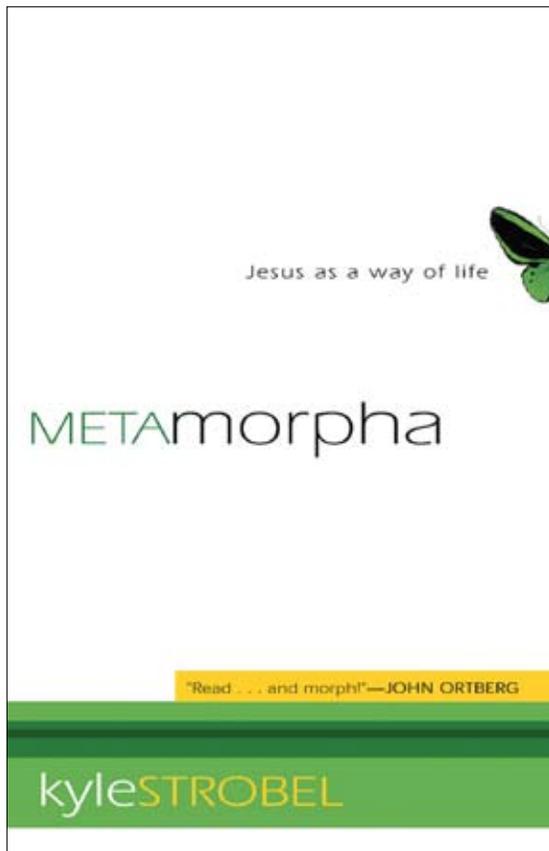


# STUDY GUIDE

## METAmorpha

Jesus as a way of life



kyleSTROBEL



# INTRODUCTION TO CURRICULUM

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Welcome to the *Metamorpha* curriculum! It is my prayer that this guide will help you as you read through *Metamorpha: Jesus as a Way of Life* by helping to guide and focus your thoughts, conversations and prayers. This introduction provides a better understanding of the book itself, as well as suggesting how best to apply this curriculum, for either group or individual use, to foster a developmental journey of belief formation.

## The Need for Tilling

Christianity through the ages has tended to do reasonably well with “sowing” the Word. The idea of sowing the Word is in reference to Jesus’s parable of a man who, while sowing seed (the Word), finds different results based on the ground (hearts) where the seed falls.

While we have mastered sowing the seed, we have failed to till the ground so the seed will take root and grow. *Metamorpha* is a guide for this task of tilling the ground, that the Word might take root and be fruitful.

If Christians fail to take seriously the task of tilling the ground of our own hearts, communities, and churches, we will preach but fail to see fruit, we will write books but only stir emotion and excitement, and we will fail to be a movement with meaning and depth.

I hope that you will see this book and this guide as a means to start a journey of belief formation with Christ and his people, and that your heart may be soft and pliable, ready to hear from the Lord.

## Explanation of the Guide

This guide will take you through *Metamorpha* chapter by chapter (except for the first chapter, which includes the *Introduction* and *Invitation*), and is designed to help you solidify the content in your mind, become aware of what God might be doing in your heart and life, and offer you ways to share that and explore these truths more deeply.

The key to interacting with this guide is not to see it as a collection of things to *do*, but rather as something to take part in. It is not written so you can fill in a blank and move on, but to help you start taking significant steps toward opening up to the transforming power of God. Count the cost of this journey. There is no point in taking it if you are not open to going where God will lead you.

There will be five major sections to this guide, each of which is explained in detail below.

### **Prayer**

Each chapter starts with a prayer. Take some time to be quiet with God and pray through each one prior to reading the chapter or doing the study guide. This is meant to turn your attention to God rather than to an interesting idea, the author, or some other eye-grabbing issue raised in the book. The goal is not to end any chapter or section focused on how interesting it was or was not, but to end with your eyes drawn toward Christ.

### **Bible Verses**

It is important in any study to make sure we are constantly turning an ear to the Bible and using it, among other ways, as a plumb line against which to test what we read. I have provided verses and sometimes chapters from the Bible to help you along these lines. Spend some time meditating and praying through these verses prior to starting each lesson.

### **Questions and Exercises**

This section takes up the bulk of the guide. These questions and exercises may be answered directly on the download, but it would probably serve you better in the end to start a journal where you can continue recording the events of your spiritual journey after the study is done.

These questions and exercises are meant to help you work through the material in each chapter, rather than just reading it and moving on. While you may complete them individually, you may find it more beneficial to complete them in a group setting, where asking the hard and deep questions with one another can serve as a springboard into deeper community.

### **Blogmap**

I have provided what I call a “Blogmap” throughout this guide as well as its own download off of the site that offers options and ideas for blogging about your journey through this book. The purpose of blogging is twofold: First, to help you process the material by writing it out, and second, to use what you are learning about yourself to open up others who read your blog and help them process this as well. You may also choose to use these topics and themes for your own personal journaling. Use them in whatever way seems to be most fruitful for your journey.

### **Metamorpha.com**

Metamorpha.com is an online community for spiritual formation and a storehouse of free resources. I will guide you toward video, audio, articles, and journals on the site that have direct relevance to the discussion topic, as well as prayer exercises and

spiritual disciplines that can be used to engage God on a deeper level. Use these as ways to go further in your study, or go through them as a group during your meeting time.

