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# SUBSTANCE GUIDEBOOK

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A roadmap to all things Substance.



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## WEEK 1 NOTES



1

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WEEK



1 - 2

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READ

Worldliness in a Changing World  
Saying Goodbye

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.*

**1 Corinthians 3:1**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

**2 Peter 1:3-7, NIV 1984**

*I have given them [the disciples] your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

**John 17:14-19**

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

**Matthew 5:6**

*So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

**Matthew 6:31-33**



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Christians in the past have talked a lot about “discernment.” What is your experience with it, or how have you grown in it? Have you known someone particularly discerning? What was special about him or her because of this virtue?
2. Do you equate the world becoming “more worldly” with becoming “more sinful”? Why is it important to distinguish between worldliness/secularism and sin?
3. Why is worldliness so alluring? Why do we fall for obvious, predictable issues over and over? Why does Christ feel so foreign?
4. Nic poses this question about gratifying our visceral desire: *Why wait and toil for the real, when a rush of lesser pleasure can be had at the press of a button?* How would you respond to this question?
5. What is one effect of the deformational culture you can see affecting you? How did you absorb it?
6. How do you manage the tension that Christian discipleship is both a gift and a path that requires every effort on which to progress?
7. Do you think you believe the Scriptures when they say God’s power has given us “everything we need for life



and godliness”? What evidence in your life supports your answer? What evidence do your family and friends see? (Ask them, and beg them to be honest with you.)

8. Imagine we (authentic Christians) could create a place to live that was separate from the worldliness of the world, but we weren't allowed to. Would you be upset that you couldn't live in such a place, or would you be relieved that you wouldn't have to?
9. Does Jesus' promise in Matthew 5:6 do anything inside you?
10. Do you need to say a more decisive and complete “goodbye” to worldliness? Why, and in what way(s)?

## WEEK 2 NOTES



# 2

WEEK



# 3 - 4

READ

Self-Sacrificial Love  
The Mind of Christ

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.*

**Galatians 5:13**

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

**John 13:34-35**

*No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

**1 John 4:12**

*For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.*

**Galatians 5:5**

*The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

**Romans 8:6-8**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**Romans 12:1-2**

*"Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

**1 Corinthians 2:16**

*The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*

**1 Corinthians 2:14**

## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. If it is easy to misunderstand Jesus and mis-define love, how do we get clear on what spiritual substance looks like?
2. Saying that the Law exemplifies love makes some people nervous. Without specific definition, “love” could mean anything and essentially, therefore, become meaningless. How does the Law continue to help us understand love?
3. What is the relationship between love and virtue? Why does it matter for becoming people of substance?
4. Who or what is something close to you that you should love but have a hard time loving? Why do you think that is?
5. How does a good grasp of what holy love is help the Christian pursue social justice in the community?
6. What are a couple things you tell God you want to do yourself that you shouldn't? What are some things you should do for yourself that you are expecting God to do for you?
7. What are some ways your mind might be conformed to the “pattern of this world”? Which of them are you most afraid to admit (things that will lead to rejection, isolation, disapproval, or persecution)?

8. How would you define the mind of Christ in your own words?
  
9. How does one get the mind of Christ? What do you need to do starting now to get there?
  
10. What structures or accountability do you need to succeed where you have failed before in seeking the mind of Christ more fully?

## WEEK 3 NOTES





3

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WEEK



5 - 6

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READ

Virtuous Freedom 1: Freedom from  
Virtuous Freedom 2: Freedom for

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.*

**Galatians 4:21-26**

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

**Philippians 2:12-13**

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

**Galatians 5:1**



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. What was the most important idea in this chapter for you? What practical difference does it make in how you see life or what kind of person you are to be?
2. Can you explain in your own words what The Golden Triangle is and why it is important?
3. Are you convinced that liberty cannot thrive without virtue in a society? Why or why not?
4. What is structuring your virtue? What Scripture helps you structure virtue/give you a picture of virtues?
5. Can you think of a time in your life when you did something for Fleshly reasons that caused more problems; a time when your “passions forged your fetters”?
6. Can you identify any of your remaining compulsions or idols? What are you hoping for in them that you don’t think God can be trusted to supply?
7. In your own words, how would you define sanctification?
8. How would you describe why Christ died to free us from the Law? Why couldn’t he forgive us and keep the Law in place? Wouldn’t that have made a better world?

