. (Engine Light, lack of Fuel, etc.)

© 2020 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

2) Stoplights

- What Stoplights (tests of faith) have you experienced?

- What did you learn from them?

- How have these tests and your response to them impacted your relationship with God?

- When you face a Stoplight, are you trusting in God and waiting on His timing, or are you trusting in something else and becoming frustrated or impatient? What impact is your attitude having on you?

- If secular non-believers were to see you going through a trial, would they be able to attest to your faithfulness in

the Lord, or would they become cynical after seeing an unfaithful response? Can they sense that you're different somehow? Do they want to know more?

- Reflect on the Scripture below. When facing trials, are you joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer? Are you walking through life with an eternal perspective so that you can respond this way? What steps can you take to better embody these qualities?

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
(Romans 12:12, NIV)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

Chapter 14: The End of the Road

Perseverance

May the Lord direct your hearts into
God's love and Christ's perseverance.
(2 Thessalonians 3:5, NIV)

Perseverance can be defined as steady persistence in adhering to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose.[23] Scripture repeatedly reminds us of our need to persevere in Christ. Therefore, I want to address what I believe is one of the greatest hindrances to perseverance in our modern church culture. My purpose is not to attack doctrinal positions regarding eternal security, but to emphasize the biblical necessity of perseverance, obedience, and enduring faith—especially when it comes to the discipleship of new or immature believers. As we close this book, let us do what the Apostle Paul instructs and work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

> *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12-13)

© 2026 The Covenant Free eBook

[23] *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), s.v. "perseverance."

Notice that the first part of this passage emphasizes obedience, while the last part emphasizes God working within us. I have come to understand that working out my salvation is a continual examination of whether I am truly abiding in Christ, so that I may live in obedience to God's will through the Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:5). This should in no way be construed to mean that we can somehow earn our salvation through obedience: rather, obedience is the result, not the cause of our salvation (James 2:18). Because I am a sinner—as we all are—I will regularly fall short. Yet I can discern whether my heart belongs to the Lord by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who produces a posture of repentance in my life. A heart that belongs to Christ does not make peace with sin. It grieves it, confesses it, and turns from it.

Working out our salvation with fear and trembling means recognizing that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). Everything we have done, and everything we have failed to do, will be laid bare before Him (Hebrews 4:13). If we are persevering, we will be regularly asking ourselves questions like these:

Are we taking God seriously by trembling at His Word (Isaiah 66:2)?

Are we living lives worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27)?

Are we sowing to the Spirit or to the flesh (Galatians 6:8)?

Are we holding firmly to the faith we profess so that we may approach Him with confidence upon His return (1 John 2:28)?

© 2023 Kyle Covington. Free eBook

Promoting Perseverance

When I was baptized as a young child, I remember receiving a message from the pastor that I have heard many times since. It went something like this: "Way to go. You believe in Jesus and now you are saved. Don't forget that it is once saved, always saved. That means that no matter what you do, you can never lose your salvation."

I understand that this teaching is often emphasized to help believers avoid constant doubt about their eternal security. But Scripture tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who seals our salvation, not the words of a pastor (Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:22). My concern is not necessarily with the theology itself, but with how it is received by people who have not yet learned to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Because of this, I am convinced that instead of placing primary emphasis on the phrase "once saved, always saved," pastors and teachers would serve their congregations better by emphasizing perseverance on the Narrow Road.

When I first heard the "once saved, always saved" message, it made me feel good and secure. Unfortunately, it also opened the door for a biblically ignorant rationalization in my mind that I could continue walking in sin without repentance and still be saved.

The teaching can backfire when biblically uninformed people like my former self do not truly understand what it means to be saved. Our sinful nature is always eager to embrace any idea that allows us to remain comfortable in our sin. Much of our modern church culture promotes a passive, easy, non-sacrificial path to salvation, but when we read Scripture carefully, that path simply does not exist.

If we are not careful, this teaching can unintentionally lock someone into a false sense of assurance. The reality is that the Christian life is active, difficult, and sacrificial. It is a fight, and we are called to persevere (1 Timothy 6:12). At the same time, God graciously gives us everything we need so that even the difficult things become burdens that are light when we come to Christ (Matthew 11:28-30).

Again, my intention is not to debate whether the theology of "once saved, always saved" is correct. My goal is simply to promote perseverance by recognizing the warnings that Scripture repeatedly gives us.