I hope and pray that this guide helps you on your journey with Christ. May you be blessed and challenged through this guide and this book, and may the tilling work of Christ open you to his Spirit who is working in the depths of your heart.

In His faithfulness,

Kyle Strobel

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# Chapter 1

## OUR NEED

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A New Way of Seeing (Including Introduction and Invitation)

### **Prayer**

Father, help me to have a soft and pliable heart, that you may have full reign to teach me, guide me, and mold me into your image.

### **Bible Verses**

Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 1:26–31; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

### **Questions**

1. At the beginning of this study, take some time to pray and ask God three things:
  - What word best describes your spiritual life?
  - What is the primary motivation for growth in your spiritual life?
  - Are you ready and open for God's work of decalcification?
2. What things that you say or do reveal your vision of life? On a scale from 1 to 10, rate yourself on how aware you are of your presuppositions (1 being "not at all aware" and 10 being "very aware"), and then explain why you ranked each in the way you did.
  - In light of your ranking, take a look at what the origins of your ideas are about God.

3. Write down the first three attributes that come to your mind when you think about God, and then spend some time meditating and praying about why those three came to mind. Afterwards, answer these questions:
  - What do these three attributes tell you about what you think of God?
  - Do these attributes say more about you, God, or your church/family background, etc.?
4. What kind of connection do you think you have with other Christians, either from your own faith community or from other denominations and churches? Do you see them as fellow disciples? As brothers and sisters? Or are they more distant than that? Why do you feel that way?
5. List five personal beliefs that are rooted in your worldview. Try to uncover the ones that are fundamental to how you live (I put my faith in money/my pastor/an author I love/a famous speaker; I have everything figured out and don't think I really need to change or grow, etc.).
6. How do you determine if you are "doing well" with God? How do you determine if others are doing well? What do your criteria say about you and your worldview, or about how you/others are actually doing with God? Where do these criteria come from?
7. Complete this sentence: The Christian life is about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
8. List three things you do (or think you should do) to make sure your worldview does not become static. How often do you really make these things a priority in your life?

## Blogmap

1. Doing well with God? A glimpse into my own self-help
  - Use this as a way of exploring how much of your concept of "doing well" with God has to do with feeling guilty, wanting to feel good, or just accomplishing something.
2. The way I see things
  - Use this as a way to assess what your presuppositions are.
3. Family traits
  - Try to pinpoint the traits, both good and bad, that come from the religious tradition you grew up with or are currently in.

## Our Need

### 4. Tradition and Vision

- Blog your initial response to and thoughts on the example of the Christmas potluck dinner on page 23, as well as the questions that follow.

### 5. The God in My Mind

- Blog about your experience and your response to the fourth question in the “Questions” section. What are your preconceived notions about other denominations, and how do you think we are doing at being a unified body of Christ?

## **Metamorpha.com**

1. Video: Bruce Demarest—What is the Difference between Knowing about God and Knowing God Himself?
2. Video: Dallas Willard—What is Spiritual Formation?
3. Journal: Mindy Caliguire—Worship

## Chapter 2

### OUR HOPE

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#### **Prayer**

Father, in your complete knowledge of my heart, life, and the journey you have me on, open my heart to all that restricts me from knowing you more, and help me to see how I have warped the Christian life to meet my own wants and desires instead of yours.

#### **Bible Verses**

Psalm 26–27. Read through these two Psalms and spend ten minutes meditating on how difficult or easy it is to honestly say these statements. Close your time of meditation by asking God to soften your heart to his Word and his truth.

#### **Questions**

1. Have my life and worldview led me simply to do “religious” things, or to come to a deeper knowledge and love of Jesus? Am I in a place in my life where I can expect to answer this question honestly, or could I be deceiving myself? Why or why not? What are some of the teachings in the New Testament that talk about what the Christian life should look like?
2. What do the programs (church service, Bible study, etc.) and/or disciplines (quiet time, small group, etc.) in your life do to help you grow in Christ? What should they be doing, or what are they designed to do? Are they doing what they’re meant to do?
  - What criteria am I using to judge these things? Are these criteria focused on me or on God?
3. With which informer (Bible, Spirit, Community) are you the most comfortable? List them in the order in which they have the most significance in your life (first in importance, second in time spent, etc.)

## Our Hope

- In light of this, using the telescope example, what are some possible outcomes of having one or more of these informers missing? (e.g., my aim seems to be right, but I can't focus enough to see correctly.)
4. Are you drawn to or driven away from people who try to reflect your blind spots back to you? Why? What kind of friend do you tend to be—one who ignores issues and hopes they go away, or someone who looks forward to pointing out the faults or issues other people have? Put a mark on which side you are closer to.

**Figure 1**



Though the truth may be painful to admit, it is wise to be aware of how you really are in this area, in order to be a good friend to others. Show your results to someone you trust and see what they think. Then spend some time in prayer about what this means for your role in your community.

- Think through the ways in which you allow your worldview to be critiqued, or if you even allow it to be critiqued, and start praying about being open to people who you know will speak truthfully into your life.
5. When you hear the phrase “The Christian life is the good life,” what is the first thought or feeling that comes to you? Read John 10:10. Do the day-to-day choices you make reflect the fact that Jesus came that we may have life to the full? Why or why not?
- This Scripture passage is one that many would claim to be true and yet not necessarily believe in. What is the difference between believing something and just affirming that something is true? Do you find yourself affirming statements about the Christian life that your life has never followed? What are some reasons for that?
6. When confronted with the reality that your worldview may be maligned or naïve, how are you tempted to respond? Are you tempted to ignore that possibility, to lose faith, to be angry or overwhelmed? What does that say about you and your worldview?

