



Checking Your Vitals

Workbook

WRITTEN BY

Hayley Braun & Melissa Casey



We are honored that you have joined us, and now invite you into some of the marking thoughts and growth points of our lives. We began this class as pastoral training to supplement our students for ministry - but quickly realized the areas of emotional, spiritual, and relational understanding were applicable to any follower of Jesus today. Through years of ministry, we have observed and studied thousands of sons and daughters designed by God in our environment - we offer some of our best learnings with you.

We consider ourselves no experts, but are devoted as students of Jesus our Teacher, Creator, and the Ultimate Authority for the rest of our lives. We hope and pray that this course awakens your curiosity, respect and love for God and his most precious creation - humankind. We pray that this content ignites value for and ability to live in deeper intimacy with God, yourself and those around you. As you grow as a student of God, His design and His nature, we pray that you would truly live life to the fullest!

WITH LOVE AND
DEEP REGARD,

Hayley

&

Melissa

About the Authors

Hayley Braun

Hayley Braun, originally from South Africa, is an author and speaker based in Redding, California. As an Overseer at Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry and Senior Leader at Bethel Church, Hayley teaches about the prophetic and encounters with the Holy Spirit. She is known for her tenderness and passion, displaying the love of God in a powerful way. Hayley and her husband have three beautiful children and are passionate about seeing revival in the nations.



Melissa Casey

Melissa Casey is a California native who has grown up learning from and walking with God. She has been in pastoral ministry for over a decade and loves to see Jesus transform the lives of his sons and daughters for his glory. Melissa is the happy wife of Stephen and thriving mother of three children, Kallan, Clark, and Juliette. She resides in Greenville, SC and is currently serving on the leadership team of STUDIO Church.



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OUTLINE

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NATURAL VS NORMAL PART 1 CONNECTION PRODUCES FRUIT

In Natural vs Normal part one, Hayley explains how it is through intimate connection to the Holy Spirit and not through striving or perfectionism that we bear fruit that remains.

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NATURAL VS NORMAL PART 2 CONVICTION FROM TRUST NOT SHAME FROM REJECTION

In Natural vs. Normal Part two, Hayley invites us to explore our understanding of our makeup in a deeper way and the changes we can make in our behavior and beliefs that reflect the transformation of Jesus in our lives. We are led to understand the differences between shame and conviction and into learning how to yield to the design and intention Christ had when he formed us.

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NEEDS PART 1 LEARNING TO RESPECT DESIGN

In Needs Part One, Melissa encourages us to look practically at God's design of humans and encourages us to grow in respect and value for our own needs and the needs of others.

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NEEDS PART 2 THE GIFT OF NEEDS

In Needs Part Two, Melissa explores the value that needs bring to our lives. Needs are a gift that connect us to God, the world around us, ourselves, and to others. God has lovingly provided signals that help us to pay attention and respond to the limitations inside of us.

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BOUNDARIES PART 1 YOU ARE THE RULER OF YOUR CITY

In Boundaries Part One, Melissa explains how we are each rulers of our own "city". We are designed to love any human we come across in a way that is mutually beneficial and in order to do this must understand how to govern our internal world with value and respect.

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BOUNDARIES PART 2 DISCOVERING THE GATES TO YOUR CITY

In Boundaries Part Two, Melissa unfolds how to begin to understand the personal gates God has designed each person with. The goal is to be able to live with and relate to each person in a way that values what they can or cannot bring to the table while learning healthful expectations of what we can give and receive.

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OUTLINE (continued)

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REPRESENTING OUR HEART - GETTING THE INSIDE, OUT

In Representing Our Heart, Hayley addresses a common relational disrupter in which we can be found defending our actions because we may have had good intentions toward someone. Hayley calls us to a higher understanding and ownership of our behavior and encourages us to demonstrate the value for others we have in our hearts.

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MEN AND WOMEN PART 1

TOGETHER IS UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

In Men and Women Part One, Hayley intentionally searches Scripture for God's original plan for men and women and lays out that together there is meant to be a union, laboring, and camaraderie between the sexes that demonstrates the nature of God to the world.

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MEN AND WOMEN PART 2

UNDERSTANDING BRINGS CONNECTION

In Men and Women Part Two, Hayley stands against the common belief that men and women must be equal in all ways to have value and instead explores God's design where men and women are truly equal in value but often different in function.

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LONGEVITY PART 1

TRADING PERFORMANCE FOR GROWTH

In Longevity Part One, Melissa seeks to untangle the common pressures of human success and lay them aside for unlimited growth in God. She explores new targets for why we are on earth and where we are heading than that which is often defined as achievement in modern society.