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBooks

From my own experience and from what I have witnessed in many others, this teaching can unintentionally lead people toward a passive, unrepentant, and apathetic faith that does not take sin seriously. Following Christ biblically is anything but passive, and failing to take sin seriously is a grave mistake.

*Right here is a good place to stop and take a few minutes to read the Scriptures from Appendix B: Warnings About Falling Away and Perseverance on page 289.

These warnings from Scripture are sobering to me. When I read them, I cannot help but work out my salvation with fear and trembling. They remind me how vulnerable we are in our flesh and how seriously we must take our walk with Christ. They also lead me to ask searching questions of my own heart.

Am I being loving to others (1 John 3:23)?

Am I truly abiding in Christ (John 15:1-4)?

Am I being a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer (James 1:22)?

Is Jesus truly Lord of my life (Matthew 7:21)?

Am I persevering on the Narrow Road (1 Timothy 4:16)?

Following Christ is a daily, active, and consistent devotion that requires perseverance. It is most definitely not a one-time, get-dunked, get-out-of-hell-free-card experience. It is a lifelong journey of faithful perseverance that shows Jesus is truly the Lord of my life, as I remain on the Narrow Road, keep the Engine fueled, avoid the Exits, repair the Engine when needed, and stay faithful at the Stoplights. It is also a journey far too challenging to travel alone, which is why we need a community of perseverance partners.

For me personally, the teaching of "once saved, always saved" never offered much benefit because it was never relevant to the practical application of doing God's will in obedience. I know that I am saved because of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that has transformed my life, not because a pastor reminded me yet again about a theological phrase. In my own

© 2025 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

life, that message only stunted my growth by enabling me to rationalize sin in my biblical ignorance.

Because of that experience, and because of what I read in Scripture, I sometimes struggle to understand why the phrase "once saved, always saved" is so often emphasized to the masses. I don't know about you, but I have heard that teaching in church far more often than I have heard the call to persevere. I believe that imbalance can be problematic for the discipleship of many people. The Bible repeatedly warns professing believers against falling away and repeatedly calls us to persevere. Therefore, regardless of where someone stands on the theology of "once saved, always saved," we should all be able to agree on this: we must take the biblical call to perseverance seriously and strive wholeheartedly to remain faithful to Christ on the Narrow Road.

Don't Burn Out

As you begin to identify and pursue your calling to serve the Lord, it's important to understand how you can avoid getting burned out. If we are drawing near to God, we will be filled up with His power. If we are obedient to His calling, we will be poured out. Our entire lives should become a continual rhythm of being filled up and poured out over and over again for His glory.

I was once invited to lunch by the popular pastor of the megachurch I attended. He was somewhat of a celebrity around town, and I assume someone gave him my name because of my involvement at the church. I was surprised by the conversation. He asked which ministries I was serving in, and I told him that I was leading a Sunday school class, helping lead a marriage ministry group, and facilitating a men's Bible study. Instead of encouraging me in those efforts, he began warning me to be careful not to burn myself out. Several years have passed since that conversation, but I still get an uneasy feeling from the Spirit

© 2020 Kyle Saunder • Free eBook

when I think about it. Was he right? Would I burn out, or would God give me what I needed to stay the course?

I am not saying that burnout is not real. It certainly is. However, it is often the result of relying on ourselves instead of relying on the Lord. When I read the Bible, I am not convinced that the advice I received that day reflected the heart of Scripture. It also makes me wonder if that perspective has become common in our modern church culture. If so, it may help explain why so many churches struggle to get people involved in serving. I once heard a staff member at my church say that 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the members. Unfortunately, that is fairly common.

I have experienced burnout from time to time, but when I reflect on those moments, they are always situations where I was trying to do things in my own strength instead of surrendering them to the Lord's will. If we commit our work to the Lord, our plans will be established (Proverbs 16:3). We are called to let our lights shine (Matthew 5:16). If we trust God to power the light instead of relying on ourselves, it will not go out. That means we must abide in the vine, because apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that He prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Therefore, He will equip us with everything good so that we may do His will (Hebrews 13:20-21). God calls us to serve Him with all our heart and soul and to be zealous in serving Him (Deuteronomy 10:12, Romans 12:11). He calls us to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). Jesus emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant and giving us His all (Philippians 2:5-7). We are therefore called to follow His example by offering ourselves fully to Him (2 Corinthians 5:15).