## Blogmap

1. Stuck in the fog
- Talk about the telescope example and write about what kind of view you have with your current setup (aim, focus, environment).

2. Friend or foe?

- Talk about the nature of friendships and what it is like to have blind spots pointed out by your friends.

3. The scaffold I need to climb

- Talk about what it might look like to climb toward what you wish were true (but is not yet) about your life.

4. The horizon ahead

- What is your vision of life, the world, and how you relate to it all?

## **Metamorpha.com**

1. Go to “Spiritual Disciplines” under the *Guidance* section and read the introduction to spiritual disciplines. Spend some time in prayer about which of the informers needs to play a bigger part in your life, and ask God to help guide you toward the best discipline to help you achieve that.
2. Article: Adele Ahlberg Calhoun—Discovering Your Desire
3. Video: Dallas Willard—What Role Do the Disciplines Play in the Christian Life?
4. Article: David Benner—The Transformational Journey

## Chapter 3

### OUR REALITY

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#### Prayer

Father, open my heart to how much unbelief is still within me. Help me to relate to you the way you want me to. I believe, help me in my unbelief.

#### Bible Verses

Galatians 1:10. Pray this statement Paul makes about himself and as you do, ask God about the “good news” you proclaim. Ask honestly, not rhetorically (as Paul does), “Am I striving to please men?”

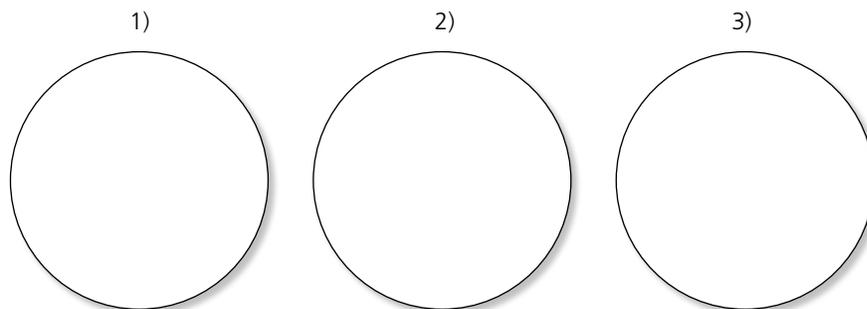
#### Questions

1. Andrew Murray, an author on the spiritual life, discusses the great sin of “prayerlessness,” which is just the failure to pray. He says this: “Prayer is the pulse of life; by it the doctor can tell what is the condition of the heart. The sin of prayerlessness is a proof for the ordinary Christian or minister that the life of God in the soul is in deadly sickness and weakness.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Do you struggle with the “sin of prayerlessness?” If so, spend some time in prayer confessing this struggle and this sin. Ask God to reveal the source of this sin to you. What do you or don’t you believe about God that causes you to forget to pray to him?
2. What does your prayer life, or lack thereof, say about what you believe? About God? About his kingdom? About yourself?
3. Is there a sin, a lifestyle, a relationship, or something else that God might be asking you to deal with? If so, what is your response? What does your response say about what you believe?

1. Andrew Murray, *Andrew Murray on Prayer* (New Kensington, Penn: Whitaker House, 1998), 154.

- Do you try and fix yourself so that God will be happy with you? What does this say about what you believe your role in growth to be? What does it say about how you view God's role?
  - Do your solutions to your problems deal with the fruit that is appearing in your life, or with the roots?
  - Do you see sin as a personal issue or a community issue? Why?
4. Create pie charts in the circles below that represent how your time is spent and what kinds of informers are informing your sense of reality (TV, rest (not sleep), Internet, community, etc.) Make the first circle a representation of a typical day, the second circle a typical week, and the third circle a typical month.

Figure 2



While looking through these results, spend some time in prayer asking God to reveal the activities to which you should be giving your time and aren't, and the activities to which you *are* giving time that you shouldn't. Share these with a trusted friend, and ask them to pray about this with you.

- Focusing on the area that you feel could be the most detrimental or negative informer in your life, list three ways that it could hinder your formation in Christ.
5. In what way do you “take your spiritual temperature?”
- Do you deal with issues in your life because you don't want to feel guilty or bad, or because of who Jesus is to you?
  - Exercise: Spend thirty minutes in quietness before God with this question raised up to him: Do I follow you because of how it makes me feel, or because of who you are? (Thirty minutes might feel like an eternity and you might be bored, angry, annoyed, or any number of emotions. If these do come up, just open your heart to God in this time. Time with God is never “wasted” time—it is time to reorient your heart to him and his kingdom. It often takes at least this much time to turn your heart away from the thoughts

## Our Reality

and concerns which seem so important to us and center yourself on God's truth about who we are, who he is, and what we are doing here in the first place.)

6. What kinds of things get you excited about God, the kingdom, and the Christian life? Why is that? How much do you value "being excited" about these things?

- Where are you and your church on this continuum? What does this tell you about how strategic you need to be to turn to God in this time of your life?

**Figure 3**



## Blogmap

1. Am I sick?
  - What are some ways you take your spiritual temperature?
2. Horticulture or life? A tree and its fruit
  - Talk about your initial reaction to the idea that we often paint our fruit to make it look good.
3. Where does all the time go?
  - Blog about your pie charts. What consumes your time in ways it shouldn't? What activities seem to be small activities in your mind (checking email, watching TV, etc.) but turn out taking a great deal of your time?

