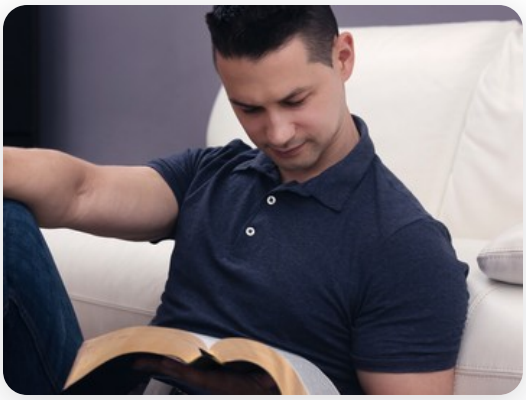
Taking a Course Solo

The short guide to reading one of these courses alone — and finishing changed, not just finished.



There’s no facilitator here, no room full of people, no one else’s answers to react against. It’s just you, the sessions, and however much honesty you bring to them. That can feel like the lesser way through — second-best to a group, a workaround until you can find one. It isn’t. Every structure in these courses (the questions, the six-day practices, the pace) was built to work on a single person sitting alone with an open Bible, because that is exactly where discipleship starts, group or no group. What follows are four postures and three practices that make the difference between a course you finished and a course that finished something in you.

Not a Certificate. A Change.

There’s no certificate at the end of these courses. That’s not an oversight — it’s the point. A certificate measures attendance: you showed up, you clicked through, you’re done. But “done” was never the target. James, writing to believers who already knew their Bibles well, drew a picture of exactly this gap between finishing and changing:

> *“For if someone merely listens to the message and does not live it out, he is like someone who gazes at his own face in a mirror. For he gazes at himself and then goes out and immediately forgets what sort*

> *of person he was. But the one who peers into the perfect law of liberty and fixes his attention there, and does not become a forgetful listener but one who lives it out — he will be blessed in what he does."*
>
> James 1:23–25, NET

WORD STUDY

***poiētēs* · ποιητής · G4163 · "one who lives it out"**

The Greek word behind "one who lives it out" is *poiētēs* — a doer, a maker, one who performs or produces. It's built from *poieō*, "to do" or "to make," the same root that gives us "poet": someone who doesn't just describe a thing but brings it into being. James sets *poiētēs* against a "forgetful listener" — someone who looks in a mirror, sees exactly what needs attention, and walks away having already forgotten. The mirror did its job; the man didn't. Notice what James does *not* say: he doesn't say the doer will be blessed for finishing the mirror-check. He says the doer "will be blessed in what he does" — the blessing is inside the doing, not issued afterward like a diploma. A course you complete without living any of it out is a very thorough look in a mirror you then walked away from.

So before anything else, reset the target. You are not reading toward a finish line. You are reading toward becoming a different kind of person than you were when you opened Session 1 — and that goal can't be faked by finishing fast.

Read It Prayerfully

The single biggest difference between a devotional read and an academic one is whether you ask for help before you start. The longest chapter in Scripture is one long meditation on loving God's word, and its author — someone who plainly already knew the text inside and out — still opened with a request, not a resolution to try harder:

> *"Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvelous things in your law!"*
>
> Psalm 119:18, NET

WORD STUDY

***gālâ* · גָּלָה · H1540 · "open"**

Gālâ means to uncover, to strip away a covering, to expose something that was hidden underneath. It's the word used when a captive is stripped and led into exile, and figuratively, of something concealed being laid bare. The psalmist isn't asking God to hand him new information he doesn't have; he already has the scroll open in front of him. He's asking God to

uncover what's already there — to remove whatever's covering his own capacity to see it. That's a strange thing to need help with, until you notice how often you can read a familiar passage and feel nothing move, then read the same words a year later and feel them land like they're new. The words didn't change. Something covering your eyes did.

Practically: pray before you open the book, every single time, even when it feels like a formality. A short, specific prayer beats a long vague one — something as plain as "Uncover what I need to see today" does the actual work Psalm 119:18 is describing.

Read It Devotionally

Devotional and academic reading can use identical words and produce entirely different people, because the difference isn't in the text — it's in what you do with it after your eyes leave the page. Joshua received a command about this at the start of the most consequential leadership assignment of his life:

> *"This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful."*
>
> Joshua 1:8, NET

WORD STUDY

***hāgâ* · הָגָה · H1897 · "meditate" / "memorize"**

Hāgâ is a word for low, repeated sound — a murmur, a mutter, a growl. Isaiah uses the same root for a lion growling over its prey (Isaiah 31:4): not a single bite and done, but a low, possessive sound made *while staying with the thing*. That's the picture behind "meditate." It isn't a synonym for "read" or even "think about" — it's staying with a passage the way a lion stays with what it has caught, turning it over, not moving on until something in it has actually been worked through rather than glanced at. A single read-through of a session, however attentive, is not what Joshua 1:8 is describing.

