

# Fighting Disease, Not Death

Finding a way through lifelong struggle



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## **Study Guide**

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Permission is given to use this study in conjunction with the book *Fighting Disease, not Death: Finding a Way Through Lifelong Struggle*.

## **Fighting Disease, Not Death Study Guide**

This guide is an accompaniment to the book *Fighting Disease, Not Death: finding a way through lifelong suffering*, By Lorie and Mark L. Vincent.

### **Chapter 1**

Begin: Can you identify a story of suffering from your own life? How and when did it begin? Where has your journey taken you and where are you now?

Reflect: Read Luke 9:51 and Acts 20:24. These passages are about Jesus and then the apostle Paul, both of whom are preparing to journey toward Jerusalem and almost certain arrest and persecution.

- What attitudes do they display?
- What priorities do they demonstrate?
- What do they ultimately decide to do?

Respond: What connection do you make between the approach of Jesus and the apostle Paul and your own story of suffering? How can you point to the gospel in the middle of your struggle?

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### **Chapter 2**

Begin: Who are the examples you can look to and take courage when you consider an approach to suffering? What did they do that you admire and hope to emulate in your own struggles?

Reflect: Read the following passages from scripture: Philippians 4:6,7; Psalm 22:22-31, Isaiah 53:4,5 and John 9:1-5. As you do answer the following questions for each passage:

- What does God do or say in the passage?
- What recommendations can be found here for persons in the middle of struggle?
- What is God saying to me?

Respond: Identify a passage of Scripture, either among those you just studied or another that speaks to you, that helps you face struggle. How might you claim and live its promises more profoundly?

### Chapter 3

Begin: Can you recall a moment when you were in denial about reality or wanted to give up and stop struggling against something you knew to be wrong, unhealthy or seemingly beyond your strength? What did you do? How did it help or harm you? Is living in denial or giving up of any long-term benefit?

Reflect: Read Matthew 5:4 and Matthew 19:13-15

- Identify the roles each of the characters play in Matthew 19:13-15. Who comes to Jesus? Who tries to prevent it and why? What is Jesus' response?
- Can you think of any connection between those who mourn and the little children that Jesus invites to come?
- How might mourning be different than giving up altogether? How is being enfolded in Jesus' arms different than abandoning hope?
- How might these passages connect to the distinction between fighting disease (or dis-ease) and not fighting death?

Respond: Identify the elements of a supportive, meaningful and appropriate response when someone reveals a terrible struggle they face. How does this response change when the struggling person believes they are beyond hope?

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### Chapter 4

Begin: In trying to do something about a problem or arrive at a quick solution, we sometimes make the problem worse. Can you think of such a time where it would have been better for you to wait and let the circumstances work themselves out? What lessons did you learn in the process?

Do you know anyone who did not go well to their death? How about you, have you come to terms with your mortality?

Reflect: While we can take care of our bodies and perhaps avoid death for a time, death comes to us all. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58:

- What difference does it make for us to believe that death and the grave has been conquered?
- How does seeing yourself as immortal rather than merely mortal change your view of life circumstances?
- What is the response called for in verse 58? Does this have any connection between fighting disease and not fighting death?

Respond: Take inventory of the following and commit to what you should do next.

- Your relationships, are you at peace with God, family, neighbors and friends?
- Your estate, are your affairs in order?
- Your funeral, is it planned?

## Chapter 5

**Begin:** Have you ever lashed out, wanting others to feel your pain? What happened and what was the result? Make a list of ways that people inflict suffering on others. Do you think this list is growing?

**Reflect:** Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Because many Christians are so familiar with this prayer it becomes difficult to slow one's mind down enough to consider this prayer reflectively. Try reading the version below that inserts a paraphrase of each phrase in the prayer:

*Our Father (Loving authority,)*  
*who art in heaven (Who resides in our true home,)*  
*Hallowed be thy name (We give you all our reverence.)*  
*Thy kingdom come (We want to live in the society you create.)*  
*Thy will be done (We submit ourselves to you,)*  
*on earth (In what we see,)*  
*as it is in heaven. (And in what is beyond our ability to perceive.)*  
*Give us this day our daily bread, (We entrust ourselves to your supply,)*  
*and forgive us our sins (And throw ourselves on your mercy,)*  
*as we forgive those who sinned against us (Because we show mercy to others.)*  
*and lead us not into temptation (Spare us from desire to choose what is wrong,)*  
*but deliver us from evil (And spare us from the wrong others would do.)*  
*for thine is the kingdom (Our allegiance is to you.)*  
*and the power (Our submission is to you.)*  
*and the glory (Our worship is offered to you,)*  
*Forever and ever, (For all time and beyond.)*  
*A-men. (May it be so.)*

- From this prayer, what do you consider to be the Christian approach to the circumstances of life, including struggle?
- What does this prayer suggest about the kind of relationship we can expect with God?
- From the overall study of fighting disease but not death, we learn that neither passiveness nor aggressiveness is a helpful response to struggle. What do you find in this prayer that points to cultivating a more balanced, patient strength?

**Respond:** Choose from the following list:

- If there is a need to forgive or ask forgiveness, take care of it in order to reduce the effects of struggle in your life.
- If you carry anger over lost opportunity because of struggles inflicted on you, begin making a new list of the opportunities gained because of the struggle. Identify how this might help you with an attitude adjustment.
- If you cannot identify major struggles you have faced, consider whether you have been grateful. Consider too whether you have inflicted additional suffering on others who struggle because you did not want to get drawn into their need. How might you adjust your response in a way that gives life rather than drains it?

## Chapter 6

Begin: If life is a long marathon race of endurance, how are you doing at the moment? Have you experienced major hurdles along the way? How would you describe the finish line?

Reflect: Read Philippians 3:17-21. Paul is writing to a church familiar with opposition and struggle.

- How does Paul describe the finish line of the race of life?
- Where does Paul locate the hope a Christian carries? How does this contrast with the hopes that others carry?
- What support do you find here for fighting disease (and dis-ease), but not death?

Respond: Imagine a child on your lap who asks you "*why do people get sick?*" or "*why do people shoot each other?*". How would you respond? How has this study helped you form and articulate your answer?