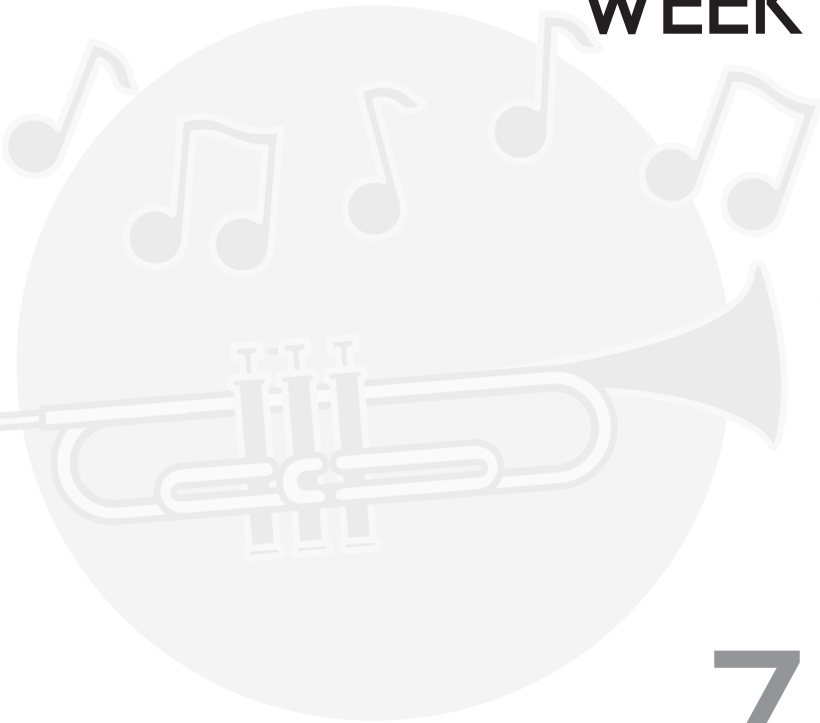
9. How does God forge virtuous freedom in us through faith?
  
10. How should our role as stewards change how we see our “what” and “why” in the world? How should seeing our role given at creation change our understanding of our lives in the age of redemption (after Christ’s death and resurrection)?

## WEEK 4 NOTES

# 4

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**WEEK**



# 7

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**READ**

In Step with the Spirit

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

**Romans 8:1-4**

*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. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

**Galatians 5:24-26**





## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. What is the most important concept you took from this chapter?
  
2. Review the five basic elements of walking with the Spirit. Which needs more of your attention?
  - 1) Hope for real righteousness
  - 2) Express faith through love
  - 3) Follow the Spirit's desires, not your Flesh's
  - 4) Admit what you know by the Spirit
  - 5) Kill the Flesh
  
3. Which of the two, self-gratification or self-justification, is your biggest enemy? Why?
  
4. Explain in as practical and concrete terms as you can what it means to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).
  
5. In your own words, what is the Spirit's role in the process of walking with the Spirit?
  
6. How does "being in step with the Spirit" tie into the other three marks of substance?
  
7. The Bible says the "acts of the [F]lesh are obvious" (Galatians 5:19). What works of the Flesh did you not want to admit were obvious until God's conviction brought

the truth home to you with force? Share some experience of Spiritual conviction and how it led to faith.

8. What scripture gives you the impression that following the Spirit is a battle with the Flesh? Does your perspective on ‘following the Spirit’ change with this perspective of a fight?
9. When your longings are misplaced, how do you rectify the problem?
10. What are the most important truths you need to remember in order to keep in step with the Spirit?

## WEEK 5 NOTES

5

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WEEK



8

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READ

Welcome to Ordinary

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear [revere] him.*

**Ecclesiastes 3:10-14**

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

**Colossians 3:17**

*In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

**Acts 20:35**

*In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

**Psalms 127:2**



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. What are your Four Rs (roles, responsibilities, repetitions, and rhythms)? List them and include the simplest, most ordinary things like “taking a shower” and “locking the doors before bed.”
  
