

A woman with her eyes closed and a determined expression is shown in profile, wearing a black boxing glove on her right hand. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The text 'SO HARD' is overlaid in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font. The 'O' in 'SO' is a solid circle, while the 'O' in 'HARD' is a hollow circle. The woman's right hand is raised, with the glove resting against the 'O' in 'HARD'.

SO HARD

STOP TRYING. /START TRAINING.



RIVER LAKE CHURCH

Nic Smith | riverlakechurch.com | Glasgow, KY

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

**WHAT
ARE YOU
BUILDING?**

**MATTHEW
7:24-27**

OVERVIEW // 30 HARD

Jesus once told a story about two builders. One built his house on sand, the other on rock. The storms came to *both houses*. The difference wasn't the weather—it was the foundation. (Matthew 7:24–27)

I don't know what storms you're facing right now, or what storms are coming next. But I do know this: if your foundation is solid, you can stand up under anything life throws at you. That's the heart behind this resource you're holding.

We're calling it "**30 Hard**"—a 30-day challenge designed to help you build a firm foundation in **five key areas of your life**:

Faith / Family / Finance / Fitness / Future

I truly believe if these five areas are strong and submitted to Jesus, you will be able to weather the wind and waves of life with confidence, peace, and resilience.

WHY "HARD"?

Because growth rarely happens in comfort.

"30 Hard" is not about doing random religious activities or trying to impress God. It's about **small, intentional, uncomfortable choices** that, over time, reshape your habits, your heart, and your horizon.

Each day of this challenge, you'll be invited to:

- Take **simple, concrete steps** in each of the 5 F's.
- Do at least **one thing that stretches you**—something you wouldn't normally do.
- Build rhythms that don't just last 30 days, but set you up for the next 30 years.

Some of the actions will feel very doable. Others will feel inconvenient, awkward, or costly. That's okay. That's the point.

THE FIVE FOUNDATIONS

- **Faith** – Daily time with God, prayer, Scripture, and obedience so your roots go down deep into Christ, not culture.
- **Family** – Whether you're married, single, a parent, or living alone, this focuses on relationships: listening well, reconciling, serving, and creating a God-honoring home and community.

- **Finance** – Learning to trust God with your money, practice gratitude and generosity, and make wise decisions instead of living under constant pressure and fear.
- **Fitness** – Honoring God with your body so you have the strength and energy to do what He’s called you to do. (Always use wisdom and, where needed, your doctor’s guidance.)
- **Future** – Being intentional with your work, calling, skills, and schedule so you’re not just drifting, but aiming your life where God is leading you.

GRACE OVER GUILT

This is a **challenge**, not a **condemnation**!

You will miss a day. You’ll forget something. Life will happen. Something won’t go as you had intended or hoped. When it does, don’t quit and don’t hide. Just start again the next day.

Jesus doesn’t love you more if you complete all 30 days, and He doesn’t love you less if you stumble on Day 3. His love is the foundation. These habits are simply ways to respond to that love with intentionality and obedience.

LET’S DO THIS TOGETHER

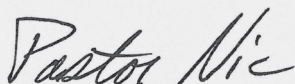
My prayer is that you don’t do “30 Hard” alone. Grab your spouse, your kids, your small group, a few friends, or your team and walk through it together. Encourage each other. Share what’s hard. Celebrate the wins.

In a world that’s constantly shaking, we don’t have to.

Let’s build our lives on the Rock—on Jesus—and strengthen these five key areas so that when the wind and waves come (and they will), we’re not swept away.

I’m in this with you. I’m praying for you. And I cannot wait to see what God does in you and through you over these next 30 days.

The Gospel Changes Everything,



NIC SMITH

Lead Pastor, River Lake Church

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

As you spend some time looking through the next few pages, you'll see that we have structured this under headings for each of the five F's (Faith, Family, Finance, Fitness, and Future).

At the top of each section, there is a universal recommendation for you to do everyday as a means of building new patterns and habits and disciplines. This is a non-negotiable. Do it every day if you don't do anything else.

The following section lists 30 different activities and you can use them in a number of ways:

- Start with the first one and work through all 30.
- Pick one that speaks to you and do it every day for 30 days.
- Pick one and do it every day for a week and choose a different one for the following week.
- Pick and choose which ones are most relevant to you and do one of them every single day.
- Or if you're really bold, pick a random number from 1-30 and do the activity that corresponds to that day!

