A 21-Day Guide to Going Radical

A directed reading experience of

*Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*

by David Platt

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Created by David Platt and Eric Stanford

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Chapter 1. *Someone Worth Losing Everything For: What Radical Abandonment to Jesus Really Means*

“We are giving in to the dangerous temptation to take the Jesus of the Bible and twist him into a version of Jesus we are more comfortable with. A nice, middle-class, American Jesus. A Jesus who doesn’t mind materialism and who would never call us to give away everything we have. A Jesus who would not expect us to forsake our closest relationships so that he receives all our affection. A Jesus who is fine with nominal devotion that does not infringe on our comforts, because, after all, he loves us just the way we are. A Jesus who wants us to be balanced, who wants us to avoid dangerous extremes, and who, for that matter, wants us to avoid danger altogether. A Jesus who brings us comfort and prosperity as we live out our Christian spin on the American dream.”

**Day 1**

1. How do you feel about reading and heeding a book that—if its cover is accurate—might turn your life upside down? Is your attitude more open or more resistant at this point?
2. Platt says that the American church, instead of truly obeying the gospel, has put a “Christian spin on the American dream,” pursuing comfort and prosperity. Fair or not fair—what do you think?

Day 2

1. Trying to look at your own life objectively, how would you say the attraction to safety and wealth has caused you to fall short of the call of Jesus?

2. Platt asks, “Do we really believe Jesus is worth abandoning everything for?” And of course, a belief isn’t real unless it affects one’s actions when something is at stake. So in that light, would you say that you really believe Jesus is worth abandoning everything for? Why or why not?

Chapter 2. Too Hungry for Words: Discovering the Truth and Beauty of the Gospel

“Fundamentally, the gospel is the revelation of who God is, who we are, and how we can be reconciled to him. Yet in the American dream, where self reigns as king (or queen), we have a dangerous tendency to misunderstand, minimize, and even manipulate the gospel in order to accommodate our assumptions and our desires. As a result, we desperately need to explore how much of our understanding of the gospel is American and how much is biblical.”

Day 3
1. In chapter 2, Platt contrasts two views of the gospel. They look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common American Christian view</th>
<th>The biblical view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who God is</strong></td>
<td>A loving Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who we are</strong></td>
<td>Folks who are basically good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How we can be reconciled to God</strong></td>
<td>Pray a prayer and accept Jesus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you think about this critique of the common American view of the gospel?

2. Are you confident that you have authentically trusted in Christ for salvation? How do you know?

Day 4

1. How hungry would you say you are for God’s Word?

2. What action do you think you might need to take in relation to God’s Word at this point in your life? Trust in the Christ of the gospel for the first time and receive a new heart that longs for him? Recover a lost passion for God’s Word? Or what else?
Chapter 3. *Beginning at the End of Ourselves: The Importance of Relying on God’s Power*

“Surrounded by the self-sufficiency of American culture, we can convince ourselves that we have what it takes to achieve something great. But there is another way. It is the way of Christ. Instead of asserting ourselves, we crucify ourselves. Instead of imagining all the things we can accomplish, we ask God to do what only he can accomplish. Yes, we work, we plan, we organize, and we create, but we do it all while we fast, while we pray, and while we constantly confess our need for the provision of God.”

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**Day 5**

1. Think of a time when you came face to face with your need for God. How did he meet your need? How did this display his greatness?

2. Platt says that the American church is capable of engineering church “success” without the involvement of God at all. Would you say that your church is attempting this kind of engineering? How (if at all) have you personally been involved in it, and how do you feel about it now?

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**Day 6**

1. If Platt is right in saying that, when we ask God for gifts, he primarily gives us himself, does that seem to you more like a rip-off or a trade-up? Why?
2. Would you say that you are, not merely interested in, but *desperate* for the power of God? Why or why not?

Chapter 4. *The Great Why of God: God’s Global Purpose from the Beginning Till Today*

“God blesses his people with extravagant grace so they might extend his extravagant glory to all peoples on the earth. This basic, fundamental truth permeates Scripture from beginning to end. Yet I wonder if we unknowingly ignore the great why of God.”

Day 7

1. When you see the statement “God has created each of us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth,” what is your reaction?

2. Platt suggests three possible answers to the question “What is the message of Christianity?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The message of Christianity is...</th>
<th>1. that God loves me.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. that God loves me enough to send his Son, Jesus, to die for me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. that God loves me enough to send his Son, Jesus, to die for me so that I might make him known among the nations.

What is your answer to the question? How has your answer perhaps changed over time?

Day 8

1. Have you ever used a rationalization (such as “I’m not called to go overseas” or “There are enough needs here at home”) to avoid personally taking part in God’s global mission? What do you think about those rationalizations now?

2. Specifically, how do you think God might want you to help fulfill his global purpose? If you’re not sure, what are some things that might help you find out?

Chapter 5. The Multiplying Community: How All of Us Join Together to Fulfill God’s Purpose

“Jesus has not given us an effortless step-by-step formula for impacting nations for his glory. He has given us people, and he has said, ‘Live for them. Love them, serve
them, and lead them. Lead them to follow me, and lead them to lead others to follow me. In the process you will multiply the gospel to the ends of the earth.’ ”

Day 9

1. Do you see yourself as a disciple maker? Why or why not?

2. Based on your own experience, what do you find joyful about disciple making? What do you find difficult?

Day 10

1. We’re supposed to go (get where we can form relationships with people who don’t know Christ), baptize (help others identify with a community of people who live for God’s glory), and teach (use every opportunity to help others know God better). To date, what part of this Great Commission have you done best at fulfilling? What part do you most need to grow in?