It is when we make our own plans and try to accomplish things in our own strength that burnout often occurs. So let us

© 2025 Kyle Duvall | Free eBook

persevere in serving the Lord wholeheartedly by leaning into His power and making our lives count for the kingdom (Isaiah 40:29). Like the Apostle Paul, let us allow God to pour us out for others and fight the good fight. Let us finish the race strong, keeping our faith and zeal fixed on the prize of eternity. We do this by being equipped with the Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

> *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.* (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Time is Short

Few things wake me up in life more than the death of loved ones or people I know. Those moments serve as sobering reminders that our time to do what we are called to do on this earth is very short. No matter our age, we should strive to make Jesus known by producing fruit that lasts (John 15:16). Whether we are young or old, nothing is promised regarding the time we have left to make the most of every opportunity to do God's will.

For all of us:

> *Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.* (Psalm 90:12, NIV)

For the young:

© 2023 KVB Cavender Free eBook

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

For the aged:

So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. (Psalm 71:18)

Age should never be an obstacle to doing the will of God. Even at 120 years old, Moses was unabated in his vigor for serving the Lord (Deuteronomy 34:7). Our culture celebrates retirement, but retirement from serving the Lord is never mentioned in Scripture. We should never take our foot off the gas when it comes to Narrow Road devotion. When our careers working for money come to an end, we should steward that additional time well by serving the Lord rather than simply living a life of leisure. May we have the same mindset as the Apostle Paul.

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.
(Colossians 1:28-29)

May we never forget where our true citizenship lies.

© 2025 Kyle Calendar Free eBook

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

May we hear this from Jesus when we face Him.

"I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (*Revelation 3:8)*

Hold on tightly to what is eternal and hold loosely to the things of this world. Persevere to the end, because time is short!

© 2020 Ivie Lavender - FreeEBook

Spiritual Maturity

As we persevere in drawing near to God on the Narrow Road, we will continue to grow in spiritual maturity. I have often tried to evaluate whether I am truly maturing in my faith. The best way I know to do this is to compare my life and mindset with those of the faithful disciples in Scripture who clearly demonstrated maturity in Christ. The Apostle Paul is a particularly helpful example. He openly invites believers to follow his example as he follows the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). By observing his mindset, priorities, and devotion to the Lord, we gain a clearer picture of what spiritual maturity looks like in practice.

The following Scriptures reveal the mindset of a spiritually mature follower of Christ.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as

always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. (Philippians 1:20-22, NIV)

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:25-26)

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 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. All of us, then, who are ***mature*** *should take such a view of things.* (Philippians 3:10-15, NIV)

© 2021 Kyle Gaydon - Free eBook

As we press on in perseverance toward spiritual maturity in Christ, let us set an example for others by fueling the Engine through fruitful devotion, forgetting the worldly life we left behind, and seeking the things that are above. May Christ be exalted in our lives as we desire nothing on this earth more than Him. Even when the journey becomes difficult, we can look to Jesus as our example so that we will not grow weary. He endured it all and has given us the power to endure as well.

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. (Hebrews 12:1-3, NIV)

Knowing the End

As we set out to live the rest of our lives with perseverance in mind, it helps to focus on the end of the road. The Bible tells us what is coming, and it will be amazing. When the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised and resurrected with new bodies, and those who are still alive will be transformed with new bodies. I am definitely looking forward to that new body (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Just like Jesus, we will overcome this world and enter into immortality, having victory over death. Not only will we receive new bodies, but there will also be a New Earth for us to dwell on. There will be no more Exits, no more Engine failures, no more Road Hazards, and no more Stoplights. There will only be peace and the presence of the Lord without any sin.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning,

©2020 Kyle Cuyvender Free eBook

nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)

Sounds pretty amazing, right? It will be even better than we can comprehend. Imagine the American settlers the first time they approached the Rocky Mountains or saw the beauty of the California coast for the first time. It must have been an incredible moment to witness God's creation in such a fresh and breathtaking way. The New Earth will be even more beautiful to behold because we will see the Lord face to face. Knowing the end of the journey and fixing our minds on it gives us the motivation to persevere and the peace to keep moving forward.

Cruise Control

I am a big fan of cruise control. Great invention. Right after I graduated from college, I bought a new car and was pretty excited as I drove it off the lot. As I drove along the highway for the first time, I started looking for the cruise control. I tried every button and switch I could find, but nothing worked. When I got home, I called the salesman, and he gave me the horrible news. I could not believe what I was hearing. I had never even heard of a car that did not have cruise control. For the next few years, I was stuck with a car that did not have it, which was incredibly frustrating. I hated that car.