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LONGEVITY PART 2

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In Longevity Part Two, Melissa invites us into a time with Holy Spirit to catch His vision for aspects of our future and calling in Christ. This session is an invitation into hearing God personally and embracing his truth about your identity on earth.

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LIVING FROM ETERNITY

In Living From Eternity, Hayley reminds us that all of the best, most mindful attempts at growing and connecting on earth may still result in moments of disappointment or seasons of struggle. She invites us to remember that in the end, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith and that he is the one in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

Week 1

NATURAL VS NORMAL PART 1: CONNECTION PRODUCES FRUIT

In our culture today it is “normal” to be surrounded by the messages that personal truth is the way, that our opinion is king, and that our personalities dictate our behavior. The Bible however lifts up Jesus as The Way, The Truth, and Door to the Life that we so long to live. He has made a way for human beings to live at their most free and their most full.

As Christians we have often mistaken the invitation to follow Jesus as a pressure to seek perfection and often default to performing in order to find our worth, but God designed our relationship with the Holy Spirit to fill us up in such a way that the best fruit can come out of us naturally when we are connected to Him.

In Jesus there is confident hope that we are not victims to our own shortcomings or strivings. It is through intimate connection with Holy Spirit that we are empowered to live out the fullness of the life humans are designed to live on earth.

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1. The spirit of religion says "I have to be perfect" and "I must produce fruit at all times" in a false effort to achieve or earn our worth or value. The truth is that while we were helpless, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6). A life connected to the Holy Spirit produces fruit that is whole and complete as a result of the love God has for us and the value He has already placed in us as His children. A life connected to religion produces pressure to perform and achieve. A life connected to the Holy Spirit is filled with help and forgiveness in the journey of becoming more like Christ. Take a minute to reflect over your life. Do you feel pressure to produce at all times? Do you feel obligation to perform outside of the stability of connection with Him? Why? How has this affected your journey with the Lord and with others?
2. Do you ever use any of your daily habits or personality traits as an excuse to act in certain ways that could be hurtful to yourself or others? Explain. What belief do you have that has helped you to support that excuse?

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Check Your Vitals

3. Take a moment and invite the Holy Spirit to come and meet with you. Now consider those traits that have been excused and observe them through connection with the Spirit of God. What changes or adjustments do you find yourself wanting to make in your story? What truth would you have to choose in order to stop making those excuses?
4. Thinking through Hayley's story about her son Aiden breaching the design of how God made him, are there behaviors you observe in your life that you would consider a violation to how God made you? How has that affected you and the lives of those around you? The behavior may have become a "normal" that you find yourself acting in these ways, but what would God say is your "natural" God given identity or behavior in these areas?
5. What does it mean to remain in or abide in the Father like Jesus did? How would it affect your daily choices if this became your operating system? How would it affect your attitudes, behaviors, and sense of self?

Week 2

NATURAL VS NORMAL PART 2: CONVICTION FROM TRUST NOT SHAME FROM REJECTION

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 2:4-7 NASB

Sometimes when we feel like we are falling short of where we think we should be, we can be overwhelmed with feelings of stress, shame, or pressure. When we become followers of Jesus, God looks at us through the lens of the blood of His Son. His starting place with us is that He sees us pure and spotless. (1 Peter 1:17-19) He doesn't convict us because He's angry with us, He convicts us of things that separate us from His love and from the full life He made us for.

The Bible says you have been redeemed through the blood of Jesus, bought with a price, adopted as sons and daughters and are seated with Him in heavenly places. This means you are legally able to leave the lies of the Accuser behind. Jesus took on your unrighteousness at the cross and has clothed you in His own righteousness. He has given us His own Spirit and calls himself Comforter, Counselor, Helpmeet, Defender, Savior and Redeemer on your behalf. He has every intention of seeing you fulfill the fullness He has for you as He meets you in love. The Bible calls the kind of love that instructs Conviction Through the Holy Spirit. Jesus broke the curse of sin and we are no longer bound to live under the weight of lies concerning ourselves. As sons and daughters redeemed by Jesus, it is our gift to be able to distinguish between thoughts that cause shame and those that cause loving change.

Week 2 Check Your Vitals

1. In relationships, in multitasking, in taking care of our families, or in simply accomplishing the tasks we have in a given week - we can feel overwhelmed, short-tempered, or snippy. We can have such pressure and intensity in our reactions to the stresses in life that we can feel like WE are the problem, the failure, incompetent or inept. Where have you noticed yourself losing ground easily and reacting to the environments around you in either a moment or in a pattern? Now consider: are your physical needs being taken care of in those moments? Why or why not? Are your emotional needs being taken care of in those moments? Why or why not?
2. What is your healthy baseline? Write five characteristics describing yourself when you have eaten well, rested well, and taken a moment for yourself in a kind and generous way - what are you like? How are you when you are filled up with love and connection to the Lord and to others? What are you like when all of your buckets are full? How has neglecting the basic needs of your body, heart or spirit affected your day-to-day life? What does this tell you?
3. Our emotions, mind, body and spirit are all connected. Do you feel that you value one of these more than the others? Why do you think that is? What do you believe about this? Ask God what He believes about this.