However you use them, be sure to go into it prayerfully and with a heart for transformation.

Finally, at the end of each section in your guidebook, we have included additional resources to help you go deeper on each topic. We'd encourage you not to overlook these; as you find yourself growing in each area, look for additional ways you can continue your progress. You'll find recommended books, podcasts, apps and even worship songs and playlists to continue to inspire you.

FATH

**YOUR FIRST
FOUNDATION**

FAITH // 30 HARD

Faith is the first F for a reason.

Before we ever talk about your schedule, your body, your money, or your career, we have to talk about your **soul**. Everything else in life sits on top of your relationship with Jesus. If the foundation is cracked, it doesn't matter how impressive the house looks.

These next 30 days are not about checking religious boxes or trying to earn God's approval. In Christ, you are already loved, already seen, already accepted. Faith is simply learning to **live from that reality**, not just agree with it in theory.

In this section, you'll be invited to do some "hard things":

- Put your phone down and pick up your Bible.
- Talk to God honestly. Share your fears, needs, and uncertainties.
- Obey when He prompts you, even when it's uncomfortable.

Some days it will feel small or even "too simple." Other days it will feel costly and stretching. Both matter. Every small, repeated step is like pouring concrete into the foundation of your life.

My prayer is that over these 30 days, you don't just learn about God—you **meet with Him**. That you move from "I believe in God" to "I walk with Him." As your faith deepens, the other 4 F's—Family, Finances, Fitness, and Future—will stop being separate boxes and start becoming places where Jesus is Lord.

Let's start where everything else flows from: your foundation with Him.

FAITH // 30 HARD

Daily Non-Negotiable

Spend 15 minutes with God every day – 10 minutes in Scripture (NIV) + 5 minutes in focused prayer. Be deliberate and place your phone in another room.

30 HARD FAITH OPTIONS

USE IN ORDER OR PICK ONE “EXTRA HARD” EACH DAY.

Pray out loud on your knees for 10 minutes.

Read one Gospel chapter (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and journal 3 things you notice.

Fast from one meal today and use that time to pray.

Share with one person what God is teaching you right now.

Turn your commute into worship (no podcasts/social).

Do a 10-minute silent prayer walk with zero music/phone.

Write out a full Psalm by hand (e.g., Psalm 23 or 139).

Confess a specific sin to God and write a short prayer of repentance.

Text someone a specific verse and why you chose it for them.

Serve at church or in your community for at least 1 hour.

Pray for your enemies by name for 5 minutes

Read Romans 8 slowly and underline/mark every promise.

Turn off all screens 30 minutes early and spend that time in Scripture.

Listen to one full worship album start to finish – no skipping, being fully engaged.

Write a handwritten prayer of surrender for one area you resist God in.

Read a Bible story with your kids/family and ask 3 simple questions about it.

Pray for unreached people or persecuted believers for 10 minutes.

Memorize 1 verse and repeat it out loud 10 times throughout the day.

Replace all social media today with Bible reading and prayer.

Write a list of 30 things you're grateful to God for.

Ask one person, “How can I pray for you?” and then pray right there with them.

Give up one comfort (coffee, soda, sugar, music, etc.) for the entire day as an offering.

Reconcile or apologize to someone you've wronged (as far as it depends on you).

Read an entire New Testament letter in one sitting (e.g., Ephesians, Philippians).

Pray with your spouse/family out loud (knowing it may feel awkward).

Share a brief faith post/story on social media about what God is doing in you.

Spend 20 minutes reading a Christian book that will stretch your faith.

Go outside, look at creation, and worship God for 10 minutes without asking Him for anything.

Ask God “What do You want me to obey today?” Then do it.

