

LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP!

By Acacia L. Slaton and Aaron Slaton

Reading Guide

CHAPTER 1

- Reread I Peter 1:6-7. What does this passage tell us about going through godly trials?
 - Have you experienced any trials in your life lately? Did those trials draw you closer to God?
 - What did you learn?
 - If you are experiencing a trial in your life right now, what is God teaching you? What do you hope to learn?

- In the first poem of the chapter, “Life Lessons,” the author writes:

*I know frustrations and I know depression
Through every trial and tribulation there's a lesson
For you to learn a life skill to teach
A person going astray to reach*

- Are you actively “reaching” someone who has gone astray? What about a person who has never walked with God?
 - In what ways are you reaching him or her? In prayer? Conversation? Example?
- At the end of the same poem, the author writes:

*The foolish learn to hate more and resent
Walk in bitterness, and they forget to repent.*

- Read Proverbs 1:7. What does God say about fools? The Bible says “fools despise wisdom and discipline.”
 - Read Proverbs 10:17. Discipline is a form of correction, and the Bible says those (fools) who ignore correction lead others astray. In other words, because fools hate what is right, they negatively influence others. Have you ever been victimized by someone’s folly? Have you ever needed to repent for “walking in bitterness” and spurning correction?
- Trials make us better people, but only through God’s grace and provision. Take some time to lift each other up in prayer for the trials each is facing.

CHAPTER 2

- Reread Matthew 8:36-37. What does the Bible tell us about seeking riches, popularity, and fame?
 - People define “success” differently. How do you define success? Is it about money? Status? Material goods? Or is it something deeper? Do you define success in your relationships? With family? With Jesus?
 - Have you ever passionately sought something that wasn’t in God’s will? What happened? Were you truly content?
- Read Hebrews 13:5. What does God tell us about contentment? Does this mean you should never strive for anything? Certainly not! According to the Bible, it is a matter of the heart and of faith.
- The author’s experience with her friend Mike was powerful. How did her story make you feel? Have you had any similar experiences?
- In the email-circulated poem this book’s author shared, it is written:

Lord, I planned to be real tomorrow.

- Can you relate to this statement, even as a follower of Jesus? We hear much about “Sunday-morning Christians”—those who walk in sin all week, but go to church for redemption or to keep up a façade every Sunday.
 - Think quietly to yourself for a moment. Is this ever the picture of your life? Is it the picture of a friend’s life? If it is you, spend some time with the Lord and repent of living for yourself and planning to be “real tomorrow.” If someone you know is living this way, pray for him or her. God instructs us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- Reread 1 John 1:9. There is no condemnation in the Lord, but He does want us to change. Pray for a godly change in your life and the lives of those around you.

CHAPTER 3

- Read John 4:1-42. Take a moment to discuss the significance of Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman.
 - What do you think the disciples were thinking when Jesus sent them away so He could talk alone with a woman of a race hated by Jews? Do you think they were immediately supportive and trusted Him?
 - How often do we doubt God in our own lives? Do you often have trouble putting your faith in Jesus? Do you seek Him for fulfillment, putting aside the things of this world in the process?

- Where do you go seeking fulfillment? Is it worth it?

- In order to fully trust Jesus, we have to know Him. Once the woman at the well took a moment to talk with Jesus (which means she not only spoke, but she also *listened*), she learned something about Him and she had to know more. For us, this means we must converse with God in prayer and read his Word regularly. These things can be hard to keep up with in the hustle and bustle of life, but they are things we must do to continue seeking Him passionately.
 - Share some ways with each other to help keep your walk with God fresh and new.
 - What works for you?

- Reread Jeremiah 2:13. God has many names and descriptions in the Bible. Here, He describes Himself as the fountain of living water. What does this mean to you?

- The author likens Jesus' necessity to our spiritual lives (and in all aspects) to the necessity of water for our physical lives. Dehydration can be the cause of many ailments, she writes.
 - What's ailing you? Is it physical? Emotional? Spiritual?
 - Are you actively expecting Jesus to intervene? Have you asked him to take control?

