

Slaying Your Giants

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Includes free 20-Lesson Discussion Guide for Group Studies (Questions for each chapter)
An ideal book for small groups to study.

Introduction

After Moses split the Red Sea, the children of Israel spent the next forty years wandering in the wilderness. Their ultimate destination was Canaan, so Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land and give a report about what they saw. Ten spies came back with this report:

“All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers” (Num. 13:32-22 NLT).

This was frightening news to those who had dreamed of a problem-free Promised Land. Up until now, they probably assumed they could stake their property claims without any opposition. But after hearing about giants in the land, they now realized that moving into Canaan wouldn't be so easy. Suddenly it dawned on them they would have to kill the giants before they would inherit what God had promised.

Although many years have passed since this took place, we receive God's blessings in the same way today. First conquer the giants. Then inherit the land.

Today, the Promised Land represents the life that God wants for you in His kingdom—joy, peace, and fulfillment. The “giants” you must defeat are spiritual struggles, negative thoughts, and destructive attitudes, all which try to keep you from enjoying life. Although these aren't physical battles, they are just as real as the ones Israel fought to enter their land.

This book describes some of the prominent giants you will face in life—problems that look bigger and more powerful than you. I'll teach you how to defeat each problem, but reading how to do it won't be enough. Only you can slay the giant that's attacking you. You can and will win every battle, as long as you are depending on the Lord.

Kent Crockett

Chapter 2 Fear **How's Your Nervous System?**

“Do not tremble or be afraid, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

When Max Wilkins was a boy, he visited his great aunt Ruth to spend the night. He was always a little bit afraid to sleep there because she lived in an old, spooky three-story house, where the floors creaked like a haunted house in the movies.

That night he went to his bedroom on the third floor and climbed into bed. The room was dark, but enough light was coming through the window that he could see a man standing in the corner of the bedroom!

Max was absolutely terrified. He knew that if he tried to make a run for the door, the man could easily catch him. He figured the only thing to do was to lay still and pretend to be asleep. All night long he lay in bed with one eye open, ready to run if the man made a move.

He kept still for hours until the sun came up, and as it got brighter in the room he could see that the man in the corner . . . was just a coat rack with a hat on it. He spent a night in torment because he believed something that wasn't true.

Although some fears are based on reality, most are just coat racks with a hat on it. Fear and worry are usually nothing more than our imaginations out of control.

One of the scariest giants you'll ever face is the giant of fear. That's his job—to scare you away from the Promised Land. Joshua found this out after he took over the leadership of Israel after Moses died.

It's his first day on the job and he has to lead a nation into battle to fight the Canaanites, Amorites, and Hittites. Put yourself in his shoes. This wasn't a video game where no one gets hurt. We're talking hand-to-hand combat with real swords. Real spears. Real arrows. Real blood.

God gave Joshua a pep talk to calm his nerves:

“Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. . . . Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be afraid, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:5, 6, 9)

The same God who spoke those words to Joshua several thousand years ago wants to speak them to you today. And the message is the same. Before you can fulfill what he wants you to do, you must conquer your fears.

CONTINUED... (3 things you can do to make fear leave)

Chapter 3
Discontentment
May I Change Seats, Please?

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. Philippians 4:11-12

A restlessness attitude that has swept over our country has caused people to lose their happiness. Counselors, despite their best efforts, have not been able to successfully find a cure. I've made up a name for the problem that's causing so many people to be unhappy. I call it "Contentment Deficit Disorder."

Symptoms of Contentment Deficit Disorder

- Lack of commitment to other people.
- Compulsion to move away to another city.
- Extremely strong desire to quit your job.
- Urgency to leave your spouse.
- Desire to drop out of school.
- Restlessness compelling you to run from your present circumstances.
- Attitude that anything is better than what you have right now.

Dr. Jack Hyles told of an experience he once had on a flight from San Francisco to Chicago. He was seated in 4A, and as he usually did, spoke to the person next to him. He said, "Good morning. How are you today?"

The man did not reply.

Dr. Hyles thought the man might be hard of hearing, so he spoke louder, "Good morning. How are you today?"

Once again, the man didn't acknowledge him.

