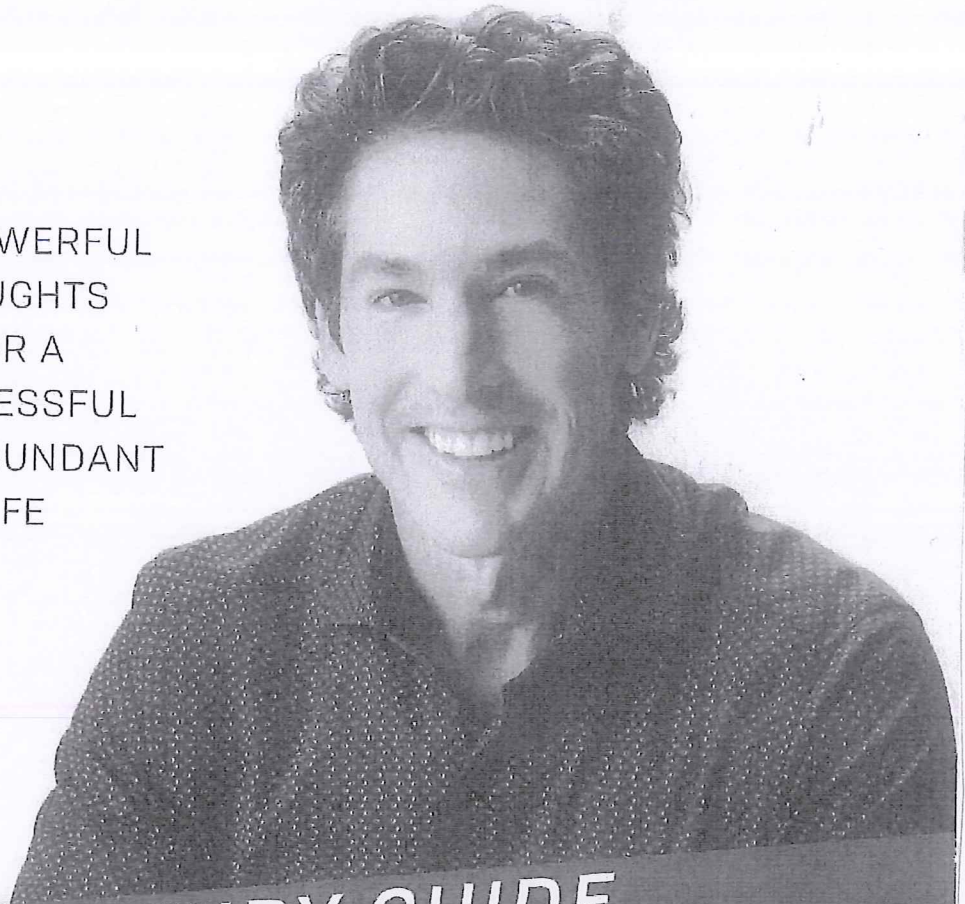


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JOEL OSTEEN

10 POWERFUL
THOUGHTS
FOR A
SUCCESSFUL
AND ABUNDANT
LIFE



STUDY GUIDE

**NEXT LEVEL
THINKING**

Be a Barrier Breaker

So often we let our environment, how we were raised, and other people's expectations of us set the limits for our life. We adapt to what's around us. It's so easy to just fit in, to go with the crowd, to be like everyone else. But God didn't create you to be average. He created you to go beyond the norm and leave your mark on this generation. You have seeds of greatness on the inside. You're supposed to go further than the people who raised you. You're supposed to live better, be more successful, and set a new standard.

1. What was your immediate response to the statement "God created you to go beyond the norm and leave your mark on this generation"? Describe what you're thinking.

2. In what ways would you say you have let your environment and other people's expectations of you set the limits for your life? How have you adapted to it?

*Don't let
mediocrity
become
normal
in your
thinking.*

You Are Fully Loaded

When God created you, He put in you everything you need to fulfill your destiny. He's intentional, down to the smallest detail, and when He laid out the plan for your life, He studied it carefully. He thought about what you would need, what it would take to get you there, then He matched you with your world. He gave you the talent you need, the creativity, the strength. You're the right size, and you have the right looks, the right personality, and the right family. You didn't get shortchanged. You are fully loaded and completely equipped for the race that's been designed for you.

1. How did you feel when you read the statement, "He put in you everything you need"? Write an honest review of how you see yourself in the light of that principle.

2. When God created you, He looked at you and said, "That was *very* good." He calls you "a masterpiece" (Eph. 2:10 NLT). Apply this powerful principle to how you see yourself. What difference does it make in practical terms?

*Next level
thinking says
you have the
right looks,
the right
talent, and
the right
personality.*

The Odds Are for You

It's easy to go through life thinking of all the reasons why we can't be successful, why we won't get well, or why we'll never meet the right person. We look at our situations in the natural, such as an addiction or a financial difficulty, and think the odds are against us. But as long as you think the odds are against you, you will get stuck where you are.

