SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Identity is received before it is performed.

Genesis 1:26–27

5-DAY PLAN

WELCOME

This is not spiritual homework.

If you came here after listening to Episode 1, take a breath. This guide is not another place where you must perform, prove yourself, or feel evaluated.

Some of you read Scripture every day. Some are opening a Bible again after a long time. Some are still figuring out what you believe about Christianity. Wherever you are in that process, you are welcome here.

The goal is simple: slow down long enough for Scripture to speak a truer word over your life than the algorithm, résumé, family system, group chat, wound, or applause. A lot is competing to tell us who we are. This is an invitation to listen again for the voice of God.

Together, we will practice the rhythm introduced in the episode: Pause. Name. Receive. Resist. Practice.

Not perfectly. Intentionally. One faithful step at a time.

> **IF YOU ARE STILL EXPLORING FAITH**
> You do not have to fake certainty. Read honestly. Ask questions. Notice what the text says, what it challenges, and what it makes you hope could be true. You can pray: "God, if You are there, help me understand what is true here."

CHOOSE A PACE YOU CAN SUSTAIN

1-DAY EXPERIENCE	3-DAY EXPERIENCE	5-DAY EXPERIENCE
Complete Day 1: dignity and identity in Genesis 1.	Complete Days 1, 3, and 5: dignity, renewal, and formation.	Complete all five days: dignity, knownness, renewal, neighbor-dignity, and ongoing formation.

One day is not failure. Three days are not less spiritual. Five days are not a badge. Consistency matters more than perfection. If you miss a day, come back without turning grace into a grading system.

KEEP THE EPISODE GOING

Don't let the conversation end here. Take two more steps as you continue engaging the episode:

📝 **Share Your Experience**. After completing the episode and this reading plan, take a few minutes to complete the **Post-Episode Survey**. Your feedback helps us understand how *Intensional* is connecting Scripture, faith, and everyday life. **Survey:** https://bit.ly/3TEYmZI

🎧 **Carry the Truth with You**. Each episode includes an original song created to help the episode's Scripture and central truth stay with you beyond the conversation. Listen again, add it to your rotation, and notice which lyric keeps coming back to you. Episode one has two songs

- **No Audition:** https://bit.ly/4yeCPVX
- **We Belong Right Here:** https://bit.ly/3VN0lf0

WHY THIS CONVERSATION MATTERS

Episode 1 begins with a pressure many young adults know well: being visible without feeling known. You can be recognized at school, work, church, online, or in your community and still feel as if your value depends on keeping everyone impressed. Genesis 1 pushes back on that economy of performance: before humanity produces anything, God gives humanity dignity, representation, and vocation.

That matters in Black, Afro-Latino/a, and Latina/o contexts, where identity can carry several layers at once: family, language, culture, church, neighborhood, achievement, migration stories, racialized expectations, and the need to read the room. The goal is not to flatten those layers. It is to ask which voice gets final authority to name you.

> **BIG IDEA:** Identity is received from God before it is achieved, performed, posted, or validated.

THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT: FROM DIGNITY TO DISCIPLESHIP

1. Creation gives dignity: humanity is made in God's image (Genesis 1).
2. God knows the person beneath the profile (Psalm 139).
3. Christ does not offer a better mask; He renews the person (Colossians 3).
4. Image-bearing changes how we treat other image-bearers (James 3).
5. The Spirit forms believers into Christlike people over time (2 Corinthians 3).

REAL-WORLD PRESSURE POINTS

THE FEED When metrics, attention, or comparison start acting like a mirror for your worth.	**THE FAMILY SYSTEM** When gratitude, honor, or sacrifice quietly turn into debt, guilt, or fear of disappointing people.
THE ROOM When code-switching moves from wise communication into shrinking, fragmentation, or hiding.	**THE HIDDEN LIFE** When public excellence grows while private presence, prayer, rest, or relationships starve.

START WITH WHAT GOD SAYS

LECTIO DIVINA ON DAYS 1, 3, AND 5

Read slowly. Reflect honestly. Pray simply. Act concretely. The goal is not to rush through verses; it is to let the Word address your actual life.

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 1:26–27

Genesis does not begin with your mistakes. It begins with God.

Before Israel has a law, temple, king, nation, résumé, or platform, God speaks humanity into being and makes human beings in His image. In the ancient world, image language often carried royal associations. Genesis radically widens that dignity: not only rulers and the powerful, but all human beings, male and female, bear God's image.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Image means dignity: your worth is not created by public attention.
- Image means representation: human beings are made to reflect God's character in the world.
- Image means vocation: dignity comes with responsibility, stewardship, service, creativity, and justice.
- The order matters: identity comes before activity; belonging before achievement; gift before performance.
- Sin distorts the reflection without erasing the Creator-given dignity of human beings.
- Christ is not a cosmetic edit to the old self. Christians confess that Jesus redeems, restores, and renews.

