



search and
RESCUE

A 10-Day Plan

Adapted from the book *Search and Rescue*
by Michael Thompson



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Plan Description:

Lewis and Clark were the great American adventurers. Learning how to walk with God is also high adventure. Although most of our world's physical landscape has now been charted, our spiritual journeys are still like Lewis and Clark's. Taking one day at a time, re-calibrating and reassessing our position often, stopping to survey the surroundings. Unlike them, we Christ followers do not travel away from home but rather toward home.



Adapted from Michael Thompson's book *Search and Rescue: The Life and Love That is Looking For You*.

1. Mapping It All Out

I have a friend who loves the expedition stories of Lewis and Clark, the great American explorers. In a recent conversation, the two of us compared our own journeys with God to the adventures of this legendary pair. Learning to live newly is like a great exploration into uncharted lands, a high adventure in learning how to walk with God.

Although most of our world's physical landscape has now been charted, our spiritual journeys are still a lot like Lewis and Clark's. They took one day at a time, recalibrating and reassessing their position often. Taking in all that was around them at any given point, they were wise to stop and survey their surroundings. At this point it is safe to say that most of us have journeyed quite a long way. But unlike Lewis and Clark, we Christ followers do not travel away *from* home but rather *toward* home.

We've all heard the expression, *A picture paints a thousand words* ... it's time to supply a picture—a MAP ... one that will serve as a useful tool for orientation and guide us on our journey toward home. Maps are only helpful when they are laid out on the table or turned on and working. When we keep them in the glove compartment or tucked away, they don't help ... they can't help. The map I am going to unfold over the following 10 days is an ancient one. All of its reference points can be helpful for orienting us to our current location so we can plan, calculate and form our next steps.

Now, making a plan is one thing and executing it is another. The different parts of this map we will cover over the next days are an attempt to illustrate the borders and boundaries of our lives in the spiritual realm *and* the best way to navigate our hearts safely through them. And being oriented is a very, very critical characteristic to experiencing the Life for which we were made! To be ORIENTED is to know with some certainty:

**Who we are,
Where we are,
and The Good that God is up to in our lives.**

It will be helpful to remember that we live in a VERY Large Story; *a great love story set in the midst of a great battle*. And you must know the Larger Story your story is in or how will you possibly be able to play your part? Understanding this Larger Story (the context of our lives) is what sets the stage for us to wisely navigate the environment in which we find ourselves. Without Orientation (context), you will be a casualty, victim or worse: a POW... and this is not the life God meant for us to live. Just surviving is far from the full and abundant Life Jesus promised us so let's pack up and move out, covering some critical ground over the next 10 days.

Search and Rescue 10-Day Devotional is comprised of excerpts and quotes from the book Search and Rescue by Michael Thompson. To purchase your copy and other resources visit zoweh.org.

Time Alone With God ...

Father, show me the areas of my life where I have become disoriented. Where have I lost my way?

Jesus, reveal to me any area of my life that I have not fully surrendered to Your leadership.

Holy Spirit, what is in the way of me letting You guide me through?

2. Two Realms and The Realm that Matters Most

We live in the great intersection of the Two Realms. It is where day-to-day life takes place whether we recognize it or not. Like children who see the borders of their world as where they currently exist, paying no mind or attention to other countries much less houses a few blocks from their own homes, it is critical that we mature into what the Larger landscape is and how it works.

There is the lesser realm; *the physical realm*, and the greater realm; *the Spiritual Realm*—the realm that matters most.

As we live within the grand and dangerous intersection of the Two Realms, actually *seeing* it is the trick. A type of eye surgery is needed and it is one that only God can perform. What once was unknown, fuzzy or unclear can become 20/20. Ask Him ... ask Jesus for the eyes to see the *Larger Story* all around you. You are in it now as you read this devotional. You've been in it your whole life! And you already are playing a larger part than you realize, but if you are naïve or ignorant, then it isn't the part you were meant to play...more on that in the days to come.

Oh yes, the *physical realm* is important, but there is **so much more** going on in the *Spiritual Realm*—and it is the Spiritual realm that is greater and the realm in which we are meant to interpret the physical. The Spiritual Realm is the realm that matters most because it has power and sway over the lesser physical realm.