CHAPTER 4

- The vision God gave the author through the Holy Spirit was powerful. It was a life-changing moment.
 - Has God sent you a dream or vision that changed your life? If so, please share.
 - Perhaps God has revealed himself to you in other ways, through prayer, reading the Bible, or through a brother or sister in Christ. What was that experience like? Did it propel your walk with God?
- Everyone has a unique story of how they come to Christ. As described in this chapter, some people grow up knowing the truth, but it takes them years to truly follow Jesus.
 - Share your story.
 - What was the pivotal moment that brought you to Christ?
 - Where are you at today?
- It is often said, and rightly so, that following Jesus isn't a religion, it's a relationship. All relationships take work.
 - What are you doing to make sure your life is a relationship with God and not a religion?
- As the author notes, Jesus obeyed his father, God, even unto death.
 - For some, God does ask of their lives. Would you be willing to give it all up for Jesus?
 - For others, God asks us to die to ourselves and to the things of this world. What is God asking you to die to?
- Reread John 3:16-17. Many people know John 3:16 by heart, but often drop off John 3:17. What does the Bible tell us here?
 - The Lord does not condemn us of our sins, but he does want us to change. He wants to save us!
 - Take a moment to think about the things from which you need God to rescue you. Make an effort to pray about those things this week.
- The Bible tells us in Ephesians 6:18 to pray about all things, all the time. Read the Scripture aloud and work on applying it this week.

CHAPTERS 5-6

- Reread 2 Timothy 2:22. What does Scripture tell us to do when something “stimulates” our lust?
- Have you been in situations like those the author describes in this chapter? She knew her weaknesses but was determined to let God stay in control of her life. Instead of pleasing herself and the man she was with in that brief moment, she chose to please God. What a testimony!
 - Based on the teachings of the Bible, what can we do to abstain from lustful thoughts and behavior?
 - In what ways can we be examples to our friends and loved ones? Our children?
 - Make it a point to lift each other up in prayer about this issue. Lust kills the spirit and the Bible says that it is adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:28).
- In “Summer Madness Part II,” the author writes:

Lust gets my attention; some women are half dressed.

- In no way can women or men be blamed for the lustful thoughts others may have about them. However, as God’s children, we should do our part in remaining modest so as not to influence others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, to stumble. Take a moment to self-reflect on what you can do to help guard yourself and others.
- Unsafe sexual intimacy outside of marriage can bring more than just heartache, as the author notes. It can also bring disease. If you or someone you know has faced this reality, take the time to lift the situation up in prayer.
- Read Song of Solomon.
 - As important as it is to abstain from immoral sexual behavior outside of marriage, it is also important to recognize what God says is good about sex within a godly, Christ-centered marriage.
 - What does God outline about the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife?

- What can we do to put away the pain and suffering of past sexual relationships to move forward into what God has planned and ordained for us?

CHAPTER 7

- Read the book of Job.
 - The Bible says Job was a righteous man, and yet he endured severe trials, probably worse than anyone we've ever known.
 - What was Job's response to his testing?
 - How would we respond to similar trials? To lesser trials?
 - How can we respond better to testing in the future?
- Read Hebrews 11:1.
 - Dissect and discuss this verse.
 - What is faith?
 - How do we go about increasing our faith?

- In "God has a Plan" the author writes:

*I woke up this morning with a sound mind;
the LORD shined his grace upon me one more time.*

- Grace is God *giving* us what we *don't* deserve. Mercy is God *not* giving us what we *do* deserve.
 - In what ways is God showing you grace in your day-to-day life? How is He showing you mercy?
- Reread Revelation 12:11.
 - What does this Scripture tell us about the power of the blood of the Lamb? What about the importance of our testimony?
 - In what way are the two correlated?
 - Share your testimony. How has God shown up in your life?
- It is likely that you and those around you are facing trials even now, whether they are big or small. All our trials are important in God's eyes, and He wants us to take them to Jesus in prayer.
 - Take a moment to share with each other the trials you are facing and the faith you have in God that he will take care of you.
 - Intercede for each other in expectation of God's provision for your trials.