## Metamorphia.com

1. Video: Bruce Demarest—What is Spiritual Formation?
2. Video: Steve Porter—What is the Sanctification Gap?
3. Article: M. Robert Mulholland Jr.—The Idol in the Box: The Religious False Self

# THE WORD

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## Believer Deconstruction

### Prayer

Father, I pray you would open me to your Word, and use it to form, encourage, and admonish me. Help me to turn to you and know you more fully through your guiding, penetrating, and pervasive Word of truth.

### Bible Verses

John 5:39–40; Hebrews 4:12–13

### Questions

1. When you read the Bible, what are you reading it for? What do you expect from your time, and how do you determine if your time has been well spent?
  - Could it be that the criteria you use to rate your time with God and the expectations you have are exactly what get in the way of growing in Christ?
  - Consider how you view God's Word. Do you consider it merely history with some good instructions for life? Do you ever think of it as God's Word to humanity that stands in opposition to the way you see the world?
2. Of the three ways to engage the Word (history, shepherd, friend) which (if any) is most natural to you? How can you develop the other two?
3. List three things you have read in Scripture, regardless of whether you understand them or not, that point to a world you just don't see (e.g., "blessed are the poor," "the last is first," "when I am weak then I am strong").
4. Read through Mark 4:1–20.

## The Word

- While this certainly refers in part to the gospel being proclaimed to those who do not know Jesus, it also refers to the everyday issue of the Word of God interacting with the human heart. Spend some time meditating on the nature of your heart toward God's Word.
5. When you have a decent amount of time, get comfortable and read through Mark's Gospel in one sitting. Note the structure and lessons, and reflect on the ways in which you view life through the ways of man rather than the way of God.
    - Take careful note of what you want the gospel to say and to be, versus what the gospel really is. Spend some time in prayer about this reality and ask God to soften your heart to his Word.
  6. Andrew Murray says that we should, "[s]tudy much to know the written Word, but study more to know the living Word, in whom you are of God."<sup>2</sup>
    - What are some practical ways you can do this? Spend some time in meditation and prayer focusing specifically on John 5:39–40. What does this passage tell you about the nature of the written Word and the living Word?
  7. Pick one of your favorite sections of the Bible (at least ten verses) and journal through it as you consider it as: 1) history, 2) shepherd, and 3) friend.
    - As you read, ask yourself the following questions: How am I submitting to the Word? Am I coming to know God in deeper ways?

## Blogmap

1. Words and Images
  - Talk about your relationship with the Bible, how you think of it (in words or images), and what that might mean for your understanding of its message.
2. The Gospel of \_\_\_\_\_ (your name here)
  - Lay out what you would have written if you had your own Gospel ("good news"). Maybe include what that says about you.
3. Long-lost friend
  - Talk about the Bible as a friend. Blog through your feelings about what this relationship looks like, or what you wish it looked like.

2. Ibid., 44.

4. The way of honey

- Read and pray through Psalm 119:103–5 and blog about the thoughts, feelings, and ideas this passage evokes.

**Metamorpha.com**

1. Video: Michael Wilkins—What is the Role of the Bible in Spiritual Formation?
2. Article: Jan Johnson—Spiritual Meditation: Welcoming God Each Time
3. Article: Alister McGrath—Encountering Biblical Spirituality

## Chapter 5

### HOLY SPIRIT

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#### The Breath of Life

#### Prayer

Father, allow me to know you and your Spirit as lovers deep within my heart. May I find myself unveiled before you: open, honest, and willing to follow you, rest in you, and trust in your work in my heart.

#### Bible Verses

John 14:16–17, 25–26; Romans 8:26–28; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–28

#### Questions

1. List the first three things that come to mind when you think about how the Holy Spirit works today.
  - What do these three things tell you about how you view the Spirit and his work?
  - Does this say more about what the Spirit does, or what the Spirit has done with you specifically?
  - Do you see him more as a power or force, or as a personal God dwelling within you?
2. What has been your “strategy plan” for growing more Christ-like? Does it involve relating with the Spirit in deeper and more authentic ways, or does it mean filling your life with busy “Christian” things (the “if I act better I am better” approach)?

- What tends to happen when you try to activate change in your life apart from the Spirit? What do you think drives you to even try?
3. Read how the psalmist in Psalm 42 is praying and taking stock of his soul at the same time. Using this pattern, and understanding that you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you and praying to God on your behalf, take stock of your soul as you pray to the Father, opening yourself to the reality of your heart.
    - In your understanding of prayer, does God come into conflict with us in our prayer? Does God interact with us, or does he just sit back and listen? How does this shape the way you pray?
  4. Think through this scenario: One day you realize that there is a major tenet of Christianity that you just don't believe (for example, God listens in prayer, the Spirit lives within you, or God loves the real you—in all your sin and depravity). How do you think you would react? Has this happened at all in this study thus far?
    - Can you rest in the fact that God knows exactly what you do and do not believe about him and still loves you anyway? What would it look like to create a discipline, habit, or rhythm in your life where you do just that?
    - What are the chances that you have misjudged yourself, and you either believe a lot more or a lot less than you think? Why do you think so?
  5. Do you struggle to see Jesus only as God, and not also man, and therefore not a true example of what it means to live the Christian life? List some things that Jesus did as God, and then see if any ordinary humans did those by the Spirit as well (e.g., walk on water—Peter; heal people—Paul; raise people from the dead—Elisha, see 2 Kings 4).
    - Read John 14:12 and meditate about its significance to living as a Jesus follower. Do you, in the depths of your heart, really believe this to be true?
  6. In what areas do you need to grow in your belief? Do you need to grow toward loving others, toward believing that the last will be first, and that without Christ you can do nothing?
    - Spend some time alone in prayer, as well as with someone else, over a month's time. Ask God if he would reveal to you a discipline you should give yourself to that would help your growth in this area. For more guidance in this area, go to [metamorpha.com](http://metamorpha.com) and read about spiritual disciplines under the *Guidance* section. This will help you avoid the many pitfalls one might fall into when practicing a discipline.
  7. Even though it may be a challenge, set aside an hour one day this week that is guaranteed to be quiet, where you will be alone. Spend five minutes or so just