There are certain things we take for granted. I think one of those things is the power we have from God to carry us through this life. When we first begin the journey with the Dream Car, it can feel like we are driving a vehicle without cruise control. We assume the journey depends entirely on our own effort. But over time we learn that the journey is actually dependent on our abiding relationship with Christ. If you have been driving your Christian journey without cruise control, you may not realize what you're missing. As we are increasingly filled with the

© 2022 Kyle Chandler • FreeTheLion

Spirit and transformed into the fullness of what we were created to be as partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), the journey begins to feel much more natural because we are relying on the power of the Lord rather than ourselves. When we persevere and stay the course, spiritual cruise control begins to take hold. His will becomes clearer, spiritual gifts become more evident, convictions grow stronger, humility replaces pride, Scripture becomes more easily understood, prayer becomes powerful, wisdom increases, faith in action becomes visible, and eternity remains at the forefront of our minds.

When we stay the course in perseverance, there is a sweet spot in sanctification where life becomes joyful and peaceful because of our hope in the Lord (Romans 15:13). Detours off the Narrow Road become fewer because avoiding the Exits becomes almost second nature. Breakdowns no longer occur because we take the Engine Lights seriously and repair problems quickly when they appear. We remain joyful at the Stoplights because we trust the Lord regardless of our circumstances. Running out of Fuel becomes a distant memory because our devotion to Christ becomes as natural as breathing as we depend on Him for everything.

When we reach this point in sanctification, it really does feel like driving on cruise control with our eyes fixed straight ahead on the Narrow Road. Knowledge replaces what was once only hopeful belief. Experience strengthens what was once only childlike faith. Truly knowing the Lord deepens what was once simply pursuing Him. As we continue the journey with the peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7), we continue to respond to the Radio Signals as they get clearer and clearer. We arrive at this spiritually thriving place when we pursue the Lord with an all-in, repentant heart as He faithfully leads us forward until the day the road finally ends. On that day, everything in our lives will reach its fulfillment. In the most intense, joyful,

© 2025 Kyle Covington - Free eBook

and emotional moment we will ever experience, we will see the narrow gate open with the glorious King on His throne saying,

> *"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master. Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matthew 25:21, 34)

The Narrow Road may be difficult, but it leads to the most glorious destination imaginable. Every mile traveled in faith, every hardship endured, and every act of obedience will one day make perfect sense when we stand before the King. May we all persevere faithfully to the end of the road, trusting that every step will be worth it in eternity.

> *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* (Psalm 16:11)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • FreeEbook

Reflection:

1) Working Out Salvation

- How have you worked out your salvation with fear and trembling?

- How does your life demonstrate that you have been born again? (Matthew 3:8)

- How does your life demonstrate an acknowledgment of His coming judgment and a mindset of perseverance? (James 2:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10)

2) Being Poured Out

- How are you being filled up by the Lord, and how are you being poured out in service to Him?

- If you can't answer that, what steps can you take to start identifying and pursuing the calling God has given you?

© 2020 Kyle Cavender • Free eBook

3) To Die Is Gain

- The Apostle Paul says, "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."* How does Paul's mindset compare with your own?

- How are you fully living for Christ and growing in spiritual maturity?

- What is your attitude towards death? How does it align with what Scripture says?

- If you are a follower of Christ, God promises that you will be raised with a new imperishable body and dwell on a new Earth where there will be no more sin, no more tears, and no more pain in His holy presence forever. How does that make you feel, and how does that shape your perspective on this present world?

© 2025 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

4) Cruise Control

- Looking back on your life, describe areas where you can see greater maturity as manifested by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

- Based on the illustration in this chapter, would you describe your current walk with God as being on spiritual cruise control, where abiding in Christ has become second nature? Why or why not?

- What is preventing you from more fully trusting in the Lord, relying on His power instead of your own, and drawing near to Him? How can you change this?

5) Eternal Joy and Peace

- How does your hope in the Lord produce joy and peace in your life?