Dr. Hyles started making hand motions like sign language, thinking he might be deaf. The man glanced over at him and then quickly looked away. Dr. Hyles knew right then he was seated next to a crab, that is, a very difficult person to get along with.

He continued to try to strike up a conversation, "It's a nice day."

Again, no response.

He asked, "Where are you going?" He knew that was a dumb question because everyone on the plane was going to Chicago.

The man didn't respond.

The flight attendant came by and took the man's order for breakfast. The man spoke to her, but wouldn't speak to him.

"Do you have some problems?" Dr. Hyles asked.

The man still ignored him.

Dr. Hyles thought, "This old crab is ruining my trip. I have to sit next to him for four more hours. He is not going to ruin my trip."

He called the flight attendant and asked, "Ma'am, may I change seats please?"

She said, "I'm sorry, but the plane is full. You must stay in your assigned seat."

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He looked at the man and said, "If you think you're going to ruin my trip, you're mistaken." The man never looked up.

All of us are on a plane ride, heading toward a destination. To enjoy the trip, you must understand a couple of things. First, God has assigned you a seat in life. Second, you are probably going to be seated next to a crab who is ruining your trip.

So you cry out to God praying, "May I change seats, please? Can I move away from this situation?"

He answers, "No, this is your assigned seat in life. Buckle your seat belt and enjoy the trip!"

How do you enjoy the trip through life when you're seated next to a crab? Here are five secrets to finding happiness.

CONTINUED...(5 secrets to enjoying life)

Chapter 9

Worry

The Movies in Your Mind

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27

A woman on a cruise ship off Sweden climbed out on the bow and spread her arms, acting out Rose's famous scene in the movie *Titanic*. Her next action, however, did not go according to script. She lost her footing, then fell into the ocean and drowned. Nearly two dozen copycat incidences of people reenacting this movie scene on ships' bows caused the Passenger Vessel Association to issue a "Titanic alert" to its cruise operators.

When was the last time you watched a movie? I don't mean in that cinema at the mall. I'm talking about the movies in your mind. Satan has produced a wide variety of films that he wants you to view.

A seat has been reserved for you. The popcorn is ready. The lights have been turned down, and the show is about to begin. Admission is free. All Satan requires is that you believe and react to what you see.

He projects his films in the theater of your mind, trying to convince you that what you see is real. Worry makes every imaginary tragedy appear as though it's actually happening. The devil wants you to react to what you see, just like the woman acted out the *Titanic* scene that she saw in the movie theater. By making deception appear as reality, he can manipulate your behavior.

In the days before cell phones, I knew a package delivery driver's wife in Kansas who received a phone call while her husband was on the road. A man in a professional-sounding voice said, "Mrs. Williamson, this is Dr. Chandler. I'm sorry to inform you that your husband is in the hospital with a life-threatening, unknown disease and may die. We need a hair sample from you immediately because we believe you may have also contracted this disease."

The terrible news jolted the poor woman. The man instructed her to get a pair of scissors and cut off all her hair at the roots so the hospital could run some lab tests. She obediently did as she was ordered, clipping off all her hair until she was bald.

After completing the caller's instructions, she asked what to do next.

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The man replied, "The next thing you need to do is to wait for your husband to come home. I made up this entire story." The prankster then hung up.

Satan wants your perception to be based upon deception. This woman acted on what she believed to be true. She would not have cut off her hair if she knew it was a prank. She placed her faith in the voice of a stranger without any other verification.

We act, not necessarily upon truth, but on what we *believe* to be true. The devil also knows this, so he creates an unreal world through your imaginations.

CONTINUED...(5 tactics to conquer the Worry Giant)

Chapter 10 Self-Image **I Love Me, I Love Me Not**

“What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?” 2 Samuel 9:8

I love me.

I love me not.

I love me.

I love me not.

To love self or not to love self. That is the question.

Jesus said, "You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*" (Matt. 22:39).

I love me.

He also said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even *his own life*, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

I love me not.

These two apparently contradicting verses, both spoken by Jesus, make me wonder, "Should I love me, or love me not? If God loves me, shouldn't I love me?"

And here's a bonus question. If Jesus commanded me to love everyone, why does he now tell me to hate?

