Chapter 1  Vanity

The Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7

1. How much time do you spend thinking about or talking about your body each day? What flaws do you fixate on?

2. How do you respond—inwardly and outwardly—to someone who looks the way you want to look?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. What does it mean to take care of our bodies in the context of the passage? What is the general principle we can apply about how God wants us to treat our bodies?

4. Where’s the line between vanity and taking care of your body because it’s the temple of the Holy Spirit?

5. How would your life be different if you were clothed in strength and dignity?

6. Read Psalm 139:13-14. What are three attributes unique to you that make you beautiful in God’s eyes?

7. How can you use what God has given you to glorify Him and further His Kingdom?

8. How can you create new thoughts and habits that reflect God’s view of beauty instead of your own?

9. What attributes of God do you find most beautiful? Find a passage of Scripture that illuminates each attribute. Whenever you begin to fixate on yourself—whether on your flaws or your fabulousness—replace those thoughts with ones of God’s beauty, which never fades.

Application: Cut the Crap

Figure out what in your life influences you to be vain—a magazine, a TV show, a relationship, etc.—and commit to changing that habit. Stop watching, stop fixating, stop setting yourself up to fail.

God, give me the desire to stop chasing after youth and beauty and things that fail. Give me eyes to see people, including myself, the way You do. Give me strength and dignity and a sense of humor so I can laugh at my aging body, knowing this life is a blip compared to eternity with You. Help me find my worth in You and You alone. Amen.
Chapter 2  Money

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:12-13

1. What material things do you pine for? Why do you pine?

2. How has greed affected your life and your relationships, including your relationship with God?

3. Read Philippians 3:8-11. What should we pine for?

4. Read Proverbs 3:9. Do you give of your “firstfruits”? Why or why not?

5. How do you define contentment?

6. When do you feel most content? Most discontent?

7. Read Philippians 4:13. Where do your strength and security come from?

8. How would your life be different if being content was the norm?

9. Read Matthew 22:36-38. Since loving Jesus more combats our love of money, what are practical ways you can serve and love Jesus more every day?

Application: Into the Green

Look at your last couple of bank statements and credit card bills and honestly evaluate where your money goes. Ask God to show you where you’re misspending and how you could honor and love him more with your finances.

God, give me a heart that is thankful for the blessings in my life, starting with You. Give me self-control and wisdom to steward my money well, and give me the ability to stand firm when temptation comes. Take away my greed and lust for stuff, and replace it with contentment and a desire for more of You. Give me a love for Jesus that keeps my eyes fixed on Him, and help me to stand firm in His strength, come what may. Amen.
Chapter 3  Recognition

“Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

1. What do you want to be known for?
2. Who do you work hard to impress?
3. What weaknesses do you try to hide?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What would it look like for you to delight in your weaknesses instead of hiding them?
5. How has God already used your weaknesses to bring glory to Himself?
6. Read Luke 10:38-42. In what ways are you like Martha? Like Mary? How will you make more time to sit and listen to Jesus?
7. What does God see when He looks at you? How important is God’s opinion of you to you?
8. Read John 3:22-36, paying close attention to the gist of verse 30. Are you content to have Jesus be the only one to get glory from your life? Why or why not?
9. What characteristic of God do you most want to reflect today? This month? This year?

Application: Wannabe

Think of a Christian woman you admire, whether from the Bible or someone you know personally—a woman known for her love of and obedience to Christ. Why specifically do you admire her? Pray that God, by His Spirit, would produce those fruits in you and that they would become more desirable to you than any worldly title.

God, give me humility, that I would allow people to see my weaknesses. Give me the desire and discipline to spend time with You each day. Give me confidence in the knowledge that You think I’m special. Help me to believe that approval from others means nothing in light of Your love for and acceptance of me, and help me to value the things You value. Help me to seek Your glory instead of my own. Amen.
Chapter 4  Relationships

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

1. Who do you love more than you love God?

2. How have your relationships suffered because you haven’t put Christ at the center of them?

3. What unfair or inappropriate expectations do you have of the people in your life? What steps do you need to take in order to change your expectations and heal your relationships (repenting, asking forgiveness, creating new habits)?