Time Alone With God ...

Father, give me the eyes to see the Larger Story, the spiritual battle going on around me.

Jesus, where have I been blind/naïve to the Larger Story around me?

*Holy Spirit, how has my previous naivety to this Larger Story affected my view of You?
Of others?*

3. We are at War- TWO KINGDOMS

Now in the realm that matters most (the Spiritual Realm), there exist **Two Kingdoms:** the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of Light. These kingdoms are at war over something precious and worth fighting for—the alliance, allegiance and affection of our hearts. Remember, the heart in biblical terms is described as our core, the very center of a human being. It is the deep, true place crafted by God in the inner sanctum of men and women, it is the current holy of holies (much more on this tomorrow). The Two Kingdoms are at war as to which will occupy this precious ground. They both know:

If you get the heart ... you get the man.

To understand the economy in which we live, one must accept that we do get a vote and yet this is *not* a democracy. This is a dictatorship. The One who created all things rules over all things. His love and affection keeps it all together and yet there is another force at work, one that is hell-bent on stealing, killing and destroying.

Our wills matter, this is how we vote for which kingdom will reign and rule in our lives. We're born into one kingdom and we must be born again, transferring our citizenship into the Kingdom of the Son. (Matthew 5, Phillipians 3:20).

Jesus spoke often and deeply about the Kingdom of God and what it was like and how it works. If we are going to enjoy the Life we were intended for, we must learn how the Kingdoms work and *who* we are in the Spiritual Realm.

Footnote: if you're unsure of where your citizenship lies and do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, speak to a pastor, a trusted Christian friend, or email our team at support@zoweh.org and we will help.

Time Alone With God ...

Father, who has my heart? Show me how the kingdom of darkness is at work in my life.

Jesus, where does my citizenship lie? Walk with me, help me to fully surrender myself to You.

Holy Spirit, reveal to me the areas of my heart I have not surrendered to You.

4. The Heart of the Matter

The Heart is *central* in the battle between the Two Kingdoms (Light and darkness). An individual's heart is the very source from where a person chooses his or her side, the place will, belief and choices spring from. It is from the heart we choose which kingdom we will align with and be a citizen.

The heart is more than the repository of our feelings. It is the place where *desires, intellect, emotion, reason and motives reside*. This is why when you capture a person's heart, you get *the whole person*. Both kingdoms know this and are therefore engaged in an epic and ruthless battle for our hearts. Remember, every heart, at its core, longs for and desires *Love*. The things I've done (and all too often still do) to arrange for some attention or affection for myself aren't pretty, sometimes my attempts are comical and other times they are desperate and dramatic.

The ingredients of **Love** are: *validation, acceptance, worth, belonging, significance and affirmation*. They are powerful experiences and both kingdoms know how they work. One Kingdom is offering *unconditional* love, the other is offering adulterated, imitation, performance driven *conditional* love.

One frees our hearts, the other enslaves.

The times I feel most alive are the times I am either receiving or offering the love I am made for. When any one of us says and does *life giving* things for someone else, or someone offers us validation, encouragement or acceptance, we are fulfilling the very mission for which God made us: *To love one another*.

We are participating in the Larger Story as either a casualty or as royalty. As a Beloved Daughter/Son of God or a captive slave to the kingdom of darkness. With a *Kingdom* orientation, making a difference, delivering special God-packages and helping change lives by partnering with Jesus to love hearts, there is nothing better. It is impossible to offer something you do not possess. Being loved by God is priority one, *then* we have a love to offer. If we can receive God's love, experience it then we are free to love.

5. What We're Up Against - THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

There is a stark contrast between *what* the Two Kingdoms are offering the hearts of men and women; it is as different as life and death. The kingdom of darkness is offering lies, a twisting of reality and truth, that when believed will act as an infection—inhibiting love, binding life, and creating havoc on and in a person's heart. An infected person can become so lost he will either succumb to the pressure and wilt or, possibly even worse, rise to the situation and conclude he is master of his own destiny able to make life happen on his own.

