

A Perfect Life *Leader's Guide*

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help facilitate individual, one-on-one, and group study of the book *A Perfect Life*. As such, it doesn't function as classroom "lessons" (with activities and such) as much as it serves as a guide for thinking through or discussing the content of the book. Each week the leader is given a theme around which the study of the book is centered, Bible passages to read together and study, Study questions to examine and explore the topics from the book and the Bible foundations, and Accountability Questions to help live out what has been learned. The accompanying Scripture passages have been provided to allow your study to dig deeply to the spiritual foundations, which lay underneath the pages of *A Perfect Life*. May your journey in holiness be rich and long.

John Wesley is known not only for his writings on holiness, which are the basis for *A Perfect Life*, but also for starting a "cell group" pattern of accountability. In these small group meetings, people were held accountable to each other not only for study and prayer, but for how they lived their lives. In this way, the revival that God had brought to Wesley's generation was able to thrive and extend. There were authentically searching believers who met regularly to talk about God, and how to live a holy life. There were faces there to keep each other accountable to living it out. It is my hope that this guide will serve as a starting point for one on one and small groups to gather together again, for the same purpose—to study, and then to hold one another accountable to living out what they have studied and learned.

This study is organized into eight weekly blocks. If a leader wanted to fit this study into a shorter time, for example, during Lent (which is 47 days, or just short of 7 weeks) it would be best to skip the material for Week 7, and use 1-6 and 8.

Section/Week	Chapters	Theme	Pages
1	1-4	No Half Christians	11-13
2	5-9	Christlike (Love)	13-18
3	10-14	A Lifestyle to Match His Holiness	18-33
4	15	What Does It Mean To Be Sanctified?	34-40
5	16	What is the Perfect Life?	40-55
6	17-20	Dangers, Challenges, and Victory	55-63
7	21a	More Questions Answered	63-80
8	21b-24	Proverbs and Summary	80-93

Ideally, the chapters in *A Perfect Life* should be read each week before you gather together to meet. Groups may find it helpful for each member to have an accountability partner. The group can break up into partners for accountability sharing when appropriate. Each weekly meeting time might look something like this:

- Catching up on each other's weeks, and lives (5-10 min.)
- Quick review of that week's reading (5 min.)
- Read Scripture/review and discuss the study questions (15-20 min.)
- Discuss Accountability Questions—Life Sharing (15 min.)
- Prayer for each other (5-10 min.)

The following are the weekly themes, Scriptures, Study Questions, and Accountability Questions. Feel free to change and adapt them to suit the needs of your setting.

Week 1

Weekly Theme:

No Half Christians

A Perfect Life talks about John Wesley's renewed understanding that Christianity is a full time, full tilt commitment to a God who is radically committed to us. This week we will examine our own inner life, motivations to follow Christ, and how closely our lives resemble the "half Christian" life.

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapters 1-4
Luke 14:25-33

Study Questions:

- What do you think it means to be "half a Christian"? Try to describe "a day in the life of a half Christian."
- Take time for each person to review what they thought of this week's reading. Talk about any lessons that jumped out and what they learned.
- Is there a difference between living the Christian life outwardly and living it inwardly? Why is our "inner religion" important?
- In *A Perfect Life*, it talks about having a singular intention. What does that mean? What does it take to have that?
- Read together Luke 14:25-33. Great crowds were following Jesus "outwardly." Jesus stops to address them and check their inner thoughts and motives. What do

- you think Jesus meant when He said, “If you want to follow me, you must love me more than (your family) and even yourself”?
- What is the point of the story about counting the cost?
 - In Luke 14:33, Jesus makes a powerful statement. Based on this verse, what do you think it means to be “half a Christian.”?

Accountability Questions:

- Start with everyone taking turns to share: Describe your relationship with God in terms of a car (what kind of car is it? What features does it have? What condition is it in?). Then describe your “dream car” that tells what you would like your relationship with God to be like.
- In what ways have you lived like “half a Christian”?
- Talk about where you are in terms of counting the cost of being completely committed to walking in holiness and living out a perfect life of loving God and loving those around you. What would it take to have a singular intention and desire for God alone? Count the cost—what would you have to subtract from your life to live like that? What would you have to add?
- If you are ready, make a statement to your partner or the group that you are going to commit to 8 weeks of study and pursuit of the Perfect Life.
- Close in prayer together.