EPISODE LANGUAGE TO REMEMBER

"***Being watched is not the same as being known. Being liked is not the same as being loved. Being followed is not the same as being formed.***"

DAY 1

Before You Perform, You Bear God's Image

Genesis 1:26–27

THEME: Imago Dei: dignity, representation, and vocation

Start with what God says before the world says anything.

Genesis opens with God as Creator. Before humanity has a résumé, platform, paycheck, failure, or following, human beings receive an identity and a calling: they are made in God's image. Imago Dei is the Latin phrase Christians use for "the image of God." It means human beings are creatures made to reflect God's character and represent His wise rule in the world. It does not mean that we are God or little gods.

That gives every person real dignity and real responsibility. Your worth is not created by applause, appearance, productivity, ethnicity, relationship status, grades, income, or online attention. Those things may matter, but none of them gets to create your worth.

Genesis also undercuts human superiority. No race, class, nationality, ability level, or social status receives extra image-of-God points. Sin, our rebellion against God and the damage it produces, distorts the way we live as image-bearers, but it never gives us permission to dehumanize anyone.

MEMORY ANCHOR

"So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God." (Genesis 1:27, CSB)

DATA-INFORMED INSIGHT

Pew Research Center's 2025 national survey found that 80% of U.S. adults ages 18–29 say they ever use Instagram. That does not prove Instagram causes identity insecurity. It does show that highly visible, profile-centered digital spaces are a familiar part of life for many young adults—the kind of environment where the question "Who gets to name me?" becomes practical.

SOURCE NOTE: Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet," November 20, 2025. Survey of 5,022 U.S. adults conducted Feb. 5–June 18, 2025.

DAY 1

Before You Perform, You Bear God's Image

Genesis 1:26–27

THEME: Imago Dei: dignity, representation, and vocation

ENGAGE THE TEXT

REFLECT	DISCUSS
What have you been asking to give you the worth God already gave you, achievement, attention, appearance, family approval, usefulness, or success?	Where do people your age feel the most pressure to "prove" they matter? How does Genesis 1 challenge that pressure without dismissing ambition, excellence, or cultural responsibility?
PRACTICE	**PRAY**
Before you open social media today, put both feet on the floor. If you trust Jesus, say: "Before I perform, I bear God's image. In Christ, God is renewing me." Then do one meaningful thing nobody online needs to know about.	Creator God, teach me to receive my life from You before I perform it for anybody else. Expose the voices I have allowed to speak louder than You about who I am. Give me humility as a creature and courage as an image-bearer. Amen.

NEXT STEP

Memory suggestion: Genesis 1:27. Weekly challenge: one hidden act of faithfulness each day.

EPISODE CONNECTION

Episode 1 asks, "If God has already given us an identity, why are we working so hard to manufacture one?" Future episodes will test that foundation against family approval, romantic attention, money, and unfinished growth.

DAY 2

Being Known Is Deeper Than Being Visible

Psalm 139:1–18

THEME: God's complete knowledge and inescapable presence

You can become more visible without becoming more deeply known.

Psalm 139 is not a social-media text, but it speaks powerfully to a culture built around visibility. David describes a God who knows his movements, thoughts, words, location, darkness, and formation in the womb. God does not need a curated caption to find the real you.

That can feel both comforting and uncomfortable. Most of us want to be known, but we also want control over what people know. The psalm refuses the fantasy that we can manage God's perception. His knowledge is complete, and His presence is inescapable.

If you have been misread by people or hurt by religious people, this does not mean every human observer deserves access to your private life. Boundaries still matter. It means you do not need to become permanently visible to be fully known by God.

MEMORY ANCHOR

"Lord, you have searched me and known me." (Psalm 139:1, CSB)

DATA-INFORMED INSIGHT

Across four studies involving 798 participants, Midgley and colleagues found that more frequent and more extreme upward social comparisons on social media were associated with immediate declines in self-evaluations. Across a browsing session, those comparisons also accumulated into lower state self-esteem, mood, and life satisfaction. The research also suggested that people with lower self-esteem were especially vulnerable to these comparison patterns. The point is not that "social media is evil." Comparison can simply make visibility a shaky place to build security.

SOURCE NOTE: Midgley, C., Thai, S., Lockwood, P., Kovacheff, C., & Page-Gould, E. (2021). "When Every Day Is a High School Reunion: Social Media Comparisons and Self-Esteem." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 121(2), 285–307. DOI: 10.1037/pspi0000336.