4. Why is it difficult for you to put God first?

5. Are there times when you feel closer to God? What circumstances contribute to the ebb and flow?

6. What are your current expectations of God?


8. What does it take for you to faithfully spend time in God’s Word?

9. What are some practical ways you can rely on God more and on “your people” less?

10. Read Matthew 22:36-40. With God in His rightful first place, what are three ways you can express His love to the people in your life today?

Application: Love Train

Read one of the following passages about God’s love every day this week. Meditate on it, asking God to teach you about, and open your heart to more of, His love.

Psalm 139:1-18
Psalm 56:8 (preferably in the New Living Translation)
Romans 5:6-11
Romans 8:31-39
Ephesians 1:3-14
Ephesians 3:14-19
1 John 4:9-10

God, create in me an undivided heart and right priorities. Help me to love You first, and help me to love others well. Give me wisdom to know how to spend my time so that I have enough to spend with You each day. Give me a heart that is receptive to Your love so my joy and peace and self-worth remain firmly planted in You. Amen.
Chapter 5  Parenthood

You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. Matthew 7:9-11, nlt

1. What are your greatest strengths as a parent or as someone who influences younger generations?

2. What are your greatest fears regarding your children (or any other children, for that matter)?

3. How does your fear impact your behavior? How does your fear impact the children in your life?

4. What do you want the children you love to believe about God?

5. What do you really believe about God’s goodness?

6. How does your faith in God’s goodness show up in your parenting or mentoring?

7. Read Psalm 36:5; Psalm 62:8; Psalm 147:3; Mark 6:34; Acts 14:17; Romans 5:8; 2 Peter 3:9; and Revelation 4:11. What does Scripture say about God’s goodness? Fill in the blank for each verse: God is good because He

8. Do you believe the things you just read as they relate to children? Pray that God would help you to believe—to relinquish them to His loving care.

9. What are practical ways you can trust God more with the kids in your life?

Application: Pray It Out

Ask God to direct you to a verse or passage for each of your children or the children close to you. Commit to regularly praying that Scripture for them, and watch expectantly for God to work in their hearts and lives.

God, I confess that when it comes to my kids, my mommy-love eclipses my willingness to surrender to Your will and plan. Help me to trust You. Help me to rest in Your love, and help me to believe You love my children more than I do. Help me to be confident of Your goodness in all circumstances, even when my children struggle. I pray they would know You in a real way and from an early age so they would experience life at Your side. Amen.
Chapter 6 Plans

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.

Psalm 23:1-3

1. What’s your five-year plan? Describe your planning process. How do you make decisions?
2. Why are your plans important to you?
3. What do you think God thinks of your process? Your specific plans?
4. Read James 4:13-17. What plans (or part of your plan) have you made without consulting God first?
5. Read Jonah 1:1-3. Is God calling you to (or away from) something you’ve been ignoring? When was the last time you asked Him to show you what He wants your life to look like?
6. Read Acts 16:6-10. Tell about a time you were willing to relinquish or change your plans when God required it. And tell about a time you weren’t.
7. Have you ever been sifted or disciplined by God, or experienced a season when you felt like an exile? How did you react? Did you draw near to God, or did you turn away from Him?
8. Read Psalm 23:1-3. Describe how you spend time in God’s green pastures and by His quiet waters. What does that really mean in your life?
9. What do you think God wants you to do with your life? Scratch that—how about just this year? This week?

Application: Let It Go

Write your current plans on individual pieces of paper, lay them in front of you, and then relinquish them to God in prayer. Ask for direction. Ask for clarity. Ask for resolve. If need be, do it every day, and pray that God would help you mean it.

God, I confess that You are often an afterthought when it comes to my plans. Change the way I think. Help me remember to ask You before I forge ahead, and give me discernment, wisdom, and patience as I wait on Your answers. Guide me and help me follow. Help me to mean it when I say, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.”
Chapter 7  Pride

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

1. List three things you think are true about yourself.

2. List three things you desire to change.

3. Read Psalm 139:13-14; Galatians 2:20; and Hebrews 13:6. How is confidence different from pride? Where should our confidence come from?