Either way the enemy wins; whether the person believes he has failed or succeeded, he becomes captive to a life of performance that will need to be repeated again and again the rest of his days unless there is healing and restoration.

There is a part of us, a fallen part, that wants to believe the lies and make allowances for self promotion, self provision and self protection.

In John 12:31, Jesus calls Satan *the prince of this dark world*. It is the world and its great oppressive prince that work in scandalous partnership to bring hardship, heartache and glimpses of hell on earth to the hearts of those who are naïve, ignorant or in denial of evil's very existence.

Satan and the world accomplish this dastardly feat with just enough maintenance and gentle pressure to virtually go unnoticed and thereby never tip their hand. It's as if we are drinking a drop of poison a day, just enough to keep us ill and living with an impaired immune system. And, most sinister of all—we're not aware of our captivity, yet we are being restrained to a marginal existence in a prison we ourselves have aided and participated in building. A jailbreak is our only hope!

Time Alone With God ...

Father, how does the kingdom of darkness have control of my life?

Jesus, where is Satan gaining a foothold in my heart?

Holy Spirit, how can I engage in the battle?

6. The Mission of Christ: Why He Came

The term “missional” has become a popular one in our culture. To be *missional* means having an intentional purpose, a significant task. Companies create mission statements either to define what they do or remind them of what they want to do. Military and special-forces units move from one *mission* to the next with strict objectives and goals. When the mission is rescuing a lost person, the rescue team must accomplish several things:

- Identify the location of the lost, missing or captive person
- Deploy to that position
- Engage with the enemies holding the person
- Rescue and recover the person
- Provide medical care or treatment needed
- Safely deliver the hostage or victim to a place of restoration, rehabilitation and rest
- Finally, reunite the person with loved ones.

This is the mission of Christ: *To search, rescue and restore.*

This is the good that God is up to in our lives! God's great *rescue* of us is essential to His great *restoration* in us. Our initial rescue is by the Father who sends the Son to ransom and recover those He loves—us! Not only is it His heart to *redeem* us, but even more His heart is to *restore* us. John Eldredge describes this in his book, *Waking the Dead*:

So we now receive a new nature and a new heart, our second man. We have been made alive with the life of Christ. Just as we received our sinful nature from Adam, so we now receive a good and holy nature from Christ (Romans 5:14-19). It has always been God's plan not just to forgive you, but to restore you!

God's Kingdom (the Kingdom of Light) is the one in which we have always been intended to live and get Life. God created us to be at our best and settle the issues of who we are by being with Him and living with Him, the King of kings missionally pouring in His Life into ours. *What a glorious thing.*

Jesus' life was a declaration of whom and what is most important. He fights for us that we might know Him, not just theologically but experientially. It is in the experiencing that we find Life. The offer of the Gospel is much more than forgiveness. Don't get me wrong...forgiveness and reconciliation are great things, but they are only the significant means to an end. The end and our beginning is Life; and the Larger Gospel is nothing less than a great invitation and provision to Life.

When we are rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of the Son whom God loves and in whom we have Life (1 Peter 2: 8-10), then true Life begins. We are brought from one kingdom to the other, from death to LIFE. And the best part of all: it continues forever.

Time Alone With God ...

Reflect on the following passages, which describe why Jesus Came- HIS Search and Rescue MISSION:

Luke 4:18 - Heal the broken hearted, sight for the blind, freedom for the prisoners (Isaiah 61)

Luke 19:10 - Seek and Save that which was Lost

John 10:10 - That we might have LIFE

Matthew 20:28 - Give His life as a Ransom

Galatians 1:4 - Rescue us from the present evil age

Colossians 1:13 - Rescue us from the dominion of darkness

1 Peter 5:10 - Restore Us to Himself and make us strong, firm and steadfast

7. Our New Kingdom

The Bible speaks of light and darkness as a constant reality, and we are invited to choose whether to live in spiritual darkness or light. Is it any wonder that the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of the Son are synonymous? They're like Graceland and Memphis, The City that Never Sleeps and New York, Tinsel Town and Los Angeles. The scriptures link together Light and the Son. Jesus said:

I am the light of the world. (John 8:12)
and
I have come into the world as a light. (John 12:46)