## Holy Spirit

resting and quieting your soul. Then open your heart to the Spirit, and offer this time to him for whatever he wants to do in your heart and mind. If your mind wanders, ask the Spirit to reveal if the items to which it wanders are more important to you than he is, and then allow yourself to rest in the love and grace God grants regardless of your answer.

- Reflect on or journal about this time, and consider how the busyness in your life prevents you from listening to the Spirit.

## Blogmap

### 1. Why I struggle with prayer

- We all struggle with some aspect of prayer. Discuss your own personal struggle with the Spirit who lives inside of you.

### 2. Holy who?

- Discuss how you have neglected, pigeonholed, or maybe even over-emphasized the role of the Spirit in your life (while under-emphasizing your own role).

### 3. Self-help and other convenient fairy tales

- Discuss how and why it is so easy to leave the work of the Spirit (as well as that of the informers in general) behind, and just aim for some kind of change. Maybe blog through how the idea of self-help can tap into your desire to control you own life rather than release it to God.

## Metamorpha.com

1. Article: Jan Johnson—Spiritual Meditation: Welcoming God Each Time
2. Video: John Coe—What is the Moral Temptation?
3. Video: Bruce Demarest—What is the Difference between Praying at God, and Praying in Intimacy with God?

## Chapter 6

# COMMUNITY

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## Mirrors and Conduits

### Prayer

My Father in heaven, help me to ground my identity in my relationship with you as your child, and help me draw close to the brothers and sisters I have in you.

### Bible Verses

Romans 12:4–10, Ephesians 4:25–32

### Questions

1. When you hear the word “community,” what concepts come to mind?
  - On this scale, where do you fall? Given where you fall on this scale, is it difficult or easy for you to be in community? Why do you think that?

**Figure 4**



2. Part of the good news of the gospel is that we are adopted and accepted into the family of God. This is often a concept people have heard but never really thought about. What are your initial feelings about this? What does it mean to you (if anything) that you now have a new Father, a brother in Jesus, and an abiding lover in the Spirit?
3. Take a look at your most intimate community. Who belongs to it and why? What kind of travellers are they? Why have you chosen these specific people to help you on this journey?

## Community

4. Take about fifteen minutes to meditate on what it would have been like if, upon conversion, you were disowned by all your friends and family. What would the Christian community mean to you then? Is that different from how you view that community now?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = horrible and 10 = fantastic), how good of a friend are you when it comes to helping people journey with Christ? Spend some time in prayer about who specifically you should commit to (including whether that person/those people should be of a different age group, background, denomination, etc.), and in what ways you should commit to helping them on their journey.
6. J. Ramsey Michaels said, “Only in community...is it possible to follow in the path that Jesus walked alone.” What are your initial feelings about that statement? What does this say about your worldview?
7. Write down how you and others define who you are: student, pastor, son, sister, teacher, etc. Then, in prayer, release these roles to God and ask him to help you know yourself, more fundamentally than any of these roles, as his child.
  - When you pray, start praying “as your child, my Father,” and be aware of how your heart might react to you saying that—does it feel fake, presumptuous, maybe even contrived? Release those emotions to God and rest in the reality of his adoption.
8. Read again through the ancient letter about Christians on pages 133–34, or download it off of the website. If an unbeliever who was not in your group of friends wrote a letter to someone in a foreign country, how would they describe you? What kinds of defining characteristics would they probably include?

## Blogmap

1. Blood relatives?
  - Discuss how people around the world, not to mention in your own city, are members of your family and how divided we can be.
2. Ancient email?
  - Discuss your reactions and thoughts on the ancient letter that was written about Christians on pages 133–34.
3. Chores, responsibilities and prodigal tendencies
  - Discuss being a child in a larger family of God, and how that means you have a role to play, you have a position, and you are a part of a family of people who have adopted you.

4. Private spirituality?

- As a child of God, you are defined not only by your relationship to God, but by your relationship to God's other children. Blog about how private and/or public your spiritual life is/should be in light of this.

## **Metamorpha.com**

1. Video: Betsy Barber—What is Spiritual Direction?
2. Prayer Exercise: Delighting in Others
3. Article: Gordon T. Smith and Mark J. Boda—Confession as a Central Practice
4. Audio: Larry Crabb—The Role of Community in Spiritual Formation
5. Video: Richard Foster—What Role Do the Ancient Christians and Their Teaching Play in the Life of the Christian Today?

