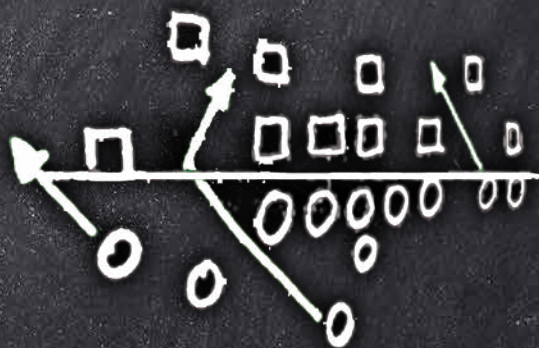


THE PLAYBOOK

A GAME PLAN
FOR EVERY SEASON



A SIX-WEEK STUDY FOR
YOU AND THE GUYS

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...

—Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV)



MAN IN THE MIRROR



DO YOU NEED A GAME PLAN?

We all go through different seasons; changes in your circumstances or mindset can significantly alter the course of your life. Sometimes they come unexpectedly, and other times there is a barely perceptible transition to a new season. Regardless of where you are right now, our hope is that this study will help you prepare for both the opportunities and challenges of each season—whether it’s one of reflection, building, crisis, renewal, rebuilding, suffering, or success.

I’ve learned some invaluable lessons through these seasons in my own life, as God used the time to grow me in profound ways. We don’t want you to miss those lessons in your life, either. It’s His grace at work.

Along the way, God wants to use you to help others grow, too—to come alongside them and walk with them through whatever season they might find themselves. Remember, the Christian life is a *team* sport so don’t try to play alone. Grab a few guys, pick a time to meet, and get in the game together!

With you in the Great Adventure,

Brett Clemmer
President, Man in the Mirror

To experience victory, we need more than just the right strategy; we need a team around us, using the same playbook, running in the same direction.

NEVER DONE A GROUP STUDY BEFORE? NO PROBLEM!

You only need three things: this workbook, a notebook, and a pen. If you want to look up additional Scripture, bring your Bible, too!



HERE'S HOW IT WORKS FOR THE NEXT SIX WEEKS

ON YOUR OWN BETWEEN MEETINGS:

1. Read the short introduction to the “season” for that week.
2. You’ll find a related Bible verse(s) under **STRATEGY** to memorize.
3. Read through the main content; ask God to give you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart ready to receive from Him.



4. After reading, answer in your notebook the questions from the section **REVIEW YOUR GAME FILM**.
5. Next, in your notebook, answer the questions in the section **GAME PLAN**.

TOGETHER AS A TEAM AT MEETINGS:

1. At your first meeting, trade contact info and write it on the back of this workbook.
2. Review the memory verse(s) for the week under **STRATEGY**.
3. Read the main content together.
4. Go through the discussion questions as a group from the section **HUDDLE UP**.
5. Share any insights from your **GAME PLAN**, as desired.
6. Pray for and encourage each other to carry out your plans, with God’s help!

FOR THE GROUP FACILITATOR

This workbook is divided into six weeks of study to be completed by a small group of 4-8 men. We recommend a 60 or 90-minute meeting. A good schedule for a 60-minute meeting is 10 minutes for catching up, 40 minutes for reading and discussion, and 10 minutes for prayer. For a 90-minute meeting, use the extra time for deeper discussion and/or more prayer time.

When leading discussion, aim to keep the conversation personal and practical, as opposed to purely theological or theoretical. **The goal is air time for every man, every week.** Encourage each man to share, but don’t force it.

You don’t need to be a teacher or an experienced Bible scholar to lead a group. The most important parts of your role are to show up, help facilitate discussion, and show guys you care. **PRO TIP:** Give every man on your team a quick call or text every week to remind him of your meeting and check in with him!

The Fine Print
Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.

Copyright © 1999, 2019 by Man in the Mirror, Inc. Graphic Design by Jeremy Kennedy with KENEDIK Design Studio and Cathleen Kwas.

