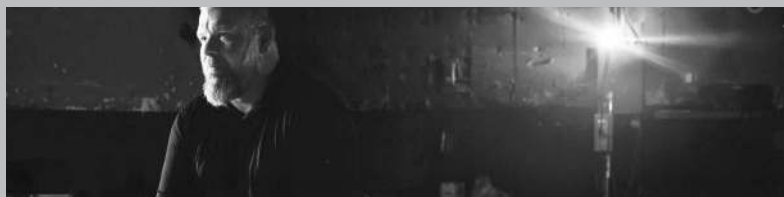


FIVE-SESSION
STUDY GUIDE
FOR MEN

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III



TRANSFORMED

EMBRACING OUR TRUE IDENTITY
AND PURPOSE






RT PHILLIPS AND TIM PHILLIPS

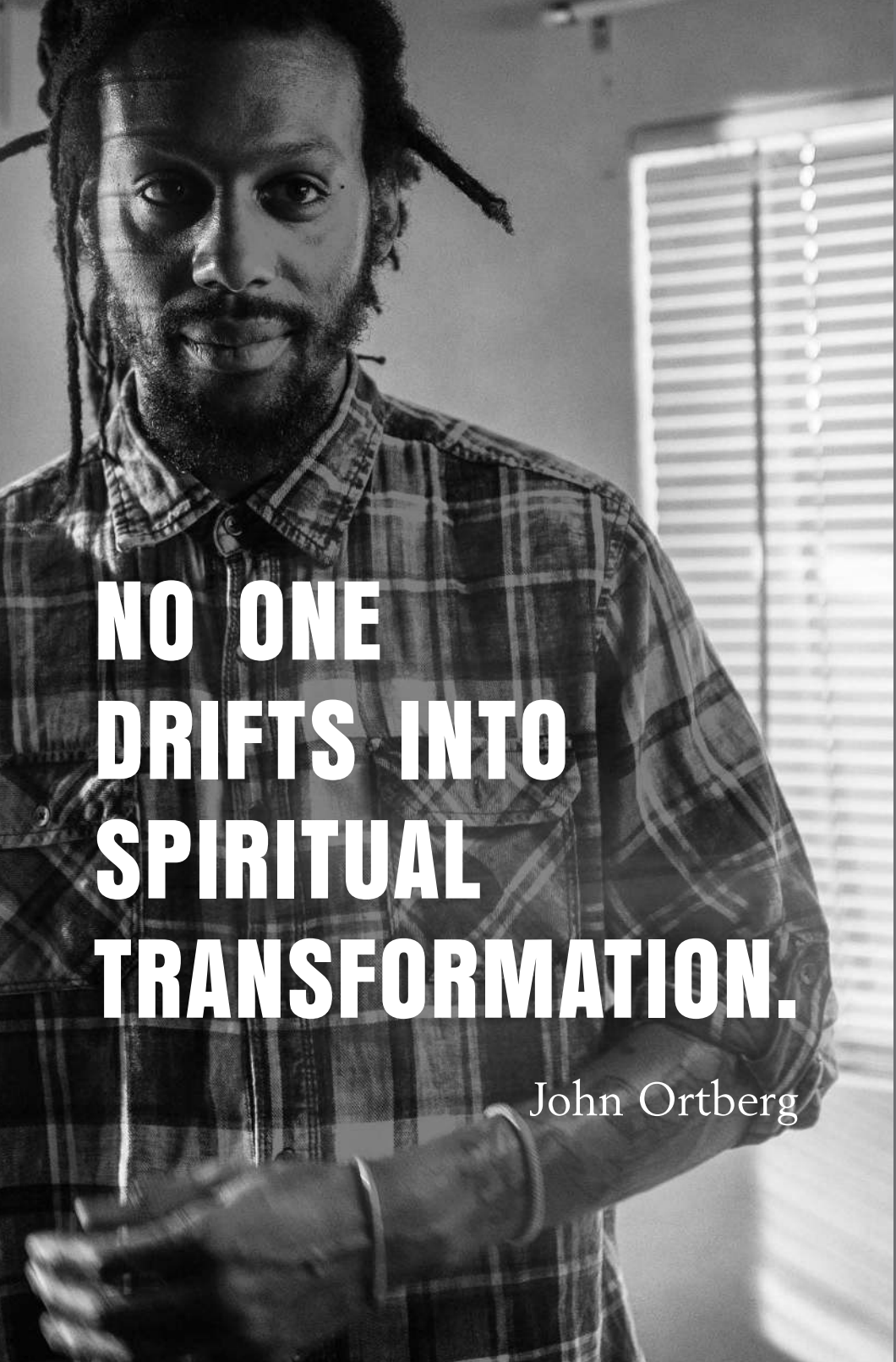


ZONDERVAN™

Contents

DISCUSSION GUIDE • PERSONAL STUDY • SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

