**FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®** 



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Michael Ross



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### Introduction: The Journey

A young Hobbit studies the ring in his hand, wondering how it came to him, questioning his ability to handle the journey. Why me? I'm just a Hobbit—simple, quiet . . . unimportant. How can I be trusted with such a difficult task?

Frodo Baggins isn't a warrior like Aragorn. He isn't powerful like Gandalf. He isn't even brave like Gimli, the feisty Dwarf. Yet Frodo has been chosen for a dangerous quest, an adventure that will transform his life and ultimately rescue Middle Earth.

He shivers at everything Gandalf has just told him about this terrible ring. The One Ring. The Ring of Power. It was thought to be lost, but is now desperately sought by its maker, the dreaded Dark Lord. This magical piece of jewelry threatened to overpower everyone and everything, to change Middle Earth forever.

And this ring has somehow found its way into Frodo's hands.

Yet even though he has to leave the Shire—all that is safe and familiar—Frodo actually looks forward to traveling. He *wants* to have adventures like his uncle Bilbo. He often imagines himself taking long, aimless journeys

through endless woods, splashing across fabled rivers, and camping under the stars.

But this! This is greater than anything he ever dreamed of. I was not made for such an important quest. Why me?

Frodo is up to his ears in adventure because of his loyalty to his friends and family—his tribe—not to mention four simple words he spoke earlier: "What must I do?"

What must I do, Gandalf? I may be small and weak and unimportant—but how can I help? What is expected of me?

What's that, Gandalf? You're asking me to save Middle Earth? You're asking this tiny Hobbit to suddenly transform into a giant . . . to do the impossible?

Impossible! I tell myself as I cling to a steep rock face. I'm not Spider-Man! How'd I ever get talked into this?

I'm on a 10-day backpacking trip in California's Ansel Adams Wilderness with a bunch of *Breakaway* guys—teen boys who read the magazine I edit each month. We're undergoing a "tribal quest."

Today's challenge: Scale a slick canyon wall.

I slide my right hand across a boulder and feel a tiny crevice. I grip it with my fingertips and push with my legs.

As I inch my way up the wall (and begin to trust the safety harness around my waist) I quickly discover that this climb isn't all that crazy, after all. The only really scary part is wearing a blindfold. That's right, a bandanna is covering my eyes. I can't see a thing!

"Excellent, Mike! You're doing great," a voice yells up from below. It's my friend Tom Hook the guy who designed this book. He's my climbing partner and, quite literally, my eyes during this exercise.

"Listen to my voice," Tom says. "I'll get you to the top. Trust me."

I reach above my head and dig my fingers into another crevice.

"That's it," Tom shouts. "Now push with your legs again. Another three feet and you're there."

I'm way out of my comfort zone. In fact, I've been living on the edge all week—pushing my body and tuning in to God.

Suddenly, chaos. I can't hear Tom's voice and some of the other guys are attempting to guide me in different directions.

"Go to the left," someone yells.

"No-move to your right."

"Push harder with your legs."

Tom comes to the rescue: "Quiet!" After a few seconds of silence, I hear his voice again. "Listen to me. Reach for a handhold above your head, push with your legs and you'll be at the top."

His instructions are perfect. Before I realize it, I've reached my destination. Victory! I hear applause from other members of my tribe. I pull off the bandanna, feeling confident, and look down.

Should have stuck with the blindfold!

Often in life we face difficult quests, even dangerous ones with life-altering outcomes: standing up for what's right instead of what's popular, leading a friend to Christ, saying "no" to stuff that can harm us (drugs, premarital sex, negative peer pressure).

But sometimes, the task at hand is a bit less risky (and a lot more fun) conquering our fears on a rock face.

Regardless of what's asked of us at any given moment, understand that *life itself is a journey*. Your very existence on Planet Earth is an amazing adventure filled with countless surprises, thrills, challenges, choices, and so much promise. But as you begin to launch out on your own life quests, ask yourself one very important question: Are you anchored to the solid rock of God and His Word?