### SELFVIEW

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#### Narcissus Reimagined

#### Prayer

Father, help me to see myself as I truly am and to know you and your love even at my ugliest, most defiant, and most vulnerable, grace-needing state.

#### Bible Verses

Psalm 139:23–24, Luke 16:14–15; Luke 18:9–14; Matthew 15:15–20

#### Questions

A TV news station was doing a report on sexuality and young persons and decided to interview a group of Christians who had chosen to wait until marriage before they had sex. As the interview wore on, the questions started opening up something deeper in the minds and hearts of the Christians. In a revealing statement about whether or not they watched MTV and the popular dramas of our day, one girl responded that, while she would not live that lifestyle, she could *live it vicariously through watching those shows*.

1. What does that tell you about what this girl really believes the good life is?
2. In a time of prayer, open up to the Spirit and ask if you are deceiving yourself as to how “religious” or “faithful” you are. Take some time praying through Psalm 139:23–24.
3. Are the place where you live, the people you spend time with, and the spiritual exercises you do conducive to knowing yourself? Why or why not? Could the possibility of even knowing that be a blind spot in your worldview?
4. On the same day every month, go through the selfview questions (download off of the website or look on pages 145–46) and journal through what your

activities during the last month say about what you believe. As you go through the selfview questions, take some time to pray about the state of your heart, and ask God to help you in your unbelief.

5. When was the last time you were disciplined by God? We know God loves us because he disciplines us, so it is important to use these times of discipline to recognize his love for us as well as to hear the hard words of discipline.
  - How well do you accept God's discipline?
  - Can you see discipline as a good thing, or even as a joy? Why or why not?
6. Consider something you have learned but do not actually believe (e.g., I don't believe John 15:5: "without Christ I can do nothing"), and think about what you would normally do to try and change your state of disbelief. Then spend some time praying through John 15:1–8, asking the Spirit to open your heart to his love, grace, and discipline.
7. Answer these questions about the way you pray: What do I communicate to God when I pray (e.g., I talk with him only when I need something, he bores me)? What do the kinds of things I pray about say about me? What motivates what I pray about?
8. Think back to your conversion (if you remember it) or your earliest understanding of the gospel. What did that gospel message teach you about the Christian life? Was it human-focused or God-focused?

## Blogmap

1. Life language?
  - Discuss the message your life is communicating about the state of your heart. You may even use this entry for confession, encouragement, or as a platform to help others ask themselves this question.
2. Can you lie to yourself?
  - Discuss self-deception and the ways in which you have deceived yourself. You could even talk about how self-deception used to be the definition of hypocrisy, and discuss what that means and looks like in real life.
3. Questions of life
  - Use one of the selfview questions to blog through, and make this a monthly practice.

Selfview

## **Metamorpha.com**

1. Article: David Benner—The Hearts Desire
2. Spiritual Discipline—The Prayer of Examen
3. Audio: David Benner—Knowing God and Self: The Journey of Authentic Christian Spirituality
4. Article: David Benner—First Steps Toward Knowing Yourself

## Chapter 8

### WISDOM

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#### The Road to Human Flourishing

#### Prayer

Father, help me to know your ways that I may walk in them, and reveal to me the ways I look at the world that are contrary to your kingdom.

#### Bible Verses

1 Corinthians 3:18–23; Proverbs 3:1–13; Psalm 111

#### Questions

1. What is your role in the body of Christ? Has the larger community helped you to understand what this role looks like?
  - Have you sought out someone to mentor you, or for someone to mentor, who has this same gift/role?
  - What does your prayer life look like in light of your role?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = doesn't play a role, 10 = incredibly important) how large of a role does the wisdom literature play in your Bible reading? Why do you think that is? List five things (one from each book) you have learned about God and the Christian life from the wisdom literature.
3. Spend some time considering the various fantasies and desires that are in your heart and whether they are wise or foolish things to pursue. Then spend some time with God, asking him to reveal the root of these desires to you. Finish your time by silently resting in God's spirit and grace.

## Wisdom

4. What comes to mind when you think of “living wisely”? Does it differ from the description laid out in this chapter? Would other people consider your life wisely lived?
5. Considering what you are sowing with the way you live your life, what are you eventually going to reap?
6. Because we in the North American church aren’t usually faced with things like persecution, war on our own soil, etc., that force us to depend entirely upon God, we need to turn to the disciplines to reach that place of utter dependence. What are some disciplines you could bring into your life on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis to turn your eyes on God and focus more sharply on your need of him? Read through the discussion of spiritual disciplines on [metamorpha.com](http://metamorpha.com) under the *Guidance* section for insights on how to do this.

## Blogmap

1. Planting a new garden
  - Discuss the reality that what you sow you will reap. What are you sowing, and what are you already reaping from your life?
2. Meaningless, meaningless, it is all meaningless
  - Discuss how much of what we do is meaningless because it fails to have a deep-rooted meaning for us. Do you ever feel like your life is filled with “anxious toil” (see Ecclesiastes 2:11)?
  - What does wisdom look like?
  - Discuss what it means to be “wise,” and describe some of the mental pictures conjured by the concept of being wise. Then talk about what you think being wise looks like in your place and time.
3. Where’s my worm?
  - Spend some time reading Proverbs and compare the Scriptures to everyday proverbial sayings that we have, like “The early bird gets the worm.”