	OVERVIEW	1
	GROUP DYNAMICS	4
	SESSION 1 – IDENTITY PROPAGANDA	13
	SESSION 2 – TRANSFORMATION WILLIE ALFONSO	28
	SESSION 3: – BROTHERHOOD SAM & EMMANUEL ACHO	43
	SESSION 4 – CHOICES JERRY QUIROZ	57
	SESSION 5 – RELOAD CLINT BRUCE	70



**NO ONE
DRIFTS INTO
SPIRITUAL
TRANSFORMATION.**

John Ortberg



**WE ARE EXCITED YOU
CHOSE TO BE A PART OF
THIS JOURNEY.**

We have been working with men in stadiums, arenas, churches, businesses, and homes for decades and can sum up what we have seen as their biggest battles in two words: *Isolation* and *Disqualification*.

- **Isolation:** “If you knew how messed up some of my life is, you wouldn’t want to have anything to do with me.”
- **Disqualification:** “If you knew how messed up some of my life is, you wouldn’t want me to have anything to do with you.”

The passion behind CORE is to create spaces where men have permission to be real. Spaces where men discover they are not alone with the kind of doubts and fears they face. Spaces where they have like-minded brothers who are there with them.

In spite of what our culture might tell us, life was not designed to figure things out on our own. When Jesus came to earth to start a revolution, he did so by gathering a small band of ordinary men.



OVERVIEW

These men had their own unique backgrounds, diverse occupations, and individual personalities. It was alongside one another that Jesus would orchestrate learning environments that would change them into the most powerful transformative community in the history of the world.

Together, these men went from being self-centered individuals to united powerhouses that forever changed the course of history. Jesus didn't just teach them wonderful truths. He modeled, coached, and empowered them on what it took to make those truths become a living reality in the challenging world in which they lived. Please hear this when we say, "Jesus is still forming and empowering communities today."

Our hope is that this 5-session small group experience is the beginning of a journey that transforms your group into this type of community.

Here are the basic elements we have prepared for you:

5 SHORT FILMS

We believe in the power of story. The 5 films connected with Series 1 are stories of real people facing real life challenges.

5-PART DISCUSSION GUIDE

We believe in the power of community. This guide will help facilitate small group interaction in a way that creates connection around things that matter.

5-PART PERSONAL STUDY AND SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

We believe in the power of personal study and reflection. This gives the opportunity, between group meetings, to move the ideas from the film and discussion into deeper understanding and growth.

GROUP DYNAMICS

COMBINED WITH THE FILMS, THE 5-SESSION GROUP DISCUSSION IS DESIGNED TO MAXIMIZE INTERACTION, CONNECTION AND MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS.

We've intentionally made this guide as straightforward as possible. Please know that each of these simple steps are specifically designed to help create maximum impact for you and your group. With that in mind, we encourage you to trust the process by following each step along with its suggested time frame.

CORE GROUP TIME CONSISTS OF:

1. Opening Prayer. Surrendering time and hearts to God's leading.

2. Check In. Discussing past week's issues, progress, and challenges.

3. Watch Film. Viewing together a 10- to 14-minute real-life story.

4. Discussion. Sharing personal impressions and thoughts about the film.

5. Next Steps. Discussing a measurable step that can be taken this coming week.

6. Personal Study Preview. Brief look at this week's personal study.

7. Closing Prayer. Asking for God's guidance and strength for the week ahead.

Each meeting together will serve as an opportunity to connect with each other, get real, build trust, and consider the important issues in the lives of everyone in your group.

OVERVIEW

IDEAL GROUP SIZE & TIME FRAME

An ideal small group size is 5–7. If the group is too small and somebody does not come or drops out, you can lose the collective perspective and encouragement a group can bring. If it is too large, you lose the opportunity for everyone to fully participate and build trust. If your group is larger, you can break into smaller groups for the discussion time. If you are meeting as a large group, we strongly encourage you keep the smaller groups together throughout your 5 sessions.