WEEK 1

THE SEASON OF REFLECTION

Every morning in Africa when the sun comes up, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning, a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you'd better be running. —AFRICAN PARABLE

Why Reflection Is So Hard

Are you on the run? If you are like most men, the answer is, "Yes." Most men are under tremendous pressure. The problem, of course, is that men under pressure often make mistakes; they can easily miss something important or run off course.

STRATEGY

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

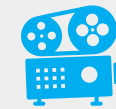
When we're running, it becomes harder and harder to stop and take stock of our lives. Even when we aren't running from one responsibility to the next—even when we have finally collapsed onto the couch at night to relax—our minds are still running. We find ourselves just a mouse click, TV commercial, or social-media scroll away from a dozen breaking news stories, cultural arguments, marketing ads, and distractions. We rarely, if at all, escape these messages long enough for any serious self-examination and reflection.

However, our busyness isn't the only obstacle to self-examination; we are also often deceived. To see a clearer reflection of ourselves, we must experience God's truth. Why? As Martin Luther said, "We love nothing more ardently than our own feelings, judgment, purpose, and will, especially when they seem to be good." Or as stated by Demosthenes, "Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he

also believes to be true." We will never be able to hold a completely accurate picture of ourselves on our own.

The Goal of Reflection

The real goal of reflection then is to see ourselves as God sees us and to ask for His wisdom and direction in our lives. Throughout the next six weeks, you'll incorporate the practice of reflection, which will allow your game plan to take shape. You may feel God prompting you to slow down the play, call a time out, or call an audible and make a big change. Decide this week that you will invite Him to "search you" and lead you, as you memorize this week's Strategy verses.



REVIEW YOUR GAME FILM

In which areas of your life do you feel the most pressure right now? Choose from the list below or add your own. Then take some time to identify the source of the pressure in each of your chosen areas by writing a brief statement in your notebook.

- Marriage/Dating
- Children
- Work
- Finances
- Friends/Relatives
- Physical Health
- Mental/Emotional Health
- Hobbies/Activities
- Other

Thinking about the last few months, write down the four or five people and activities that occupy most of your time, such as developing a time-sensitive work project, playing golf, or caring for an aging parent. Now write down the four or five people and activities you consider most important in your life. Are you spending your time on whom and what is most important to you? Why or why not?

For the people and activities you identified as most important, how have you been doing *recently* in each of those areas? Rate each one on a scale of 1 to 4: (1=failing, 2=getting by, 3=doing well, 4=flourishing).

If the next ten years turn out like the last few weeks and months, will you have experienced true success?

GAME PLAN

1

For each area you rated as a 1, 2, or 3 on the scale above, what is one positive step you could take to begin to move it higher? Commit to a timeframe—the sooner the better!

2

In the audit you did of how you spend your time and what is most important, which relationships or activities weren't on both lists? How will you refocus your attention, where needed, in the next month?

3

Write down a time and place that you think could work for regular reflection once this study ends. What are the details of what you'll do, and what do you hope to get out of it?



HUDDLE UP

Take two minutes each to introduce yourself and share about your family, job, interests, etc.

Do you feel that every morning when the sun comes up, you'd better be running? If yes, do you think it's helpful or unhealthy for you? Explain.

What are the sources of the pressure you face? What kind of pressure do you put on those around you—specifically your loved ones?

What hinders you from making time to regularly reflect on your life?

Have you been through circumstances in which self-examination could have saved you frustration or pain? If you feel comfortable, share one of these with the group.

If the goal of reflection is to see yourself as God sees you, what are steps you can take to experience more of God's truth?

WEEK 2

THE SEASON OF BUILDING

A structure is only as strong as its foundation. Are you certain you're building on the solid rock of Christ? Allow Him to be the foundation for every relationship and circumstance you're building. Approach this season with wisdom and intentionality, looking carefully at the time (how you use it) and stewardship (how you care for what God has entrusted to you).

Building Your Marriage

TIME. What quality of time do you give your wife? Do you regularly encourage her with your words? Do you show her physical affection in non-sexual ways? Do you spend time with her alone? All of these practices develop intimacy. Imagine an intimacy account for your marriage, where every interaction you have with your wife is either a deposit or a withdrawal. Deposits like these bring tremendous return on your investment! To build a strong marriage, you must show your wife through the quality of the time you spend with her that—after Christ—she's your #1 priority.