4. Read John 10:27; John 14:16-17; and Romans 10:17. How do you hear from God? Are you faithful in your routine? What could you do differently or better in order to tune your ears to His voice?

5. Describe a time when you were appropriately humbled. Did your self-perception change? How has your life been different since?

6. Read John 15:5 and Hebrews 13:6. In what circumstances are you dependent on the Lord? Are there areas of your life where you’re going it alone?

7. What are some specific ways you’ve experienced God’s love for you?

8. How does God’s love expose pride? How does it drive out pride?

9. Read Psalm 34:1-3 and Romans 14:11. A worshipful heart and a bended knee are the antitheses of a prideful heart. What is impeding your worship?

10. List your three favorite attributes of God—things so far and above any good in you—and praise Him for them.

Application: Out with the Old, In with the True

Read Psalm 139:23-24. Sometimes we lack self-awareness and don’t see the stuff standing between us and the Lord. Ask God to show you anything in your heart or life that offends Him. Ask to be sifted and changed—which is a scary request, I know. But until we’re willing to face what’s already there, we’ll be stunted in our growth, stalled on the road to becoming more like Jesus.

Dear God, I confess my pride and strong desire to do things all by myself. I confess that pride has run amuck in my heart, eroding my relationship with others and with You. Thank You for being faithful to show me my sin, painful as Your work in my life can be. Thank You for being faithful to change me, stripping me of pride, self-absorption, resentment, and self-protection, and for replacing those things with humility and the dependence on You I so desperately need. And thank You for giving me a worshipful heart. Lord God, You are worthy of all my praise and deserve all the glory. Teach me to worship unencumbered by the pride that puts me on the throne. And keep me on my knees so I will grow and look more and more like Your Son. Amen.
Chapter 8  Testimony

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 1 John 1:5-9, NLT

1. Have you ever envied someone else’s story? If so, who and why?

2. Describe a time God used another person to draw you closer to Him. What were the circumstances in your life at the time? How did that particular person point you to Him?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:4-7; and 1 John 1:5-9. What really draws people to Jesus? Do you hinder or help that goal? How?

4. Read Galatians 5:16-26. What does the redemptive work of the Spirit produce in us? Have you been taking credit for a particular quality He has cultivated in your heart?

5. What stands between you and sharing your testimony or the gospel?

6. Read Matthew 5:43-45 and Luke 12:51-53. Are there people in your life who have separated themselves from you because of Jesus? What should you be doing while you wait for the Lord to restore your relationship?

7. What do you think it means to be transparent?

8. In what areas of your life are you being authentic, and in what areas do you need to grow in authenticity? Be specific.

9. Read 1 Samuel 7:12 from the New Living Translation: “Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer (which means ‘the stone of help’), for he said, ‘Up to this point the Lord has helped us!’” Samuel wanted the people to see the rock and be reminded of what God had just done for them—it was a memorial of His work in their lives. Make a list of your Ebenezer stones.

10. Write your testimony, both your come-to-Jesus moment and what God is changing in you or working through you today (I was . . . , but God . . . , and now . . . ).
Confessions of a Raging Perfectionist

Application: New Mercies I See

Galatians 5:22-23 says, “Against such [fruit] there is no law”—in other words, there is no limit or cap on the Holy Spirit’s redemptive work in our lives. What sanctifying change is God trying to make in your heart or mind right now? What spiritual fruit do you need more of? God is always at work, always writing another chapter in your life story. Pray that He would show you what He’s working on, and pray that you’ll surrender to it. And then get honest about it with the people in your path.

Oh, Lord, I praise You for saving me. I praise You for pulling me along the Jesus road, for picking me up when I fall, and for refusing to tolerate the sin that seeks to destroy my relationship with You. Thank You that You love me completely just as I am at this moment and that You love me too much to let me stay who I am at this moment. You are good. You are patient. You are faithful to make me more and more like Your Son, who You sent to redeem my wandering heart. Help me, God, to stay under Your pruning hand and to be honest about my struggles with myself and with the people in my life. Give me the courage and the opportunity to share the gospel and how it has changed me. Give me peace and rest in Your total acceptance and love, I pray. Amen.