An ideal time frame for your group is 90 minutes. Of course, if your group decides, you can meet for longer or shorter periods. We recommend not meeting for less than 60 minutes. The suggested meeting agenda we have provided is based on the 90-minute time frame. If you meet longer or shorter, adjust accordingly.

**Note that our language throughout is “each week.”
We find a lot of groups meet every other week. This can
work great as well. For relational continuity we do not
recommend meeting once a month.**

GROUP FACILITATOR

We have consistently seen the #1 common denominator for most effective small groups is having one individual who is motivated to “owning” the group’s formation, logistics, and reminders for the full 5 weeks. This will go a long way in seeing the group stay consistent and finish strong. Many times, that same guy guides the group through the discussion, but that is not always the case. The main responsibilities for an effective group facilitator are:

- Recruits men to join him in a 5-session small-group experience together.
- Makes sure everyone gets a study guide.
- Makes sure the meeting place and film watching portion are good to go.
- Communicates meeting time reminders and encouragement between gatherings.

MEETING LOGISTICS

The group dynamic is designed around watching a short film together each time you meet. This will require having the means to play the films and access to a proper screen and sound system. In choosing the meeting place, the fewer distractions you have, the greater the chance for open discussion. Some churches host larger gatherings of men who sit around individual tables. They all watch the film together and participate in all the discussion time at their tables. If you do this, we encourage you to keep the same guys at each table each week in order to build trust.

FIRST SESSION ORIENTATION


Please be sure that your group goes over the Sharing and Group Guidelines in the first session and has a chance to ask any clarification questions. Have the group agree to commit to these Guidelines. They are simple yet designed to enhance your experience together.

OVERVIEW

Here is how everything fits together for this series.

- Each meeting you will go through the Group Discussion Guide, watch a film, and discuss personal relevance and application.
- In between each session, you will go through the Personal Study and Scripture Reflection to process the major theme of that film and think more deeply on supporting Scriptures.
- At the next meeting you will have an opportunity to discuss what you discovered, worked through, and what stood out to you during your Personal Study and Scripture Reflection time.

We encourage your group to consider at least one “off the script” meeting (i.e., BBQ, movie, sporting event, games, cards, etc.). We lay these out more fully at coreunites.com/whatsnext.



In the first session
together, please
**read out loud these
guidelines** for everyone
to have an opportunity
to discuss and agree to.

OVERVIEW

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

We believe that if you can stay within the riverbanks of these four guidelines, you will maximize a positive small experience for everyone.

1. Personalize, Not Sermonize. What does the specific issue being discussed mean for my life, my concerns, my dreams versus the need to give additional insights to others? The courage to speak from personal transparency contributes significantly to everyone in your group. Speak more from the “I”, “my”, “me” and NOT the “you” and “we” position. This can be difficult for those of us who are teachers or those who wish to be seen as insightful.


2. Be Brief. Be thoughtful not to dominate discussion time. Think in terms of 1-2 minutes each time you share. If you know you are someone who loves to share, discipline yourself to actively listen. If you have something that needs more time to unpack, make a request to discuss it later. Being brief can be difficult for those of us who externally process versus those who internalize thoughts before speaking.

3. Encourage, Not Fix. We honor courageous authenticity. We discourage group counsel or correction. We need to take responsibility for our own actions, results, and experiences. This can be difficult for those of us who are counselors or “fixers.”


4. Maintain Confidentiality. Keep everything shared confidential. Do not repeat it to ANYONE outside your CORE group, including spouses or close friends. This can be difficult for those of us who don’t highly value what it means to be a trusted confidante.

SMALL GROUP COURTESY “101s”

- If you are going to be late or absent, call someone in your group to inform them.
- No cellphone use during the meeting, unless permission is asked at the beginning of the meeting.
- Don’t leave the group permanently without speaking to your group about it.



There are 5 films
that go along with
*CORE for Men:
Transformed.*



These are a central
component to
the small-group
experience.

