

# Reading the **Owner's Manual**



## **Devotional + Discussion Guide**



**HOUSTON'S FIRST**  
BAPTIST CHURCH



# **Reading the Owner's Manual**

## Devotional + Discussion Guide

### **Series Introduction**

When something in life breaks down, we often reach for the manual – unless, of course, we never opened it in the first place. The Bible is God's "owner's manual" for our lives, showing us how to handle everything from giving and praying to trusting and building our foundation on Him. In Matthew 6–7, Jesus gives us simple, powerful instructions on how to live God's way, not the world's way. Each day of this devotional will help you open His Word, apply His truth, and walk in wisdom that lasts.





Day 1

# Handle God's Resources God's Way

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## DEVOTIONAL

Jesus teaches that generosity isn't about being seen, it's about being faithful. In Matthew 6:1–4, He calls us to give quietly, not for attention or applause, but to honor the Father who "sees in secret." When we follow God's way of giving, our hearts shift from self-promotion to surrender.

Every gift becomes an act of worship. Whether we give financially, through service, or by sharing our time, generosity reminds us that everything we have comes from Him. The world says, "Make it about you." Jesus says, "Make it about God." True joy in giving is found when no one else notices but Him.

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## BIBLE VERSE

*"But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*  
— Matthew 6:3–4 (CSB)

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## REFLECTION QUESTION

What would change in your heart if your generosity was focused only on pleasing God instead of others?

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## QUOTE

*"Be careful. Do we give for God's eyes or for man's eyes? People's praise is fleeting. It's powerful. It influences our lives, but people's praise is fleeting."* — Pastor Gregg Matte

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## PRAYER

*Lord, thank You for giving me all I have. Teach me to give with humility and joy. Help me to trust that You see what's unseen – and that Your reward is far greater than human praise. Amen.*





## Day 2

# Praying and Fasting God's Way

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### DEVOTIONAL

Prayer and fasting are personal invitations into the presence of God. Jesus tells us not to pray to impress others, but to connect deeply with the Father who loves us. When we pray and fast, we're not proving our spirituality; we're pursuing intimacy.

Fasting quiets distractions so our hearts can hear Him more clearly. It reminds us that we need God more than anything else. Prayer keeps us anchored in His presence when the world pulls us in every direction. When we pray and fast God's way, we grow less dependent on ourselves and more dependent on Him.

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### BIBLE VERSE

*"But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." — Matthew 6:6 (CSB)*

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### REFLECTION QUESTION

What distractions keep you from spending intentional time with God, and what could you fast from this week to make more room for Him?

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### QUOTE

*"Fasting is feasting on God." — John Piper*

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### PRAYER

*Father, draw me into deeper fellowship with You. Teach me to pray with honesty and faith, and to fast with purpose. As I quiet the noise of my life, let me hear Your voice above all others. Amen.*





Day 3

## How to Grow Faith and Shrink Fear

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### DEVOTIONAL

Worry comes naturally – faith takes focus. Jesus reminds us not to be anxious about what we'll eat, wear, or face tomorrow. Instead, He invites us to seek first His kingdom. Faith grows when our eyes shift from "what ifs" to "God is."

When fear rises, remember Who provides. The birds don't worry about their food, and the flowers don't stress about their beauty, yet God cares for them. If He provides for creation, how much more will He provide for you? The cure for anxiety isn't control; it's surrender. Faith grows strongest when we let go.

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### BIBLE VERSE

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." — Matthew 6:33 (CSB)*

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### REFLECTION QUESTION

What fear are you holding onto that God is asking you to release in faith today?

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### QUOTE

*"Feed your faith, and your fears will starve to death." — Anonymous*

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### PRAYER

*God, help me to replace fear with faith. Remind me that You are my Provider, Protector, and Peace. When anxiety begins to rise, teach me to seek You first and trust that You will take care of the rest. Amen.*





## Day 4

# True Foundations

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### DEVOTIONAL

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares two builders – one wise and one foolish. The difference isn't in what they heard, but in what they did. Both listened to His words, but only one obeyed.

