

# LIVE TO GIVE



## STUDY GUIDE

**Inspired by the book: 'Wonder Drug: 7 Scientifically  
Proven Ways That Serving Others Is the Best  
Medicine for Yourself'**

**by Stephen Trzeciak & Anthony Mazzarelli**

**First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown  
Fall 2022**



*We aspire to be beacons of God's love and truth ...*

September 5, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

Since announcing our “Live to Give” sermon series and inviting people to join discussion groups on the book *Wonder Drug*, I’ve fielded a handful of comments about the “secular” nature of the book. Yes, *Wonder Drug* is “secular.” You won’t find *Wonder Drug* on a Christian retail book website or in a Christian bookstore (if they even still exist). *Wonder Drug* is a science book; not a theological treatise. This is A-OK! We don’t need to burn this book or other books that don’t fit neatly into our catalogue of “sacred” texts. Science is a gift from God. Science helps us understand the world we inhabit — a world and universe created by the Divine Architect — whom we profess to be the creator of heaven and earth!

While working on my Master of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary I spent a considerable amount of time, all of my electives, at the crossroads of theology and science. I studied under the academic direction of my friend and mentor, Wentzel Van Huyssteen, a pioneering South African theologian who welcomed Christians and scientists to the same table to learn from one another. He, like many (myself included), believe the two disciplines, science and religion, ought to be in conversation with one another. These two ways of perceiving the world are not exclusive and one does not dominate or control the other. Rather, in conversation the two allow for a better understanding of the universe we exist in — a world we’ve been called to be stewards of — to understand, to intimately know and care for. Scripture tells us that the Lord called the created world “good” and humans “very good.” Science is good. Faith is good. Both were created by the Lord. It is my hope, and the intention of this study guide, for us to have fruitful and constructive conversations about our Christian faith in light of what science tells us about compassion, the human capacity for empathy, and the benefits of living a life in service of others.

What you will discover in reading *Wonder Drug* is that scientific research supports what the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament letters have been proclaiming for thousands of years — it’s better to serve others than to simply serve ourselves. Is this not what Jesus meant when he said, “The last will be first and the first last” or that the “Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve?”

I recently stumbled upon a conversation between Christianity Today magazine founder, Billy Graham, and C.S. Lewis. In the 1950s Graham was interested in publishing various essays and short stories by Lewis in his new magazine. Surprisingly, Lewis declined Graham’s invitation, preferring to instead, “smuggle theology behind enemy lines.” Lewis was content publishing novels like the Narnia series and *The Screwtape Letters*, all of which contained Christian themes and messages but were not overtly Christian novels, via his regular publication channels. While I don’t know Lewis’ intent, I am convinced he saw secular publications as a better way to reach the world for Christ. He lacked interest in “preaching to the choir” when it came to sharing stories about human nature, brokenness, sin and redemption. The same can be said of other prolific authors like, JRR Tolkien, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Fredrick Buechner, among others.

Creating separate domains or “walls of hostility” between the sacred and the secular is not constructive and fails to take the scriptural edict of being in the world but not of the world seriously (I won’t unpack this here but would be happy to have a conversation over coffee or tea!). Compartmentalizing our lives and subsequently denying the science around us erodes our Christian witness in the world. We become Sunday Christians and not everyday Christians as we fail to see God at work all around us in the things we have deemed “secular.” In our last sermon series on the Old Testament book of Esther we saw that God is not mentioned once. There are zero occurrences — ZERO, ZILCH, NADA. This bothered some rabbinical and early church leaders as they debated and

prayed for the Spirit of God to show them what belonged in their respective Biblical canon, but in the end the Spirit showed them that something they deemed “secular” was in fact “sacred.”

I’m not nominating *Wonder Drug* for canonization or to be labeled sacred. I am simply inviting you to catch glimpses of the Sacred at work in a book about being less self-interested, compassionate and other-focused. It’s basically a book about that pesky Biblical commandment to love your neighbor as you would love yourself. It is my hope that *Wonder Drug* and this study guide, in conversation together, affirm the truth that you and I were created to be Live to Givers. Let’s fill our prescriptions together!!!

Finally, during our sermon series and study you will have three opportunities to put your faith into action - to Live to Give! September 12th marks First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown’s 134th birthday. Giving what you can in addition to your 2022 pledge will ensure the mission and vision of FPC continues far into the future. Then, in a few weeks, you’re invited to actively participate in Consecration Sunday (10/16) and Church Has Left the Building (10/29 & 10/30). On Consecration Sunday we present our 2023 pledge cards (estimate of giving) to the Lord as we worship together in a combined service at 9:30AM in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall (overflow). Church Has Left the Building takes place on a Saturday and Sunday (you can come both days if you’d like!) and are group community service activities you and your family can participate in with other people from our church and community. We will have several opportunities for people of all ages and abilities on both days. Keep an eye on our website for opportunities to submit your 2023 pledge and sign up for Church Has Left the Building.

In Christ,

Wes

Wesley R. Allen; Associate Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown

## **HOW TO READ *WONDER DRUG* AND USE THE STUDY GUIDE**

You are in luck. When was the last time you were in a book group and didn't have to read the entire book (anthologies don't count)? The sermon series Live to Give and this Study Guide will be focusing on the last 7 chapters of *Wonder Drug* (Part III, pp. 191-278). Feel free to read Parts I and II, but if you are pressed for time, as many of us are, you can only read some of the books shortest chapters and still learn how to become a Live to Giver.

This guide is intended to be used with a small group but you can also use it as a devotional to intentionally ponder scripture and the corresponding chapters theme. To sign up for any number of our small group studies please visit the church website. Each week you're encouraged to start with our Way of the Week. You can either read the text together or click on the link (the blue underlined text) and share the Way video.