Week 2

Check Your Vitals

4. Your physical body is a resting place for the Holy Spirit. How are you at reading the God-given signals in your own body? Are you aware of how your experiences or care of self throughout a day may affect your mood or behavior? What feelings come up when you think of "taking care of yourself" - making sure you eat, sleep, exercise, enjoy life, get outside on a regular basis?

5. God convicts us to heal us, help us, and to open us up to be able to receive more of His love. What does God say about you? What is His version of who you are? What is the truth about who He calls you and how He sees you?

Week 3

NEEDS PART 1: LEARNING TO RESPECT DESIGN

We believe that the God of the Bible is the designer of all of humankind and that He made men and women in His image. Therefore we consider it helpful to learn about how God designed humans - from their strengths to their limitations - in order to relate to Him and to others in the ways that He intended. God created humans with the “shortcoming” of absolute dependence on the world around us. He designed humanity with built-in limitations that are expressed in every area of life. In order to live, humans depend on air to breathe, food to eat, love from others and the undeniable daily needs to rest and sleep. These needs are non-negotiable and to neglect them would result in the eventual death of the human body.

The Bible shows us time and time again that natural things point to invisible truths. We find that in the same way that we can observe human bodies having needs, we also have mental, spiritual and emotional needs that must be met in order to create healthy, thriving individuals. Remarkably, these needs and internal limitations are the very things that make connection with others possible. In culture today we face the constant subliminal messages that to need is to be weak and that dependency creates vulnerability. We have pressure all around us to neglect design and rather to act independently, to “pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps”, and to never give someone else the power to hurt us. These mindsets may keep us temporarily safe, but they eventually keep us from living the meaningful and interdependent lives we were made for. It is vital that we back up and learn to respect the gaps God put inside of us for they are the very needs that allow us to interact with, be filled by, and connect to the world around us.

Week 3

Check Your Vitals

1. When you hear that you may have to address the needs that you have, what feelings come up? What do you believe to be true about your needs? Where did that belief come from and how has it affected your life?
2. Who took care of your needs growing up? Emotionally, physically, mentally? How have those experiences affected your value for and respect of your own needs? How has it affected your value for other's needs? Explain.
3. When you feel pain (that points to a need), what have you historically done with that need? Is there an area in your relationships that you have felt some kind of pain consistently? What is the need you have that has been underneath the pain that you have felt? (for eg. I have felt the pain of not feeling confident that I belong. I have a need for reassurance, affirmation, or inclusion.)

Week 3

5. What have been some of the benefits of your needs? Where has connection grown between you and others because your needs were made known, acknowledged and/or met? How did that make you feel?

Week 3

Check Your Vitals

6. Are there areas in your heart, soul, or relationships that you have felt famished? Does it ever feel like you are an empty bucket that cannot be filled? What do you believe about this? Now consider that area: is the need that you have one that it meant to be filled by others? By God? By personal stewardship of your own heart? (for eg. do you need time with a friend, or do you need to responsibly pull away for solitude and rest? etc.) What are the beliefs and/or behaviors would you have to change to begin to steward that area of your life?
7. How would your life look more full and abundant if you decided to let the God-given needs that you have be met by Him and those around you? What is one first-step change you would have to make in your beliefs or behaviors that would start you heading in that direction? How would that change impact you a year from now?

Week 4

NEEDS PART 2: THE GIFT OF NEEDS

As we settle into the truth that needs are a non-negotiable part of human existence, it is important to go a step farther and view needs through the benefit that they bestow. God designed humans to be able to function fully and richly in body, mind, soul and spirit. Jesus said of himself “I came that you would have life to the full.” (John 10:10)

By design, God put fail-safe signals inside of humans to alert them to the needs that must be met in order to live well on this planet. Like a mechanic who pays attention to the check engine lights and then responds appropriately, we get to learn to become caretakers of the being that God has given to us stewardship over. Just like the car, our body will call out signals of pain where it needs to be cared for, healed or addressed. A soul will call out signals of anxiety or depression where there is need or misalignment. A spirit will call out signals of hunger pangs or longing or spin in frenzy where there is lack of connection. Our minds will manifest in the discomforts of fuzzy, disconnected thoughts or tormenting worries.

