



Program Guidelines

Basic Concept

Welcome to *A God Lived Life*! It's more than a Sunday stewardship series. It's a whole-life challenge designed to throw down the gauntlet to God's people to live the life to which he has called them. The hope is that being challenged in specific ways will urge them to put into practice a closer walk with God and a life of love toward others. That's a God-lived life.

Basic Calendar

A God-Lived Life fits well into the season of Pentecost, which speaks to the life of the church. Managing God's gifts is part of that life both for the Christian and the Church. But every congregation is encouraged to decide where these stewardship resources will best meet their ministry needs.

A God-Lived Life is meant to be carried out over four months, with one special Sunday each month ("launch Sunday"). The rest of the Sundays go according to your normal calendar. For example, August through November provides an ideal "fall window" before the busy festival portion of the church year kicks in.

Knowing congregations are different, there is flexibility to use the materials in a way that works best for your setting. Some congregations may choose to do the program four Sundays in a row, condensing some of the challenges and newsletters. Others may want to make *A God-Lived Life* a year-long emphasis. In this setting, one stewardship concept would be tackled each quarter.

Each month is kicked off by a special "*God-Lived Life*" launch Sunday. Each month focuses on a single aspect of the God-lived life:

Month 1 – "A life of **being a disciple**"

Month 2 – "A life **lived for others**"

Month 3 – "A life of **hospitality**"

Month 4 – "A life **lived shrewdly**"

Monthly resources are provided to bolster each emphasis: promotion and communication materials, worship helps, Bible studies, sample bulletins, sermon text studies, and sample sermons. A month's worth of devotions for weekly e-mails or meetings gives continued encouragement.

Pre-Planning & Preparation

A God-Lived Life is meant to provide a slate of resources in order to save congregational leaders and participants time and effort creating something similar on their own. Pastors, designated church leaders, and ministry personnel simply need to make the provided materials their own. It may be helpful to print out a hard copy of all the materials, categorize them by month, and supply copies to those who need it.

- **Designate 2 months for planning:** This is the time to introduce the stewardship challenge to your church leadership team and other key leaders that are part of the planning process. For example:
 - If the plan is to implement *A God-Lived Life* for the fall **beginning in August**,
 - Planning and preparation need to begin **in June and July** before the first launch Sunday.

WHEN: 2 months before the launch of the program

- **Have an initial sit-down** that will allow your “stewardship team” the chance to gain an overview of the entire program. Review key resource areas like promotion and communication materials, recurring monthly resources, etc. Familiarize yourself with how the “challenge card” connects to the launch Sundays, which connect to your people’s participation each month.

WHEN: 2 months before the launch of the program

- **Worship leaders and participants** will want to be familiar with the service folders, sermons, and in-service Bible studies. These are all editable files. Please note the emphasis on in-service Bible studies. Congregations are strongly encouraged to consider their use for two reasons:
 1. The average congregation reaches about 15% of their members in a corporate-setting Bible study.
 2. If the desire is to encourage all your members to participate in *A God-Lived Life*, the best chance to directly reach the majority is in a worship setting.

The combined service, sermon, and Bible study can be adapted to fit a 60-minute or less worship timeframe.

WHEN: 2 months before the launch of the program

- **Identify key coordinators for key events/activities:** In particular, pay attention to Month 2 and Month 3 challenge cards that are activity and event-heavy because of their emphasis on “serving others” and “being hospitable.” It will require someone to think through logistics and scheduling. What members have the gift of organizing, communicating needs, and recruiting helping hands? Identify, invite, and secure their commitment during the “pre-plan” months. This investment will be well worth it to build momentum and enthusiasm, allow for greatest member involvement, and give time to prepare and train. It also will cut down on frustration and confusion if things are left to the last minute.

WHEN: About 2 months before the launch of the program

- **Costs of A God-Lived Life:** It depends. The overall program was designed to keep budgetary expenses to a minimum or within your present electronic or mailing framework for communication. Your congregational size plays an important part in determining this.

However, special encouragement is given to “not go cheap” with the monthly challenge cards. This is the centerpiece that touches the hands, hearts, and minds of your people. This is the stewardship call for the gospel-motivated believer to commit. The challenge card is where the rubber hits the road and intentions lead to actions. It is possible to print all resources in house. However, high-quality printing of four months of challenge cards may be worth professional printing consideration. It indicates to your people, “This is really important.”

WHEN: Print challenge cards 1 month before the launch of the program. If you have them professionally printed, you might need to allow for more time for printing.

