

**EUGENE H.
PETERSON**

**THE
MESSAGE
FOR
GRADUATES**

**GUIDANCE
FROM THE BIBLE
FOR YOUR NEXT
ADVENTURE**



PRESENTED TO

BY

ON THE OCCASION OF

DATE



THE MESSAGE is a contemporary rendering of the Bible from the original languages, crafted to present its tone, rhythm, events, and ideas in everyday language.



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CONTENTS

Introduction 1

PART ONE: The Traits of a Christ Follower

- 1** Walking with Jesus 7
- 2** Knowing and Living the Scriptures 17
- 3** Participating in Christian Community 23
- 4** Engaging Those Who Don't Know Christ 31
- 5** Reproducing Spiritual Generations 41

PART TWO: Questions Adults Ask

- 6** How Can I Manage Stress? 51
- 7** How Can I Make Wise Choices? 59
- 8** How Can I Stay Healthy over Time? 65

Conclusion: Faith like a Child's 73

About *The Message* 81

Topical Index for Graduates 85

INTRODUCTION

WHEN WE IMAGINE Jesus calling his disciples, we tend to picture a thirty-something teacher and twelve thirty-something students. We tend to think of a gathering of grown-ups.

In reality, Jesus called young people to follow him. The Bible doesn't tell us their precise ages, but it can be generally assumed that the first followers of Jesus were as young as thirteen and certainly no older than thirty. Most were likely in their teens. Mary, Jesus' mother, was most likely also in her teens when she was visited by the angel of the Lord and declared herself "the Lord's maid, ready to serve" (Luke 1:38).

This is not just trivia; it's significant that Jesus didn't wait to call people into discipleship and Christian leadership until they were fully formed, fully established adults. The Christian life is a process of becoming, and that

process can begin at any time and has no point of ending in this life. Who you are today, *this day*, is the person Jesus invites to follow him.

That said, there are transition points in every life. Graduation is such a transition point: It marks the end of one life stage and the beginning of another. The questions you will ask change dramatically from one side of this transition to the next. The demands on your life, the complexities of your challenges, the things that bring you joy and the things that cause you stress—they're different once you've moved from student life to this new season.

This book is intended to help you through that transition. It is made up mostly of the words of God—passages from the Scriptures that speak to this season of change, that point to the way of faithfulness, that anticipate and prepare you for the life ahead of you. The Word of God is a faithful guide to life, and a life with God is the best kind of life available. This book is meant to help you lean into that kind of life.

The supplemental content in these pages is intended to provide some context, to bridge whatever gaps exist between these ancient words and this contemporary life. We don't mean to suggest that the Bible's ancient origin makes it less relevant to modern times. Just the

opposite: In every generation, people discover that the wisdom of the Scriptures transcends time and speaks to every generation in challenging and encouraging ways. There is good news in these pages; anything additional to the Scriptures is meant merely to put the spotlight on that good news.

Let's also quickly acknowledge that this little collection of Bible passages of particular interest to graduates is not the totality of God's Message to graduates—or to any particular graduate, for that matter. The Word of God is living and active, and you would do well to go from reading through this collection to, as Eugene Peterson puts it, “just reading the Bible.” It rewards its readers because its author is the God who loves you.

You'll regularly come across the term *disciplemaker*. The word *disciple* is an old and odd enough word that its meaning can be a little elusive, so imagine how confusing it can seem to claim *disciplemaking* as an aspect of following Jesus. But these terms are easily explained: To be a disciple is to be a follower of Jesus—learning from him, living as a reflection and representative of him, following in his footsteps. To be a disciplemaker is to take seriously his final instructions to his first followers, instructions that echo throughout the Bible as inherent to life with God:

“Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20

“Making disciples” is a normal and inherent aspect of following Jesus, because the best world is one in which “the earth fills up with awareness of GOD’s glory as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

There’s more to adulthood than what you’ll find in these pages. Our hope is that what you *do* find here will reassure you that God is with you and for you and can be trusted by you in *whatever* you face.

PART ONE

THE TRAITS OF A CHRIST FOLLOWER



WALKING WITH JESUS

EVERY LIFE IS AN ADVENTURE—which means, among other things, that every life will involve complexity, confusion, challenge. Thankfully, we are not left to our own devices to make it through our lives. We are accompanied through life by a God who is for us and, as the angel announced to Mary, is Immanuel—“God is with us” (Matthew 1:23). So the first responsibility of Christian adulthood is to be with the God who is with us. Here are some Bible passages to help you reflect on what that means and what it looks like.

“At that same time, a fine vineyard will appear.

There’s something to sing about!

I, GOD, tend it.

I keep it well-watered.

I keep careful watch over it

so that no one can damage it.

I’m not angry. I care.

Even if it gives me thistles and thornbushes,

I’ll just pull them out

and burn them up.

Let that vine cling to me for safety,

let it find a good and whole life with me,

let it hold on for a good and whole life.”

ISAIAH 27:2-5

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

MATTHEW 11:28-30

What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a "law man" so that I could be *God's* man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

GALATIANS 2:19-21

God affirms us, making us a sure thing in Christ, putting his Yes within us. By his Spirit he has stamped us with his eternal pledge—a sure beginning of what he is destined to complete.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:21-22

"Your strength will come from settling down
in complete dependence on me."

ISAIAH 30:15

“Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.”

JOHN 15:4

My help and glory are in God

—granite-strength and safe-harbor-God—

So trust him absolutely, people;

lay your lives on the line for him.

God is a safe place to be.

PSALM 62:7-8

None of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That’s why we have the saying, “If you’re going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:29-31

Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we’re a

free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This down payment from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life. . . .

I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!

EPHESIANS 1:7-14, 17-19

Open up before GOD, keep nothing back;
 he'll do whatever needs to be done:
He'll validate your life in the clear light of day
 and stamp you with approval at high noon.
Quiet down before GOD,
 be prayerful before him.
Don't bother with those who climb the ladder,
 who elbow their way to the top. . . .
The spacious, free life is from GOD,
 it's also protected and safe.
GOD-strengthened, we're delivered from evil—
 when we run to him, he saves us.

PSALM 37:5-7, 39-40

These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

ROMANS 8:23-28

Christ's anointing teaches you the truth on everything you need to know about yourself and him, uncontaminated by a single lie. Live deeply in what you were taught.

1 JOHN 2:27

If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

MATTHEW 6:25-26

I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12

My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you've been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now *live* him. You're deeply rooted in him. You're well constructed upon him. You know your way around the faith. Now do what you've been

taught. School's out; quit studying the subject and start *living* it! And let your living spill over into thanksgiving.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way.

EPHESIANS 6:10-11

My grace is enough; it's all you need.

My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

GET STARTED

WALKING WITH JESUS



- Read the Gospel of Mark. Try to read two chapters a day; you'll be finished in just over a week.
- Try starting every day with a short prayer to Jesus. Add it to the very beginning of your morning routine. You can come up with your own prayer or try this prayer used by Christians around the world for centuries: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*
- Try setting an alarm at certain points throughout the day to remind you to check in with Jesus. Say a brief prayer when the alarm goes off, inviting Jesus to speak into whatever is going on for you at that moment or asking for his help in something coming up later in your day.
- Ask a friend to help you keep in contact with Jesus. Make plans to pray with and for each other and to discuss what you're learning about Jesus.