Week 2

Weekly Theme:

Christlike (Love)

The only way to live the perfect life is to live like Christ lived. The only way to do that is to have the mind of Christ, and the commitment of Christ. Only then can we love like Christ loves.

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapters 5-9

Philippians 2:1-15

Study Questions:

- Name someone that you have imitated or tried to be like. What was it about that person that made you want to follow in their footsteps?
- Chapter 5 in *A Perfect Life* talks about having the Bible as our standard of truth. Why do you think that is important?

- Do you ever get scared that you will make Christian something “less than it is”? Why or why not?
- What does it mean in Chapter 6 (page 15) to “only love the creation as it leads to the Creator”? How do you do that?
- Read Philippians 2:1-15. According to this passage, what does it mean to “have the same mind as Christ”?
- Chapter 6 of *A Perfect Life* talks about having a fully devoted heart. How does the devotion expressed in this chapter help us to have the “mind of Christ,” described in Philippians 2?
- What does it take to have the mind of Christ and a fully devoted heart? How do these relate to living a life of holiness?
- Which is more important, our thoughts or our actions? Is this a difficult question or an easy one?
- What other lessons did you learn from Chapters 7-9?

Accountability Questions:

- Share with each other: How was your pursuit of the perfect life of holiness this week? What helped you with it? What hindered you?
- What is one thing you can do this week to further your pursuit of living the perfect life in Christ? Try to think of one area. One of the best ways to learn the mind of Christ is to spend time reading the word of God, the Bible. Tell your group or your partner how much time you think you will be able to spend reading the Bible this week. Try to commit to at least 10 minutes every day.
- Share with your partner or group one specific area of your life that you would like them to pray for this week.
- Close in prayer together.

Week 3

Weekly Theme:

A Lifestyle to Match His Holiness

Holiness doesn't just happen. It takes prayer, and it takes a significant commitment. It takes a willingness and determination to put into daily life whatever you need to ensure spiritual growth and holy desires. The Perfect Life is not a place of arrival, but a lifestyle that is lived every day.

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapters 10-14

Matthew 7:24-27

James 1:22-25; 2:14-22.

Study Questions:

- Chapter 10 of *A Perfect Life* describes the person who is serious enough about living for God that they practice living for Him on a daily basis. What are the characteristics of this kind of person?
- Which ones do you think are the most important? Tell your partner or a member of the group which one of those characteristics you see in them.
- Chapter 11 talks about facing opposition to the holy life. Have you ever thought about what kind of opposition you might face? What might it look like? What could you do to prepare for it?
- From Chapter 12: See if you can put into your own words “In what ways Christians are NOT perfect.” Which paragraph helped you to understand it best?
- Now see if you can put into your own words “In what ways Christians ARE perfect.” Which paragraph helped you to understand it best?
- What was the most encouraging part that you read in Chapter 12?
- What do you think it means to be “created in God’s image”? What is the relationship between being created in God’s image, and being cleansed from sin? (See chapter 13).
- Chapter 13 describes some of the characteristics of the lifestyle of this perfect life—what are some of those characteristics? (hint: living in freedom, living in dependence on God, constantly in prayer, desire to be changed, etc.)
- The end of Chapter 13 and all of Chapter 14 give of quick summary of the work of God to change us and make us holy. Using these sections as a guide, how would you describe the process of entering into the perfect life?
- Read this week’s Scripture passages, Matthew 7:24-27, James 1:22-25; 2:14-22. What do these verses have to say about what kind of daily lifestyle we should live? What are the benefits of living this way?