- **Put together your mailing list and communication plan:** It is encouraged that all members be invited to participate, including homebound members. Encourage them in their own unique setting to connect with their church family. *A God-Lived Life* lends itself nicely with your elder ministry that desires to retain and strengthen a greater connection with drifting members. Since every member of the church is presented with the opportunity to join in, this provides a side-door approach to “fringe it” members without highlighting them personally. See the resource package for sample messaging and ideas for how to get the information to your members.

WHEN: Start to publicize the program 1 month before launch by using sample resources from the resource package.

- Post information on your website and in your newsletter (“A God-Lived Life - Pre-Launch Website Wording”)
- Send a letter to your members (“A God-Lived Life - Congregational Letter”)
- Send an e-mail to your members (“A God-Lived Life - Pre-Launch Email Wording”)
- Place a blurb in your bulletin (“A God-Lived Life - Pre-Launch Bulletin Blurb”)
- Show a PowerPoint or use the PowerPoint slides to create a digital display graphic to show before and after worship (“A God-Lived Life – PowerPoint”)

3 Key Connects Each Month

Launch Sunday → Challenge Video → Challenge Card

Each of the four designated months for the program begins with a special *A God-Lived Life* launch service. Every congregation needs to review its ministry calendar to determine which weekend lends itself best. (What other events are happening? Communion or non-communion? etc.) However, the first weekend of every month is a natural lead-off for the rest of the month.

There are three critical “connects” in each challenge month:

Connect 1 Launch Sunday. Each launch Sunday, you’ll notice a worship plan with options for either a full service or a shortened service that incorporates a 19-minute Bible study. You’ll find prayers, readings, hymn suggestions, and a gathering rite that goes along with the theme.

Three Bible studies and other resources are also included with each week. They are written so that you can use them all (in other words, they don’t overlap). Here’s how we suggest you use them:

- The Sunday service includes a *19-minute Bible study* on one of the appointed readings, so that EVERYONE gets introduced to the concepts studied.
- The *Sunday morning Bible study* uses the study written on the week’s concept of stewardship, with opportunities for a deeper dive into the concept.
- The *small group sermon questions study guide* is used later in the week by small groups. If your congregation doesn’t have formal small groups, you could invite people to a Zoom call to discuss the sermon and the week’s concept on Monday evening.
- Each part of the series comes with *four midweek devotional newsletters* per month to encourage the congregation in completing their challenges and to keep the concept fresh in their minds.

- There is a *text study* and *sample sermon* provided each month to assist a pastor's study and illustrate how one pastor preached the emphasis.

Connect 2: Challenge Video. Each month comes with a 2-3-minute video specific to the emphasis. It is recommended that it be viewed immediately following the sermon (or in-service Bible study). This is “where the rubber meets the road.” Christians are encouraged to think, “If the message I just heard from my pastor is true, what will I personally be doing now?” Whereas the sermons present the “why” (Why should I do this? What’s my motivation?), the videos present the “how.” How ought I to act now that the gospel has done its work in me? The video means to inspire and encourage, “Here we go! Let’s challenge ourselves to strive intentionally and with purpose.” Why? Because Christ lived the God-lived life for me so I can live for him!

After the initial viewing, the videos can be uploaded onto your congregation’s website or social media for continued visibility. It also sends a clear message to those outside the church what is important to your congregation: growing in personal discipleship, service to others, and hospitality toward all.

Connect 3: Challenge Card. At the conclusion of each video, this instruction is given:

“Pull out your personalized challenge card . . .”

A set of challenges accompanies each of the launch Sundays to be carried out throughout the month. These challenges ask people—who are moved by the grace of God and Jesus’ life and death in their place—to commit to acting on Scripture’s encouragement to put the Word into practice.

Each month’s card will offer a menu of ways members can challenge themselves to do things a disciple does. Some of the challenges connect people to the community of believers. Other challenges look for ways for church members to rub shoulders with their community. Some challenges are fulfilled personally, like “having family devotions a couple times a week this month” or “I will read my Bible for 15 minutes each day.” Members are asked to commit to at least one challenge for each month’s card to live out their callings.

By spreading different challenges over the course of four months, the goal is to take things we all want to do and know we should be doing and make them a little more doable. As the Lord works in people’s hearts and they experience the blessings of these activities, the hope is that they continue in them now that good habits have begun to be formed.

A more detailed “A God-Lived Life – Challenge Card Instructions” document is included in the God-Lived Life resources.