I'll preface this part by saying, if you happen to see Dr. Trzeciak feel free to call him a "super nerd" or "research nerd" - he loves both titles! Now on with what I really wanted to say, make sure to thank Research Nerd Steve Trzeciak when you see him. He donated the books for you to read. I'll also encourage you to "like" or "love" *Wonder Drug* online or you can leave a review on your favorite online retailer or [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com).

## **WEEKLY READING**

- Week of September 11th: Start Small - pp. 191-202
- Week of September 18th: Be Thankful - pp. 204-210
- Week of September 25th: Be Purposeful - pp. 212-224
- Week of October 2nd: Find Common Ground - pp. 226-241
- Week of October 9th: See It - pp. 243-252
- Week of October 16th: Elevate - pp. 254-264
- Week of October 23rd: Seven: Know Your Power - pp. 266-27

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO BE A LIVE TO GIVER**

- **FPC's 134th Birthday** is Monday September 12th! Pray about giving a generous financial gift to FPC's September 12th Fund to ensure the mission of the church continues for another 134 years.
- October 16th is **Consecration Sunday**. Make your 2023 pledge online or fill out a handwritten pledge card and bring it with you to worship at 9:30AM. You can also mail your pledge card to the church office (attn: Norman Vandergrift).
- October 29th & 30th is **Church Has Left the Building**. Sign yourself, your family, your friends, and your small group up to participate in one of the many service opportunities our Deacons have put together for us to give back to our community. In the coming weeks sign up opportunities will be made available in person and online. Since October 30th is a 5th Sunday we will meet for outdoor worship together at 9:30AM and then depart for our scheduled service projects.

### **Consecration Sunday**

  
Sunday, October 16, 2022, 9:30 am

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### **Church Has Left the Building**

  
Sunday, October 30, 2022, 9:30 am

**LIVE TO  
GIVE**



## PRESCRIPTION NO. 1 - START SMALL

- [Way of the Week – No. 17 - SHOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE](#)

Our church is for “real” people. Bring your true self, including your joys, your sorrows, your fears, your strengths and your weaknesses. God loves you as you are. Don’t hide your struggles, failures or problems. God loves you as you are. Don’t hide your struggles, failures or problems.

- **Pray Together**

Share requests with one another and spend time in prayer, bringing your joys, pains, strengths and weaknesses before God. Commit to supporting one another in prayer throughout the week.

- **Read: Matthew 4:18-22 (NRSV)**

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

- **Discussion**

1. It can be challenging to put new habits into practice. Being other-focused is one of these difficult tasks, as Drs. Mazzairelli and Trzeciak make clear throughout *Wonder Drug*. Being other-focused requires us to act differently and think differently than our “dog eat dog” societal worldview suggests. Jesus was extraordinarily other-focused and when beginning his ministry he started small, inviting four fisherman from two families to leave everything and follow him as he challenged them to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matt. 4:17). Jesus says to each one of us, “follow me.” What makes following Jesus, like Andrew, Simon, James and John, so difficult?
2. When I ask my children, Vivian and Jacob, to do something, maybe a simple chore around the house or for some help with yard work, I often get an assortment of excuses as to why they can’t help. 99.9% of the time these excuses have no real bearing on their ability to help with what I’ve asked of them. “I just turned on my video game” or “I’m in the middle of watching an episode” are some of the excuses Jen and I hear. We all make excuses — even when it comes to how we respond to Jesus’ invitation to follow him. In *Wonder Drug* Drs. Mazzairelli and Trzeciak discuss some of the common excuses we make, sacred cows, time and money! What are some of the roadblocks you’ve encountered or excuses you have made in your faith journey? How have you overcome these challenges and excuses in your life? **Read: Luke 9:57-62.** What excuses does the second person Jesus invites to follow him make? How does Jesus address this persons concern? Immediately following this exchange, Jesus appoints seventy disciples and sends them out. We don’t know if the three people Jesus spoke to in the passage were a part of the 70 being sent out, we simply know that Jesus sent the 70 out to be laborers for the Kingdom of Heaven. **Read Luke 10:1-11.** Why does Jesus tell the followers to leave behind their purses, bags, and sandals?
3. Maybe you don’t consider yourself lacking in what you give to God. Like many folks at First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown, you may worship regularly, attend various studies, give of your “time, talents and treasures” to the mission of Christ in the world. Sometimes we become complacent as Christians and we tend to forget that the disciples gave up *everything* to follow Jesus. It is a blessing that you are actively involved in God’s work in the world through the mission of FPC! Thank you for your eagerness and willingness to follow. Nevertheless, we can’t forget that the disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus. How is God calling you to give more? What are some additional ways you can push yourself to “immediately” set aside your fishing nets and follow him?

4. "If you were going to, say, launch an exercise routine, you wouldn't go from couch potato to marathoner overnight" write Drs. Mazzarelli and Trzeciak (p. 199). They offer some great advice that we can apply to our relationship with God and service to the world. Whether you already consider yourself a committed disciples or an aspiring one; how can you apply the four tips to build the habit of serving others (p. 200) to your commitment to Christ and his invitation to follow him?
5. Toward the end of the chapter, "Start Small," Drs. Trzeciak and Mazzarelli share a story from the book *Why People Die by Suicide* and the text from a man's suicide note. The note read, "I'm going to walk to the bridge. If one person smiles at me on the way, I will not jump." Trzeciak and Mazzarelli share this story to illustrate the benefits of small gestures of compassion, kindness and being other-focused." Let's fill our prescription for to "Start Small." What are some things you can do in the coming week to radiate of the love of Christ in the world? Read:

#### **Close in Prayer**