How to Use This Study Guide

This guide can be used in a variety of settings:

- Individual study – Read the chapter, then work through the questions over a week.
- Small groups – Meet weekly or bi-weekly, each member reading the chapter beforehand.
- Leadership teams – Use as part of a staff retreat or leadership development track.
- Pastoral cohorts – Study alongside fellow pastors for mutual accountability and growth.

Each session is designed to take approximately 60–90 minutes in a group setting. Begin with prayer and an icebreaker question, then work through the discussion questions and close with the application exercise.

Introduction: Preparing for the Journey

Overview

Greg White opens by inviting readers to wrestle with a fundamental identity question: Who is the church? He challenges common misconceptions—that the church is a building, a denomination, a service to attend—and reframes the church as the people of God, living and moving in the world. Before introducing the five behaviors, he establishes the critical importance of vision and adaptability in ministry.

Key Concepts

- The church is people, not a building or institution.
- The difference between 'going to church' and 'being the church.'
- Vision is an uphill climb—coasting means declining.
- Behavior originates from within: who you are determines what you do.

Discussion Questions

1. What three words would you use right now to describe your local church? What do those words reveal?
2. Greg says 'coasting is only possible going downhill.' When have you experienced coasting in your ministry or spiritual life? What brought you out of it?
3. How would you define 'being the church' in your own words—and how does that differ from what you currently practice?
4. The author emphasizes adaptability. What method or approach in your church might need to be updated, even if it once worked well?
5. What does your current vision for your church look like? Can you explain it in one paragraph—or on a napkin?

Application Exercise

Take 10 minutes to write down: (1) three words describing your church today, (2) three words describing your community, and (3) one change needed in the church to begin transforming the community. Share with your group.

Chapter 2: 1st Behavior – Discipling

Word Picture: Infants | 1 Corinthians 3:1–8

Overview

Drawing on Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians' spiritual immaturity, Greg explores what it truly means to make disciples. He unpacks the full discipleship journey—Follow, Learn, Apply, Be, Multiply—and challenges leaders to ask themselves, 'Am I discipling, or am I polishing the tractor?' Personal stories, including his work in the Philippines, illustrate that methods must adapt, but the principle of relational discipleship is timeless.

Key Concepts

- Discipleship is a process, not a program or event.
- The journey of discipleship: Follow → Learn → Apply → Be → Multiply.
- 'You are the curriculum' – who you are matters more than what resources you use.
- Multiplication begins with one person discipling two.
- The mission: 'Guiding People to Know and Grow in Jesus.'

Key Scripture

Matthew 28:18–20 | 1 Corinthians 3:1–8 | Colossians 1:28 | 2 Timothy 2:1–2

Discussion Questions

1. What does spiritual maturity look like in your church? How do you know when someone is 'growing up' in Christ?
2. Greg says the congregation cannot grow beyond the personal growth of its members, and the members cannot grow beyond personal growth of the pastor. How do you respond to that?
3. Are you currently discipling someone? If not, what is one obstacle preventing you from starting?
4. What does 'tending the fields vs. polishing the tractor' look like in your specific context?
5. How would your discipleship approach need to adapt for your specific community or culture?

Application Exercise

Using the questions on pages 26–27 of the book, begin drafting a simple discipleship plan for your church or small group. Define what a disciple looks like, identify one person you will invest in, and set a first meeting date within the next two weeks.

Chapter 3: 2nd Behavior – Equipping

Word Picture: Co-Workers | 1 Corinthians 3:9a

Overview

Paul declares 'we are God's fellow workers'—partners with God in His mission. Greg argues that this partnership demands that leaders equip others, not do everything themselves. Using examples from his own pastoral journey and John Maxwell's model (Model, Mentor, Monitor, Motivate, Multiply), he challenges leaders to identify what they do well and delegate everything else—equipping others to do the rest.

Key Concepts

- Every believer is called and gifted for ministry—no one is a spectator.
- Equipping people is not optional for pastors; it is core to the calling.
- God equips us as He equipped David—through experience, not just training.
- The five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4) exists to equip the saints, not to do all the ministry.
- Seven reasons for equipping people in ministry.

Key Scripture

Ephesians 4:11–12 | 1 Corinthians 12:14–27 | 2 Timothy 3:16–17 | Hebrews 13:21

Discussion Questions

1. Greg lists five core responsibilities as a pastor. What are your top five? What are you doing that someone else could and should be doing?
2. Are you more like Saul (a driver of donkeys) or David (a shepherd of sheep) as a leader? Give a specific example.
3. What spiritual gifts are currently underutilized in your congregation? How could you better steward those gifts?
4. John Maxwell's model goes from 'I do, you watch' to 'you do, someone else watches.' Where are you currently in that process with the people you lead?
5. Greg says if you believe you are the only one who can do something in the church, you limit your ability to lead. Where might this be true for you?

Application Exercise

List all the things you currently do in ministry. Circle the 5 you do best or must be doing as a pastor or church leader. For the others, identify one person you could train and equip to take on each task. Set a timeline for transitioning those responsibilities.

Chapter 4: 3rd Behavior – Training (In-the-Ministry)

Word Picture: God's Field | 1 Corinthians 3:9b

Overview

The local church is God's field—a place where ministry leaders are grown, not just found. White introduces the 'Farm Team' concept: an intentional system for identifying, developing, and releasing leaders at every stage of their growth. He contrasts pyramid structures of power with concentric-circle structures built on responsibility and collaboration, showing how churches of any size can cultivate a culture of leadership development.