Without understanding, we can refer to these pain points as problems, not as helpful information. But God didn’t design us to experience pain without resolve. For every signal that is mumbled or yelled to get our attention, God has intended solutions. He has hidden the cure for every pain, every anxiety, every trouble in Himself and throughout His creation. You will find solutions in His own arms, in the way of Jesus, in the community around you, in quietness and solitude, in shared joy and delight. As with the engine light, when the engine is repaired, the light goes off and the engine is functional again. Acknowledging and meeting our needs for health, connection, organization, and rest (to name a few) results in peace and abundant living. The benefit of embracing our own lack in these areas is that we learn to invite God’s resources in and become filled up. Connected. Intertwined. Invested in. Investors. We become present in our lives and no longer avoidant, constantly needing to hide from or medicate our discomfort.

Check Your Vitals

1. In childhood, young ones are often powerless to change tough or painful situations. Many children are raised in ways that are unsafe and can damage their confidence or even their very identities. A large part of why we choose to cope or medicate pain as adults was learned early on when pain was so sharp but we had no capability to alter our environment. It is important not to feel shame about our tendencies to run from pain but rather, as adults learning to trust God in this area, invite him into your life to begin restoring your soul where it had been damaged. Are you aware of any areas of your life that you may have learned to medicate pain because you didn't know how to change your environment? Ask the Lord how He wants to begin to heal that way of thinking. What is His truth and perspective about this?

Week 4

3. What is a need you know you have that feels vulnerable to you? What does God think about that need? What is His perspective about that need?

Week 4

Check Your Vitals

4. Hayley said, "Sometimes you are going to get it a little wrong to get it righter." How do you feel about failing? How does it feel that understanding can take time and requires the willingness to go on a journey? The alternative can often be to turn a blind eye and try to ignore the problem. But, if you never changed this, where would you be in ten years? Explain. On the other hand, if you decided to face the mess of getting it a little wrong but consistently began to grow in curiosity, understanding, safety, ownership and trust how would your life look different in ten years than it does today? Explain.

5. When learning to get needs met by others and learning how to communicate them we can often seek to self-protect, to blame, feel fear or find ourselves not knowing how to trust other people's intentions. We tell ourselves "if they loved us they would..." and use blame as a reason to turn and run the other way. Think of one or two relationships in your life that you have experienced pain or discomfort on a regular basis. Assuming the relationship is not abusive, but just has some of the common ups and downs of imperfect human interaction - what would change if you assumed the best about that person's motives toward you? What would change if you assumed the best about your simple needs for the world around you? Think of a need and consider: how can you communicate that quirk or need without making it someone else's fault or responsibility that you have it?

Week 5

BOUNDARIES PART 1: YOU ARE THE RULER OF YOUR CITY

When God made you He gave you stewardship over one of His most precious treasures... You! Other than His own Spirit inside of you, you are the only one who has total access to the wealth of heart, personality and being that makes up who you are. He has also given you free will which makes you the only one who ultimately decides what kinds of thoughts you think, behaviors you walk in, and the interactions you have with others.

As you leave the hopeful safety of your family and become an adult, you are the only one who can truly monitor your internal world and read the signals inside of yourself to tend to the world within. Now, while this may be true, it may not be something you have ever thought about or know how to do. Not to worry, God is the one who made you and understands you completely! Depending on your life journey this far, you may need time and help from experts around you who can assist you in learning how to tend to the Garden that is your internal world.

Ultimately God's goal for you IS to have fulfilling connection to yourself, to Him, and to others as you walk the earth. Jesus designed you to ultimately be able to give and receive love fully while being able to tend your heart with all diligence and protect the inner life of the very special (son or daughter) that you are.

Week 5

Check Your Vitals

1. You are the only one with access to and rulership over yourself outside of God's Holy Spirit. Do you believe that one of God's best gifts to you was giving you the gift of yourself? Have you considered that you, in and of yourself, are a treasure that only you have complete access to? What reaction do you have when you consider this statement? Why? How would you treat yourself differently if you understood that you are the only one with complete access to one of God's greatest treasures or masterpieces?

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Ephesians 2:10 NASB

Week

- 3.

Week

5. On a scale of 1-10 how easy is it for you to trust people? What benefit are you receiving by relating to people this way? Explain.

Week 5 Check Your Vitals

Check Your Vitals

6. On a scale of 1-10 how frequently do you feel breached by other people? How has this affected your interactions/depth of relationship with others? Explain.
7. It is important that you Invest in your relationship with others, not just in your relationship with God. Do you believe this? Is there anything you are believing that keeps you from doing this well? Ask the Lord what his perspective is about this. What would you adjust to embrace His way of thinking?