With each choice you make, are you "belayed" (or supported) by the Holy Spirit who is pointing out solid holds and ready to catch you if you fall? Or are you dangerously hanging from loose, rotten rock that is slowly crumbling away.

Answering these questions depends upon the tribe you identify with—especially your *tribal creed*, the beliefs and



values your tribe holds dear.

The features of our tribal identity are unique:

#### **GOD'S TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP CREED**

- **1.** I have undergone the rite of passage. Guys are inducted into the group only after undergoing a rite—which often involves a physical challenge that proves the initiate's changed spirit and willingness to subvert his identity to the group. Members of God's tribe (1) submit their lives to Jesus Christ, (2) commit to His authority and power, and (3) join His body of believers.
- **2.** *I accept the sacred text.* Personal identity is bound to a Statement of Belief. *Members of God's tribe follow the absolute truth of the Holy Bible.*
- **3. I enter into a lifelong membership.** Tribal members are "branded" by their forfeit of individual identity and become absolutely loyal to the group. *Members of God's tribe make a 180-degree change of heart that is absolutely, 100% permanent.*
- **4. I attend council meetings consistently.** Regular meetings ensure the bond within the group and further the dominion of the tribe's goals. *Members of God's tribe make church a priority.*
- **5.** I fulfill my individual responsibilities. Unique tasks are assigned to every member, both to reinforce respect and commitment to the tribe's goals and creed, and to strengthen the tribe. Members of God's tribe desire what makes them "come alive in Christ" and strive to fit their lives into the Creator's perfect plan.

Okay. So what exactly is this you're getting into? Is this a devotional? Is it a journal? Is it a journey? Actually, yes to all of the above!

In each daily entry you'll find:

- TRIBAL QUEST—a faith challenge for the day.
- TRIBAL TRUTH Scripture that defines a Christian's tribal quest.
- **TRIBAL FACE**—a true account of a faith hero who sought after God's heart and earned himself a new identity in God's worldwide tribe. These heroes include astronauts and coal miners, missionaries, martyrs, outcasts, and emperors.
- **TRIBAL TRAINING**—advice, action-points, and thought-provoking questions and strategies for applying God's truth to your life.
  - TRIBAL MARKS—plenty of space to journal and write out your own

prayers, thoughts, hopes . . . and all the new stuff you've learned.

So, don't hold back! Fulfill what burns in every young man's heart. Dare to trust your Creator and become the warrior He made you to be. Use this life-changing resource as a way to get connected to God's eternal tribe.

Study with a friend or group of guys from church—maybe even your dad (you know, as your own tribal rite-of-passage thing). Just remember: When you reach out to your Creator and ask with a sincere heart, "What must I do, Lord? What is expected of me?"—be ready to plunge in headfirst! Your ultimate journey awaits. Join the adventure of following Christ. And with each quest He gives you, don't be surprised if you find yourself facing—and overcoming—challenges far greater than anything you ever imagined.



#### **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE**

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

-Matthew 16:24-25

## Day 1: "Come, Follow Me!"

#### »TRIBAL QUEST

Move beyond religion and "head knowledge" and experience a deeper bond with Jesus Christ, striving to grow daily in His love, power, and truth. *Explore the Word: Matthew 4:18–22; 16:13–17:9*.

#### **»TRIBAL TRUTH**

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

-Matthew 4:19-20

#### **»TRIBAL FACE**

#### John: Fisherman and Apostle

Fishing is John's life. He's barely in his late teens yet he's convinced that throwing nets into the sea and landing the big catch is a good way to make a living. Not only does it put food on his table, but it's also the family thing to do. John and his brother, James, are partners with their father in a prosperous fishing enterprise.

Little does John realize, God has a bigger catch in mind.

One day, while preparing nets as usual with his dad and brother, something amazing happens—an encounter that changes his life forever.