Life's storms are inevitable, but collapse is not. When your life is built on Christ, the solid rock, you can withstand the winds of hardship and the waves of uncertainty. Salvation is the foundation, and obedience is how you strengthen it. The more you apply God's Word, the more stable your faith becomes – no matter the storm.

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### BIBLE VERSE

*"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." — Matthew 7:24 (CSB)*

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### REFLECTION QUESTION

In what area of your life do you need to move from hearing God's Word to acting on it?

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### QUOTE

*"Wisdom is not just knowing what to do, it's doing what you know." — Rick Warren*

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### PRAYER

*Jesus, help me to build my life on You alone. Strengthen my foundation through obedience to Your Word. When storms come, remind me that You are my rock, my refuge, and my firm foundation. Amen.*





# Discussion Guide

## Summary

God didn't leave us guessing how to live – He gave us His Word as the ultimate "owner's manual" for life. In Matthew 6–7, Jesus shows us how to handle our resources, connect with the Father, trust instead of fear, and build on a foundation that lasts.

When we open Scripture, we don't just read instructions; we encounter the heart of the Designer Himself. His Word is meant to guide every area of our lives, from how we give and pray to how we face worry and make decisions. The more we follow His manual, the more we discover that God's way truly works – because He designed it.


## Intro Prayer

*Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word – our true owner's manual for life. As we discuss these truths, help us listen with open hearts and obedient spirits. Teach us not just to hear Your words but to live them daily. Amen.*

## Ice Breaker

What's one "manual" or set of instructions you've actually read (or wish you had!) that made a difference? How does that relate to how we treat God's Word?

## Key Verses

- Matthew 6:3–4      Give in secret, trusting God sees what's unseen.
  - Matthew 6:6      Pray to your Father who is in secret.
  - Matthew 6:33      Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
  - Matthew 7:24      Build your life on the rock by acting on God's Word.
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# Discussion Questions

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## 1. THE MANUAL ITSELF

- What does it mean to treat the Bible as your “owner’s manual”?
- In what ways do we tend to ignore or “glance over” God’s instructions until something breaks down in life?

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## 2. GIVING AND GENEROSITY

- Why do you think Jesus starts with “how to give” when teaching about righteous living (Matthew 6:1–4)?
- How does secret generosity shape your heart differently from public giving?

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## 3. PRAYER AND FASTING

- What does Jesus’ emphasis on praying in private teach us about our relationship with God?
- How does fasting (setting something aside to focus on God) help you depend on Him more fully?

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## 4. FAITH OVER FEAR

- What tends to steal your peace most easily?
- How does “seeking first the kingdom” reframe your worries about provision, control, or the future?
- Can you share a time when trusting God changed the outcome of a fearful situation?


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## 5. BUILDING ON THE ROCK

- Jesus says hearing His words isn’t enough; we must act on them. What’s one teaching or conviction from this series you need to put into practice?
- What does it look like, practically, to build a “storm-proof” faith?

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## 6. LIVING BY THE MANUAL

- How can we help one another stay rooted in Scripture in a world full of noise, opinions, and quick fixes?
  - What spiritual habit – prayer, giving, fasting, Scripture reading – do you want to strengthen after this series?
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## Life Application

This week, identify one “instruction” from God’s Word you’ve been neglecting, and take one obedient step to apply it.

Commit to spending time each day “opening the manual,” reading Scripture not just for information but for transformation.

## Key Takeaways

- The Bible isn’t just a book of advice; it’s the divine blueprint for abundant life.
- When we give, pray, and trust God His way, we discover His peace, provision, and power.
- Hearing God’s Word must lead to doing God’s Word.
- A life built on Christ, the solid Rock, will stand through every storm.

## Ending Prayer

*Lord, thank You for Your Word, the living guide for our hearts and lives. Help us not only to read it but to rely on it. Strengthen our faith to follow You in giving, praying, trusting, and obeying. May our lives reflect the wisdom of those who build on the Rock. Amen.*