OVERVIEW

ADDITIONAL SMALL GROUP BEST PRACTICES

Here are some additional small group dynamic insights that will be beneficial for your CORE group to be aware of:

- The purpose of a CORE group is to encourage us to think and discuss from a personal heart perspective. When the film ends, go directly into the first discussion question, “What part of _____ story or sharing stuck out to you?”
- The CORE discussion time is a simple invitation to be real. No posturing required. “Being real” can mean different things to different people. So, be respectful of each other and embrace what “being real” means for them. That includes not making anyone feel like they have to share something personal. When everyone in a group feels like they can relax and be themselves, it’s surprising how God will help open up the group’s interaction over time.
- Interrupt any tendency you feel to judge another. We get enough of that already.
- Avoid being an “advice giver.” If someone in the group wants input or feedback, let them ask for it. If you have input you want to offer, ask permission to give it. Feel free to not grant permission to someone to give input if you are not ready to hear it from them.
- Do not shut down someone who may choose to use strong language or express raw emotion in describing their perspective and experience (i.e., swearing, raising voice, etc.).
- Be respectful of the time frames included in the meeting agenda for each week. As briefly discussed earlier in our Group Guidelines, a common problem is the tendency of one guy to dominate the group time. If someone is going over on time, after the meeting, respectfully remind them of the guidelines. If they persist, kindly remind them during the group time out of respect for the rest of the group.

C ● R ■ FOR MEN

- There will be some very good and open conversations in the “Check In” and “Discussion” time. Make sure you leave yourselves a little room for the “Next Steps,” “Personal Study Preview,” and “Closing Prayer” time.
- The current culture is high on talking but slow on doing. When you purposefully give time to ask, “What specific step am I going to take this week?” it can move your group into new levels of discovery and breakthrough. This also gives everyone something specific to pray for one another during the week.
- In your first time together, write down everyone’s name in this guide and during the week, take a moment to pray for each guy by name. It doesn’t have to be a long prayer. Watch what happens to your own heart toward the guys in your group when you do this. It’s pretty awesome to see how your heart changes toward the group.
- When you discuss how your previous week’s “Next Steps” and “Personal Study” went, this is a “no shame zone.” Growth and new habits take time. Empathy, encouragement, and patience go a long way toward building the kind of environment that will surface root issues and facilitate breakthrough.
- Pay attention to the men in your group. If it seems like there might be a guy who would have an easier time opening up “one on one,” look for an opportunity to grab a coffee or a bite to eat. These moments can be great for some guys.
- Finally, a great CORE group meeting, which takes time to evolve, has an ease and a flow to it. It is not a rigidly enforced agenda, but it is important to follow the established guidelines that allow enough time for each of the group elements.

LET’S GO!

SESSION



IDENTITY

PROPAGANDA

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE (90 MINUTES)

OPENING PRAYER

Surrender your time and heart to God's leading.