No, Jesus wasn't commanding us to despise mom and dad. The biblical word "hate" doesn't always mean to "cease loving." In this case, it is used as an idiom of preference, where one person is preferred over another. When Jesus says you must hate your relatives and yourself, he means that you must favor him above everyone else. Christ wants to lead you, rather than letting anyone else control your life.

However, some people wrongly believe they must hate themselves—the very souls Jesus created and died for. If that were true, you should *want* to go to hell, which would be the ultimate hatred of self. Obviously, that can't be right. You would be fulfilling Satan's will, not God's.

The devil desperately wants you to see yourself as a worthless creature with no reason to live. He wants you to take your eyes off Christ and place them on yourself. Then you'll become focused inwardly instead of upwardly. Inferiority blinds you from seeing yourself as God's unique creation with a wonderful purpose to fulfill.

CONTINUED...(Take 3 steps for a healthy self-image)

Chapter 11
Pessimism
Treasure Hunting

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” John 15:11 KJV

Roy Parrino has a job that most people probably wouldn't have on their career wish list. Can you guess what it might be?

Embalming bodies at the county morgue? Dead wrong.

Liposuction technician? Fat chance.

Roy works in a sewer in Orange County, California. He spends his days cleaning out miles of sewer lines in the Los Angeles area—braving toxic fumes, avoiding discarded syringes, and wading through filthy muck that's been flushed down toilets.

"You really have to psych your mind up for it," Parrino says. "Remember, you're going into the filthiest environment there is. It's like being in a big toilet."

Maybe you feel like you're in a sewer right now. You're stuck in an unwanted job, surrounded by intolerable people. You're braving toxic attitudes, avoiding discarded relationships, and trying to fix unsolicited problems. It's easy to turn into a pessimist when you're surrounded by repugnant environments and repulsive people.

If your heart isn't in tune with God, you'll look for the worst in your situation. You'll overlook the good things you have and gripe about not having enough. When negativity consumes your heart, your perspective gradually deteriorates, plunging you into the sewer of pessimism.

Meet the princess of pessimism, Ima Whiner. She gripes. She complains. She looks for the negative in every situation. Even the Twenty-third Psalm isn't protected from her scrutiny.

A Pessimist's Commentary on Psalm 23
By Ima Whiner

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

“Shall not want”? Give me a break. I want lots of things. I'd like to have a nicer house, a better job, and a pay raise. I want people to do what I say, when I say. And I wouldn't mind winning the lottery either.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

I have a problem with the words “makes me.” That sounds a bit bossy to me. First you say I can't want things; now you're making me do things.

He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

I don't want to be guided down the paths of righteousness. I prefer the more scenic routes. How about leading me to Hawaii for a change? What about Vegas? I'm getting a little tired of the paths of righteousness. The next thing you know, you'll be leading me down a dark alley. . .

CONTINUED... (How to become a Biblical optimist)

Chapter 15

Burdens

Check Your Baggage Here

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

According to legend, a Christian who was weary from carrying his cross passed through a small village. He noticed a sign in front of a store that read, "Crosses Traded Here." Thinking his load was unfair and his cross too heavy, he decided to enter the store. He was amazed to discover it was filled wall to wall with crosses. He told the owner, "My cross is really heavy and I'd like to trade it for a different one."

The owner replied, "Very well. You can trade your cross for any one of these crosses carried by the saints throughout the ages. Choose the easiest one."

The man approached a stack of crosses, comparing them for size and comfort. He picked one up, but it was much heavier than his. He picked up the next cross and it was even heavier than the first. He moved to the next one, then the next, but they were all much heavier than his.

After going through the entire store, he finally came to the last cross and picked it up with ease. "I'll trade my cross for this one," the relieved man told the owner.

"But sir," the owner replied, "that is the cross you carried in here!"

Sometimes we think our burdens are too heavy until we compare them with the persecutions of the saints from the past. Even though our trials are light in comparison, some of the burdens we carry can still be overwhelming. At times, almost unbearable. If we don't find a way to deal with them, we will be crushed under the weight.

Some people try to lighten their loads through counseling. One woman was heavily burdened with problems and decided to see a counselor. She explained, "I have so many problems they're giving me a migraine headache."

The counselor said, "Please sit down and tell me about it."

She sat down and unloaded her problems for three hours. When she had finished, she said, "I feel so much better now. My headache has disappeared."