Chapter 9  Obedience

This world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don’t forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.

Hebrews 13:14-16, nlt

1. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. Do God’s plans sometimes seem unfair or unjust? Do you ever think your good or bad behavior somehow plays a part? Why or why not?

2. Have you ever lost someone too soon, whether to death or estrangement? In what ways did the Lord carry you? In what ways did you battle through it alone?

3. Read Isaiah 1:11. Do you ever obey God for the wrong reasons? What are your wrong reasons? What should the reasons be?

4. What sin in your life do you loathe? What sin in your life is on repeat? What do you do when the Lord convicts you?

5. Read 1 Peter 5:7-9. When Satan whispers in your ear, what does he say? Which of his lies do you believe?

6. What is grace? What does it look like in your life right now? What should it look like?

7. Have you experienced God by your side, closer than a brother, comforting or carrying or guiding or protecting you? When and how?
8. Read 1 Kings 19:11-12. When have you heard God’s still, gentle voice? How did you respond?

9. Describe a time you were called to awkwardness for Jesus. Did you heed the call? What was the outcome?

10. Read Jeremiah 17:5-8. Are you trying to obey in your own strength, or are you asking and trusting God to give you the strength you need to obey? Confess your weakness and lack of resolve to do what’s right, and ask God for help. He wants to help!

Application: Stop, Drop, and Pray

Praise God that every breath we take is rich and ripe with opportunity for obedience that pleases Him. Stop what you’re doing, confess that you don’t have the ability to please God on your own, and ask Him to empower you today. And ask again tomorrow and the next day and the next, lest you be led astray by Satan, who exists to twist the truth and pollute our walk with Christ.

Dear God, I praise You for grace. I praise You for being so patient when I obey for the wrong reasons, when I have a bad attitude, and when I don’t extend Your grace to others. I praise You that You offer help freely, that You equip Your children for service, and that Your Word is a constant source of truth to combat Satan’s lies. Help me, Lord, to live my life in a way that pleases You. I long to hear those words “Well done” from the one who saved me, is redeeming me, and is faithful to complete the work He began in my heart. Amen.

Chapter 10  Diet Coke

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23:1-6, NLT

1. Do you have a Krissie in your life—someone who inspires you with her contentment and ability to depend completely on God? What do you see in her life that you desire more of in your own?

2. What are you too dependent on? Make a list of your crutches, and explain how and when you use them.

3. How do you think the Lord views your list of coping mechanisms? Explain.
4. What are the deeper needs you’re trying to meet with your crutches? Peace? Joy? Security? Take to time to pray and think through the root of your behavior.

5. Read Isaiah 30:18; Matthew 6:33; and 2 Peter 1:3-4. Make a list of the times in your life when God has provided in a way only He could.

6. Read Psalm 37:3-6. In what current circumstance is God teaching you dependence? Are you submitting or rebelling, and why?

7. Read Psalm 37:7. Describe your time with God. Is it a chore? Your main source of joy or strength? Or somewhere in between?

8. What steps can you take to rely on the Lord more than you currently do?

9. Read Matthew 4:1-11. Why do you think Jesus fasted? What implications does His fasting have for you?

10. Write out Matthew 22:37-38. Describe how loving God with your heart, soul, and mind should impact the way you spend your day. Are you loving God with all you are? Why or why not?

Application: Rock-and-Roll Wisdom

Read through your list of crutches from question 2 as Mick Jagger’s “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” plays in your head. Compare what you’re settling for to Psalm 23. Crazy, right? Use your prayer time this week to ask God for wisdom and self-control to bring your needs and your likes into a proper balance that will glorify God and satisfy your deepest longings.

Dear God, thank You that no stronghold in my life is too strong for You to change. Thank You that in spite of my constant settling for things that offer fleeting satisfaction, You remain faithful, and Your love for me doesn’t change. Please change me. Please show me where I’m inappropriately relying on things or people instead of You. I confess my desire to be instantly gratified and my tendency to wander from You and Your promise to truly satisfy. Change me, Lord. Change my instincts. Change what I love. Give me a desire—a thirst—for You and Your unique and total sufficiency, and give me the discipline and the wisdom to make life-giving choices each day. Amen.