CHAPTER 8

- Discuss the book of Ruth.
 - What did her life look like before losing her husband?
 - What did her life look like after?
- Take a moment to read a few passages from Lamentations.
 - Look at how Webster's Dictionary defines "lament":

Verb – to wail aloud; to express sorrow, mourning, or regret for often demonstratively

- In the book of Ruth, Naomi laments quite a bit. Lamenting is different from complaining, as the intentions are not self-serving and bitter. It is a cry of desperation to our God.
 - How did God honor Naomi's lamentations?
 - Have you taken time to lament to God lately? Not to complain, but to truly pour out your heart to Him? The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart and he lamented to the Lord often and with great vehemence. Cry out to God! He's waiting!
- Ruth gives us a very clear picture of what an honorable and godly woman looks like.
 - Discuss Ruth's lifestyle and character.
 - What sets her apart as a prime heroine in the Bible?
 - What can we learn from Ruth?
 - Read Philippians 2:4.
 - What does the Bible command us to do about selfishness?
 - In what ways do we struggle with being selfish? Is it with our money? Our time? Our affections?
 - In what ways can we work toward being more selfless?
 - Do you trust God to open the doors for good relationships in your life? Take the time to hand this area over to God. We can't all live fairy-tale lives, but we can live better ones—God-centered lives!

CHAPTER 9

- Reread Romans 1:16.
 - What does the Bible tell us about standing up for Christ?
 - Are we all making a concerted effort to not be ashamed of Him?
 - What can we do to be better about it?
- As in the author's situation, has anyone immediately recognized you are a Christian by your behavior and character?
 - What was that encounter like?
 - How did God use you?
- Have you ever found yourself in a situation, at work or otherwise, where you were explicitly told you could not share your faith? How did you respond?
- Read Matthew 5:13-16.
- The author writes:

Salvation is a gift from God, so we must realize that all God wants us to be is a light, and He will do the rest.

- In what ways are you making an effort to be light? To be salt?
- Reread Ephesians 6:16.
 - This Scripture says we *will* need faith—not that we *might* need faith.
 - With that in mind, what are you doing to increase your faith?
 - What can you do to take that a step further?

CHAPTER 10

- It is no secret that our society often puts unrealistic pressure on women and men alike to be the Western idea of “beautiful.”
 - What are you doing in your own life to treat your body as a temple in God’s sight without giving in to the ridiculous expectations of our culture?
- Do not beat yourself up for wanting to belong! The Bible itself stresses the importance of maintaining regular fellowship, but specifically with other believers. It is essential to our Christian walks! However it is important to know who we are in Christ without conforming to the things of this world.
 - Take a moment to ask yourself, “Who am I in Christ?”
 - Discuss the differentiation and delineation there must be between belonging for who we are (in the Lord) and belonging for who others want us to be.
- Read 1 Corinthians 13.
 - What does God’s Word say about love?
 - What areas of this description do we have trouble modeling?
- The story the author shares of the woman who gave into what she hoped could be love on vacation is powerful! Her situation is an extreme example of how sin can literally lead to death, but no one is above similar behavior. We are all sinners, but Jesus is the Redeemer!
 - How can we guard our hearts and bodies to avoid making similar mistakes?
 - What can we teach our children about God’s model for love and how we ought to interact with people of the opposite sex?
- Reread Psalm 56:8.
 - Most people in life experience at least one broken heart. The Bible tells us God hears our sorrows! It says He even collects our tears. What a beautiful image!
 - Are you trusting God to heal your pain? Are you willing to forgive not only whoever hurt you, but also yourself?
 - Don’t believe any lie that says you are unlovable. God’s love for us is deep and everlasting! You are dearly loved.

CHAPTER 11

- Reread aloud the verses listed at the beginning of chapter 11.
 - What is their common theme?
 - As discussed a few chapters before, what is the difference between lamenting and complaining?
 - Are you remembering to take your cares to Jesus? Make an effort to share with Him any pain you are experiencing. The Bible says that it is by His stripes we are healed! That includes not only physical ailments, but also emotional and spiritual issues.
- The author reminds us to thank God for sending Jesus to rescue us. What a mess we'd be in if He hadn't!
 - Take time to share with each other and with the Lord what is "ailing" you. Lift each other up in prayer now and throughout the week.
 - Take your cares to God regularly. In an effort to remain humble, many Christians refrain from praying for themselves when the Bible explicitly tells us to petition our Father. Remember to remember yourself in prayer.