Just off in the distance, not too far away, John spots a man walking along the shore. There's something about His face—a strength matched with gentleness, and something like love that makes him unable to look away. When he speaks, his voice is so compelling.

"Follow me."

That's all He says.

John looks at James with a bewildered expression. James is staring at him too. With each footprint the man leaves behind in the sand, John's heart beats faster. A unique emotion seems to compel him and his brother to leave the nets.

"Who is that?" John asks. But James is already heading toward the unusual man.

• • •

John and his brother chose to follow Jesus, leaving behind much more than just their nets. They abandoned everything that was familiar to them, every earthly pursuit: money, career, comfort, popularity, pleasure. James and John set off on an amazing adventure that became so much more; unwittingly, they had joined a revolution that was going to change history.

For the next few years, the brothers watched as Jesus healed the sick, brought people back from the grave, and spent endless hours reaching out to the lost and the lonely—those the world would rather have forgotten. James and John lived with the Savior 24/7, walking hundreds of miles with Him, and never once looking back.

If there was anyone who really knew Jesus, these two brothers certainly did. They shared a deep and uncommon connection. The Lord brought them into His inner circle, making them His closest friends—even members of "the big twelve" (the original apostles). These guys were on the mountain with Jesus when God the Father dropped by for a little social time (see Luke 9:28–36).

And John was the only one Jesus asked to look after His mother when He was dying on the cross. What's more, John was the only person Jesus appeared to when He described the end times in the Book of Revelation.

Talk about connected! And this apostle got right down to the point in his book, starting with: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

It's not surprising that his account of Jesus' life is one of the most popular books in the Bible. As we read his writings, we can't help but get the idea that John really loved Jesus. His solid faith literally helped to turn the world upside down (actually, more like, right side up). John left behind his old life for something—Someone—much greater.

How about you? Do you want to be set apart, to be a member of the inner circle? There's a place for all of us . . . even salty fishermen.

#### **»TRIBAL TRAINING**

• Know Christ deeper by experiencing Him daily. Learning about the Lord from a theology textbook is much different from experiencing Him personally in a day-to-day walk. According to the apostle Paul, it's all about faith and fellowship: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I con-



sider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:8–9).

- Allow the Lord to realign your priorities. It's time for a gut check. When it comes to your faith in Christ, where are your priorities? Is having a deeper, stronger attachment to Jesus your number one passion, like it was for John? When you blow it, do you admit it, asking your Savior to renew and transform your heart? What other priorities are filling your heart—friends, girls, entertainment, stuff? Spend some time in prayer, and ask God to take over your priorities.
- PRAY IT OUT: "Lord, help me to leave behind bland rituals and stale religion so I can follow You in a truly living, exciting way." Don't just read about faith or settle for secondhand knowledge about Jesus. Ask Him for the strength and courage to give up your old life. Ask Him to show you how to experience Him daily.

## » TRIBAL MARKS A Key Point I Learned Today:



» NOTE: This is your space to journal, draw, doodle—whatever you wish!

Under the appropriate headings write about your praises, struggles, hopes, dreams... and anything else on your mind.





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### Survivor Stuff #1

»Tribal Treasure Map (How the Bible Is Organized)

Here's a tribal trek through the Scriptures!

The Holy Bible is like an ancient map that leads to treasure. But to find the treasure, you've got to know how to read the map. In reality, this big, black, leather-bound "life map" is a library of 66 books, or booklets, bound into a single volume and divided into two primary collections of books:

#### **The Old Testament**

This is the first collection—39 books—which teaches us the basics about life and creation, about God's commitment to us, the prophecies of the Messiah, and why we need Christ: Sin is a failure to attain the standard God

has set, a perversion of our nature, a breaking of God's holy law, and rebellion against our Creator.

The Old Testament is divided into:

**The Pentateuch** (Genesis to Deuteronomy)—the foundation of the Bible—tells us who God is, what He does for us, and what He requires of us; it instructs us in God's laws.