## Metamorpha.com

1. Article: Bruce Demarest—Reclaiming Wisdom: A Gracious Reversal
2. Journal: Larry Warner—The Four Seasons
3. Article: Adele Ahlberg Calhoun—Open Myself to God

# THE WAY OF JESUS

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## Life through Death

### Prayer

Father, I ask, in the name of your son Jesus who walked the way of the cross, that you would open my heart to the path you've laid before me. Help me to know Jesus in his death and resurrection—and to know you through him.

### Bible Verses

Romans 6:1–14; John 15:18–27

### Questions

1. Imagine encountering Jesus as he was travelling with his disciples. What would he say to you? Why do you think he would say that?
2. When you picture a healthy Christian life, does it include the assumption that things are always working well, or that you always feel close to God? If so, this seems to contradict the examples we have in Scripture as well as in church history (see chapter). If you feel spiritual dryness, frustration, or distance from God, it is probable that God is trying to take you on a journey away from your own self-love and toward loving him because he is God. Spend some time reflecting on how, in these times, it is easier to avoid God's guidance and look instead for a way to feel better.
3. Read through Philippians 2:5–8 and 3:4–11. As you read through these passages, pray that God would reveal all of the ways you try to succeed at “religion” rather than at following him. Then read Philippians 1:21 and ask yourself if you honestly believe it. If not, pray through the verse and ask God to help you in your unbelief.

## The Way of Jesus

4. Consider what steps you have taken to secure a certain lifestyle for yourself (higher education degrees, jobs, sacrificing family time to work, etc.)? How do we advance in life with an eye toward the horizon of the kingdom? How does our résumé come to look like Jesus's?
5. Thinking back to the story of Job, whom are you most naturally like: Job's friends, who have a fully-established, systematic understanding of all God can and will do; Job, who trusts in God's love and justice but might trust in his own knowledge and innocence too much; or Job's wife, who immediately breaks down and curses God when things don't go her way?
6. The kingdom of God is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

  - Fill in an answer to this question with the first thing that comes to your mind. How does this affect how you live and relate to God in your everyday life?

## Blogmap

1. If I could save time in a bottle
  - Discuss what beliefs, activities, etc. you have given your life and time to. If the way you were spending your time was put in a bottle, what would you have saved up when you were done? How does that fit the story Jesus told?
2. The anomaly of history
  - The cross is the great anomaly of history and is, in a sense, what separates one person from another. Discuss the nature of the cross in our day and age.
3. My God-box
  - To some degree, we all have shoved God in some kind of box. Discuss the box you've put God in and what that does to God's work in your life.

## Metamorpha.com

1. Video: John Coe—How Has Spiritual Formation Impacted Your Own Life?
2. Journal: Larry Warner—The Question
3. Journal: Rob Loane—An Invitation to a Deeper Spiritual Life, Part II: An Older Son's Story

## Chapter 10

### DISCIPLESHIP

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#### At the Foot of the Master

#### Prayer

Father, may I sit at the feet of Jesus and be open to all his teaching, his love, and his admonishment. May you reveal to me how easy it is for my heart to stray to values and priorities that are of my flesh rather than turn to you.

#### Bible Verses

Matthew 16:21–28; Luke 10:38–42; Matthew 28:16–20

#### Questions

1. What do you believe your role is in “making disciples of all nations?” Does that role get in the way of Jesus, or replace his role in any way? Or is it possible that you are not very involved, or that your role is basically non-existent?
2. Does your community point people to Jesus or to other individuals? When you think of people in the faith that you look up to, do they point you to Jesus or do you find yourself more enamored with them?
3. Write an answer to the questions on page 214 both for yourself and your church, and spend some time meditating on your answer, either good or bad.
4. What is a “disciple?” The Bible uses “disciple” and “believer” interchangeably, so upon conversion we become a part of the group that sits at Jesus’s feet and calls him master.
  - What are your feelings about being part of that group? Is the chance to become a disciple the “good news” that you heard? Does this help to shed some light on why Jesus would tell us to count the cost before following him?

## Discipleship

5. It is often easy to make Christian activities “robbers’ dens,” places you go or things you do to be safe after committing a crime or sin (e.g., someone reading their Bible to take away the guilt they feel because they cheated on a test). Are there times when you do this?
  - Have you ever used church as a place you go to make up for a life filled with not following Christ—where Sunday morning becomes the means to make Saturday night’s activities okay? Take some time to kneel before Christ and confront the reality of what your life says about what you really believe. Finish your time by resting in the reality of his grace.
6. Picture in your mind what you would consider your ideal Christian existence. Does this vision of life influence how you live, judge, or rate the Christian life? Could it be that this subconscious belief about the good life makes it harder to be disciplined by Jesus?
  - Think about how this belief plays itself out in ways you may not have noticed before, and share those thoughts with someone you trust.

## Blogmap

1. At the feet of the master
  - Discuss the incredible reality that we are still called to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn about the way to live. Also discuss how often we forget this aspect of Christianity.
2. How much further to go?
  - Discuss being a disciple and what it looks like to be either a good disciple or a bad one. Write about which one you are and what this means for your life.
3. Making disciples
  - Blog through the questions on page 214 in light of your Christian experience.

## Metamorpha.com

1. Video: Michael Wilkins—What is the Difference between Discipleship and Spiritual Formation?
2. Article: Dallas Willard—Why Bother with Discipleship?
3. *Guidance* section: Prayer Exercises—use these to learn the different ways in which we can sit at Jesus’s feet.