7. It is important that you invest in your relationship with others, not just in your relationship with God. Do you believe this? Is there anything you are believing that keeps you from doing this well? Ask the Lord what his perspective is about this. What would you adjust to embrace His way of thinking?

Week 6

BOUNDARIES PART 2: DISCOVERING THE GATES TO YOUR CITY

"For You created my innermost parts; You wove me in my mother's womb."

Psalms 139:13 NASB

It is our sincere belief that even if you don't know it, God knit you together in your mother's womb in a way that, when functioning according to design, allows for you to genuinely exchange love and value with the people you interact with. The journey of discovering who you are and how you work can take some time. It is important during this season to change your perspective from self-preservation and self-protection to courageous curiosity. The way to find out how you work often is to discover what doesn't work and find your way back from there! Over the next weeks and months you will have opportunities where an interaction with someone hurts or feels like it breaches your trust...

STOP!

This is the moment we have been waiting for! Instead of rising up in anger, or shrinking back in pain, it is important to ask- what about that situation hurt me? How would I have liked that situation to go? This interaction, and my pain response to it, tells me THIS _____ about myself. I am someone who needs _____ to feel safe or valued in this kind of situation. On the other hand, who are the people who feel like they are already far into my walls and are welcomed there? What do they do that makes me feel safe in trusting them and safe to welcome them in at that level? You are going to find that the king/queen of this city has some pretty humble, beautiful, and genuine values that, when in good repair, can make your city a safe and thriving place. Now let's begin to adjust our expectations for those who have breached us. Instead of punishing them, let's begin the learning curve of "moving them" to a place where we can accurately expect what they have to offer instead of inappropriately requiring them to meet needs they may not have the tools, resources or interest in supplying.

Week 6

Check Your Vitals

1. Are there any points of pain you have in any of your relationships in your life right now? Instead of leaning back because of the hurt, we are seeking to lean in with curiosity. What was the scenario that ended up causing you pain? What does that say about what you need? Does this misunderstanding seem like a recurring cycle or was it more of a one time breach of trust in an area that you usually expect a different result?
2. Do you have people in your life that you feel pressure to "let them in" to your inner gates because they "deserve" that status but they have not necessarily earned the right through their behavior? (life-long friend, parents, boyfriend etc) If you are in a relationship where you have felt consistent pain, what are you expecting from them that may be unrealistic or not according to how they are or how they operate?

Week 6

Check Your Vitals

3. Getting further toward your inner gates, is there a relationship you can think of that you have felt consistently hurt in your interactions? Break that down, what is the situation that makes you feel breached? There are other people in your life who know you deeply that DON'T breach you in that way, what do they do differently? What does that say about how you work? What do you need in those situations to feel heard/loved/understood/known?

4. In honesty, those people who "breached you" may actually have good intentions toward you. Are there other areas in your relationship that you know you can count on them? What is it that you can consistently expect from them in a positive way? How would it look to pull on them for what you know they can give instead of continuing to pull on them for what isn't automatic for them? What would have to change in what you currently expect from them? How could you share the content of your life with them in a way that pulls on their strengths and abilities and still allows them to meet heart felt needs for you?

Week 6

Check Your Vitals

5. Is it possible that, in the relationships you feel constantly hurt, the other person has the best intentions toward you? (We are not talking about an abusive situation). If it is possible, what do you think is a positive attribute that motivates them to act that way in that situation? What point of view do you think they are coming from? Why do you think you're hoping for them to give you something they don't normally operate in? How can you adjust that expectation to get the most out of your relationship?

6. Who are the people you feel are "in the farthest" regarding your gates? What qualities do they have that are different from other people who may be further out? What makes you secure in those relationships? What does this say about you?

Week 6

Check Your Vitals

7. Are there any "bulls in the china shop" in your life? Those people that you have need to interact with but they may have no natural inclination to regard you in a way that feels valuing or understanding of who you are? These may be family members, co-workers, people at your gym etc. What is a way for you to interact and bring regard without needing them to meet your needs for you?

Week 7

REPRESENTING OUR HEART GETTING THE INSIDE, OUT

In the journey of learning to become more connected to ourselves, God, and others - God has given a myriad of gifts to humanity for us to be able to interact with and relate to each other. These gifts range from anything as amazing as intuition, wisdom, the ability to feel and be aware of another person in their presence, to the simplest gifts of a warm smile, eye contact, and even our physical senses. Regardless of these wonderful gifts, God did not give us the gift of reading each other's minds. In the journey of learning to become connected no one has the ability to know our thoughts or internal world unless we choose to let them in. It is our responsibility to open up, communicate and demonstrate the care we have for each other. We express our hearts, our value and our honor through actions and words, not just in our internal beliefs. Our intentions cannot be assumed.