**The history books** (Joshua to Esther)—chronicle man's rebellion and God's faithfulness.

**The poetry books** (Job to the Song of Solomon)—demonstrate the wonder, the mystery, and the majesty of God.

**The major prophets** (Isaiah to Daniel) — declare the holiness of God; they provide a foreshadowing of the Good News to be brought by Jesus.

The minor prophets (Hosea to Malachi) — point to devastation, idolatry, cruelty, and the ultimate coming of the Messiah.

#### The New Testament

This is the second collection of books in the Bible—27 books written by ten different authors. The New Testament begins with the four Gospels, and includes a record of the spread of the Good News preached by Jesus, as well as letters to individuals and churches, and general letters that read like sermons. The last book, Revelation (or the Apocalypse), tells of the final triumph of Jesus and the judgment of all humanity.

### Survivor Stuff #2

#### »Tribal-Truth-in-a-Year Reading Plan

Follow the daily readings listed here, and you'll have the whole Bible read in one year! You will definitely be changed by what God teaches you through His Word.

**Week 1** • Genesis 1–3 • Genesis 4–5 • Genesis 6–8 • Genesis 9–11 • Genesis 12–14 • Genesis 15–17 • Genesis 18–20

Week 2 • Matthew 1-4 • Matthew 5 • Matthew 6 • Matthew 7 • Matthew 8-10 • Matthew 11-13 • Matthew 14-15

**Week 3** • Genesis 21–23 • Genesis 24–27 • Genesis 28–30 • Genesis 31–36 • Genesis 37–41 • Genesis 42–45 • Genesis 46–50

**Week 4** • Matthew 16–18 • Matthew 19–20 • Matthew 21–23 • Matthew 24–25 • Matthew 26–28 • Mark 1–3 • Mark 4–6

<u>Week 5</u> • Exodus 1–4 • Exodus 5–7 • Exodus 8–12 • Exodus 13–18 • Exodus 19–24 • Exodus 25–31 • Exodus 32–34

**Week 6** • Mark 7–8 • Mark 9–10 • Mark 11–12 • Mark 13 • Mark 14–16 • Luke 1–3 • Luke 4–6

**Week 7** • Exodus 35–40 • Leviticus 1–7 • Leviticus 8–10 • Leviticus 11–17 • Leviticus 18–22 • Leviticus 23–25 • Leviticus 26–27

**Week 8** • Luke 7–8 • Luke 9–10 • Luke 11 • Luke 12 • Luke 13–14 • Luke 15–16 • Luke 17–18

**Week 9** • Numbers 1–4 • Numbers 5–9 • Numbers 10–14 • Numbers 15–21 • Numbers 22–25 • Numbers 26–31 • Numbers 32–34

**Week 10** • Luke 19–21 • Luke 22 • Luke 23 • Luke 24 • John 1–2 • John 3–4 • John 5–6

**Week 11** • Numbers 35–36 • Deuteronomy 1–5 • Deuteronomy 6–11 • Deuteronomy 12–16 • Deuteronomy 17–20 • Deuteronomy 21–26 • Deuteronomy 27–30

<u>Week 12</u> • John 7–8 • John 9–10 • John 11–12 • John 13–14 • John 15–17 • John 18–19 • John 20–21

**Week 13** • Deuteronomy 31–34 • Joshua 1–4 • Joshua 5–8 • Joshua 9–12 • Joshua 13–19 • Joshua 20–24 • Judges 1–3

**Week 14** • Judges 4-8 • Judges 9-12 • Judges 13-16 • Judges 17-21 • Ruth 1-4 • 1 Samuel 1-3 • 1 Samuel 4-7

**Week 15** • Acts 1–4 • Acts 5–7 • Acts 8–11 • Acts 12–15 • Acts 16–18 • Acts 19–21 • Acts 22–28

**Week 16** • 1 Samuel 8–12 • 1 Samuel 13–15 • 1 Samuel 16–17 • 1 Samuel 18–20 • 1 Samuel 21–26 • 1 Samuel 27–31 • 2 Samuel 1–4