## Chapter 11

### MISSION

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Community of Light

#### Prayer

Father, open my eyes and my heart to your people and the world. Help me to know the depths of your love—and that I *am* loved.

#### Bible Verses

John 13:34–35; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–28; 1 Peter 1:13–2:5

#### Questions

1. The life you lead is the answer to a question you believe is worth living for—it is your mission. This is the question that Jesus wants to redeem. Spend a couple of minutes reflecting on your life as a whole. Then try to determine what question your life answers: How can I best serve God? How can I have as much fun as possible? Who can I use to make my dreams come true? Or is it some other question entirely?
  - What questions do the lives of your closest friends answer? Your family? Your church?
  - Think of your question in relation to the answer to Jesus's question, "Who do you say that I am?"
2. Have you counted the cost of a journey of belief formation with Jesus? If not, spend some time in prayer asking Jesus to guide your heart and mind toward him and his will for your life. Use "Not my will but yours be done" as a launching point.

## Mission

- Read and pray through 1 Peter 1:13–2:5 and open your heart to God during the prayer. Every time you read something you know isn't true in your life, just pray, "Jesus, my Savior, not my will but yours be done."
3. Do you know someone who you would say has clearly been "conquered by God?" What makes them distinctive? What changes would you need to make before you could say this about yourself?
  4. Think of someone you interact with on a regular basis whom you find hard to love. Devote a regular time each day to pray for that person, and to pray for openings in your interactions that enable you to truly love him or her. Every time you feel annoyed, guilty, or even joyful after an interaction with this person, use that as an opportunity to open your heart up to God and ask him why you are feeling this way. Are you feeling joyful because you went "beyond the call of duty" to try and love this person, and therefore are becoming self-impressed? Are you starting to feel a greater burden for the person? Or are you starting to realize that God loves you when you are unlovable? After engaging in prayer for this person for a few weeks, spend some time journaling about how your interactions with him or her have changed.
  5. Part of this chapter discussed how the culture, even in the areas around our largest churches (or where there are just a large quantity of churches), does not tend to feel the effects of the kingdom. Take a look at your specific group of friends and ask if the culture surrounding them is affected by the kingdom. What kind of fruit does your group of friends yield? What is being indicated by the fact that the culture around them is or is not affected?
  6. Do you find yourself wanting to be an advertisement or salesperson for the kingdom, or to be the kingdom to the world? What is the difference? What does each look like?

## Blogmap

1. What's mine is mine
  - Blog or journal through Acts 2 and the concept of how the earliest church shared all things. Discuss how you feel about this kind of community.
2. The answer is the question
  - Write about what question your life is answering and what question you wish it were answering.

3. When I dream

- Reflect on the book as a whole—can you imagine a redemptive community of love, who helps one another on the journey of belief formation as a family? What might that look like in practical terms?

**Metamorpha.com**

1. Audio: Larry Crabb—The Role of Community in Spiritual Formation
2. Article: Gordon T. Smith—Spiritual Direction, Pastoral Care and Friendship
3. *Guidance* section: commit to going through the prayer exercises found there.

## EPILOGUE

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### A Vision for the Future

#### **Prayer**

My Father, I trust that you have set me on a journey into knowing you, loving you, and turning my life over to you in greater and more in-depth ways. Help me to walk the road ahead open to the work of your Spirit within me, the guidance and admonishment from your Word, and from the community you've put around me. May I turn to you in all things.

#### **Bible Verses**

Psalm 51:16–17; Micah 6:8; Hosea 6:6

#### **Reread**

There was most likely a chapter, a section, or a fragment of this book that you didn't like, that you simply skipped over or skimmed through. Identify one of those sections and meditate on why you felt that way, then spend some time in prayer asking God to show you your preconceptions and open you up to see him in a new and fresh way. After you conclude, spend some time prayerfully rereading that section of the book.

Instead of offering questions to go through, I have designed three exercises for the group to do together during this final session.

#### **EXERCISE 1**

Read Mark 4:1–20. Pray through this parable and its explanation, knowing that in different times in your life your heart has been all of the different types of soil. Using what you have learned through the book, ask yourself the question, “How do I live the kind of life before God that will allow me to have a soft heart?” Spend ten to twenty minutes in silence before God, and open that time by asking him that same question.

#### **EXERCISE 2**

Read John 14–17. This was a part of Jesus's last major talk with his disciples. As you read it, put yourself in their place, knowing that your Savior is sending a helper to be

with you always, but as a disciple you are now in a world that does not understand, know, or even tolerate the man you follow. Spend ten to twenty minutes in prayer asking God to open you up to what it means to be his disciple in your place and time.

### **EXERCISE 3**

I have tried to take you on a journey of belief formation. Because I don't know your situation or circumstances, you have to discern with those around you how to walk this journey ahead. Spend another ten to twenty minutes opening up to God, asking him to guide you, to reveal your blindness to you, and to surround you with people who have counted the cost of the journey to which he is calling you. Commit to making this a daily practice for the next month or longer.

### **Send-off**

I encourage each person to surround him/herself with a group of people who are willing to count the cost of this journey. Utilize this guide, the book, and [metamorph.com](http://metamorph.com) to help you open your hearts and lives to God and to one another. It is my hope and prayer that this guide and the book were a blessing to you.

Your brother on the journey.

In his faithfulness,

Kyle