Accountability Questions:

- Keep each other accountable: How did you do with spending time reading the Bible everyday this past week? Was it easy or difficult? What did you get out of it?
- Another area of accountability is our prayer life. The Bible and the book *A Perfect Life* both reflect that this is something that is ongoing—a continual conversation with God—it is to be a part of our lifestyle, a part of who we are. Commit with your partner or your group to spending at least 15 minutes in prayer every day while you study together. It is often helpful to create a routine to be able to accomplish it—so talk with your group about what location and time of day you will set aside for prayer (a closet works great, and a set time before or after school usually works for students, but feel free to choose what will work best).

- Have each person share where they are at with holiness in this way: If your desire to live in holiness could be registered on a speedometer, what would it say? How fast would you say you are pursuing holiness before God?
- Share with your partner or group one specific area of your life that you would like them to pray for this week. Specifically, share any areas of your ongoing “lifestyle daily practice of the faith,” that you would like prayer for.
- Close in prayer together.

Week 4

Weekly Theme:

What Does It Mean to be Sanctified?

One key part of the process that God uses to make us holy is called “sanctification.” It means “to be cleansed and set apart for a holy purpose.” It is the process by which God not only forgives our sin, but cleans us up and gives us the Holy Spirit to empower us to live for Him. Without this, we will continue to struggle, but as the Spirit works on us, we find victory over sin. God restores us to His holy image, and give us the power to walk with Him. It is an integral step for anyone who wants to live a perfect life of holiness.

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapter 15

Acts 15:9

2 Corinthians 6:16- 7:1

Ephesians 4:20-24

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

1 John 1:9

Study Questions:

- Do you have anything at home that is “sanctified”? Do your parents have special china plates that they only bring out on special occasions? Do you have any cleanser to clean the sink for its purpose? Do you have any other special items at your house that your family only brings out at special occasions or holidays? Share some that are special for your family.
- Have you ever made a special effort to clean house when you had company coming over? What was that like? Have you ever cleaned yourself up really nice and dressed up really nice for a special date? What all did you do?
- Have you ever thought of these everyday items or actions as being “sanctified” (set apart for a special purpose—or cleansed for a special guest or special use)? Have you ever thought that God might want to something like that with your life?

- Reflect on your reading of Chapter 15 from *A Perfect Life*: What dimensions of sanctification did you learn from your reading?
- Which question in that chapter taught you the most about sanctification? Why did you choose that one?
- Which question and answer did you have the most trouble understanding (if any)? What about it did you find the most difficult?
- Why is sanctification an important part of the Christian Life? Think about this story—what if a president or prime minister from a country were going to come to your house for a visit? How would you prepare? What would happen if they arrived before you were ready? What do you think the newspapers would say about it? (For more discussion if you have time: What if the president or prime minister came to your house ahead of time and said they would like to help you get ready, clean the toilets, vacuum, wash the dishes. How would you feel about that?)
- Read the Scripture passages for this week. As you study them together, ask each other, “what do you think God is saying to us through this passage?”
- Then ask, “what do these verses teach us about sanctification?”

Accountability Questions:

- Take time to talk about last week’s commitments—ask each other, “How did you do with read God’s word and with prayer this week?” Ask if there is anything you can do to help each other.
- Take a special time of silence to reflect on our sinfulness and brokenness before God. Give your group about 5 minutes just to closely search their own hearts, and ask God to reveal to them any action or attitude of their heart that is not right before Him. Instruct them to confess anything God brings to mind, and if it is something they have already asked for God’s forgiveness, to breathe a prayer of thanksgiving that God has forgiven them. If they have not asked for forgiveness, tell them they are free to ask for forgiveness. Get back together and discuss what that was like to be silent and let God search their heart.
- God promises to fill us with His Spirit, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness if we will ask Him. Take time to go around the group, and without pressuring, offer the invitation to anyone who would like to pray that God would fill them with His Holy Spirit, and sanctify them—cleanse them from all sin and set them apart for His purpose. Take time to pray for each one. For those who are not ready at this point tell that that is no problem, and that they can ask God for it anytime. Tell them there will be other opportunities to respond to this invitation later in this study.
- Optional challenge: Read James 5:13-16. Talk about the importance of confession as a part of your spiritual journey. Take time with your partner or in your group to share areas of struggle with sin, making confession to one another. Let them know that this is a confidential time, not to be shared outside of this group, but that each person who hears promises to first, not repeat what they hear, and second to pray fervently for God’s Spirit to forgive, cleanse, and remove their sin.