- If you struggle to find joy and peace, what steps can you take to develop an eternal perspective and trust in Him?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

PART VI

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

© 2026 Kyle Cavender • FreeeBook

Your Drive

The Drive Illustration can be used as a map of your life, showing where you've been, where you are, and where you need to go in your relationship with God. Sharing our testimonies is ultimately about sharing the love of Jesus. We should desire for everyone to experience the love, grace, and sanctification that reshape our lives when we let go of the world and choose to follow Him.

Below is a list of questions designed to help you steward your story well. As followers of Christ, we are called to testify about what the Lord has done in our lives. Take time to consider how God has worked in your heart and led you toward the Narrow Road. Your testimony may be exactly what someone else needs to hear to wake up and begin truly following Christ. If you have a powerful testimony, I would genuinely love to hear it. You can email me at drive@narrowroad.life.

- What did your life look like on the Tricycle Track or Wide Path before you truly began following Christ?
- Who or what first introduced you to the Dream Car?
- What changed when you left the Tricycle behind and chose the Dream Car?
- Did it take time for you to get the Car started? If so, why?
- What Baggage did you bring with you into the Dream Car?
- When did you begin reading the Operation Manual?
- What impact did God's Word have on your heart, thinking, and direction?
- Describe any seasons when you ran out of Fuel and were towed back to the Tricycle Track.

Copyright Cameron Fredrickson

- What holy habits have most impacted your relationship with God? What does Fueling the Engine look like in your life today?
- What Exit Signs has Satan used to try to pull you off the Narrow Road?
- When you exited the Narrow Road, did you take a U-Turn or continue driving down the Wide Path in rebellion? What were the consequences?
- What Road Hazards leading to Car Wrecks have you experienced?
- How did God use that discipline to shape, correct, or restore you?
- What Engine Lights have come on in your life, and how did you respond?
- How has the Service Station played a part in your spiritual growth?
- What changed when you stopped just *going* to church and started *being* the church?
- What Stoplights have required you to wait on God rather than move forward on your own terms?
- Have you experienced Radio Signals? How has the Spirit led or redirected you?
- How has God sanctified you on the Narrow Road? What does your life look like now compared to where you began?

© 2026 Kyle Cavender's Free eBook

A Final Request

I know that God has had His hand on this book from the very beginning. It started twenty years ago when I first opened the Bible after being broken by divorce. Then, about seven years ago, while sitting in the church lobby, I began doodling on that week's bulletin. The Drive Illustration suddenly came to me, and I sketched it out. I immediately wondered:

Was this biblical?

Had God just given me a message to share?

What was I supposed to do with it?

Write a book?

In the years that followed, whenever I felt empty or unsure what to write next, I waited. Time and again, a thought or phrase would come in the same unexpected way the illustration had. This continued until the book was finished. I wrote the words, but the Holy Spirit guided the message. This book is the result of a heavy burden God laid on my heart, a burden to reach all the former "me's" out there who have grown hardened to sin. Those who think they understand Christianity without ever having opened the Bible. Those the church never truly discipled. Those who profess the gospel yet remain unchanged by it. Those who claim Christ yet live for the world. That burden is rooted in Hebrews 3:13–14:

> *"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."*

© 2026 Kyle Carender • Free eBook

Everything I once needed to hear when I was trapped in spiritual apathy is contained in these pages. I firmly believe the biblical truth in this book can be a game changer for helping people wake up and move from simply knowing about God to truly knowing Him. My prayer is that it leads people to live lives worthy of the gospel rather than continuing to live for the world. If this book stirred something in you, please don't keep it to yourself. First, I ask that you would pray for this book. Pray that it would impact the many people lost in cultural Christianity. Second, share it boldly. Recommend it to a friend, a family member, a small group, or anyone who feels stuck, drifting, or simply going through the motions of faith. If you have a platform of influence, use it. If you have a voice, raise it.

There are countless nominal Christians sitting in pews every Sunday, quietly going through the motions on a path that does not lead to life. The Narrow Road is real. Few find it. Let's help more find it while it is still called today. I am grateful to stand alongside you in this calling. May God bless you as you live out the Narrow Road life.

Kyle Cavender

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

My Closing Prayer

Lord, as I read Your Word, my heart is heavy.

I am grieved that many churches no longer teach the full counsel of Scripture.
I grieve for those who claim Your name yet don't truly know You or Your Word.
I grieve how easily apathy takes root in our hearts, even though you gave everything on the cross.

I grieve that many rest in false assurance, unaware of Your holiness, Your power,
and the depth of our own depravity apart from You.
I grieve that they don't see what awaits them if they don't wake up to Your truth.

