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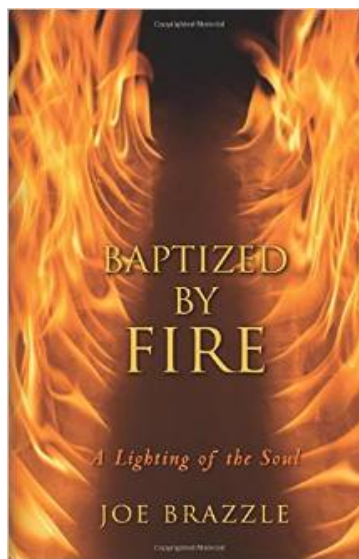
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EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE!
PART 1
SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT WORKBOOK



2525 Raeford Rd. Ste. D, Fayetteville, NC 28305

A Five-Week Study of Baptized by Fire



Embrace the Challenge of Life, Part 1

By Joe Brazzle

SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT WORKBOOK

Dear Friends,

First let me begin with my appreciation and gratitude for your personal commitment to this journey of spiritual growth and development. This workbook is intended to help you identify the spiritual insights discussed in the book *Baptized By Fire* and learn to build a growing relationship with God. My prayer is that this workbook deepens your understanding, strengthens your faith and focuses your efforts toward purposeful living in the weeks to come.

Often these types of topics can be too abstract and difficult to understand. Not to mention conversation about spirituality might feel uncomfortable or tense due to past experiences, beliefs, or education. You might find the [Baptized By Fire-SEW](#) videos on YouTube helpful as we approach these topics openly and with great care.

In hopes to gain full value for yourself and the spiritual process, let's consider a few *Embrace the Challenge* norms;

- **Safety:** I will work to keep myself and others mentally and physically safe.
(Only you know your limitations and boundaries, so be kind to yourself.)
- **Choice:** Exercise the power to choose your challenge.
(Try to identify and be aware of your choice during this process)
- **Openness:** Work to remain open to change and growth.
(Adventure is truly found in the unknown.)
- **Presence:** Work to stay close to your breath and present with yourself.
(Take time to breathe deeply during this process.)
- **Excitement:** Work to find the adventure and fun in living.
(Fun, humor, and laughter are natural and signs of healing.)

Over the next few weeks, these values will help you build and foster a firm and rich soil to grow and explore this process more deeply.

Blessings,

Joe Brazzle

Introduction to Spiritual Empowerment

On August 17, 2007, in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, I was emergency airlifted from demolitions Range #47 to the University of North Carolina's medical hospital for treatment. I had received severe trauma to the eyes, face, neck, and body, and I was placed in a coma for stabilization. No past experience had truly prepared me for the pain and agony I endured during those times. Although my military career had come to a close, an unexpected intimate relationship with God emerged.

Over the next several weeks we'll survey the concepts of self-acceptance, forgiveness, deep listening, and proactive living. This workshop is designed to help us develop a deeper understanding of our human nature and reconnect us spiritually with God.

I challenge you to commit to one hour each day reviewing the *Actions On* and *Joe's Journal Points* sections in the *Baptized by Fire* book. Take a deeper study into the scriptures and personal insights. Start with the body scan (see chapter 3) to settle the mind and body and become more aware and present. Then review and reflect on the *Actions On* exercises in the book. There are seven reflection questions in the *Joe's Journal Points* section. Choose one for each day to reflect on and write about.

Note: To order a copy of *Baptized By Fire* go to; [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

A FEW SKILLS TO DISCUSS

Embracing Challenges (MoreLife Mindset): Embracing the challenge of life is a commitment to exercising your power of choice. Don't fall victim to the limitations and constraints that problems bring in your life. Life is the *University of the Universe*. Meet your challenge head on with the mind of a student and a spirit of curiosity.

Actions-on and Reflection (Integrity and Discipline): Personal values are the waypoints that guide our path and define our character. Eric Greitens, a retired Navy SEAL and *New York Times* best-selling author, said,

“Arrogance is the armor worn by hollow men...” I had plenty of arrogance to pass around in the early years of my military career. Over time, Uncle Sam instilled the values in me needed to serve this great nation and more deeply define my character. My character benefited immensely from the army’s value-based leadership and helped me identify several values that are foundational for me.

What might I *Keep Doing, Start Doing, and Stop Doing* that will help me make strong commitments to myself so I may be able to move forward for greater well-being and seeking peace?

Centering (Mindful Breathing): The opportunity to deeply connect with our Self, God, and others can only be found in our present experiences. Mindfulness is the vehicle for this deeper connection between present moment and experience. With practice, the quality of mindfulness aids clarity, self-awareness, and attention. Fr. Richard Rhor says mindfulness, or as he calls it, contemplation, is a “full-access knowing.” In his book *Naked Now*, he suggests that contemplation opens the heart and mind long enough to receive God’s direction and grace.

RPM (Reading, Praying, and Meditating): Like Jesus, we should read, pray, and meditate to deepen our relationship with God. Seeking spiritual guidance helps set our compass heading and directs us on this crazy adventure. No journey is without its challenges and no challenges can be overcome without wisdom. Reading, prayer, and meditation are the tools needed to understand God’s timeless wisdom for the road ahead no matter what crossroad or challenge you face.