If you have spent any amount of time in deep relationships you will know that having even the best intentions doesn't stop misunderstanding between people. The truth is, good intentions often get lost in translation when tone, behavior, or action neglect to express what is true in our hearts. A wife may delight in her husband but if she is hurried and her tone is harsh, all the delight in the world could be quickly missed due to the impatient interaction. We may have deep honor or respect for someone, but we do not take the time to say or demonstrate in a way that the other interprets honor, they will most likely go about their day clueless. We may have deep love and value for a friend, but if we don't learn to express it you can bet there will be gaps in their understanding. We may even have regard for strangers, but it is our responsibility to show them in a way that is obvious, and impactful, not just assumed. Our goal is twofold. We want to both become aware of our best intentions toward others and we want to become mindful that our actions demonstrate those intentions.

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- "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love."*

How does it feel that promotion in the kingdom of God best results in servanthood and regard for others? How has this played out in your life?

Check Your Vitals

3. How do you physically carry yourself? Do you walk into a room with your head high? Willing to be the first to smile/the first to make eye contact? Are your shoulders back and confident? Are they slouched and unsure? Are you willing to be the first to greet or do you wait for others to cover for you? Explain. What do you believe about this? Is there anything you would change as you consider it? Explain.

4. How you greet and treat others can change their entire day and it can change yours. How are you at showing and demonstrating value to the people around you? What are ways you could intentionally show regard to those closest to you all the way to those who are strangers?

5. What does it look like for you to practically bring heaven to earth in your immediate sphere in this season? What does it look like in your family? Your workplace? Your school or gym? Your marriage or intimate relationship? Your friendships? In the grocery store or at the traffic light?

Week 8

MEN AND WOMEN PART 1: TOGETHER IS UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

Men and women, together we are God's masterpiece and the physical representation of his image on this planet. Painfully, since the moment the serpent deceived Eve and she and Adam sinned and hid from God, there has been a rift between these two parts of a whole. The battle for identity and truth regarding men and women has been raging and it can feel confusing and hopeless to find solid ground in our understanding and value for ourselves and our complementaries.

God summed up the creation of men and women as "very good" commissioning them both to fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it. His design was genius in that he created the two to become one and as a unit chose to fill them with a portion of his Spirit. He made it so that the union of the man and woman would create godly sons and daughters and future inhabitants of heaven. (Malachi 2:15) This togetherness intrinsically provided self-contained units of safety and protection to the planet that have been able to sustain life since the beginning - the nuclear family.

As men and women we are different but compatible, full of strength in differing ways. We are matched in thought, in heart, and in soul and are designed to cover and care for each other's vulnerabilities and celebrate each other's strengths. As we consider the cry of scripture, "On earth as it is in heaven!" we seek to restore that which was lost. We seek to restore the God-given value and union and honor between the sexes and to abolish the competitive, hostile, self-preserving struggle between the two. It is vital that in the years to come we have done the work to learn of and value both our own sex, and those differing from ourselves.

Week 8

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1. Are you a man or a woman? What is your favorite thing about being that way? What are some of your favorite qualities about your sex? What are the most vulnerable parts about being your sex?
2. Do you have judgments about your own sex? What about the opposite sex? Where did those mindsets come from? If you were viewing yourself through God's eyes what is the truth about your sex? What about the opposite sex?
3. What would you say you were shown were the roles for men and women growing up? "I will create for him a helper" - a military term where the Israelites cried out for aid in war - to rescue, to save and to be strong... who corresponds and adds what you don't have. Does this surprise you? What do you think when you hear this is the role that God designed women for?

Week

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Week 8 Check Your Vitals

Check Your Vitals

6. The original design wasn't that men and women would be equal in operation, role, or perspective but rather that men and women would be equal in value, but different in operation. How does this hit you? What do you like about this? What makes you nervous about this?
7. When men and women come together in harmony and love valuing each other's differences instead of scorning or criticizing differences we begin to create heaven on earth. What do you think about this? What would you need to adjust in your thinking to embrace this idea?

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Week 9

MEN AND WOMEN PART 2: UNDERSTANDING BRINGS CONNECTION

Our differences designed by God point to men and women both having value. Those differences are meant to come together in an ecosystem where God is the source and men and women each live in their fullness. Our differences aren't limitations but are containers that God fills and flows out of, and people get to see a better picture of who God is when men and women bring their full selves to the table. Men and women together reflect the fullness of God's nature to the world.

We do not seek to relegate people to roles, but seek to liberate men and women to who God designed them to be. If men and women together is how we give a complete representation of God's image at work on the earth we must lean into valuing both ourselves and our complementaries in the way that God himself does. Distinctly different but equal in value, worth, and meaning.