1. The odds may be truly against you, and the circumstances may look impossible, but what can turn those around to be for you?

2. When you know the odds are for you, what ways do you see this impacting your life?

3. Why does God put you in situations where you can't see a way out?

Move Up to the Next Level

It's easy to go through life weighed down by addictions, dysfunction, guilt, or the past and think that's who we are, but God created you to be free. When Jesus hung on the cross, before He took His final breath, He said, "It is finished." He wasn't just talking about the giving of His life for us and how He had finished His purpose. He was putting an end to all the negative things that could keep us from our destiny. He was saying, in effect, "The guilt is finished. The depression is finished. The low self-esteem is finished. The mediocrity is finished. It is all finished."

1. Read the account of Jesus' death in John 19 and the context for His declaration in verse 30, "It is finished," which means "paid in full." What was your immediate response to the statement that "It is finished" includes "putting an end to all the negative things that could keep us from our destiny"? Reflect upon your thoughts.

2. Are there things you're living with—guilt, feeling down on yourself because of past mistakes, not expecting anything good to come to you—to which you need to say, "It is finished"? Write down an example that you need to correct now.

Recognize Your Value

Too often we base our value on how someone is treating us, how successful we are, how perfect a life we've lived. The problem is that all those things can change. If you're trying to get your value from people, then if they hurt or disappoint you, you're going to feel devalued. If you base your value upon your achievements—how much money you make or the title behind your name—then if something happens and you don't have that position or your business goes down, your sense of value will go down. Some people don't feel good about themselves because they've made mistakes. Now they're living with insecurities, feeling inferior. They base their value on their performance.

1. Your value should be based solely on the fact that you are a child of the Most High God. Reflect on this truth and write out some specific ways that applies to your own sense of value.

*Value is not based
on what you do, what
your income is, or
who you know.*

2. You have royalty in your blood, but the enemy works overtime trying to devalue you. Have you recognized that is true in your life? In what ways?

Live with the Boldness of a Son

Because of negative things we've gone through in the past—disappointments and unfair situations—or even mistakes we've made, it's easy to forget who we really are. Too often we've developed a slave mentality. We think we're at a disadvantage, so we don't pursue our dreams or believe for good breaks to come our way. We live as though we're a slave to an addiction, a slave to depression, a slave to mediocrity, a slave to others' approval.

1. It is never easy to admit we have a slave mentality in areas of our lives, but as long as we allow it to remain, it will limit our life. Take some time and reflect on what those areas have been in your life.

2. While we may struggle against a slave mentality, what is the truth about who we really are? In what ways have you recognized that as true in your life, and in what ways have you not?

*"Dear friends,
now we are the
children of God"
(1 John 3:2).*

Approve Yourself

Too many people go around feeling as though something is wrong on the inside. They don't really like who they are. They focus on their faults and weaknesses. They're constantly critical toward themselves. There's a recording of everything they've done wrong that is always playing in their mind. They wonder why they're unhappy and don't realize it's because they have a war going on inside.

1. You're not supposed to go through life feeling wrong about yourself. What is the key to dealing with the feeling that you will never measure up?

*"We all, with
unveiled face...are
being transformed
into the same image
from glory to glory"
(2 Cor. 3:18 NKIV).*

2. What is the problem with not liking yourself?

Get the Contaminants Out

I don't know about you, but I've found bitterness is always knocking at the door—people do you wrong, you didn't get the promotion, you came down with an illness. You can't stop difficult things from happening to you, but you can choose how you respond to them. If you hold on to the hurt and dwell on the offense, you open the door to bitterness. When you're bitter, it affects every area of your life. Bitterness poisons your attitude to the point where you see everything in a negative light.

1. We all have known people who became bitter. How would you describe them in general terms?

2. Have you ever felt bitter about something difficult that's happened to you? Describe your experience and how it affected your relationships, your joy, and your dreams.

*When you're bitter,
you can't enjoy
life. There's always
something wrong.*

Remove the Shame

Starting in our childhoods, we've all heard the phrase "Shame on you." When you didn't clean your room, you were told, "Shame on you." When you were mean to your little brother or sister, once again it was, "Shame on you." As adults, the words still play in our thoughts. If you fell back into a bad habit, you told yourself, "Shame on you." If you went through a divorce, the message was repeated over and over, "Shame on you." We don't realize how destructive shame is. We use it to try to convince people to do better, but shame does just the opposite. It causes us to feel guilty and unworthy.

1. There was a voice that was constantly whispering to the young lady who put her baby up for adoption, "Shame on you." Shame is one of the enemy's favorite tools. He is called "the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10 NKJV). Write out some specific ways that shame has been used against you.

The enemy will remind you of every mistake and every failure you've ever made, even about things that weren't your fault.