The counselor replied, "No, it hasn't. I've got it now!"

We can't release our burdens without giving them to someone else. Jesus said he wants to take our burdens and give us rest. But if this is true, why do so many Christians still feel weighed down with problems? Surely, Jesus wasn't lying when he said we could find rest for our souls.

Perhaps there's another explanation. Maybe the problem lies with our inability to release our burdens.

Burdens are the luggage bags we carry throughout life. We don't transport them with our hands, or on our backs, but on our souls. When we feel burdened down, we're not going to see a physical load because it's invisible. Even so, we aren't just imagining this pressure that weighs us down. It's not a physical burden, but a spiritual weight that's causing the heaviness on our souls.

We acquire these burdens when we think about problems for prolonged periods of time. Burdens just don't go away on their own. They will stick with you until you release them.

I once was with a group on a seven-day tour of Israel...

CONTINUED...(How to let go of your baggage)

Chapter 18
Jealousy
A Sneaking Suspicion

Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy? Proverbs 27:4

Do you remember the mythical story about Pandora's box? A man gave a woman named Pandora a mysterious box with the instructions not to open it under any circumstances. One day when she was left alone, Pandora's curiosity got the best of her. She lifted the lid to take a peek inside, and countless heartaches and miseries swarmed about her. Opening the box unleashed the sorrows of the world.

Jealousy is a Pandora's Box that opens the door to more evils. James 3:16 says, "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing." Open the door to jealousy, and other evils will follow—hate, accusations, revenge, strife, and murder, just to name a few.

What's the difference between envy and jealousy? Although they may look alike, they aren't identical twins. Envy is obsessed with possessions, while jealousy is obsessed with a person. Envy craves status; jealousy craves affection. Envy is grounded in covetousness, while jealousy is rooted in mistrust.

Jealousy is gripped with the fear that it will lose a loved one. Rooted in suspicion, it views others as threats. Insecure people accuse their loved ones of misconduct. Jealousy doesn't trust, even when the accused individual is innocent.

Let's suppose Jesus got married while he was on earth. His wife is insanely jealous, even though he is sinless. His wife says, "I saw you talking to Mary Magdalene yesterday. What were you talking about?"

"It was innocent. I was just telling her about the kingdom of God."

"Oh, is that so? I've noticed you've been talking about that to her a lot lately!"

After David killed Goliath, women danced in the streets and sang victory songs. Saul smiled when they sang, "Saul has killed his thousands. . ." He thought, *Hey, they're singing my favorite song!* Then the women sang the second stanza: "And David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7).

Saul's smile turned to scorn. *They think David is ten times better than I am. What will they call me in verse three? Saul the Chicken-Hearted?*

When Saul heard the women exalting David rather than himself, jealousy consumed him. An evil spirit came on Saul, and he "looked at David with suspicion from that day on" (1 Sam. 18:9, 10). He wore those specs until his dying day.

King Herod executed his wife Mariamne because he suspected that she had committed adultery. When he heard the King of the Jews was born, he ordered the small children in Bethlehem to be slaughtered. Jealous of a newborn king.

Can you see the fruit of jealousy? Accusations. Hatred. Murder.

Whether jealousy is caused by reality or imaginations, it creates tremendous tension in relationships. Years ago when I was dating the young lady who would eventually become my wife, jealous imaginations started flashing through my mind. We were in a long-distance relationship, so the devil tried planting a few doubts and suspicions....

CONTINUED...(How to kill the jealousy giant)

Chapter 19
Discouragement
The End of Your Rope

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13

Do you live where never is heard an encouraging word and the skies are cloudy all day? And no one appreciates you, right?

I hear you. I've thought about checking out of my own responsibilities a few hundred times myself. Throughout the years I've watched dozens of people quit. They go into a tailspin and never seem to recover. That's not the answer.

It's easy to get discouraged when everything goes wrong and falls apart. You're ready to resign from the human race, thinking there's no reason to continue. Before you do something you might regret later, why don't you grab a cup of coffee and let's have a heart-to-heart talk.

A tree is best measured when it is down. That's true with people too. Being down doesn't mean being done. Sometimes you must get to the end of your rope to experience God in a new way.