Week 9 Check Your Vitals

Check Your Vitals

1. How did you experience the connection between men and women growing up? Where was it energizing and where was it destructive? What did you believe to be true about male/female relationships growing up? How did this affect your understanding and value for the opposite sex?
2. How do you show regard to people of the opposite sex? (In your marriage, in your singleness, with your children, family, friendships?) Do you think you have ever stifled people of the opposite sex by not understanding what makes them feel loved, respected, or empowered? Explain.

2. How do you show regard to people of the opposite sex? (In your marriage, in your singleness, with your children, family, friendships?) Do you think you have ever stifled people of the opposite sex by not understanding what makes them feel loved, respected, or empowered? Explain.

Check Your Vitals

3. In listening to Hayley speak on some of the needs and differences between men and women, what surprised you or stood out to you about your own needs as a man or woman? Explain. What surprised you or stood out to you about the opposite sex? Explain.
4. Some of the roles that society has stereotyped men and women for have inadvertently ended up stifling their true identities. For example, a stereotype could be "men have to be tough", and while a man can be tough, the thought can limit men from the security to also be weak in areas of their lives. Or, women are commonly known as homemakers - and while it can be true, the stereotype has caused a lot of conflict for women and pressure to only nurture but never have space or individuality or self-care. Can you think of a stereotype in your life that you feel has caused you to feel you have to act a certain way? What is the truth about this aspect of your nature?

Week 9 Check Your Vitals

5. You are made in God's image. Ask the Lord "in what ways am I most like You? In what ways is my spouse/parent/opposite sex friend most like You? What do You value about those things?"
6. Is there anything you believe about your own sex that you must adjust in order to regard your own sex with more respect, love and value? What is the truth about this? Is there anything you believe about the opposite sex that you must adjust to regard them with more respect, love and value? What is the truth about this? Explain.

Week 10

LONGEVITY PART 1: TRADING PERFORMANCE FOR GROWTH

Sometimes when it comes to our relationship with God, and hearing His voice in particular, we can disqualify ourselves from the relationship because we are afraid of hearing incorrectly or “getting it wrong”. As we are seeing over and over again throughout this course, natural things point to invisible truths. We cannot have depth of relationship with any other being without investing time, committing to learning, choosing active investment and embracing eventual growth in understanding. Depth of relationship is summed up in a series of tries and fails and successes and trying again.

As we open ourselves up to living lives of longevity in relationship to God it is key to the journey that we learn to trust God as our God and get familiar with hearing His voice. Jesus said with full confidence, “My sheep hear my voice”. He didn't flinch when He said, “It is better that I go away because... I will send the Holy Spirit who will guide you in all truth”(John 16:7-13 abbreviated). Regardless of your confidence in your own abilities, He is confident in His ability to speak to you! God describes himself as a loving, invested Father. He portrays Jesus as a door that opens when we knock. He reassures that the Holy Spirit comes as a Comforter, Counselor, Giver of Wisdom, and Teacher. He is very sure of His ability to be involved in our lives in a rich and intimate way - we are the ones who get to learn what He means by all of this!

The truth is, your longevity and future are going to be best marked and most marked by your journey of getting close to Jesus, taking up His yoke, and learning from Him. He wants you to know that He is humble and meek in heart and has rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28-30). There is no way around it, God is your Ultimate Source of a full and meaningful life, Definer of Success, and the literal Way of Life for you to live. It is time to allow yourself to throw off everything that hinders you and throw yourself into a life of trust defined by the King of Kings.

Week 10 Check Your Vitals

1. Do you feel confident in hearing the voice of God? Why or why not? Do you have concerns in this area? How has obedience to God looked in the past? What has been your motivation to follow Jesus' instruction or direction in your life/what has been the benefit?
2. When God speaks to you do you press in with curiosity and ask him what he means? How have you related to God as your counselor? How have you related to God as your comforter? How has this affected your life? Explain.

Week 10 Check Your Vitals

3. Until now, how would you define success in your life? Maturity? Growth? Is achieving (relationally, spiritually, academically, health-wise, financially) tied to your worth? How have you known that you are hitting the mark? What are the markers you use to define whether you are doing a good job or not in life?

4. Do you feel that you have pressure to "hit the mark", to not fail, maybe even have perfectionistic tendencies? Have you traditionally obeyed God out of principle or out of relationship? Why do you think that is? What do you do if you "mess up" in your own perspective? How do you recover?

Week 10 Check Your Vitals

5. "I didn't design you to grow up, I designed you to grow into me." Often we will limit our ideas of the future to the things we can conquer or achieve to prove that we have done something with our lives. We will often cling to those achievements as badges of our own significance. But if you weren't actually designed to grow up, but rather were designed to grow IN to God in all of his unsearchable vastness, there is far more for you than you could have imagined. When you think about how you've lived your life, how does this hit you? If this were true, what would change? Explain.