Journaling: Journaling can be fun and serve as a quick reminder of thoughts, feelings, or actions that may have surfaced during a reflection.

WEEK ONE FOCUS SHEET

Chapter 1: Accept Yourself Entirely

“Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

– John 8:7 NIV

⊕ **Next Steps:**

1. Read chapter one of *Baptized by Fire*.
2. Read John chapter 8 verses 10-12 from the Holy Bible.
3. Explore the *Actions On* section at the end of chapter one for additional reflection and journaling.

Here are few focus question and exercises to enhance your reflection of chapter one.

*What was the question Jesus asked the woman who was caught in adultery?

*After she answered, how did Jesus response to the woman?

*How would you feel if Jesus resonded to you in that way?

Journal Exercise:

The first and best victory is to conquer self; to be conquered by self is, of all things, the most shameful and vile. – Plato

*After reflecting on Plato's profound statement, what part of yourself are you having trouble with right now?

*What do you need to hear from God today?

*What might you Keep Doing, Start Doing, and Stop Doing that will help you make strong commitments to yourself?

Keep Doing: _____

Start Doing: _____

Stop Doing: _____

NOTES

(Sketch, draw, doodle or write key topics that stood out in your study this week?)

WEEK TWO FOCUS SHEET

Chapter 2: Forgive Yourself and Others

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

– Luke 6:37 NIV

⊕ **Next Steps:**

1. Read chapter two of *Baptized by Fire*.
2. Read Luke chapter 6 verses 37-38 from the Holy Bible.
3. Explore the *Actions On* section at the end of chapter two for additional reflection and journaling.

*****Bonus Extended Study***:** To enhance your study go to <https://www.gotquestions.org/Gospel-of-Luke.html> and read through the summary of Luke to get a feel for the author, atmosphere and chapter highlights.

Here are few focus question and exersices to enhance your reflection of chapter two.

*What two actions does Jesus warn us not to do?

*What two actions does Jesus encourage us to do?

*Jesus makes a claim about how these actions work together in the world. Describe in your own words the interaplay of these actions that Jesus discussed in Luke 6:38?

Journal Exercise:

To live is to suffer – to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and in dying. But no man can tell another what this purpose is. Each must find out for himself and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes. If he succeeds he will continue to grow in spite of all indignities.

– Viktor Frankl, *Preface to Man's Search for Meaning*

*After reflecting on Victor Frankl's powerful words, what purpose have you found in your past suffering?

*What past hurts are you still holding yourself or others responsible for and can you *Let Go and Let God*?

*What might you Keep Doing, Start Doing, and Stop Doing that will help you make strong commitments to yourself?

Keep Doing: _____

Start Doing: _____

Stop Doing: _____

WEEK THREE FOCUS SHEET

Chapter 3: Follow a Reactionary Spirit

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

– Matt. 5:17 NIV

⊕ **Next Steps:**

1. Read chapter three of *Baptized by Fire*.
2. Read Matthew chapter 5 verses 1-20 from the Holy Bible.
3. Explore the *Actions On* section at the end of chapter three

*****Bonus Extended Study***:** To enhance your study read about the beattitudes @ www.gotquestions.org/beatitudes.html.

Here are few focus question and exersices to enhance your reflection of chapter three.

*During Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (vs 3-11) he identifies several character traits that are blessed and the reasons why we should practice them. Can you name them?

(vs. 3) Blessed are the _____, for theirs _____

(vs. 4) Blessed are those _____, for they _____

(vs. 5) Blessed are the _____, for they _____

(vs. 6) Blessed are those _____, for they _____

(vs. 7) Blessed are the, _____, for they _____

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(vs. 8) Blessed are the _____, for they _____

(vs. 9) Blessed are the _____, for they _____

(vs.10) Blessed are those _____ for theirs _____

(vs. 11) Blessed are you _____

Rejoice and be glad because _____

Journal Exercise:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. – Phil. 4:8 NIV

*In what ways do you practice deeper understanding of spiritual things?

*What books or spiritual resources have you read that made a huge impact on your relationship with God?

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*What has been your experience from church or other spiritual communities for your personal growth and development?

*What might you Keep Doing, Start Doing, and Stop Doing that will help you make a strong commitments to yourself?

Keep Doing: _____

Start Doing: _____

Stop Doing: _____

NOTES

(Sketch, draw, doodle or write key topics that stood out in your study this week?)

WEEK FOUR FOCUS SHEET

Chapter 4: Live a Proactive Life

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

-John 13:15 NIV

⊕ **Next Steps:**

1. Read chapter four of *Baptized by Fire*.
2. Read John chapter 13 verses 1-17 from the Holy Bible.
3. Explore the *Actions On* section at the end of chapter four.

*****Bonus Extended Study***:** to enhance your study learn about the significance of Jesus's acts at the Last Supper and how some believers practice remembrance and reflection of those acts @ www.gotquestions.org/Maundy-Thursday.html

Here are few focus question and exersices to enhance your reflection of chapter four.