During the 1930's, 250 men were holding the ropes to a dirigible (an airship similar to a blimp) to keep it from floating away. Suddenly a gust of wind caught one end of the dirigible, lifting it high off the ground.

Some of the men immediately let go of their ropes and fell safely to the ground. Others panicked, clinging firmly to the end of their ropes as the nose of the dirigible arose to greater heights. Several men who couldn't keep holding on fell and were seriously injured. One man, however, continued to dangle high in the air for forty-five minutes until he was rescued. Reporters later asked him how he was able to hold on to the rope for so long.

"I didn't hold on to the rope," he replied. "I just tied it around my waist and the rope held me up."

David was once at the end of his rope, and learned to let God hold him up. You do remember David, don't you? You know—the sheep-tending, rock-slinging, giant-killing, wife-stealing, song-writing guy who penned the Twenty-third Psalm? He didn't spend *all* his time lying in green pastures beside still waters. Sometimes he had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and sit at a table in the presence of his enemies.

One day when David and his men returned to the city of Ziklag, they discovered that the Amalekites had burned the city down and had taken their wives and children captive. David fell to his knees, along with the six hundred men with him, and wept until their strength was gone (1 Sam. 30:3-6).

Just when he thought things couldn't get any worse, David overheard the men whispering behind his back, "If we hadn't left our families to follow David, none of this would have happened. This is David's fault. Let's stone him and make him pay for this!"

Murphy's Law, not to be confused with Moses' Law, was in effect that day. David was fleeing from Saul's fury. His family had been kidnapped. His own soldiers were threatening to kill him. His house had been burned down. And, he probably forgot to renew his fire insurance policy.

David was at the lowest point of his life. As Jed Clampett would say, "Lower than a snake's belly in a wagon rut." He had reached the end of his rope. . .

CONTINUED...(5 ways to conquer discouragement)

Chapter 20
Death
Scared to Death

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for little while and then vanishes away. James 4:14

Anthony Fernando, a twenty-one-year-old man living in Colombo, Sri Lanka, went fishing one day off the coast of the island. He had no idea he would never make it back alive. If you would venture to guess how this man lost his life, what would you say? That he died from a heart attack? Perhaps he fell out of the boat and drowned? How about a shark attack?

It was none of these things. A forktail gar fish jumped out of the water and cut him on the neck with its tail. He bled to death before a fellow fisherman could get him to a hospital. If you had told him that morning that a fish would kill him, he wouldn't have believed it.

If you would have told Ali-Asghar Ahani he would be killed by a snake, he might have believed it. But not in the way it happened. Although he could have shot the snake, this man from Iran was trying to capture it alive. When he pressed the butt of his shotgun behind its head, the snake coiled itself around the gun. With its tail thrashing, the snake pulled the trigger, firing one of the barrels. Ahani was shot to death by the snake, which used his own gun as a weapon.

John Bowen wasn't expecting to die when he attended a Jets-Patriots football game. Did he die of heat stroke? Was he trampled by overly zealous fans? Neither.

At halftime, the entertainment was a performance of radio-controlled, unusual-looking model airplanes that flew around the stadium. One of the planes, a flying lawnmower, went out of control and flew into the stands where Bowen was seated. He has gone down in history as the only person to ever be killed by a flying lawnmower during a football game.

A herdsman was watering his cattle at a pool in eastern Kenya when a group of wild monkeys started throwing stones at him. One of the rocks hit him in the head, which caused the injury that led to his death. If you would have told him that he would die from rocks thrown by angry monkeys, he never would have believed you.

None of these people believed that death was just moments away. Death can come unexpectedly to anyone, and one day your time will come.

Have you ever thought about how you will die? Will you be cut by a fish tail? Shot by a snake? Killed by a flying lawnmower? Stoned by wild monkeys? Maybe your heart will just stop beating. You probably won't be able to predict how or when your demise will occur. Nevertheless, you have an appointment with the coffin. You have a one-way ticket to the grave and the fact you are getting older is a reminder that the train hasn't stopped.

Everyone is biodegradable. Statistics show one out of every one person is going to die. It's coming, like it or not. When your turn comes, you need to be prepared. No, you can do better than that. You can actually look forward to it.

CONTINUED...(Conquering the fear of death)

FREE DISCUSSION GUIDE for small groups included in the Appendix (20 Lessons)

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