DAY 2

Being Known Is Deeper Than Being Visible

Psalm 139:1–18

THEME: God's complete knowledge and inescapable presence

ENGAGE THE TEXT

REFLECT	DISCUSS
What part of your life do people regularly misunderstand? Where have you confused being noticed with being known?	What is the difference between healthy privacy and hiding behind a curated version of yourself? How can a community become safer for honest presence?
PRACTICE	**PRAY**
Take ten minutes without your phone. Write three sentences beginning with "God sees…" Name a burden, fear, calling, grief, work, healing process, or hidden faithfulness other people may never notice.	God who knows me, I do not have to make myself perfectly understandable to You. You know what I can name and what I cannot yet explain. Meet me in the hidden places and teach me to receive Your presence without pretending. Amen.

NEXT STEP

Memory suggestion: Psalm 139:1. Weekly challenge: one ten-minute phone-free window each day to practice honest presence before God.

EPISODE CONNECTION

Episode 1 says being watched is not the same as being known. Episode 2 will explore the mind that stays online after the screen goes dark; Episode 4 will make room for wounded, questioning faith.

DAY 3

Let Christ Restore the Real You

Colossians 3:9–11

THEME: New identity in Christ, renewal, and belonging

Jesus is not offering you a better mask.

Colossians 3 is written to people who belong to Jesus. Paul says they have put off the old self and put on the new self, a new life being renewed according to the image of its Creator. Christian identity is not generic self-improvement. It is a life re-centered in Christ and steadily renewed by God.

That renewal does not require cultural erasure. Paul names real human differences and then says none of those categories gives anyone superior standing in Christ. Jesus does not flatten people into sameness. Christ becomes our deepest allegiance, the One by whom every culture, story, and identity claim is evaluated.

For many of us, adulthood means learning which version of ourselves a room rewards. Work gets one version. Family gets another. Church gets another. Dating gets another. The feed gets another. Paul's answer is not "brand yourself more consistently." It is: live truthfully from the new life Christ is forming in you.

MEMORY ANCHOR

"You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator." (Colossians 3:10, CSB)

DATA-INFORMED INSIGHT

In a diverse college sample of 220 emerging adults (mean age about 23), Michikyan found that greater identity confusion was associated with more idealized and false self-presentation on Facebook, while greater identity coherence was associated with more real-self presentation and a more truthful, positively realistic form of ideal-self presentation. Because the study used survey data and multiple regression, it identifies associations rather than proving that social media causes identity confusion.

SOURCE NOTE: Minas Michikyan, "Linking Online Self-Presentation to Identity Coherence, Identity Confusion, and Social Anxiety in Emerging Adulthood," British Journal of Developmental Psychology 38, no. 4 (2020): 543–565. DOI: 10.1111/bjdp.12337.

DAY 3

Let Christ Restore the Real You

Colossians 3:9–11

THEME: New identity in Christ, renewal, and belonging

ENGAGE THE TEXT

REFLECT	DISCUSS
Where are you most tempted to become a different person simply to remain accepted? Which part of your story are you afraid Jesus will erase if you surrender it to Him?	When is code-switching wise communication, and when can it become fragmentation? What would it look like to honor culture without asking culture to become your savior?
PRACTICE	**PRAY**
Tell one trustworthy person one place where you feel pressure to perform, hide, exaggerate, or shrink. You do not have to tell your whole story—just one honest sentence. Choose someone safe enough to receive the truth without using it against you.	Jesus, I bring You the real version of me, not the polished version. Renew what sin has distorted. Reorder what I have made ultimate. Teach me to honor my culture and story without asking either one to be my savior. Form me in Your image. Amen.

NEXT STEP

Memory suggestion: Colossians 3:10. Weekly challenge: practice honest presence in one relationship instead of managing an image.

EPISODE CONNECTION

Episode 3 will explore family honor and calling; Episode 6 will move dignity into bodies, desire, boundaries, and relationships; Episode 10 will return to grace-driven formation.

DAY 4

See God's Image in Your Neighbor

James 3:9–10

THEME: Speech, neighbor-dignity, truth, and love

You cannot celebrate God's image in yourself and casually curse it in someone else.

James notices a contradiction: the same mouth can bless God and demean people made in God's likeness. The image of God is not only about how you understand your own worth. It also shapes how you speak, joke, post, correct, confront, disagree, and carry someone else's name when they are not in the room.

Truth still matters. Accountability still matters. Boundaries still matter. Honoring someone's God-given dignity does not require you to give an unsafe person access to you, remain silent about abuse, or pretend every behavior is acceptable. James is not asking for fake niceness. He is asking for a mouth whose truth and tone are being formed by the God it claims to worship.

This is where identity becomes mission. Your group chat is a discipleship space. Your comment section is a discipleship space. Your classroom, workplace, church, family, and neighborhood are discipleship spaces.

MEMORY ANCHOR

"With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness." (James 3:9, CSB)

DATA-INFORMED INSIGHT

In Pew Research Center's 2020 survey of 10,093 U.S. adults, published in 2021, 41% said they had personally experienced at least one of the measured forms of online harassment, and 31% said they had been called an offensive name online. James 3 is not a statistic about the internet, but the data remind us that speech wounds are not theoretical in digital life.