*What did Jesus say when Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet?

*Take a moment and try to image Jesus washing your feet. What feelings, sensations, images, and thoughts come up for you?

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*After Jesus affirms he is Teacher and Lord, what does he urge us to do (vs.14)?

*What promise does Jesus make in verse 17?

Journal Exercise:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

– Gal. 5:13(NIV)

*Describe a specific time when serving others brought you joy and fulfillment.

*Looking over your lifetime, what has been the most meaningful work you've done?

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*Describe a leader that has made a huge impact on you and in what way?

*What might you Keep Doing, Start Doing, and Stop Doing that will help you make a strong commitments to yourself?

Keep Doing: _____

Start Doing: _____

Stop Doing: _____

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(Sketch, draw, doodle or write key topics that stood out in your study this week?)

Live and Love on Purpose

At this point in the study, it should be clear that a proactive relationship with God has way more benefit, truth, and guidance, than a passive and possibly fearful relationship with our spirituality.

Whether we are hiking in nature, sitting in silence, reading scripture or playing with our children, we should always look for the fingerprints of God. A daily learning emerges each time we seek God and those experiences begin to chisel away at the rough edges of our selfishness and pride.

By simply holding this principle of loving God first, we can begin to prioritize our life in such a manner to live and love on purpose. We can live a *Christ inspired life* of love and service for ourselves and those closest to us.

Love is the most powerful force operating in the world. Love has the uncanny ability to mend all things. In short, love has the ability to change the way we view the world and the decisions we make in it.

So how do we learn to harness the amazing power of love? We go to the source, that's how.

GOD IS LOVE AND LOVE IS GOD!

Having a close relationship with God, teaches us about love at the most essential level. We learn joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in our walk with God. Loving God is not essentially hard to do. We can look around, tune in and quickly recognize the craftsmanship of God's work. We can also look and find the comfort of His love and guidance deep inside ourselves through prayer and meditation. Unfortunately, keeping those powerful experiences at the forefront of our minds is easier said than done. Loving God is easy but having a close relationship with God is a different challenge altogether.

DISTRACTIONS, STRESS, AND FEAR

The pulling force of our social-emotional world seems to always suck us into a life of reactions, worries, and endless tasks. Worldly stressors and challenges are a force which always seems to pull us away from our experiences with love and God. Whatever the instigator of worries might be, having a growing relationship with God is always in competition with the physical world. Without a close relationship with our own spirituality, we rob ourselves of experiencing and understanding love at the most

fundamental level. No value is more important than learning to love God and sharing that love with our closest relationships.

PRIORITIZE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT LIFE ROLES

So how do we build better relationships and learn to express loving actions toward others? We work, serve and lead on purpose! We prioritize our time with God and the most important life roles first.

I've learned through my own life changing experiences, that no great achievement, breakthrough or major crisis is worth experiencing alone. We find the most meaning and motivation in the service of our life roles we desire to play.

Steven Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, would call these our big rocks. Important items in our life that should come first before the tiny pebbles that also take up valuable time. He suggested in his book that we should identify the most important roles to play in our lives and seek out the loving actions that strengthen those roles first.

FOCUS SHEET WEEK FIVE

Epilogue: Live and Love on Purpose

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

– Matthew 22:37–40 NIV

⊕ **Next Steps:**

1. [Watch YouTube SEW Video-Epilogue](#)
2. Read Matthew chapter 22 verses 35-40 from the Holy Bible.
3. Complete the “*My Roles and Goals*” Worksheet

*****Bonus Extended Study***:** to enhance your study about what Jesus said on the greatest commandment go to:<https://www.gotquestions.org/greatest-commandment.html>

Here are few focus question and exercises to enhance your reflection.

*What are three of your deepest values and why are they important to you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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*What are three actions that bring the most meaning and purpose to your life?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

* Look at your deepest values and most meaningful actions and try to write a first draft to a personal mission statement. (See Appendix 2)

"MY ROLES AND GOALS"

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

-1 Peter 4:10 NIV

STEP 1: Prioritize God First

Spend the first part of the day with God to build your spiritual relationship and learn about love at the most fundamental level. Set aside at least thirty minutes for devotional reading, prayer, and meditation and be open to what you might hear. Often times, we gain clarity, guidance and understanding in these first moments with God.

*Where have you notice God showing up in your life? _____

* Where do you need God to show up more in your life? _____

*What fear, shame, or guilt do you need to confess to God? _____

STEP 2: Identify Your Most Important Life Roles

After we've spent time with God, identify the four most important life roles that you desire to serve and list why these roles are so important.

Life Role	Important to me because...
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____

STEP 3: Plan Specific Actions of Service and Love

Plan, prioritize, and schedule a loving act for each role within a given week to heal and grow the most important relationships in your life.

Life Role	Loving act...
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
	—

STEP 4: Serve Your Important Life Role First!

Execute each action within the given week to strengthen your important relationships with love and integrity.

NOTES

(Sketch, draw, doodle or write key topics that stood out in your study this week?)