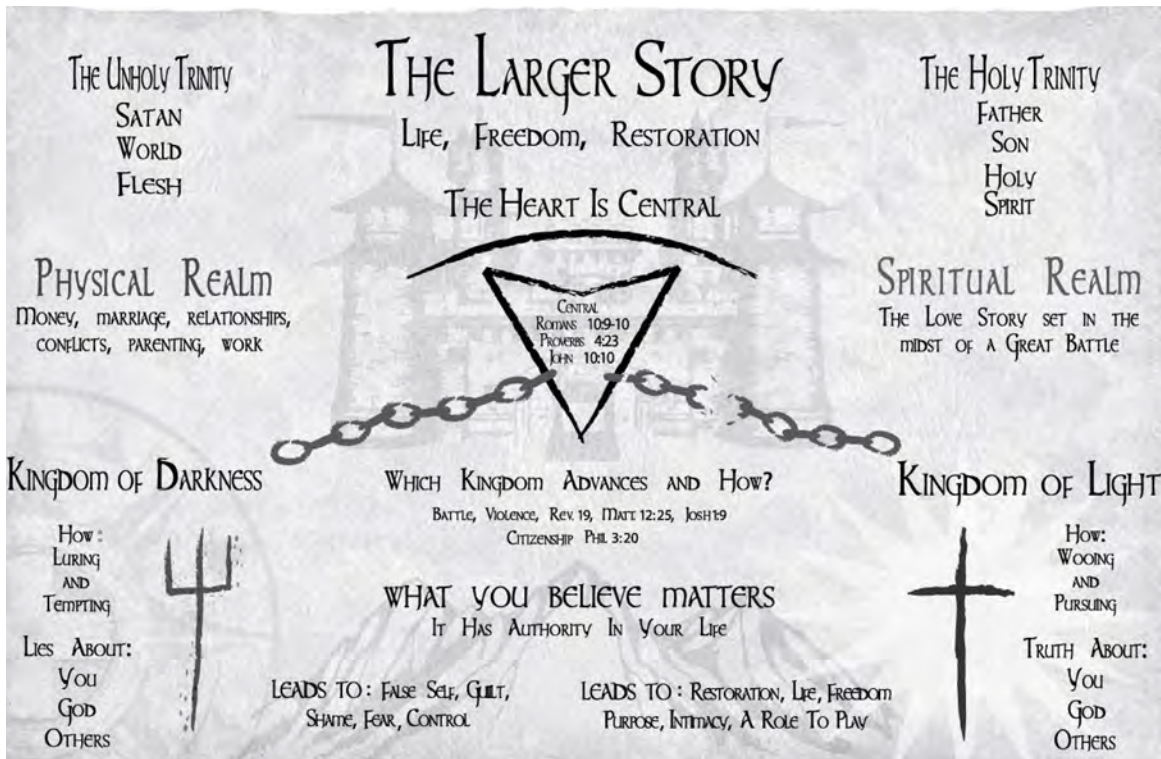
Do you see the connection? By light we see, and *Jesus is the Light*. What we see can be an invitation or a confirmation. We've all heard the expression *hindsight is 20/20*. It is the *present* that so often sheds light on the past. This holds true in the offer of the Larger Gospel. Like the old hymn says, *I once was blind but now I see*.

Cataracts or blindness aren't just physical realm issues. When we don't see well, or at all, the odds of getting lost increase exponentially. The Great King, Jesus Christ, and His Kingdom offer us a life we can't conjure up, arrange for or make happen on our own. All the needs we have in life and for life have an Author and Creator whose supply store is always open. Wait, I'll do you one better— His heart is always open to supplying all we need. Our currency is belief. What we believe matters. The Great King invites, even pleads, *believe in me and I will set you free!*

Freedom is the call of our King and what Jesus' Kingdom is all about ...

Light over Darkness
Love over Hate
Good over Evil
Freedom over Bondage!

8. No Control



Whoa! Look at that. Like one of those old Rand McNally maps pulled from the glove compartment, unfolded and opened wide, taking up both driver and passenger seats, when did we begin to think we could control all of this?