- Psalm 30:5 says:

His anger lasts for a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning.

- What does this Scripture mean?
- Are you looking forward to the "morning"?
- How are you going to get there?

CHAPTER 12

- Reread 1 Peter 1:21.
 - What does this Scripture tell us about hope?
 - From where does hope come?
 - What is hope? Is it something we seek in vain?

- “Keep Hope Alive” says:

Where is the kid who had lots of hope?

- Why is it that children have so much hope and faith when adults often have to strive for it?
 - What can we do to “have faith like a child”?
- Is there a difference between hope and faith? If so, what is it?
- Reread Malachi 4:2.
 - What does this verse say about fearing God?

- In “Jesus Wants to Heal You,” the author writes:

Why do people seek acceptance from other people?

Because they seek man’s approval over God; but there is no equal.

- What does God’s Word say about fearing men?
- Are you lacking faith or hope? What can you be doing to keep it alive?

CHAPTER 13

- The author reminds us at the beginning of the chapter that prayer should not be the last thing we do in any situation—it should be the first.
 - Do you make prayer a priority in all situations?
 - In only certain situations?
 - In only negative situations?
 - Remember to pray for the good *and* the bad. God is involved in all aspects of our lives!
- *When we pray we are calling God on the scene*, the author writes. What an awesome thought! In our everyday lives, the “authorities” (police, paramedics, etc.) rush to the scene when intervention is needed.
 - Are we treating God as the prime “authority” in our own lives?
 - What does it mean to give God authority over our lives?
- Reread Psalm 91:11.
 - Are we living lives that reflect the truth of this verse?
 - Have you ever had an encounter with what you were sure was an angel?
 - Have you ever had any other experience in which you believe angels were involved? Please share.
- As important as it is to pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and protection, we should also remember to pray for the protection God promises us through His angels. They, too, are His creation and they are powerful parts of his kingdom.
 - Pray for angelic intervention in your life this week.
 - The Bible tells us that at times, we may be unaware we are “entertaining angels” (Hebrews 13:2). Ask God to prepare you to entertain His angels with a welcoming spirit at all times.

CHAPTER 14

***This chapter deals with a very intimate and personal subject: rape and sexual impurity. If you are reading this book and guide in a co-ed group setting, it might be prudent to break into same-sex groups so as to allow open discussion about God's instruction in these matters.*

- Discuss the story of Amnon and Tamar found in 2 Samuel 13.
 - What do you believe God's purpose was in recording this story in the Bible?
 - What can women take away from this passage?
 - What can men take away from this passage?
- If you have been the victim of rape, know that you are not to blame! Ask God to restore your heart and body. He hears your cries, and even though it may have felt like it at times, He has never left you.
 - Talk to someone. Speak to a counselor or person of God if you haven't before. There is healing power in our godly relationships.
 - Pray. Don't turn from God during your pain. Run to Him!
- If you at any time were Amnon's character in this story, repent! Sin is sin, but Jesus' blood was shed to redeem us of it all!
 - Ask the Lord to cleanse you of all unrighteousness. He is faithful and just to do so! (1 John 1:9).
- Perhaps you in no way relate to this story—you are blessed! Make an earnest vow to raise your children and teenagers to abstain from sexual immorality and to do their best to stay out of compromising situations. Seal them with prayer every morning and night!

CHAPTER 15

- Recall and share your story.
 - How did you come to know Jesus?
 - What was your life like before?
 - What was it like immediately after?
 - What is it like now?

- Have you gone through deep valleys in your relationship with Christ?
 - Where did you turn in the low times?
 - What were you seeking?
 - Did you find it? If so, how? If you turned away from him a time, what brought you back?

- Read Hebrews 13:5.
 - When you experience low points remember, as the man in the author's story reminded her:

He never left your side; you're the one who left Him.

- Read John 8:1-11.
 - What truth does the Lord reveal to us in this passage?
 - It is evident in this passage that the woman had sinned. But Jesus reminds her that there is no condemnation in Him. Isn't this true for us today?
 - The last thing Jesus tells her is "Go and sin no more." How can we make sure to follow this command in our lives?