Share your testimony (short version) with one person.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES // FAITH

BOOKS

- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* – John Mark Comer
 - *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* – Peter Scazzero
 - *Celebration of Discipline* – Richard Foster
 - *Mere Christianity* – C.S. Lewis
-

PODCASTS

- **BibleProject Podcast**
Deep dives into Scripture and biblical themes
 - **Knowing Faith**
Theology, church history, and Bible in a conversational style
 - **Life.Church with Craig Groeschel**
Practical teaching and application
 - **Deeper Christian Podcast**
Focused on growing a passionate love for Jesus
-

WORSHIP SONGS / PLAYLISTS

- “Firm Foundation (He Won’t)” – Cody Carnes
 - “Build My Life” – Pat Barrett / Housefires
 - “Goodness of God” – Bethel Music / Jenn Johnson
 - “Holy Forever” – Chris Tomlin
 - “Gratitude” – Brandon Lake
-

APPS

- **YouVersion Bible App**
Bible, reading plans, devotionals, church integration
- **Dwell**
Audio Bible app focused on meditative listening
- **Lectio 365**
Guided daily prayer and Scripture reflections
- **Blue Letter Bible**
In-depth Bible study tools and original-language helps

FAMILY

**THE PEOPLE
WHO SHAPE YOU**

FAMILY // 30 HARD

When the storms of life hit, one of the first places you feel it is in your relationships.

Family can be the greatest source of comfort... and also some of our deepest pain. For some of you, the word “family” brings up your spouse and kids. For others, it’s parents, siblings, close friends, roommates, or your church family. No matter what your situation looks like—married, single, divorced, widowed, kids at home or empty nest—**you were not designed to do life alone.**

This section of 30 Hard is about doing “hard things” in your relationships:

- Listening more than you talk.
- Owning your part instead of blaming.
- Saying, “I’m sorry,” and actually meaning it.
- Setting healthy boundaries where you’ve allowed chaos.
- Creating moments of connection instead of defaulting to screens.

If you’re married, some of these challenges will push you toward deeper unity with your spouse and more intentional parenting. If you’re single, some will invite you to build and honor the “chosen family” God has placed around you—friends, mentors, church, and biological family.

You might be tempted to think, “This is just how our family is; it’ll never change.” That’s the voice of resignation, not the voice of Jesus. No family is too far gone for Him to bring healing, growth, and new patterns.

Over these 30 days, don’t aim for a perfect family. Aim for **honest, humble, Jesus-centered steps** toward a healthy family. As you do, you’ll be amazed how much stronger your life feels when the people closest to you are not just surviving the storm, but standing in it together.

FAMILY // 30 HARD

Daily Non-Negotiable

10 distraction-free minutes with one key family member – phones away, eye contact, asking them questions and actually listening.

30 HARD FAMILY OPTIONS

USE IN ORDER OR PICK ONE “EXTRA HARD” EACH DAY.

Eat one meal together at a table with no screens at all.

Ask one family member, “What’s one way I can love you better?” and don’t defend yourself.

Write a gratitude message to three people who have been “family” to you

Plan and lead a simple family devotion (one verse, one question, one prayer).

Do a 20-minute game night with kids / family (no TV).

Write a handwritten note of appreciation to your spouse/child/parent.

Give one family member 30 minutes of “you pick the activity” time.

Apologize for something you’ve done wrong in the past and ask for forgiveness.

Have a “no phone in the bedroom or at the table” day.

Ask each person in your home their “high and low” of the day and listen fully.

Schedule a date night (or intentional 1:1 time) and make a plan for it.

Do one household chore that someone else normally does – without telling them first.

Call a parent or older family member and really listen

Pray out loud over your kids/family before bed.

Tell your story (how you came to faith) to your spouse/kids/ someone at work.

Ask your spouse/ child, “What’s one dream you have?” and explore it with them.

Take a family walk and ask 3 open-ended questions (not yes/no).

Have a 15-minute “family meeting” – what’s working, what’s not, what needs to change?

Ask a mentor couple/ family for one piece of advice about family life.

Sit beside your spouse (or family) for 20 minutes – no phone, no TV – just talk.

Encourage each person in your home with one sentence about what you see God doing in them.

Write a gratitude message to three people who have been “family” to you.

Read a chapter of Proverbs together and let everyone share one verse that stands out.

Pick one recurring family conflict and talk calmly about how to handle it differently.

Create a simple family “value statement” (3–5 words you want to define your home).

Serve a family that’s stretched thin

Initiate a hard but healthy conversation with a family member

Go through old photos and thank God together for His faithfulness.

Write a short “blessing letter” to your spouse or child about their future.