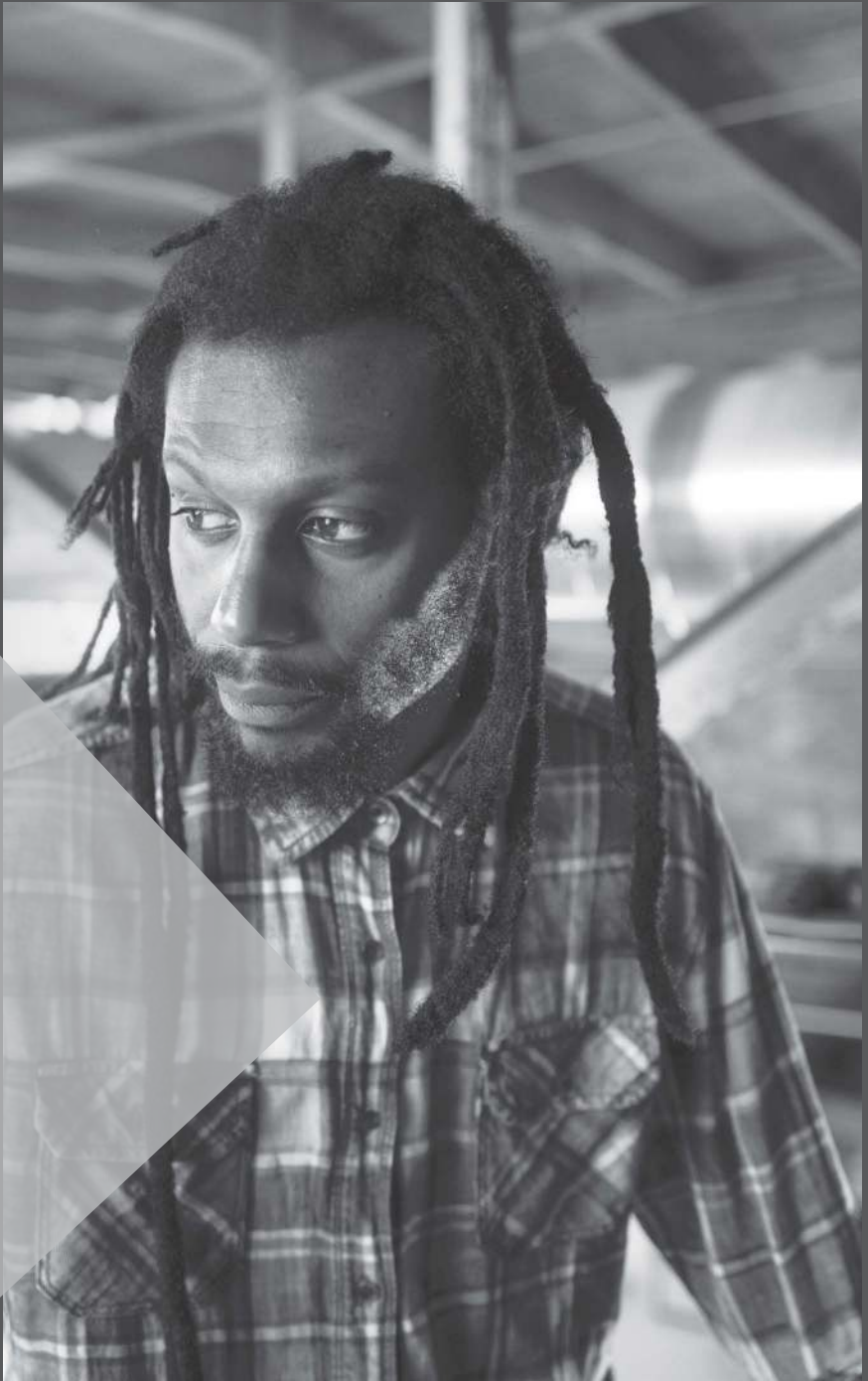
CHECK IN (15 MINUTES—1–2 MINUTES PER PERSON)

1. Share your name.
2. Main reasons for wanting to be or continue in the group.
3. One thing you would like to get from participating in these next 5 sessions.

TOGETHER READ THE GUIDELINES ON PAGE 9. (15 MINUTES)

These are simple yet designed to enhance your group experience.

1. Does everyone in the group understand them?
2. Are there any clarification questions regarding any of the guidelines?
3. Can we commit to these as a group?



IDENTITY

Note: Many of you are seeing this study guide for the first time. There is some foundational information in the Overview and Group Dynamics section that would be well worth reading before you meet again.

WATCH FILM (12 MINUTES)

Identity—Propaganda

GROUP DISCUSSION (35 MINUTES)

Be mindful of the need for everyone to have the opportunity to talk. Take 1–2 minutes each time you share.

1. What did you connect with in Propaganda’s sharing?
2. What “norms about manhood” do you think are influencing what you believe about yourself? How does that contrast with what God says about you?

NEXT STEPS (10 MINUTES)

In light of today's discussion, what is one step you can take in your life or in your relationships this week? Something specific. Something measurable. Something the group can pray for during the week.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PERSONAL STUDY AND SCRIPTURE REFLECTION—READ OUT LOUD (2 MINUTES)

The Personal Study and Scripture Reflection section in this guide is included in each of the sessions. Taking time each week to do them can be one of the most important things you choose to do over these next 5 weeks. It is the difference between randomly throwing seed on the ground versus planting it deeply. Setting aside time for personal study and prayerful reflection is a new rhythm for many. Committing to this, along with showing up every week with your group, will strengthen your ability to drop old thoughts and habits and take on new ways to think and live.

PERSONAL STUDY EXCERPT—READ OUT LOUD (2 MINUTES)

What is identity? It's your perception of who you are, why you are that way, and what you do to sustain that perception.

Life and the cultures we are born into offer us one identity and this is the first set of identities we take on. It's like fish swimming in the water. The fish don't even think about water. It is just the environment they swim in. It is like the air we breathe. Air is what surrounds us. How often do you remind yourself to breathe? Not often, if at all. It's just the environment you were born into; you embraced it with your first breath and didn't give it another thought unless you were forced to.

This is how the identity we developed as children happened.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask for God's guidance and strength for the week ahead.