CHAPTER 16

- Just as no one knows the day or the hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36), no one knows the day or the hour they will leave this life and enter into the next, eternal life.
 - It is imperative that we don't live our lives as if we will have another one!
 - What can we do daily to prepare ourselves for entering into God's kingdom?
- Read the parable of the ten virgins found in Matthew 25.
 - What can we learn from the wise virgins in this story?
 - What can we learn from the foolish women?
 - What are you doing now to keep your "oil" ready for the coming of the Lord or for our time to meet him before his return?
- "Time is Ticking Away" gives us a powerful analogy to the way we treat our lives. The author writes:

He heard the clock ticking to the rhythm of his heart.

- In this poem, we learn that the main character's heart has not been in the right place—he spent his life wondering and guessing, in essence doubting.
 - What does the Word tell us about doubt? Read James 4:8.
- Reread Romans 13:11.
 - What does this Scripture mean?
 - What should we be doing to make sure we are ready to meet Jesus face to face?

CHAPTER 17

- Take several minutes to reflect on and discuss the story you just read.
 - At what point did you realize the man was a reflection of Jesus?
 - Could you relate to the woman's sorrow at each stage of her life?
 - Could you relate to the man's pain as the woman he loved and longed for to be his bride continually rejected him?
 - In what ways have we rejected Christ?

- Think about the image the author produces when the woman falls off the cliff but is lying peacefully on the rock in the water.
 - How are we like this woman?
 - Have there been times in your life that you have repeatedly rejected Jesus, and yet God protects you and gently places you upon a rock, even when we are undeserving?
 - Rejection is not always a major event. Sometimes we reject God in small ways, but each time our hearts are hardened a bit. In what small ways do we reject the Lord?
 - How can we work on this? Try to be accountable to yourself and God this week.

- Take a moment to read Matthew 21:44 aloud again.
 - This verse gives us the opposite image of what we read in the chapter's story. This verse shows a stone crushing *us* instead of us lying upon a stone.
 - How can we avoid being crushed? How can we aim to stand upon the rock of Jesus?

CHAPTER 18

- Desma’s God-given vision was an awakening for him and his sister. Take a few minutes to discuss it.
 - Why do you think the Holy Spirit revealed Satan as a clown in Desma’s vision? What is the significance?
 - Why do you think the teenagers followed the clown so easily, without heeding the warning signs that they were headed down a dangerous path?
 - How do you think the clown slipped shackles onto the teens without them noticing?
 - In what ways are we like the teenagers in this vision?
- Many important things are revealed to us through visions in the Bible. Read Joel 2:28.
 - Based on this Scripture, it seems that Desma directly fulfilled the Lord’s promise that “young men will see visions.”
 - Has the Holy Spirit given you a prophetic word, a dream, or a vision? If so, please share.
 - Has what He’s given come to fruition? What have you learned from it?
- “The Wide Road to Destruction” says:

Their leader once had a smile, then it turned to a smirk.

- Satan is a deceiver, and he uses our perceptions to deceive us. The teenagers in the vision thought the clown was smiling, but he really was smirking at them. He knew he was leading them down a “wide road to destruction.”
 - Have you been in a situation where things appeared to be one way, but turned out to be another?
 - Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of discernment. Ask Him to take control of your perceptions and to help you see what is holy and flee from what is unholy.
- Reread Matthew 7:13.
 - What does the Lord instruct us to do in this verse?
 - Are we obeying?

CHAPTER 19

- Self-esteem is an important issue for men and women of all ages. In Western societies especially, there exists an emphasis on external beauty.
 - Some of the most beautiful people in the world are self-conscious about their own bodies. Why do you believe this is?
 - At one point or another, we are all actors. When was the last time you found yourself performing for others?
 - Do you believe that it is possible to be both prideful and self-conscious? Are the two traits mutually exclusive?
 - Self-esteem is not a one-sided issue. When was the last time you actively attempted to improve another's self-image?