Ask, “If you could change one thing about our family culture, what would it be?” Then listen.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES // FAMILY

BOOKS

- *The Meaning of Marriage* – Timothy & Kathy Keller
 - *You and Me Forever* – Francis & Lisa Chan
 - *The 5 Love Languages* – Gary Chapman
 - *Boundaries* – Henry Cloud & John Townsend (helpful for healthy relational limits)
 - *Shepherding a Child's Heart* – Tedd Tripp (for parents)
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PODCASTS

- **Focus on the Family Daily Broadcast**
Marriage, parenting, and family challenges
 - **FamilyLife Today**
Conversations around marriage and family life
 - **Java with Juli** (Juli Slattery)
Honest conversations on sexuality, relationships, and discipleship
 - **Therapy & Theology** (Lysa TerKeurst)
Emotional/relational health from a Christian lens
-

WORSHIP SONGS / PLAYLISTS

- “The Blessing” – Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes, Elevation Worship
 - “Goodness of God” – Bethel Music / Jenn Johnson
 - “Promises” – Maverick City Music
 - “House of the Lord” – Phil Wickham
 - Any “Family / Marriage” reading-plan-linked playlists in the YouVersion Bible App
-

APPS

- **YouVersion Bible App + Bible App for Kids**
Plans on marriage, parenting, singleness, and relationships
- **Talkspace / BetterHelp**
Christian therapist option for those needing professional help with family/relationship issues
- Your phone's built-in **Screen Time / Digital Wellbeing** tools
To support “no phones at the table / evening” boundaries

FINANCE

**TRUSTING GOD
WITH YOUR MONEY**

FINANCE // 30 HARD

Few things reveal our trust in God like how we handle money.

Our culture disciplines us to chase more, spend more, and stress more. We're told that security is in a number, identity is in what we drive or wear, and happiness is one purchase away. No wonder so many of us feel constantly anxious, behind, or ashamed when it comes to finances.

This section of 30 Hard is not about guilt. It's about **freedom**.

Over these 30 days, you'll be invited to:

- Look honestly at where your money is actually going.
- Confront debt, impulse spending, and hidden habits.
- Practice generosity, even when it feels uncomfortable.
- Invite God into your budget, not just your emergencies.

Some of these steps will feel very practical—tracking expenses, canceling subscriptions, planning a budget. Others will feel deeply spiritual—confessing fear, laying down greed, choosing to trust God as Provider.

Here's the truth: God doesn't need your money. He wants your **heart**. When He talks about tithing, giving, and stewardship, it's not because He's trying to take something from you; it's because He wants something for you—a life that isn't chained to fear, comparison, and constant pressure.

As you lean into these “hard things,” you may not become rich, but you will become **rooted**—more peaceful, more intentional, and more aligned with God's heart. And that's a foundation storms can't shake.

FINANCE // 30 HARD

Daily Non-Negotiable

Track every dollar you spend today (no “mystery spending”). At the end of the day, review it with God.

30 HARD FINANCE OPTIONS

USE IN ORDER OR PICK ONE “EXTRA HARD” EACH DAY.

Do a no-spend day (essentials only: bills, gas, already-planned groceries).

Give an extra amount above your normal tithe/offering (even if it stretches you).

List every single bill and subscription you have.

Cancel at least one non-essential subscription or recurring charge.

Sell one unused item and give at least part of your proceeds away.

Set a written giving goal (percentage or amount) for the next 12 months.

Cook all meals at home today – no eating out.

Plan a simple 0-based budget for the next month.

Have an honest money conversation with your spouse (or a trusted friend if single).

Put your credit card away and use only debit or cash for a week (start today).

Give an anonymous surprise financial blessing to a person or family God puts on your heart.

Spend 20 minutes learning about biblical stewardship (listen/read).

Choose a specific percentage to save from each paycheck and set it up.

Create a simple debt list (smallest to largest) and pray over it.

Skip all impulse purchases today – if it’s not on the list, you don’t buy it.

Plan one lifestyle downgrade (cheaper phone plan, fewer streaming services, etc.).

Invite God into one specific financial fear and write out a prayer of trust.

Choose one recurring “treat” (coffee, snack, fast food) to completely cut for 7 days.

Give cash secretly to someone in need (no credit, no posting).

Build (or add to) a \$1,000 starter emergency fund.

Read and meditate on 2–3 money passages (e.g., Matthew 6:19–34; 1 Tim 6:6–10).

Set a long-term financial goal (pay off X, save X, give X) and write a target date.

Choose a percentage to increase your generosity by this month (even 1%).