This is the landscape, the territory in which we travel and the story we find ourselves smack dab in the middle of; this is *where we live!* It's time we learn *how to live*. This is the Larger Story and their major characters that defines our value and our role; the part only we are uniquely gifted and equipped to play, the *who we truly are* role. And most glorious of all, this is the story that enables us to see, understand and experience *the good that God is up to in our lives* - growing us, training us, loving us into more!

This map also gives us critical insight that we need to face that which opposes us. The unholy trinity (Satan, the world and the flesh) is in the story too, at least for now. They ought not be underestimated. It won't always be this way, but for now we will certainly be lost if we live naïve, ignorant and underestimate our enemy.

When we live lost, we settle for a lesser life, a part far too small. And we are subject to the frustration that results in drinking too much, eating too much, sleeping too much, working too much, complaining too much and judging others far too much. But once we get our bearings, become oriented, then we are able to do what we were created to do ... love. Be loved by God, love God back and help others experience the same.

There is quite a lot going on in the Two Realms and Two Kingdoms. Kind of *overwhelming, and that it should be!*

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9. Larger Than We Can Imagine

Now if you've stayed with me this far, then it is my hope that you have landed at *overwhelmed*. John Eldredge in his book, *Waking the Dead* writes:

If you're not pursuing a dangerous quest with your life, well, then, you don't need a Guide. If you haven't found yourself in the midst of a ferocious war, then you won't need a seasoned Captain. If you've settled in your mind to live as though this is a fairly neutral world and you're simply trying to live your life as best you can, then you can probably get by with the Christianity of tips and techniques....We need God intimately and desperately.

When did we begin to believe we could control the Larger Story and all the elements within the Two Realms and Two Kingdoms? There seems to be a gravitational pull for me to attempt to control my life. You probably know the feeling I'm talking about: To be in charge, call the shots, keep it all together and, like the old commercial says, *Never let 'em see you sweat*. As I often like to ask folks who are still on the self-help treadmill, *how's that working for you?*

We cannot control these Larger Story variables or the characters that war and fight over us. Rather, we are subject to them, we contend with them and are invited to choose again and again which to align with and which to fight against. Choose unwisely and, well ... just look around; casualties are *everywhere*. Choose wisely, and there is One who promises to guide us safely home.

Truly, this earth is not our home. The day I stepped into this reality was a very good day, one that set up many more good days to come. I didn't say they were easy; there still can be hard days, but they are good. I have to let you in on a little secret, one that I didn't discover until walking in this Larger Story for a few years. The more I saw, the more my orientation grew, the more FREE I became. The more God took me into my own story, my personal history, the more my history was rewritten. The more God took me deeper into study and understanding of any one dimension or component on the map, the more the whole story expanded. And that is exactly how it works.

Explore one part, discover it is more, and the whole terrain *shifts*. In other words, you can't gain ground in knowledge and experience in one element without it affecting all the others. I see it all the time when I teach about this message, each person listening hears something a little different. Individual hearts pick up on different things. Listeners *collect* the dots, then they start *connecting* them.

Some hearts discover a battle they've been oblivious to. Others catch onto the mission of Christ and confess they've had Him all wrong. Where is God moving your heart in the Larger Story *today*? What is He awakening you to?

We were having dinner with some friends and the conversation shifted to the map and our hearts place in the Larger Story. Our friend said, “it seems a little selfish, all this attention on our hearts and our parts in the story.” This particular friend is a dietitian, an expert at nutrition. I wonder how she would have reacted if I had said, during a discussion on food, “Feeding yourself and getting plenty of exercise sounds a little selfish, don’t you think?”

Just like eating right and a little exercise can help a person live *better*, recognizing and engaging in the Two Realms and Two Kingdoms are extremely helpful and significantly equips us to experience Life as God intended ... **abundant and full.**

10. Living Newly

I always thought it odd when flight attendants would say in their pre-flight announcements:

Now, if for any reason we should experience a loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop from overhead. Pull tightly on the cord to begin the flow of oxygen and place the mask over your nose and mouth and breathe normally, then help children and others with their masks.