2. Which of these things are the hardest to do (a) for their own sake? (b) as productivity? (c) with thankfulness? or (d) in a state of wonder?
  
3. In coming full circle, how does real wisdom and knowledge from God also lead to happiness and substance?
  
4. How has this chapter influenced your thinking about work? Generosity? Poverty?
  
5. Ecclesiastes 3:10-14 says that God has placed a “burden on the human race.” In your own words, what is this burden? How do you reconcile that this burden is not a curse—but instead the burden is considered good that helps us?
  
6. In what situation or area of life do you need to exercise faith by trusting God in the ordinary?
  
7. Read Psalm 100 or Ecclesiastes 2:24-26b
  - Pray through the passage.
  - What does the passage say it means to “worship God”



with gladness?

- What do you learn about God's character?

8. Put thankfulness into practice—pray a prayer of thankfulness with your small group.

## WEEK 6 NOTES



# 6

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**WEEK**



# 9 - 10

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**READ**

Escaping Diversion  
Embracing Discipline

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

**1 Corinthians 15:58, ESV**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

**2 Peter 1:3-4, NIV 1984**

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*

**Acts 20:28-31**

*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.*

**Philippians 3:12-14**



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Describe the effects of distraction and diversion on your life.
  
2. Review the four tests for what is permissible. How does this relate to discovering if something is a diversion? Think of a few examples in your life that might be diversions or sins, and run them through this grid. Try doing it with other people.
  - 1) Is it beneficial (for your true good)?
  - 2) Is it constructive (for the true good of others)?
  - 3) Will it master you?
  - 4) Does it align with who you are in Christ?
  
3. Based on your experiences, what do you think about the following statements?
  - “Focus is like a muscle. It can get in shape and fall out of shape.”
  - “...diversion doesn’t just keep our attention off of Christ, it deadens our passion...”
  
4. How are we supposed to “keep [our] spiritual fervor, serving the Lord”?
  
5. What kinds of diversion are you most prone to?
  
6. What diversions do you need to escape right now?

7. What are you being diverted from? What is the thing God wants you to face? Him? Your character? Pursuing a mark of substance? The state of your family? (You may have to pray and focus on this for a while—maybe discuss it with a mentor or mature Christian friend.)
  
8. What are your thoughts and feelings about spiritual discipline?
  
9. What do you think of each of the martial disciplines?
  - Vigilance
  - Brutality
  - Training
  - Cooperation
  
10. Would you consider your life disciplined in a “gracious striving” kind of way?
  
11. Why do you think Jesus died and rose to take hold of you?
  
12. Which of the four martial disciplines are you most prone to dismiss? Which do you need the most?
  
13. How could embracing the martial disciplines help you grow in the marks of substance?

## WEEK 7 NOTES



7

WEEK



11

READ

Belonging to the Formational Community

## KEY BIBLE VERSES

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Matthew 28:18-20**

*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

**Colossians 3:12-17**



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Three components of being part of the formational community are immersion, intimacy, and shared passion. Do these characterize your experience in the local church?
2. Do you feel and think about the church the way Jesus says he does in the Scriptures? If not, what is stopping you?
3. How would you answer the question, “Why is it important that I go to church (aka: corporate worship)?”
4. Is the spiritual health of your church causing people in it to absorb spiritual substance or worldly dysfunction? If it’s not healthy, how can you fight for its health in a constructive way that tends toward unity and demonstrated humility?
5. How do you feel and think about church discipline and spiritual authority? Are you fearful or cynical because of past experiences or things you’ve heard? Do you get involved in choosing the leaders of your church? Do you pray regularly for your leaders in the church and their families?
6. In your own words, what is the purpose of the church? What is it supposed to do? Who is it supposed to affect?
7. In this chapter, Nic asks, “Is it possible to embody and proclaim the good strangeness of Christianity while also

showing people that we're not as unlike them as they think?" How would you respond to this question?

8. In what ways have you grown in spiritual substance this year?





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