Key Concepts

- God's field = a place where people grow, not just a building where they gather.
- The 'farm team' model: intentionally identifying and developing future leaders.
- Concentric circles vs. pyramid structures of church leadership.
- 'Methods are many, principles are few. Methods always change, principles never do.'
- Seven steps to building a farm team for ministry leadership.

Key Scripture

1 Corinthians 3:6–9 | John 4:35–38 | Exodus 18:21–24 | Ephesians 4:1–3

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean for your church to be a 'place where people grow'? What structures currently support that—and which ones hinder it?
2. Who in your congregation shows potential for ministry leadership? What is your plan to develop them?
3. How does your current church structure empower people or limit them? Are you operating from a pyramid or a concentric circle model?
4. Greg challenges leaders to ask 'Who will I mentor today?' rather than 'What must I do today?' What would it look like to shift your daily focus this way?
5. What 'farm team' system—however simple—could you put in place in the next 90 days?

Application Exercise

Using the seven-step farm team framework (pages 46–54), draft a one-page plan for how your church will identify, develop, and release one new ministry leader in the next six months. Include who, what, and when.

Chapter 5: 4th Behavior – Building Relationships

Word Picture: God's Building | 1 Corinthians 3:9c, 14:12b

Overview

The church is God's building—and the bricks are people, bound together by love. White dives into the often-neglected inner work required for healthy relationships: loving yourself before you can love your neighbor. He explores the Great Commandment, the destructive power of self-limiting beliefs, the necessity of forgiveness, and the practical disciplines that build lasting community.

Key Concepts

- 'Love your neighbor as yourself' requires first learning to love yourself through God's eyes.
- The most important conversation you have each day is with yourself—what are you saying?
- Self-limiting beliefs block relationships, leadership, and faith.
- Four areas of forgiveness: from God, to those who hurt you, from those you've hurt, and of yourself.
- Character determines the quality of connection.

Key Scripture

Matthew 22:36–39 | John 13:34–35 | Ephesians 2:19–22 | 1 Peter 2:4–5 | Ephesians 4:32

Discussion Questions

1. Greg says the most critical relationship you have is with yourself. How does your inner self-talk affect your relationships with others in ministry?
2. Where have self-limiting beliefs held you back in your leadership or spiritual life?
3. Think of a relationship in your church that is strained. What role—if any—does unforgiveness play?
4. The Babe Ruth story illustrates that people remember how you made them feel. Who in your congregation needs to be seen and valued this week?
5. White says 'building relationships is one thing; maintaining them is another.' What practices help you maintain relationships over time?

Application Exercise

Write a two-minute personal testimony of how you came to faith in Christ (question #1 in the four areas of forgiveness, p. 70–71). Then identify one relationship that needs repair—and take one concrete step toward restoration this week.

Chapter 6: Bridge – Examination

1 Corinthians 3:10–15

Overview

Before arriving at the fifth behavior, Greg pauses for self-examination. Drawing on the imagery of the Judgment Seat of Christ, he calls leaders to step back and honestly assess the quality of what they are building. Like a tree-trimmer who climbs down to evaluate progress, every leader must periodically take stock—not to condemn, but to course-correct.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul speaks of work that is either gold or wood, silver or hay. How would you honestly assess the work you are building in your church right now?
2. When did you last step back and examine your ministry from a fresh perspective? What did you see?
3. What external voice—a mentor, a peer, a coach—do you trust to speak honestly into your ministry?

Chapter 7: 5th Behavior – Being the Church

Word Picture: Temple | 1 Corinthians 3:16–17

Overview

The culminating chapter calls readers to the most profound shift in the book: moving from doing church to being the church. Because believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit—individually and collectively—the church is not a place to go but a people to be. Greg unpacks what it means to be a worshiper not just on Sunday mornings but in every moment, every relationship, and every community we inhabit.

Key Concepts

- You cannot 'go to church'—as a believer, you are the church wherever you go.
- 'Being' will outdistance 'doing' every time (Charles Swindoll).
- Worship is a mindset, not an occasion. It is daily life with the Lord.
- The difference between praise (verbs—what God does) and worship (nouns—who God is).
- Busyness, unforgiveness, and doubt block the awareness of God's presence.

Key Scripture

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 | Acts 1:8 | John 4:23–24 | 1 Peter 3:15 | 2 Corinthians 5:17

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine your church as a book. What is the title of the chapter you are currently living? What do you want the next chapter to be titled?
2. White says 'being will outdistance doing every time.' Where in your ministry or personal life are you prioritizing doing over being?
3. When in your week do you experience genuine worship beyond Sunday services? What makes those moments possible?
4. What is one thing that currently blocks your awareness of God's presence—busyness, doubt, unforgiveness, or something else?
5. After working through all five behaviors, which one is your greatest area of need? What is one step you will take this week?

Application Exercise

Write the title of each of the five chapters of your ministry (or personal faith journey) so far. Then write the title of the chapter you want to live next. Share with a trusted person who can hold you accountable.

Closing: Group Covenant & Next Steps

As you conclude this study, consider making a group commitment to put the five behaviors into practice. Use the following questions to close your final session:

- Which of the five behaviors is most alive in your church right now?
- Which behavior needs the most intentional attention in the next 12 months?
- Who will you disciple, equip, train, befriend, and worship alongside?
- What accountability structure will help you and your group stay on track?

The mission is clear: Guide people to know and grow in Jesus. The journey to be the church begins—and continues—with you.

"strive to excel in building up the church." — 1 Corinthians 14:12b