- Take time to remind each other of any commitments you have made for next week, and agree to prayer for each other every day this week.
- Pray together before you go.

Week 5

Weekly Theme:

What is the Perfect Life?

When God makes us holy it is not to be a museum display. It is dynamic and active. God's holiness (and because we are made in His image, our holiness) is expressed in pure love. The motivation and foundation of our holiness is love for God, and a pure love for our neighbor (those who are within our reach). The perfection we are talking about is not wrapped up in keeping track of mistakes, but it is about the aim and intent and motivation of our hearts—to be perfect means to be full of God's love.

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapter 16

Matthew 22:34-40

Study Questions:

- What do you love? Make a list of as many things as you can that you have said, "I love..." What is the difference between saying "I love pizza," and "I love my Dad"?
- Reflect on your reading of Chapter 16—was there any question or point that surprised you? What ones were obvious? (hint: There may be some unusual question throughout this book that may seem unusual to your group. Remind them that this book originally came out of a revival that God was bringing, and that these questions were actual questions that people were wondering about as they were learning about what God was doing in their midst. Whenever God does a new thing, it is not always easy to understand and people wonder about all kinds of things).
- What kinds of images do you normally associate with holiness? What images does perfection bring to mind? Have you ever equated holiness and perfection with love? Why or why not?
- Read the weekly Scripture passage from Matthew. There were hundreds of specific laws and instructions from the prophets in the Old Testament. How does living out those two commands (love God and Love neighbor) fulfill them all?
- How does loving God and loving our neighbor fulfill the idea of Christian Perfection? In other words, how does living a life of pure love help us to live perfectly for God?

- Take time to go around and have everyone share one way they could “Love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength,” this week.
- Next, take time to go around and have everyone share one way they could “Love their neighbor,” this week. (Remember, our neighbor is anyone within our reach).
- If the perfect life is living a life of love, does this make the perfect life seem more difficult or easier? Why do you think that way?

Accountability Questions:

- Life Accountability Check Up: Go around and share as a group or with your partner how you did this week with:
 - Bible reading
 - Time with God in Prayer
 - Receiving/pursuing God’s sanctification and living it out
 - Praying for your partner’s sanctification
- If you took the optional challenge last week, take time as partners or in the group to talk about how you did this week with the areas you confessed to each other. Talk about whether or not it was easier or more difficult to face that challenge this week.
- Take time to share any prayer requests or prayer needs. Feel free to ask for prayer to be faithful and for the discipline to walk with God and pray for your partner this week.
- Renew your commitments to each other to pray for each other. Take a moment and say to your partner or group what you are specifically committing to this week. Say, “This week I am committing to praying for 20 minutes every day, and to call my partner everyday at 4pm to remind them to read the Bible.” Get that specific with each other.
- As you close in prayer this week, take time to give thanks to God for His salvation, His sanctification, His love that enables us to love, and for your partner or group.

Week 6

Weekly Theme:

Dangers, Challenges, and Victory

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapters 17-20

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Romans 7:7-25

(Hebrews 11:32-38)

Study Questions:

- Share one very embarrassing moment. We all have at least one. After that, share one of the most difficult moments you have had to face so far.
- Reflect on your reading of Chapters 17-20: What happened to the people who became “fanatics”? How did they start to go astray?
- What were some of the oppositions to God’s work described in chapters 18 and 19? Name one or two oppositions to pursuing a perfect life that you have faced or think you will face. How do you think you can overcome those?
- What did you think of Jane’s Story in chapter 20? What characteristics did you see in her life that helped her face her suffering?
- Read this week’s Scripture passages together. When bad things happen (weeds) where does the Bible say they come from? What weeds have you seen in your life as you started this journey of investigating the perfect life?
- What does the Romans passage have to say about our struggle with sin? Have you ever felt like that?
- What does this passage have to say that can encourage us in our struggles with sin?
- What do you think it takes to live a perfect life, and find victory over sin and opposition?