Do a 30-minute “budget audit” – and list where is every dollar actually going.

Create a simple plan for Christmas/holiday spending (no more swiping blindly).

Pick one child/teen and teach them one wise money principle.

Refuse to compare your lifestyle to someone else’s all day (no scrolling for envy).

Choose a less expensive version of something you normally buy (or do without).

Write down your top 3 money idols (status, security, stuff, etc.) and confess them to God.

Make a “God’s money story” timeline of your life – how He’s provided, and thank Him.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES // FINANCE

BOOKS

- *The Total Money Makeover* – Dave Ramsey
 - *The Treasure Principle* – Randy Alcorn
 - *God and Money* – Gregory Baumer & John Cortines
 - *Faith & Finance* – Rob West (tied to the FaithFi ministry)
-

PODCASTS

- **Faith & Finance Live** (FaithFi)
Biblical stewardship, Q&A, practical money guidance
 - **The Ramsey Show** (Dave Ramsey)
Budgeting, debt payoff, and financial peace from a biblical perspective
-

WORSHIP SONGS / PLAYLISTS

- (Themes: surrender, trust, contentment, God as Provider)
 - “I Surrender” – Hillsong Worship
 - “Nothing I Hold Onto (Climb)” – United Pursuit / Will Reagan
 - “Christ Be Magnified” – Cory Asbury
 - “Jireh” – Elevation Worship & Maverick City Music
 - “All to Us” – Chris Tomlin
-

APPS

- **FaithFi**
Combines biblical teaching with envelope-style budgeting tools
- **EveryDollar**
Zero-based budgeting app from Ramsey Solutions built on biblical money principles
- **YNAB (You Need A Budget) or Monarch**
Strong general budgeting tools that support long-term planning
- Your bank / credit union app – For daily tracking and quick account checks

FITNESS

**CARING FOR THE
BODY GOD GAVE YOU**

FITNESS // 30 HARD

God cares about your soul—but He also cares about your body. You were given one body to live in while you're here on earth. It's the vessel through which you love your family, serve your church, do your job, and live out your calling. When we ignore our physical health, eventually everything else feels it—our emotions, our energy, even our spiritual focus.

This section of 30 Hard is not about six-pack abs, ideal weight, or comparing yourself to anyone else. It's about **stewardship**—honoring God by caring for the body He's entrusted to you.

Over these 30 days, you'll be invited to:

- Move your body consistently, not just when you “feel like it.”
- Make a few small but meaningful changes in what you eat and drink.
- Rest better—earlier bedtimes, less screen time late at night.
- Listen to what your body is telling you instead of ignoring the warning lights.

Every person is starting from a different place, and some have real limitations or medical realities to consider. Please use wisdom, honor your doctor's guidance, and adjust as needed. Doing something small and sustainable is better than doing something extreme for two days and quitting.

The goal here is not perfection. It's progress. As your physical health improves—even in modest ways—you'll have more capacity to love, serve, and respond to God's call on your life. A stronger body doesn't remove the storms, but it does help you stand a little steadier when they hit.

FITNESS // 30 HARD

Daily Non-Negotiable

Move your body for at least 20 minutes (walk, jog, workout, stretch – just intentional movement). *(Obviously you should adjust for health/doctor's advice.)*

30 HARD FITNESS OPTIONS

USE IN ORDER OR PICK ONE "EXTRA HARD" EACH DAY.

Walk 10,000 steps (or your hardest realistic step goal).

Eliminate all sugary drinks today (soda, sweet tea, energy drinks).

Do 3 sets of: pushups, squats, and planks (modify as needed).

Go to bed 30 minutes earlier than usual.

Take a 20-minute walk without your phone.

Replace one unhealthy snack with fruit/veggies only.

Do a 10-minute stretch/mobility routine before bed.

Drink only water all day (and hit a healthy amount for your body).

Do a "stairs only" day whenever possible (no elevators if you can avoid them).

Eat no fast food today.

Do a simple home workout: 10 squats, 10 pushups, 10 sit-ups – 3 rounds.

Take a 5-minute walk after each meal.

Plan and prep tomorrow's meals so you don't default to junk.

Go outside for 20 minutes of fresh air and light activity.

Limit added sugar as much as possible all day.

Take one food you know is a problem for you and cut it out for 3 days (start today).