CORE GROUP NOTES



SESSION 1



PERSONAL STUDY

Remember WHO YOU ARE man of God!

You ARE a chosen, forgiven, redeemed son of the Creator of the universe.

You ARE a commissioned minister of reconciliation.

You ARE co-heir with Christ to the kingdom of heaven.

And you ARE my brother.

In this film, Jason Petty, aka Propaganda, offers us a brilliant dissertation on identity, what forms it, what is our old identity, what is offered to us as a new identity, and how we transition from one to the other.

First, let's think about this for a few moments. What is identity? It's your perception of who you are, why you are that way, and what you do to sustain that perception.

Life and the cultures we are born into offer us one identity and this is the first set of identities we take on. It's like fish swimming in the water. The fish don't even think about water. It is just the environment they swim in. It is like the air we breathe. Air is what surrounds us. How often do you remind yourself to breathe? Not often, if at all. It's just the environment you were born into; you embraced it with your first breath and didn't give it another thought unless you were forced to.

This is how the identity we developed as children happened.

We just naturally, often automatically, took on points of view, beliefs and 'tribal affiliations' based on the primary influences in our lives.

For example, if you like sports, what are your favorite sports teams? What are your political beliefs? What are your points of view on racial matters?

PERSONAL STUDY

Where you land on each of these matters has as much to do with the influences you had growing up as it does your own independent thinking.

Many of the “tribes” you are a part of now were automatically adopted, due to your place of origin, family of origin, geographical location of origin, and the experiences you had. Often, we instinctually choose our preferences without much thought. And, then, somewhere along the way, we may start questioning these preferences.

Let’s take a look at how Propaganda described this identity challenge. Consider his thoughts in light of how you may have built your own identity.

He noticed how he had formed his original identity growing up:

What he thought it meant to be a man . . .

“We were in this Latino neighborhood and what I knew from Latino men is, yo . . . men work, like that’s what you do. They work long hours, hard hours. That’s what men do.”

“So, if you ain’t working, you ain’t a real man.”

The allure and fallacy of the self-made man . . .

“I don’t like the idea that somebody had to do something for me for me to get where I am. But it’s such a dumb thing to not like because everything is like that, somebody did something for you.”

You are what you do . . .

“I have a profession where our value is quantified by ticket sales and album sales. If you have friends that are killing it . . . doing better than you . . . oftentimes you feel like ‘dang, like what am I doing? What am I doing wrong?’ It starts becoming like super competition with buddies. And I think that’s been such a hindrance in the sense that sometimes it sparks jealousy . . . like envy toward people who are your loved ones.”

**REMEMBER WHO
YOU ARE MAN OF GOD!
YOU ARE A CHOSEN,
FORGIVEN, REDEEMED SON
OF THE CREATOR OF THE
UNIVERSE. YOU ARE A
COMMISSIONED MINISTER
OF RECONCILIATION.
YOU ARE CO-HEIR WITH
CHRIST TO THE KINGDOM
OF HEAVEN. AND YOU ARE
MY BROTHER.**

PERSONAL STUDY

“The ramifications of thinking you are what you do . . .

“But when I feel like I’m not as good as them or the world doesn’t think I’m as good as them, I stop pursuing the fullness of who I am, and I’m just overwhelmed with who they are.”

Building a new identity . . .

“So, what it means for my identity to be on purpose is that I don’t have to see myself from a deficit model. A lot of times as dudes, we’re like ‘Yo, I worked hard. I struggled. You know I failed at this.’ So, it’s like you’re starting from a deficit. And then mistakes happen. We look back like ‘I shouldn’t have done this or shouldn’t have done that.’ Again, it’s a deficit. But if I say no, this is on purpose, I’m not starting from a deficit. I’m starting from purpose. Then moving forward is not reactionary or in regret. It’s moving from design. If I can see my identity as a design, like I’m black on purpose, and I’m from LA on purpose . . . I know what I’ve gone through was on purpose. Like God was painting something bigger.”

“When I understand my life is that, then . . . Of course, it isn’t to excuse mistakes or things that I had no control over. I don’t see those as victim inducing. I see this as by design.”

Expressing this new identity . . .

“I realize a lot of my definition of manhood was just misogyny and patriarchy, which is oppressive. And I’ve learned now as a married man and a grownup how quickly I can humble myself . . . Esteeming others higher than myself . . . leveraging power and privilege for others.