Accountability Questions:

- Review how you did with last week’s commitments. Be sure to ask your partner or your group how they did with their commitments as well.
- Ask each other, “How are you doing now with your journey in holiness before God? How is your love for God and others?”
- Take time to share any prayer requests or prayer needs. Feel free to ask for prayer to be faithful and for the discipline to walk with God and pray for your partner this week.
- Take time for the opportunity for members of the group or your partner to share where they are at—give them a chance to confess, to share struggles.
- Take time to offer the invitation to ask God’s Holy Spirit to fill us and sanctify us, for anyone who would like prayer for it (see the Accountability Questions from Week 4).
- Go around and share something you are thankful for that you have received from this journey together.
- Take time to share any prayer requests or prayer needs. Feel free to ask for prayer that God would help and support us through our struggles, challenges and opposition, that we would live by faith.
- Renew your commitments to each other to pray for each other. Take a moment and say to your partner or group what you are specifically committing to this week. Say, “This week I am committing to praying for 20 minutes every day, and

- to call my partner everyday at 4pm to remind them to read the Bible.” Get that specific with each other.
- Close in prayer together.

Week 7

Weekly Theme:

More Questions Answered

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapter 21 “a” (pages 63-80)

Luke 1:74-75

Hebrews 12:14

2 Peter 3:11

Study Questions:

- See if you can think of one question that you don’t know the answer to (members of your group may or may not know they answer themselves, or it may be a question that is unanswerable). Share your question with the group.
- Review your reading from the first part of Chapter 21. What question did you learn the most from? Were there any that challenged your spiritual journey? What were they?
- What question about the perfect life did you have the most trouble with? What about that question was difficult? See if the members of the group can help answer your question.
- Read this week’s Scripture passages together. Though we may not know all of the answers to all of our questions, what do these passages affirm about living a perfect, holy life?
- If you could sum up your study of the perfect life so far, how would you describe it? What main lessons have you learned so far?

Accountability Questions:

- Review how you did this week with your commitments and your holiness journey. Were there victories? Were there struggles? Share them with your group.
- Take a moment and review some of the Scripture passages from your study of *A Perfect Life* so far. It can be a passage from the book, or one from your study time together. Pick out one verse that you would like to “give” to your partner or a member of your group. Then read the verse for them and explain why you would give them that verse.

- Take time to offer the invitation to ask God’s Holy Spirit to fill us and sanctify us, for anyone who would like prayer for it (see the Accountability Questions from Week 4).
- As you close in prayer this week, take time to give thanks to God for His salvation, His sanctification, His love that enables us to love, and for your partner or group.

Week 8

Weekly Theme:

Proverbs and Summary

Weekly Study:

A Perfect Life, Chapters 21 “b”- 24 (pages 81-93)

Genesis 1:26-27

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1 Peter 1:16

Study Questions:

- If you had a life motto, what would it be? Why would you make that your motto, or phrase to live by?
- Review your study of the last part of Chapter 21 and Chapters 22-24. Which proverb-like short saying spoke to you the most? Take time to read it to the group.
- Was there anything in the summary in Chapter 22 that reminded you of something that you had learned earlier? Was there anything new there that you had not realized before? Share it with your group or partner.
- What did you think of the last two chapters? Why do you think there aren’t more people pursuing a holy life before God?
- Read this week’s Scripture passages together. What do you think it means to be created in the image of God?
- What do you think it means to love God with all your heart? What other commands and advise does the Deuteronomy passage give us?
- What reason does God give us for being holy?

Accountability Questions:

- Take time to go around and share where you were in your journey with God when you began this study, and where you are now? Has there been any change? How do you feel about that?

- If you feel it is appropriate, offer your group another opportunity to pray for God's Holy Spirit to sanctify them and give them the power to live for Him.
- Talk together about what you will do now that this study is over to continue to "keep in step with the Spirit," and continue this journey.
- Spend some time together thinking of the name of a person who you think would benefit from this study. Pray for them and plan to invite them to participate in this study next time it takes place. (You might even volunteer to be their partner and go through it with them.)
- Pray together, giving thanks to God for His faithfulness to you on your journey.