My initial thought was: *yeah right, who's going to put his mask on first then help the kids?* I always felt noble as a father when I would smile protectively at one of my daughters sitting next to me on the plane during those announcements. *Don't worry honey, Daddy will take care of yours first.* I'm sure you're two steps ahead of me here. If those masks ever drop, you can guarantee that something has gone wrong.

It is not a selfish pursuit to mask up; it is a necessary one in order to be of help to my loved ones and even to total strangers for that matter. And also it is with the emphasis on your heart and getting it back, on becoming whole hearted. It is with a whole heart that we live and love well. To focus on the recovery of our hearts is not selfish; it is necessary, especially when it comes to helping others find the Life and Love they are searching for and Who is searching for them.

When we discover or uncover, expand or deepen our understanding of one of the Larger Story elements—God's love, our significance and value, the enemy's evil, the unholy trinity or the mission of Christ—then all the other elements will move with it. A clearer picture of God's love for me makes me realize I'm more valuable to Him than I knew. The relationship I was created to have and experience with Him is one thwarted by an enemy who would rather I not live connected and intimate with my Father. For when I begin to live this way, others will watch, see, hear and sense that something is different. And if they will walk out of the concentration camp as I did, they will also experience a new freedom and life. Living in a new Kingdom under a gloriously kind and loving King means bad news for the old kingdom ruled by an evil and sinister prince.

One of the greatest expeditions a heart can enter into is learning how to live anew as a Kingdom citizen and not be pulled back into old ways. It will also be the greatest battle a heart will know. If you want this Love and this Life, you're going to have to fight for it. It will not be easy, it will not be quick, and you are going to need *a lot* of help. Living newly, with a *new normal*, is the hope and mission of the Spirit of God. As the Spirit works in and partners with the hearts of those connected to Him, *living newly* will be the reality. This new life will not be one in which we do everything right from now on, but rather we will know the One who is there to help us after we've done something wrong. It's going to take time to learn this new way to live.

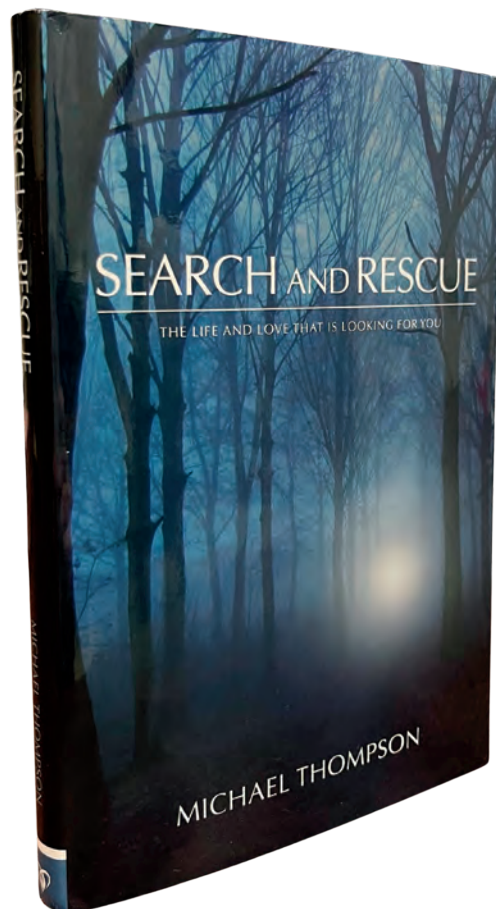
After placing our life in the hands of the Author of Life, is it possible that we will stumble or struggle? Will we get lost again? You bet! But it will be without the previous aftershocks of our mistakes—the guilt, shame, fear, condemnation—when the best we could expect after blowing it was groveling our way back to some remotely safe place to lick our battle wounds.

Can we be taken captive again? Can we lose sight again? You bet, but not like before. The wrong turns we make, the poor decisions we execute, are being and will be redeemed. We are to *work out our salvation*, and God is *with us* and *for us* as we do. He will provide ways for us to go where we've never gone, choose what we hadn't known was available and live in a way we didn't know was an option!

If you enjoyed this devotional...

Check out the book it comes from:

Michael Thompson's
Search and Rescue:
The Life and Love that's Looking for You



You can find the book on
Amazon and zoweh.org/search-and-rescue