I grieve that love for this world has replaced reverence for You.
That comfort, pleasure, lust, greed, and approval matter more than obedience.
That temporary pleasure is chosen over eternal riches.

I grieve the godless and unholy darkness that surrounds us
and the environment we have allowed to encircle our children.

Protect my family, my friends, and all who follow You.
Strengthen us to honor You in the darkness and to be light.
Let that light shine brighter each day.

Give us courage and boldness to stand firm in our faith and to make You known.

© 2026 Kris Cavender • Free eBook

Help us abide in the Vine, growing stronger in Your Spirit with each day You give.
Keep our eyes fixed on eternity and teach us to persevere for Your kingdom.
Help us to love others well and proclaim Your truth to the ends of the earth.

Thank You for salvation through the gospel.
Thank You for the power of Your Spirit that enables us to overcome.

Bring justice against evil. Establish Your kingdom.
We eagerly await Your return.

We love You and everything you stand for in Your holy righteousness.

Amen.

© 2026 Kyle Cavender - FreeEBooks

Appendix A: The Sword of the Spirit for Battling Sin

Substance Abuse

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1)

But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. (Luke 21:34)

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! (Isaiah 5:11)

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like

© 2020 Kyle Carpenter • Free eBook

an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink." (Proverbs 23:29-35)

Sexual Immorality

Read Proverbs 5, Proverbs 6:20-35, Proverbs 7.

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality. (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.[24] (1 Corinthians 7:2)

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (Hebrews 13:4)

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
(Matthew 5:27-28, words of Jesus)

© 2026 Kyle Lavender • Free eBook

[24] Notice the specific sexes mentioned here. Marriage is not a "social construct" but the plan of God Almighty.

He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. (Proverbs 6:32)

Lying

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16, One of the Ten Commandments)

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices. (Colossians 3:9)

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight. (Proverbs 12:22)

For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit." (1 Peter 3:10)

A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish. (Proverbs 19:9)

Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. (Psalm 120:2)

© 2023 Kyle Cavender - FreedomBook

Distraction, Apathy, Laziness, and Selfishness

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:17)

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. (Romans 12:11)

The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway. (Proverbs 15:19)

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. (Hebrews 6:11-12, NIV)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

© 2025 Kyle Covington FreeEbook

Stealing and Greed

You shall not steal.
(Exodus 20:15, One of the Ten Commandments)

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
(Ephesians 4:28)

And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”
(Luke 12:15, words of Jesus)

Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death. (Proverbs 10:2)

Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them. (Psalm 62:10)

Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (Romans 13:7)

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.
(1 Timothy 6:9-10)

© 2026 Kyle Cavenor • Free eBook

Gluttony

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come

to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags. (Proverbs 23:20-21)

For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. (Philippians 3:18-19)

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14)

It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory. A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls. (Proverbs 25:27-28)

Cultural Rebellion of Abortion

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. (Psalm 127:3)

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. (Jeremiah 1:5)

On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. (Psalm 22:10)

There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil. (Proverbs 6:16-18)

©2020 Kyle Alexander Free eBook

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)

As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.
(Ecclesiastes 11:5)

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb, "I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself. (Isaiah 44:24)

And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. (Genesis 9:5-6, NIV)

©2026 Kyle Cavender Free eBook

Cultural Rebellion Against God's Design for Sex and Identity

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among

themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:21-32)

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. (1 Timothy 1:8-10)

©2026 Live Covenant Free eBook

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7)

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. (Leviticus 18:22)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (Leviticus 20:13)

A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.
(Deuteronomy 22:5)

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

© 2026 Kyle Cavanaugh • Free eBook

Appendix B: Warnings About Falling Away and Perseverance

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (John 15:5-6, words of Jesus, NIV)

I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. (John 16:1, words of Jesus)

Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. (Romans 11:19-22)

I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.
(Revelation 3:11, words of Jesus)

© 2020 Kyle Cavender - Free eBook

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:12-14)

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:17-18)

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.
(Hebrews 2:1, NIV)

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1 Corinthians 10:12, NIV)

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.
(Matthew 24:10-13, words of Jesus)

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.
(1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

© 2026 Kyle Covendale - Free eBook

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.
(Colossians 1:21-23)

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.
(2 John 9)

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV)

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (Hebrews 10:36, NIV)

© 2026 Kyle Cavender's Free eBook