SOURCE NOTE: Emily A. Vogels, The State of Online Harassment, Pew Research Center, January 13, 2021. Survey of 10,093 U.S. adults conducted Sept. 8–13, 2020.

DAY 4

See God's Image in Your Neighbor

James 3:9–10

THEME: Speech, neighbor-dignity, truth, and love

ENGAGE THE TEXT

REFLECT	DISCUSS
Whose name becomes easier to diminish when you are with your people? Where does "I'm just being honest" become permission to be cruel?	How can a group practice truth-telling without contempt? What is the difference between dehumanizing someone and setting a wise boundary with them?
PRACTICE	**PRAY**
Notice one person your environment makes easy to overlook—a custodian, classmate, coworker, neighbor, delivery driver, service worker, older adult, or newcomer. Use their name if you know it. Look at them. Listen. Honor their dignity. Do not turn the moment into content.	God, put my mouth under Your lordship. Make me honest without cruelty, courageous without contempt, and clear without dehumanizing. Give me wisdom for boundaries and courage for repair. Amen.

NEXT STEP

Memory suggestion: James 3:9. Weekly challenge: before sending or posting, ask, "Does this tell the truth while honoring the image of God?"

EPISODE CONNECTION

Episode 5 will connect worship to justice; Episode 8 will expand James 3 into words, witness, and wisdom; and Episode 9 will ask whether Christian love is visible and trustworthy.

DAY 5

Formation, Not Performance

2 Corinthians 3:17–18

THEME: Spirit-given freedom and ongoing Christlike transformation

The goal is not a stronger brand. It is a transformed life.

2 Corinthians 3 is not a generic promise that you can manifest a better version of yourself. Paul is describing the new-covenant work of the Spirit. Believers behold the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image. Christian freedom is not freedom from formation; it is freedom for a new kind of formation under the Spirit of God.

That matters because reinvention culture can make change feel like another performance: new aesthetic, new goals, new bio, new routine. Paul points somewhere deeper. Transformation is received and practiced as the Spirit makes us more like Jesus, more truthful, holy, patient, courageous, just, merciful, and loving.

Five days cannot complete that work. Thirty days will not complete it either. The point of a short plan is not to finish transformation. It is to start a small rhythm you can keep returning to. Grace gives structure without shame: receive what God gives, take the next faithful step, and repeat tomorrow.

MEMORY ANCHOR

“We all … are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18, CSB)

DATA-INFORMED INSIGHT

A 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis of 20 health-behavior habit studies involving 2,601 participants found substantial variation in habit-formation timing. Among the four studies that directly reported time-to-habit estimates, reported medians ranged from 59–66 days, while individual estimates ranged from 4–335 days. The research concerns health behaviors, not spiritual formation, so it should not be used to assign a timetable to discipleship. The modest practical lesson is that repetition and stable contexts matter, and a five-day Scripture engagement plan should be understood as the beginning of a rhythm, not the finish line.

SOURCE NOTE: Ben Singh, Andrew Murphy, Carol Maher, and Ashleigh E. Smith, “Time to Form a Habit: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Health Behaviour Habit Formation and Its Determinants,” Healthcare 12, no. 23 (2024): 2488. DOI: 10.3390/healthcare12232488.

DAY 5

Formation, Not Performance

2 Corinthians 3:17–18

THEME: Spirit-given freedom and ongoing Christlike transformation

ENGAGE THE TEXT

REFLECT	DISCUSS
Where are you trying to look transformed instead of allowing Jesus to transform you? What small practice could survive an ordinary Monday?	Why do people often prefer dramatic spiritual moments to small, repeated practices? How can a community encourage growth without turning formation into comparison?
PRACTICE	**PRAY**
Choose one cue you already encounter every day: before opening social media, after coffee, on the commute, before class, when you enter work, or before bed. For the next 30 days, use the Freedom Filter: Pause. Name. Receive. Resist. Practice. Thirty days is a starting rhythm, not a finish line.	Spirit of God, free me from performing transformation and transform me. Make me more like Jesus in the places public metrics cannot measure. When I miss a day, teach me to return without shame. Give me grace to participate faithfully in the work You are doing. Amen.

NEXT STEP

Memory suggestion: 2 Corinthians 3:18. Weekly challenge: attach one small Scripture or prayer practice to one stable daily cue.

God EPISODE CONNECTION

Episode 10 will close the season with the same grace-first direction: unfinished does not mean abandoned; the who saved you by grace will not grow you by guilt.

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RECEIVE. RESIST. PRACTICE.

You are not just a profile pic. Live from the truth God has spoken, then take the next faithful step.