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Week 17 • Romans 1–3 • Romans 4–5 • Romans 6–8 • Romans 9–11 • Romans 12–16 • 1 Corinthians 1–4 • 1 Corinthians 5–6
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**Week 18** • 2 Samuel 5-7 • 2 Samuel 8-10 • 2 Samuel 11-12 • 2 Samuel 13-14 • 2 Samuel 15-20 • 2 Samuel 21-24 • 1 Kings 1-4

**Week 19** • 1 Kings 5–8 • 1 Kings 9–11 • 1 Kings 12–16 • 1 Kings 17–19 • 1 Kings 20–22 • 2 Kings 1–7 • 2 Kings 8–10

**Week 20** • 1 Corinthians 7 • 1 Corinthians 8–10 • 1 Corinthians 11–14 • 1 Corinthians 15–16 • 2 Corinthians 1–3 • 2 Corinthians 4–7 • 2 Corinthians 8–9

**Week 21** • 2 Kings 11–13 • 2 Kings 14–17 • 2 Kings 18–21 • 2 Kings 22–25 • 1 Chronicles 1–9 • 1 Chronicles 10–12 • 1 Chronicles 13–17

**Week 22** • 2 Corinthians 10−13 • Galatians 1−2 • Galatians 3−4 • Galatians 5−6 • Ephesians 1−3 • Ephesians 4−6 • Philippians 1

Week 23 • 1 Chronicles 18–21 • 1 Chronicles 22–27 • 1 Chronicles 28–29 • 2 Chronicles 1–4 • 2 Chronicles 5–9 • 2 Chronicles 10–13 • 2 Chronicles 14–16

**Week 24** • Philippians 2 • Philippians 3 • Philippians 4 • Colossians 1–2 • Colossians 3–4 • 1 Thessalonians 1–3 • 1 Thessalonians 4–5

**Week 25** • 2 Chronicles 17–20 • 2 Chronicles 21–24 • 2 Chronicles 25–28 • 2 Chronicles 29–32 • 2 Chronicles 33–35 • 2 Chronicles 36 • Ezra 1–2

Week 26 • 2 Thessalonians 1-2 • 2 Thessalonians 3 • 1 Timothy 1 • 1 Timothy 2-3 • 1 Timothy 4-6 • 2 Timothy 1-2 • 2 Timothy 3-4

**Week 27** • Ezra 3-6 • Ezra 7-8 • Ezra 9-10 • Nehemiah 1 • Nehemiah 2-3 • Nehemiah 4-7 • Nehemiah 8-10

**Week 28** • Titus 1 • Titus 2 • Titus 3 • Philemon • Hebrews 1−2 • Hebrews 3−4 • Hebrews 5−7

**Week 29** • Nehemiah 11–13 • Esther 1–3 • Esther 4–6 • Esther 7–10 • Job 1–7 • Job 8–14 • Job 15–19

<u>Week 30</u> • Hebrews 8–10 • Hebrews 11–13 • James 1 • James 2 • James 3–5 • 1 Peter 1–2 • 1 Peter 3–4

**Week 31** • Job 20−24 • Job 25−31 • Job 32−37 • Job 38−42 • Psalm 1−4 • Psalm 5−8 • Psalm 9−12

**Week 32** • 1 Peter 5 • 2 Peter 1 • 2 Peter 2 • 2 Peter 3 • 1 John 1−2 • 1 John 3−4 • 1 John 5

**Week 33** • Psalms 13–16 • Psalms 17–20 • Psalms 21–24 • Psalms 25–28 • Psalms 29–32 • Psalms 33–36 • Psalms 37–41

**Week 34** • 2 John−3 John • Jude • Revelation 1−3 • Revelation 4−5 • Revelation 6−7 • Revelation 8−11 • Revelation 12−14