6. God not only has a plan for your life but a WAY for it to be fulfilled. It's possible that it's much less about accomplishing (performing) and is much more connected to trust, faith, and belief that opens the door into BECOMING who God says you are. What is the difference between accomplishing what God has said about your life compared to becoming what God has said about your life?

Week 11

LONGEVITY PART 2: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO KEEP THE VISION

God has a plan for your life. He has reason for your existence. He has love so great that He would stop at nothing to reunite you to himself and be near to you for all your days. So often we hear these things and shoulder these truths like tasks instead of transforming realities. All across the global church we see believers striving to fulfill God's plan for their lives completely missing that Jesus Himself is the Author and Finisher of our faith! As we grow in trust and grow in hope that Jesus is who He says He is it is important to let His perspective of life shape how we live our lives.

Week 11

Check Your Vitals

1. What surprised you most by what you saw in the encounter that Melissa led? Why? Ask the Lord, "what do you want me to know about this?"
2. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that "God has put eternity in our hearts." He has designed us to have hunger for and understanding of the life we were created for that extends far beyond our years on earth. He already relates to us through this perspective. Is there an area of your life right now on earth you feel like you've been struggling with or trying to master for a while? If you were 10,000 earth years in existence, what would you look back and tell yourself about this moment? What does God want you to know about this? What is the next step He wants you to embrace as you grow in Him?

Check Your Vitals

3. What kind of performance pressure have you put on your life or “destiny” on earth? Have you felt that you are supposed to be a certain way by a certain time? Why? How does that compare to what you saw in the encounter?

4. What anxiety/worry/fear can you lay down about the future after what you’ve seen today?

5. What gift did your future self give to you? What did it represent and why was it important? Explain.

Week 12

LIVING FROM ETERNITY

Throughout this course we have considered how much connection can be grown and developed as we sow into learning, understanding, and changing our beliefs and behaviors. We have looked inward and outward to evaluate and address places in our life that can be healed, grown, mended or transformed with heart-filled attention. On the other hand there is an equally sobering truth: You may have the best intentions and actively seek to grow and change and become. You may learn to treat people with heart-felt value, get your needs met, and do everything you can to have health-filled boundaries and love... but there will still be moments, days, and seasons where things still don't go perfectly. It may be true that, regardless of all your best intentions, you may still experience rejection, the pain of disconnection, the struggle of longing without the gratification of fulfillment. And this is where we simplify and remember, no matter how our circumstances turn out, we are living from a different reality. We live with eternal perspective in our hearts and refuse to be transactional with our love.

Life on earth can be hard. Best efforts sometimes don't produce what we hope. But we live before GOD, accountable to Him and to what He's said. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our story, the Perfecter of our faith - and although He has never guaranteed that it will be easy, Scripture tells us that it will be worth it! Living in unity with God has been made possible for those who follow Jesus. We are clothed in mercy and grace but called to follow a way higher than those that are perishing. Heavenly character is built in the moments we surrender revenge and man-made justice, and choose the higher path and ways of Jesus. God himself is deeply invested in your growth and has determined to shepherd and lead you into the fullness of truth and life in Him. He has committed to be with you, guide you, comfort and correct you. He understands where you are heading and is committed to seeing you get there. You may feel that things aren't always working in the ways you want them to, but have hope! When God comes in to teach and discipline us as His children it is because He is after our hearts.

Week 12 Check Your Vitals

1. *"For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."*
Hebrews 12:11 NASB

Discipline produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness for anyone who has been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11) Where have you seen this in your life? Are there any areas of your life that come to mind that do not seem consistently filled with the peaceful fruit of righteousness? Ask the Lord what He wants you to know about this. Explain.

2. There is a difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment addresses action, discipline addresses heart. He disciplines us for our good, not just to make us "not bad". Where do you feel the Lord pressing on or disciplining you in your life right now? Why is He going after that thing? What will you have to change to yield to Him in it?

Week

4. Where in your life do you have distance or separation in a relationship that could be mended? Ask the Lord the key to moving forward in that relationship. More personally, is there an area of your life that you treat yourself with punishment and separation that God wants His grace to flow into? How do you move forward in this?

Week

- 6.

Thank You



We are so grateful that you have invested this time into Checking Your Vitals and are choosing to grow in connection with God, yourself and those around you. Our prayer is that you would truly live life to the fullest! The full Ecourse is available at CheckingYourVitals.com, and you can find us online to stay connected and discover more resources.

WITH LOVE AND DEEP REGARD,

Hayley Braun & Melissa Casey