STEWARDSHIP. As men, we are called to be the "spiritual leaders" in our marriages. That term can be intimidating and confusing! Keep it simple with this definition: to lead is to care deeply about your wife's spiritual well-being—and your own. The Bible uses marriage as a metaphor for our covenant with Christ. We, as the church, are His bride. Although deeply imperfect, we are graciously loved by Him, and He cares deeply about our spiritual well-being. Likewise, you're called to give yourself up for your wife, "nourishing and cherishing" her (Ephesians 5:25,

29). Discuss God's Word, pray *with* her and *for* her, and make it a priority to attend church together. Take an active role in the marriage—be engaged and courageous in how you love her and lead her.

Building Your Children

TIME. The phrase "make up for lost time" eventually becomes an impossibility when it comes to our children. No gift, inheritance, or words are a sufficient substitute for time together. It's often said about parenting that the days are long, but the years are short. Push through the daily grind of the long days to use each one God gives you—whether they are 3 years old or 33! Encourage them. Show physical affection. Say "I love you," and "I am proud of you," and back it up with your time.

STEWARDSHIP. Children are a gift from God, and we are simply stewards, responsible for helping them develop a heart of love for Him and others. So how do we do that? Have spiritual conversations at home. Teach them God's Word. Share your own experiences of growth and hardship. Talk with them about decisions you face and explain your choices. Discover what they think and where they're learning it. Most importantly, model a vibrant walk with God in your own life. There are no guarantees when it comes to whether our children will choose to follow Christ. Helping your children be "transformed by the renewing of their mind" (Romans 12:2) by providing a biblical worldview is the *best* way you could love them.

Building a Lifestyle

TIME. Building a career and lifestyle is important, but it shouldn't come at the expense of your marriage or relationship with your children. If it is, you can be sure you aren't in the center of God's will for your life. To succeed at work but to fail at home is to fail completely. On the flip side, if you aren't putting the time or work into providing for your family, you also aren't in the center of God's will for your life. Ask Him to help you recognize and walk in the perfect balance for your family's unique needs.

STEWARDSHIP. Do you view your money and possessions as yours or as gifts from God to steward? When you're in a season of building, stay engaged—not just with your financial goals, but with the Holy Spirit's leading. He wants to give you wisdom about what to spend, save, and give. In this way, you steward your heart as well—"for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).



REVIEW YOUR GAME FILM

Thinking about your recent disposition toward your wife, rate yourself with an X on the scales:

Passive ————— Courageous
Distant ————— Engaged
Neglecting ————— Cherishing

- If your children's ideas and beliefs were solely shaped by your input, influence, and example, would they have a biblical worldview?
- Have you built a lifestyle that is below, at, or above your means? Have you been allowing God to direct your spending and giving? Why or why not?



GAME PLAN

1

What specific deposits will you make this week to cultivate intimacy in your marriage? (Consider encouragement, non-sexual touch, and carving out time alone with her.)

2

How will you demonstrate care for your wife's spiritual well-being this week? Write it out as a plan. If you're single, how can you encourage spiritual growth in a loved one?

3

What could you do with your children to be more ministry-minded together (i.e. volunteer somewhere, serve a neighbor, etc.)? List possibilities and then discuss as a family. If you don't have children, ask a group of friends to join you in serving.

4

How could you better steward your finances, efforts, or time to bring God glory?



HUDDLE UP

- If you're married, how has your intimacy account balance been? Full? Overdrawn? Explain your answer.
- Do you think of your children as an extension or reflection of yourself? How do you shift your mindset to one of stewardship?
- Are your home life and work life in or out of balance?
- What is something you'd like to rebuild if you had the opportunity? What would you do differently?
- Have you built on a foundation of Jesus Christ so far in your life? If not, what other foundations (ideas, beliefs, motivations) have you built on?

STRATEGY

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 6:18-19