2. Platt contrasts disinfecting Christians with discipling Christians. Disinfecting Christians, he says, is isolating them in a church building and teaching them to be good, while discipling Christians is propelling them into the world to risk their lives for the sake of others. Which do you think is going on more often in your own local church—disinfecting or discipling? Why do you say that?

“What would happen if together we stopped giving our scraps to the poor and started giving surplus? What if we started giving not just what we are able to give but beyond what we are able to give? What if we gave like this, not just because of the critical need around us, but because this kind of giving is actually what the heart of Christ in us both demands and desires?”

Day 11

1. Would you say that materialism has been a blind spot for you—something whose spiritual danger you have not adequately recognized? Why or why not?

2. If Jesus were to give you the same command he gave to the rich young ruler in Scripture—namely that you are to sell everything and follow him—could you do it? Why or why not?

Day 12

1. How do you feel about the idea of setting a cap on your lifestyle? What might that cap look like for you and your family?

2. In your own war against materialism, what battles are you fighting right now? How is it going? What is your strategy for victory?
Chapter 7. There Is No Plan B: Why Going Is Urgent, Not Optional

“All people know God, and all people reject God. All people are guilty before God, and all people are condemned for rejecting God. God has made a way of salvation for the lost, and people cannot come to God apart from faith in Christ. As a result, Christ commands the church to make the gospel known to all peoples. If this is true, then the implications for our lives are huge. If more than a billion people today are headed to a Christless eternity and have not even heard the gospel, then we don’t have time to waste our lives on an American dream.”

Day 13

1. Platt says that most Christians lean toward being either intellectual universalists or practical universalists. An intellectual universalist believes that religion is a matter of preference and that religions are fundamentally the same. A practical universalist, while claiming that Christ is necessary for salvation, lives as if people around him or her will be okay in the end without Christ. Which way do you lean?

2. How do you feel about the biblical argument Platt outlines in chapter 7 for the idea that people who never hear of Jesus are destined for hell after death? What doubts or questions on this subject (if any) remain in your mind?
Day 14

1. On a scale of from 1 to 10, how much of a sense of urgency do you feel inside right now about bringing the gospel to those who don’t know Christ? If your number is less than 10, why is it not higher?

2. If you want to play a bigger role in taking the gospel to unreached people, where could you start?

Chapter 8. Living When Dying Is Gain: The Risks and Reward of the Radical Life

“This is the great reward of the gospel: God himself. When we risk our lives to run after Christ, we discover the safety that is found only in his sovereignty, the security that is found only in his love, and the satisfaction that is found only in his presence. This is the eternally great reward, and we would be foolish to settle for anything less.”

Day 15

1. Do you find it easy or hard to believe that Jesus would call us to go to danger, and maybe even to death, for his sake? Why?

2. Think back over your Christian life. Have you ever been betrayed, hated, or persecuted for following Christ? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
Day 16

1. According to Platt, believing that the world is not your home is the key to taking back your faith from the American dream. Would you say that you really believe, deep in your soul, that this world is not your home? If not, what might it take for you to move toward that kind of belief?

2. For you, what is the most wonderful part of the truth that God himself is your greatest reward?

Chapter 9. The Radical Experiment: One Year to a Life Turned Upside Down

“I dare you over the next year to (1) pray for the entire world; (2) read through the entire Word; (3) sacrifice your money for a specific purpose; (4) spend your time in another context; (5) commit your life to a multiplying community. I believe—no, I know—that if you stick to these challenges for a whole year, you will find yourself coming alive like never before. You will know the incomparable thrill of being a part of what God is up to where you live and around the world. You will be ready to shed forever the unworthy parts of the American dream and hold on to the beautiful and lasting dream that God has designed for you.”

Day 17
1. In the past, what has been your experience with praying for nations or people groups around the world?

2. If you're prepared to accept the first part of the Radical Experiment...what approach will you take to start praying for the whole world?

Day 18

1. What's your current Bible reading practice? How is it working for you?

2. If you're prepared to accept the second part of the Radical Experiment...how (if at all) will you change your habits to start reading the entire Word?

Day 19

1. For you, what would it mean to move from just giving away your excess to giving away what hurts—in other words, making a real financial sacrifice?

2. If you're prepared to accept the third part of the Radical Experiment...what will your next financial gift be and to whom will you give it?

Day 20
1. As you think about the possibility of spending time in a foreign country to represent Christ among people who don’t know him, are you more apprehensive or more excited? Why?

2. *If you’re prepared to accept the fourth part of the Radical Experiment...* how could you begin to decide what part of the world you will travel to?

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**Day 21**

1. How do you think being a part of a local church that is truly obeying the gospel can help you as you continue to pursue radical discipleship to Christ?

2. *If you’re prepared to accept the fifth part of the Radical Experiment...* what avenues within your church can you begin to explore to become more effective at making disciples?

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