Chapter 11 Happiness

I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Philippians 3:7-11, NLT
1. What are the things you want most out of life?

2. When has your life seemed the most out of control?

3. How do you typically respond to the twists and turns, disappointments, and imperfections of life?

4. Read Matthew 7:24-27. Where does your hope come from? In other words, where have you built your proverbial house?

5. Read Psalm 25:4-6. What does it mean to hope in God?

6. How has your view of God changed as you’ve gotten older and experienced more of life and of Him?

7. Read Philippians 3:10-11. What does it mean to “suffer with Christ”? Are you willing to suffer, as Paul was?

8. How would your life be different if you “looked up”? If your hope was rooted in spending eternity with God in the new Eden?

9. Read Proverbs 8:17; Isaiah 40:29; 42:6; 54:10; John 14:27; 16:22; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 10:13; and Philippians 4:19. What are some of God’s promises we can cling to while we wait for eternity to commence? (Notice that the book of Isaiah rules.)

10. Read Colossians 3:1-4. Is Christ your life?

Application: Homeward Bound

Write down the changes you want to make in your life to reflect that God’s Word is true, His promises are real, and our home is in heaven.

God, change my life by giving me an eternal perspective. Help me hope for what I don’t yet see. Help me remember that nothing here will ever be perfect but that You are, and someday the perfection You intended will be restored. Make me patient, and grant me joy in the waiting. Lead me so that my life will mean something in light of Your eternal Kingdom. You are worthy of my allegiance, worthy of my hope, and worthy of my praise. Be Lord of my life, today and every day. Amen.
Chapter 12  Freedom

I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.  

Philippians 3:12-14, nlt

1. Read John 8:31-32. What do you think it means to be free in Jesus?

2. What influences the way you see your spiritual freedom? Your upbringing (whether you’ve accepted how you were raised or you’re rebelling against it)? Pop culture? Scripture? Justification of sin?


4. Read Romans 6:22 and Galatians 5:1. In what ways are you still acting like a slave to your sin? Is there something in your life you’re reticent to let go of completely?

5. Read Colossians 1:21-23. What do you want to do with your God-given freedom? Be your own master? Or glorify the one who freed you in the first place? Maybe a mixture of both? Explain and be honest.

6. Read Ephesians 3:12 and 1 Peter 2:16. What does it mean to live as God’s slave?

7. Read Galatians 5:22-23. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are free to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit—“against such things there is no law.” In other words, there’s no limit to God’s goodness expressed in our lives. Which of these fruits do you need more of? Ask God for it.

8. Read Ephesians 6:10-17. What piece of spiritual armor are you forgetting to wear? How is Satan exploiting your vulnerability as a result?

9. God usually convicts us of one or two “biggies” at a time—or in my case, one chapter at a time. Prayerfully identify your biggest area of struggle—the one God wants to change in you right now. What piece of God’s armor specifically applies to the stronghold He wants to bring down, and what will you do to suit up?

10. Read Philippians 3:12-14. Is our desire for perfection part of our wiring? If so, how was it intended to be fulfilled?
Application: Bridget Jones It

In the hope of starting a new chapter in your life, make your own list of stats that reflects your relationship with Jesus right now. Then make your resolutions about how to get to your new chapter. (You can use the example below or go rogue and make up your own.)

Spiritual Status:

Strangleholds:

Hopes:

Resolve to . . .

Dear God, thank You that in You there is freedom. Help me to see it more clearly. Help me to desire You and the life You offer—to value the things You value, like kindness, gentleness, patience, and self-control. Change the way I see the world and all the things that masquerade as freedom giving when in reality they enslave. Thank You that You have conquered sin and death, and that You offer us life in Christ. Make me more like Him. Help me desire to be more like Him. Help me love You with my whole being. Lift my eyes to heaven, where my longing for perfection will be fulfilled. Amen.