Practically: read the session's key passage more than once, and read it out loud at least once. Reading aloud is slower than reading silently, on purpose — you can't skim while your mouth is forming the words. That friction is the point, not a flaw.

Read It Expectantly

There’s a difference between reading to acquire information and reading in expectation that God will actually do something through it, and the writer of Hebrews names that difference as the whole hinge of faith:

> *“Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”*
>
> Hebrews 11:6, NET

WORD STUDY

***misthapodotēs* · μισθαποδότης · G3406 · “rewarder”**

This is a rare word — it appears exactly once in the entire New Testament, right here. It’s built from *misthos* (wages) and a verb meaning to pay back or repay: literally, “one who pays out wages.” The writer needed a word that didn’t already exist in common use, because the ordinary Greek vocabulary for “generous” or “kind” wasn’t specific enough for what he wanted to say: God is the kind of God who *pays out* to the people who actually seek him — not to the people who show up, and not to the people who merely know the material, but to the ones who came looking for something. A rare word for a claim the writer clearly thought needed one.

Practically: before each session, tell God specifically what you’re hoping he does in you through it — not vaguely (“help me grow”) but as specifically as you can manage (“I’ve been carrying anger about this for years; I want that loosened”). You’re not obligating God to a transaction. You’re taking Hebrews 11:6 at its word that he responds to people who actually seek, and putting yourself in that posture instead of the posture of someone merely working through material.

Give It the Time It’s Asking For

Every session in these courses pairs a main teaching with a six-day practice — not because six days is a magic number, but because a single sitting can inform you and still change nothing. Sitting with a truth across a week is what lets it move from something you agree with to something that’s actually reshaping a habit, a relationship, or a fear. Rushing through sessions to reach the end defeats the six-day design as surely as skipping the practice altogether does; a course read at double speed is a course read for information, and information was never the goal here.

> *“So we must not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up.”*
>
> Galatians 6:9, NET

Protect a slot on your calendar for this the same way you'd protect a standing appointment — not "whenever I get to it," but a specific day and time, defended against everything that isn't an emergency. Two paces work well for reading alone:

Pace	Rhythm	Best for
Weekly	One session, plus its six-day practice, each week	Steady, uninterrupted stretches of time
Every other week	One session every two weeks, with extra room for the practice	Busy or unpredictable seasons

Either is fine. What isn't fine is no pace at all — reading three sessions in one sitting because you have a free evening, then nothing for a month. The six-day practice is doing quiet, cumulative work in the gaps between sittings; skip the gaps and you skip the actual mechanism these courses are built on.

Answer the Questions Honestly — in Writing

Every session opens with a Consider This question, meant to be answered *before* you read on, and closes with reflection questions meant to be answered *after*. Both are easy to read past. Don't. Write your answers down, in actual words, even if it's two sentences in the margin or a note on your phone.

> *"Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"*
>
> 2 Corinthians 13:5, NET

Writing forces a kind of honesty that thinking-about-it doesn't. A thought can stay comfortably vague; a sentence has to commit to something specific, and specific is where self-examination actually happens. If a question makes you uncomfortable, that discomfort is data, not a signal to skip ahead — the questions that are hardest to answer honestly are usually pointing at exactly the place a session is trying to reach.

Do the Homework

The six-day practice attached to each session is not an optional appendix. It's where the *poiētēs* from the word study above — the doer, not merely the listener — is either formed or isn't. Reading about forgiveness and actually forgiving someone this week are not the same event, and only one of them is what the course is asking of you. Do the practice on the day it's assigned, not in a batch the night before the next session. The spacing isn't incidental; a practice done in one sitting to catch up is a checkbox. The same practice done across six actual days, inside the texture of an actual week, is where it has room to become something more than an exercise.

If something heavier surfaces while you're reading alone

Some sessions touch real weight — old wounds, ongoing struggles, questions that have been sitting unaddressed for years. In a group, someone else is in the room when that surfaces. Reading alone, it can be tempting to sit with something heavy in complete privacy and call that processing it.

Don't carry it alone longer than you have to. If a session brings up grief, trauma, a besetting struggle, or anything that feels like more than you can hold by yourself, that's worth taking to a real person — a pastor, a counselor, a trusted friend — not just to God in private, though start there too. Nothing in these courses is a reason to stop taking prescribed medication or to leave treatment; if a session ever seems to suggest otherwise, that's not what it means.

If you'd rather not read alone at all, that's a fine reason to gather a few people and go through it together instead.

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE

A finished course and a changed life are not the same thing. Only one of them was ever the goal.

A prayer to open with

Father, I'm not here to collect information about you. Open my eyes to what's actually in front of me. Stay with me while I sit with it instead of letting me skim past it. Meet me the way you promise to meet those who actually seek you — and give me the honesty, this week, to write down what's true instead of what sounds right. In Jesus' name, amen.