- **Week 35** Psalms 42–45 Psalms 46–49 Psalms 50–53 Psalms 54–56 Psalms 57–59 Psalms 60–62 Psalms 63–65
- **Week 36** Revelation 15–16 Revelation 17–20 Revelation 21–22 Ecclesiastes 1–2 Ecclesiastes 3–5 Ecclesiastes 6–8 Ecclesiastes 9–12
- **Week 37** Psalms 66–68 Psalms 69–72 Psalms 73–75 Psalms 76–78 Psalms 79–81 Psalms 82–84 Psalms 85–89
- **Week 38** Song of Songs Isaiah 1–6 Isaiah 7–12 Isaiah 13–18 Isaiah 19–23 Isaiah 24–27 Isaiah 28–31
- **Week 39** Psalms 90–92 Psalms 93–95 Psalms 96–98 Psalms 99–101 Psalms 102–104 Psalms 105–106 Psalms 107–109
- <u>Week 40</u> Isaiah 32–35 Isaiah 36–39 Isaiah 40–48 Isaiah 49–52 Isaiah 53–55 Isaiah 56–59 Isaiah 60–66
- **Week 41** Psalms 110–112 Psalms 113–115 Psalms 116–118 Psalm 119 Psalms 120–124 Psalms 125–129 Psalms 130–134
- **Week 42** Jeremiah 1–6 Jeremiah 7–10 Jeremiah 11–15 Jeremiah 16–20 Jeremiah 21–24 Jeremiah 25–29 Jeremiah 30–33
- **Week 43** Psalms 135–137 Psalms 138–140 Psalms 141–144 Psalms 145–150 Proverbs 1 Proverbs 2 Proverbs 3
- **Week 44** Jeremiah 34–38 Jeremiah 39–45 Jeremiah 46–52 Lamentations Ezekiel 1–3 Ezekiel 4–11 Ezekiel 12–17
- <u>Week 45</u> Proverbs 4 Proverbs 5 Proverbs 6 Proverbs 7 Proverbs 8 Proverbs 9 Proverbs 10
- **Week 46** Ezekiel 18–24 Ezekiel 25–32 Ezekiel 33–39 Ezekiel 40–48 Daniel 1–3 Daniel 4–6 Daniel 7–12
- **Week 47** Proverbs 11 Proverbs 12 Proverbs 13 Proverbs 14 Proverbs 15 Proverbs 16 Proverbs 17
- **Week 48** Hosea 1–3 Hosea 4–5 Hosea 6–10 Hosea 11–14 Joel 1–2 Joel 3 Amos 1–2
- **Week 49** Proverbs 18 Proverbs 19 Proverbs 20 Proverbs 21 Proverbs 22 Proverbs 23 Proverbs 24
- Week 50 Amos 3-6 Amos 7-9 Obadiah Jonah Micah 1-2 Micah 3-5 Micah 6-7
- Week 51 Proverbs 25 Proverbs 26 Proverbs 27 Proverbs 28 Proverbs 29 Proverbs 30 Proverbs 31
- **Week 52** Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah 1−8 Zechariah 9−14 Malachi

#### **Notes**

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<sup>7</sup>Henry T. Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day-by-Day* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 257.

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<sup>9</sup>Walter Wangerin, Jr., *The Book of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 845.

<sup>10</sup>Ann Spangler and Robert Wolgemuth, *Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 371.

<sup>11</sup>Kenneth J. Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 51.

<sup>12</sup>John Wesley, Journal, 24 May 1738, in *A Diary of Readings*, ed. John Baillie (New York: Collier, 1955), 73.

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<sup>15</sup>Adapted from Spangler and Wolgemuth.

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<sup>19</sup>Billy Graham, *The Faithful Christian: An Anthology of Billy Graham* (New York: McCracken, 1994), 33–34.

<sup>20</sup>Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message Remix: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003), 1770.