- Leah's story teaches us much about trusting God, viewing others, and not judging based upon appearances.
 - How often do you use prayer simply as a wish list? Do you become easily frustrated when your prayers are not answered in the way you hoped?
 - "No," is sometimes a very loving answer from God, but the love of the answer extends beyond our scope of comprehension. When was the last time God did *not* answer one of your prayers and it turned out to be a good thing?
 - When asking things of God, we must do so in love, for he always answers in love. Just as Jacob loved Rachel, our love for God should transcend our own desires. When you pray, do you do so with as much love as you have fervency?

- Love is not considered true until it has been tested by the storms of life. This applies to both our relationship with God and our relationships with others.
 - What storms have you been through with God by your side? Has your love and understanding of him increased?
 - Have you been hurt by someone claiming true love, only to be abandoned when the storm arrives? How does this play into your self-esteem?
 - Do you measure God's reliability by the length of the storm or your condition after it passes?

- Reread Proverbs 31:10.
 - How does this verse differ from what mainstream America teaches?
 - How can this verse aid in renewing your mind?

CHAPTER 20

- Lot offered his two virgin daughters in exchange for safety of his visitors, indicating a culture lacking in morality.
 - Have you ever become so accustomed to a sinful environment that you forgot the difference between right and wrong?
 - What role do our surroundings play in the way we behave?
- God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah teaches us a few things about God.
 - Does God hate? If so, what does He hate?
 - We live in a culture today that rejects all forms of hatred, but God quite justly hates certain things. Should we emulate godly hatred?
 - How do we hate what God hates and continue to love like Jesus loved?
 - What does God hate in your life?
- As the author mentioned a few chapters ago, God is a gentleman. He will not force himself on us. He commands respect and obedience from us, but He never demands it.
 - What is the difference between *commanding* and *demanding*?
 - Is there something God is commanding you to do but you are being reluctant? What is it? Why aren't you willing to obey?
- Coming to Christ is an amazing thing, but it should be permanent. In 2 Peter 2:20-21, we read how vital it is to maintain a fervent walk with God once we've begun one.
 - Why do you think it is worse to have known God and walk away, than never to have known Him at all?
 - What does this say about God's love of us?
 - Speculate on the feelings of Christ when a believer leaves the faith from His perspective. What must it do to the one who laid down His life for us, to know us only for a season?
- Reread Genesis 19:26.
 - What role does letting go of our pasts play in our walk with God?
 - How do you look at your past before your relationship with God?

CHAPTER 21

- Discuss 1 Samuel.
- When Hannah did not understand the Lord's timing, she cried out in prayer.
 - What does this teach us about the nature of prayer? Must it always follow a strict formula?
 - Can prayer be emotional? If so, in what way? Is it okay to be angry with God?
 - Hannah poured out her heart, her frustrations, and her anger to God. In return, what was God's response?
 - Why does God often take His time in responding to our prayers? Is it really just our perception that makes it seem like "too" long?
- Sometimes the answer simply does not come, or the answer we wanted doesn't come. What then?
 - There are many examples of instantly answered prayers in the Bible. Are these examples meant to show us how God can provide us with anything we want whenever we want it? Or do they exemplify God's power?
 - Many believers have a difficult time processing unanswered prayers, especially when the subject matter involves sick or hurt loved ones. Will we ever have all of the answers to how God works?
 - Why is it a good thing that we will never know exactly how God works?
- "Wait on the Lord" packs a powerful message. It describes a person who gets what they pray for.
 - Have you ever prayed for something, received it, only to be discouraged? For example, in the first line of this poem we read:

I prayed for patience, then I had to wait.
 - What was God teaching you? What did you learn?
- Reread Matthew 8:8.
 - What does this teach us about the power of God?
 - What does this teach us about the love of God?

CHAPTERS 22-27

***This book ends with a series of poems and Bible verses for you to read, meditate upon, then discuss and reflect upon collectively. Perhaps read them separately and spend time slowly devouring the wisdom each has to offer. Then, reflect upon them all at once. Search for common themes and powerful truths. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?*

- Reread Romans 5:4. Then read “God is in Control” aloud.
 - How does this Scripture correlate with this poem?
 - What does the author mean by the line:

How can I speak to the dead when I have no spiritual wealth?