Do a "stand up every hour" day when you're awake.

Swap TV at night for a walk + earlier bedtime.

Do 50 total pushups spread throughout the day (modify as needed).

Try a new physical activity (class, YouTube workout, bike, etc.).

Eat slowly and stop when you're comfortably full, not stuffed.

Log everything you eat today – be brutally honest.

Don't snack after 8pm (or 3 hours before bed).

Take a "walk and talk" phone call instead of sitting.

Cut fried foods for the entire day.

Plan a realistic weekly fitness rhythm on paper (days, type, and time).

Do a 1–3 minute cold rinse at the end of your shower (if safe for you).

Drink a glass of water before every meal.

Do 5 minutes of deep breathing to lower stress instead of stress-snacking.

Celebrate by repeating your favorite "hard" fitness day and see how much easier it feels.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES // FITNESS

BOOKS

- *The Daniel Plan* – Rick Warren, Daniel Amen, Mark Hyman (faith + food + fitness)
 - *Made to Crave* – Lysa TerKeurst
 - *Atomic Habits* – James Clear (secular but extremely helpful for habit-building)
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PODCASTS

- **Revelation Wellness – Healthy & Whole**
Faith-based fitness training for body, mind, and spirit
 - **Strong. Confident. His.** (Kim Dolan Leto)
Biblical encouragement around health and fitness for women
 - **FIT Christian Woman**
Integrates exercise science and Christian faith
 - **The Christian Health Club Podcast**
Faith-forward conversations on nutrition and wellness
-

WORSHIP SONGS / PLAYLISTS (GREAT FOR WORKOUTS)

- “Reason I Sing” – The Worship Initiative
 - “Take You at Your Word” – Cody Carnes
 - “Praise” – Elevation Worship
 - “Gratitude” – Brandon Lake
 - Any “Upbeat Worship / Workout Worship” playlist on your streaming platform
-

APPS

- **Faithful Workouts**
Christian workout videos, recipes, and devotionals (especially for women 40+)
- **FaithFit**
Devotional workout experience combining Scripture, music, and exercise
- **SoulStrength Fit**
Christian fitness program with daily devotionals and faith-based workouts
- Any basic **step counter / fitness tracker app or wearable**
(Apple Health, Google Fit, Garmin, Fitbit, etc.) for movement goals

FUTURE

**AIMING YOUR
LIFE WHERE
GOD IS LEADING**

FUTURE // 30 HARD

The last F is your **Future**—your work, calling, and long-term direction.

Most people don't end up in a ditch because of one huge, terrible decision. They end up there after years of drifting—saying “yes” to whatever's urgent, reacting instead of planning, and letting fear or comfort make the big calls.

This section of 30 Hard is about doing the hard, often unseen work of **intentionality**:

- Clarifying where God might be leading you.
- Developing skills instead of coasting on talent.
- Creating rhythms so your calendar reflects your calling.
- Saying “no” to some good things so you can say “yes” to the right things.

You don't have to have your entire future mapped out. Some of you are at the very beginning of your career. Others are mid-course and wondering if it's time for a change. Others are later

in life and asking, “What does faithfulness look like now?”

Wherever you are, these next 30 days will push you to stop drifting and start **aiming**:

- Aiming your work at God's glory, not just a paycheck.
- Aiming your development at serving others, not just promoting yourself.
- Aiming your plans at eternal impact, not just short-term comfort.

When the storms of life come, people without a sense of calling and direction often feel completely lost. But those who have been quietly building, learning, obeying, and planning with God are far more resilient. They know Who they belong to and where they're headed.

My prayer is that as you walk through this section, you won't just ask, “What do I want to do with my life?” but, “God, what do You want to do with my life—and how can I start preparing today?”

Daily Non-Negotiable

Invest 15 minutes in your future – learning, planning, or creating something that will matter a year from now.

30 HARD FUTURE OPTIONS

USE IN ORDER OR PICK ONE “EXTRA HARD” EACH DAY.

Write a simple 1-year vision for your work/calling (one page max).

List your top 5 strengths and top 5 weaknesses honestly.

Ask a boss/mentor/co-worker for honest feedback in one area you can grow.

Read or listen to something growth-oriented for 20 minutes (leadership, skill, calling).

Identify one skill that would greatly impact your future and write a 30-day practice plan.

Block out 1 hour on your calendar for deep work on something important (not urgent).