“For me now that is the mark of manhood. If I want to lead, then lead by service . . . lead through submission. Ultimately this is the call for all of us, but specifically as a dude, given the context of our culture, I want to lead by not trying to gain power but trying to lay it down. Now I feel like that’s manhood.”

Transitioning from the old identity to the new identity . . .

“Forgiveness was the Father stooping down. And I think that that’s such a challenge to our concept of manhood of you working to get yours. You get where you get because you grinded. That’s the way I thought. What man meant was work. Nobody hands you anything. Everybody has the same 24 hours. I just need to make mine be 32. You know what I’m saying? But forgiveness came out of the heart of the Father—not because of the actions of the receiver, which points us to the adoption part, which means you had no hand in this; but both of those things—they immediately humble and they level the playing field and they say, ‘You know this is the action. We are receivers, rather than givers.’”

We close with this final thought for you to consider from Propaganda . . .

“I think at the end of the day I would challenge men to challenge their norms. Question things that you figured were set in stone as far as our definitions of manhood, of strength, and beauty of leadership. I think when you’re willing to really question and deconstruct, you can reconstruct into a better configuration. Sometimes winning is losing. Sometimes leading is to serve. It is to be humble and [realize that] identity doesn’t come solely from our experiences, but from our Maker.”

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

3. Reread this opening quote and consider how this is a better description of who you really are:

- Remember WHO YOU ARE man of God!
- You ARE a chosen, forgiven, redeemed son of the Creator of the universe.
- You ARE a commissioned minister of reconciliation.
- You ARE co-heir with Christ to the kingdom of heaven.
- And you ARE my brother.

4. Have I addressed my “Next Steps” that I shared with my CORE group? If not, what is keeping me from stepping out and addressing it? What’s my next step?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION PRACTICE

We encourage you to consider the following Scripture passage over the course of this week in a prayerfully contemplative way. This simple process will help you engage not only your mind but also your heart. Consider focusing this week on the same Scripture below (Jeremiah 9:23–24) each day, using these principles:

- Be alert for a phrase or word that catches your attention. This could be in the form of a question on what it means or a new insight.
- Once during the week, read the verses aloud slowly.
- Once during the week, as you read the verses, pause along the way to use it to spark specific prayers to God.
- Finally, after reading the verses, pause to be thankful that *“it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”*

Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

**SCRIPTURE REFLECTION FOR SESSION 2:
JEREMIAH 9:23–24 (ESV)**

*Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom,
let not the mighty man boast in his might,
let not the rich man boast in his riches,
but let him who boasts boast in this,
that he understands and knows me,
that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice,
and righteousness in the earth.
For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”*

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION NOTES



Also available from CORE: **TRANSFORMED**



EMBRACING OUR TRUE IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

God never designed us to just figure things out on our own. When Jesus came to earth to start a revolution, he did so by gathering a small band of ordinary men around him. These men had unique backgrounds, diverse occupations, and individual personalities. Jesus orchestrated learning environments as they worked alongside each other that changed them into the most powerful, transformative community in the history of the world. Together, they went from self-centered individuals to united powerhouses.

Study Guide: 9780310131755

DVD with Free Streaming Access: 9780310131779

The goal of the CORE studies is set men on a similar journey that will transform them and their group into this type of community. Each study features five real-life stories of men who have faced real-life challenges and discovered transformation, redemption, restoration, purpose, and identity. These stories serve as a catalyst for men to start being real about their own stories and realize they are not alone in the struggle. In turn, this opens them up to getting the encouragement necessary to engage in life proactively.

There has never been a more critical need to equip men with the tools to win the battles over their hearts and futures. CORE gives them the ability to create spaces where they can show up as they are without judgment, be open about their struggles, and find freedom to discover who God says they are. They will be invited to step out of shame and isolation and encouraged to step into their God-given purpose.

This study features an introduction from Jeremy Affeldt and stories from well-known speakers on the topics of identity, transformation, brotherhood, choices, and renewal.

Available now at your favorite bookstore,
or streaming video on StudyGateway.com.

CORE

CORE creates space where men can be real.

A space where they are no longer alone in facing their struggles or pursuing their dreams.

Space where they can discover, in community, what the scriptures say who they really are and what they were made for.



WHAT'S NEXT?

For additional series and resources for leaders go to coreunites.com/whatsnext

coreunites.com