- What characterizes a spiritually dead person?
- Reread Matthew 7:1-2. Then read “Don’t Judge Me” aloud.
 - There are plenty of abuses to this Scripture—oftentimes Christians will use it to spurn godly correction and accountability from their brothers and sister—but what does God really mean by it?
 - In the poem the author writes:

You may walk with your head up high.

You may look down on the lowly.

But you may find yourself in the same predicament.

*It might happen slowly, or it may happen in the blink of an eye;
poverty coming to greet you in disguise.*

- We can find ourselves impoverished in a variety of ways besides just a lack of money. How?
- In what ways were some of the most poverty-stricken people you’ve known afflicted?
- What does the Bible say about God’s provision for us?
- Reread James 5:9. Then read “I’m No Better Than You” aloud.
 - What does God’s Word say about complaining?
 - What does it say about gossip? Gossip is one of the “small” sins, right? Of course not! Yet, it’s so easy to fall into that trap of talking negatively about others.

- In the referenced poem, the author makes the point that we have no place, especially as Christians, to judge our brothers and sisters, friends, co-workers, or even strangers. One line says:

You can have everything in the world and your life ends up a waste

- What does the author mean by this? What constitutes a wasted life, in God's sight?
- How are we making sure our lives are abundant and purposeful?
- Reread Proverbs 18:21. Then read "Power in the Tongue" aloud.
 - Those of us who have been following Jesus for a while have probably heard a sermon or two about the power of the "tongue"—the power in the things we say.
 - Why do you think that is? What *is* the power of the tongue?
 - Are we controlling the things we choose to say? In what ways can we work harder to be selective about what we speak?
 - Pray about it! Ask the Lord to lasso in your speech. Ask Him to give you self control and to help you only speak words of edification!
 - This poem says:

*Words can bless a person or bring about a curse
Bring healing to your life or prolong the hurt*

- Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." How do the poem's lines reveal the truth of this verse?
- Reread Mark 11:25. Then read "Wall of Protection" aloud.
 - What is this wall the author describes?
 - What happens to the wall's builder?
 - What do you think made him want to rid himself of the wall, even though he obviously painstakingly built it alone?
 - What does God tell us about forgiveness?
 - Why are we so quick to hold onto our grudges and move on?
 - Who is forgiveness for? Who benefits?

- Reread Psalm 71:23-24. Then read “Redeemed” aloud.
 - This poem describes an experience that starts in utter darkness and oppression, but ends with light and hope. Can you relate to what the poem’s character experienced?
 - Read Ephesians 6:12. This poem well illustrates what this verse proclaims.
 - Now Read Ephesians 6:13-17. What are we commanded to do in order to resist the powers of the devil and his demons?
 - Make an effort to memorize the full armor of God found in these verses. Then, every morning protect yourself with it. Be ready for battle!

CHAPTER 28

- Read Luke 5:4.
 - When you started reading this book, did you know from where its title came?
 - What do you believe is the significance of this verse and its use as this book's title?

- Take some time to reflect on your journey in reading and studying God's Word through *LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP!*
 - What chapter could you most relate to?
 - During the reading and studying of which chapter did you grow the most?
 - What has the Lord taught you? What is he continuing to teach you?
 - Is your heart under construction? If so, that's great! How is God working on you?

- Reread 2 Corinthians 13:5.
 - Examine yourself now and regularly as this Scripture commands. Make sure you are measuring up to God's standards regularly! When you don't feel like you are measuring up, take the time to figure out why. Is there pain in your life you aren't dealing with? Sin?
 - Do not be condemned, but be redeemed!

- Are you ready to take the author's advice and launch out into the deep?
 - In what ways will you commit to living Jesus' command to Simon Peter?
 - What are you doing now?
 - As the author compels, receive God's blessing. Have faith, and be willing!

***End your study by reading and discussing the author's testimony. How does this give you insight into each chapter of this book? How has God used both of the authors? Share your testimony with others as the authors have done here. God wants to use you!*

All writings referenced herein, excluding biblical references and unless otherwise noted, are the original works of the authors of
LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP!

Reading guide compiled by
Write Word Edit