Update or create your résumé or LinkedIn profile.

Declutter your workspace for 30 minutes.

Write down your top 3 long-term career/calling goals.

Take one small step toward a long term goal (an email, call, form, etc.).

Ask someone in your field, “What’s one thing you wish you’d done earlier?”

Shadow or observe someone who is further along than you (in person or online).

Turn off all notifications for 24 hours during your workday blocks.

Make a list of everything you say “yes” to in a week – circle what doesn’t fit your calling.

Create a weekly “ideal schedule” that reflects your priorities.

Do one thing today first thing in the morning that your “future you” will thank you for.

Eliminate or delegate one low-value task that eats time.

Practice your craft/skill deliberately for 20–30 minutes (not just “doing your job”).

Start a “wins and lessons” document and add 3 of each from the last month.

Reach out to someone you admire and thank them or ask one key question.

Read a chapter from a book related to your field or calling.

Write a 5-sentence personal mission statement.

Say “no” to something good so you can say “yes” to something better.

Identify your top 3 time wasters and set one boundary around them.

Map a simple 5-year “dream timeline” with faith-filled but realistic steps.

Clean up your email and create 2–3 simple folders to stay organized.

Plan one course, conference, or resource you’ll invest in this year.

Start a “God at work in my work” journal – write today’s entry.

Ask God specifically, “How do You want to use my work for Your Kingdom?”

Commit one concrete next step to someone else (tell them so they can hold you accountable).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES // FUTURE

BOOKS

- *Every Good Endeavor* – Timothy Keller (theology of work & calling)
 - *Garden City* – John Mark Comer (work, rest, and the mission of God)
 - *Work Matters* – Tom Nelson (connecting Sunday faith to Monday work)
 - *The Gospel at Work* – Sebastian Traeger & Greg Gilbert (how to work for King Jesus)
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PODCASTS

- **Making It Work** (Theology of Work Project)
How faith and work intersect in real-life challenges
 - **Answer the Call – Christian Career Coaching**
Discern calling, job search, and career steps as a believer
 - **Embrace Our Calling**
Focused on finding your “vocational sweet spot” as a Christian
 - **The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast** or
Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast
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WORSHIP SONGS / PLAYLISTS (CALLING & SURRENDER THEMES)

- “Build My Life” – Pat Barrett
 - “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)” – Hillsong UNITED
 - “Available” – Elevation Worship
 - “Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me” – CityAlight
 - “Take My Life and Let It Be” – modern hymn arrangements
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APPS

- **Notion** or **Evernote**
For capturing goals, journaling, and long-term planning (many churches and leaders use Notion as a personal “command center”)
- **Streaks** / **HabitNow** / **Loop** / **Habitify**
Simple habit-trackers to support 30-day goals and beyond
- **Todoist** / **Microsoft To Do**
Task managers to align daily actions with calling
- **YouVersion Bible App Reading Plans**
on work, calling, and vocation

30 DAYS! AND YOU DID IT!

As you come to the end of this 30 Hard journey, I want you to pause and remember where we began—the story of two builders, one on sand and one on rock.

Over these last 30 days, you've taken Jesus' invitation seriously. You've dug deeper. You've chosen obedience over autopilot. You've practiced small, intentional steps in your Faith, your Family, your Finances, your Fitness, and your Future. And whether you felt it every day or not, something inside you has shifted.

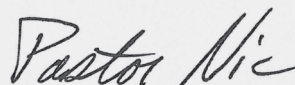
You've strengthened your foundation.

Maybe you rebuilt a prayer rhythm. Maybe you reconciled with someone at home or told your money where to go instead of wondering where it went. Maybe you stretched your body, or your courage, or your discipline and maybe you finally took a step toward the future God has been nudging you toward. These weren't random tasks—they were the quiet, costly decisions that separate sand from rock.

My hope is that as the storms of life come (and they will), you'll recognize the difference: you stand a little steadier, breathe a little deeper, and trust a little more quickly because of the foundation you've built. You didn't just finish a challenge. You began a new way of living.

So keep going. Keep choosing the hard things that make you strong. Keep building on the Rock. And remember—you're not doing this alone : the same God who carried you through these 30 days will carry you into the next 30 years.

The Gospel Changes Everything,



NIC SMITH

Lead Pastor, River Lake Church