Governing the Soul

The Journey to Spiritual Maturity

Self-paced course guide • 16 modules • Four assessed levels

Based on Daniel Zarabia’s Reflections on Maturity and the Government of the Soul, as represented in the revised curriculum supplied by Reno. ETS adaptation and assessment exercises prepared with AI assistance; not represented as Zarabia’s original wording or endorsement. Rudyard Kipling’s If is a supporting illustration; Scripture is primary.

How to use this guide

Read Scripture in context using your CSB Bible. Study the teaching, reflect privately, and choose a practical action. Complete each module quiz online, then pass its level exam with at least 80%. There are no fixed cohort meetings or mandatory coaching appointments.

Assessment recognizes demonstrated understanding. It does not certify overall spiritual maturity, authorize ministry office, or require disclosure of private experiences.

Your pace, a consistent standard

Across ETS Academy, complete the required learning and pass the relevant level assessment before advancing. Feedback directs you to review; retries carry no penalty. Existing lesson completions remain credited. Growth-focus and personality assessments are recommendations, not promotions.

Course map

Level 1: Self-Government Under Pressure

1. Governing Your Response Under Pressure
2. Conviction Without Arrogance
3. Waiting Without Compromise
4. Refusing to Mirror Wounds

Complete all four modules and pass the level exam before advancing.

Level 2: Purified Motives & Single-Minded Vision

5. Unseen Faithfulness & Refusing the Spotlight
6. Submitted Dreams vs. Idolatry
7. Active Obedience Over Passive Thought
8. An Identity Rooted Beyond Circumstances

Complete all four modules and pass the level exam before advancing.

Level 3: Resilient Mission & Reconstruction

9. Responding Wisely to Misrepresentation
10. Stooping to Rebuild
11. Grieving Honestly and Beginning Again
12. Faithfulness, Rest, and Renewed Strength

Complete all four modules and pass the level exam before advancing.

Level 4: Interpersonal Wisdom & Mature Sonship

13. Grounded Influence & The Common Touch
14. Relational Boundaries & Discernment
15. Stewardship of the Unforgiving Minute
16. The Coronation & Laying Down Crowns

Complete all four modules and pass the level exam before advancing.

MODULE 1

Governing Your Response Under Pressure

Read in Scripture

Proverbs 16:32; James 1:19–27; Galatians 5:22–25

Understand and apply

Maturity takes responsibility for a response without assuming control over everyone else. Self-control is practiced with the Spirit's help. A person can feel anger and still choose truthful, patient action.

James connects listening and restrained speech with receiving and doing the word. A reflective pause helps us hear accurately; it does not excuse ignoring urgent danger or necessary intervention.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

Which pressures make it hardest for you to listen before answering?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

In a nonurgent situation, pause for ten minutes or longer before responding. Record what changed in your understanding.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 2

Conviction Without Arrogance

Read in Scripture

Proverbs 12:15; 1 Peter 5:5–7; Galatians 6:1–5

Understand and apply

Conviction and teachability belong together. Confidence in a decision does not make every criticism wrong; receiving correction does not mean surrendering every conviction.

Proverbs contrasts self-satisfied judgment with listening to counsel. Test an impression through Scripture in context and thoughtful counsel rather than assuming a strong feeling proves divine confirmation.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

How do you distinguish thoughtful counsel from pressure to win approval?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Review a disagreement. Identify one valid concern, what you checked, and your next step.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 3

Waiting Without Compromise

Read in Scripture

Psalm 27:13–14; Proverbs 13:12; Isaiah 30:15

Understand and apply

Waiting is hopeful dependence on God while fulfilling present responsibilities. Weariness can tempt us to manipulate outcomes or cut ethical corners.

Psalm 27 joins confidence and courage amid difficulty. It does not give a date for every desired outcome. Waiting faithfully can include making necessary decisions, seeking advice, and changing an unwise plan.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What responsibility can you fulfill today while an outcome remains uncertain?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Name one tempting compromise and replace it with an honest action you can take now.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 4

Refusing to Mirror Wounds

Read in Scripture

Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 12:17–21; Proverbs 24:29

Understand and apply

Retaliation can reproduce the harm we experienced. The Spirit helps believers respond with truth and grace rather than lies or hatred.

Jesus teaches love and prayer for enemies. Romans 12 rejects personal revenge. Neither requires denying wrongdoing, restoring unsafe access, or withholding appropriate accountability.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What would grace and a healthy boundary look like together?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Pray for an offender without seeking unsafe contact. Choose one truthful, nonretaliatory response.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 5

Unseen Faithfulness & Refusing the Spotlight

Read in Scripture

Matthew 6:1–4; Colossians 3:23–24

Understand and apply

Faithful service seeks God’s approval rather than applause. Public service can be appropriate; the question is whether recognition has become the governing motive.

Matthew 6 addresses righteousness performed in order to be seen. It invites sincere generosity. Necessary reporting, financial transparency, and safeguarding should not be abandoned in the name of secrecy.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

How do you respond when someone else receives credit?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Offer two appropriate acts of service without seeking personal publicity. Notice your motives.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 6

Submitted Dreams vs. Idolatry

Read in Scripture

James 4:13–17; Matthew 6:19–24; Genesis 37–50

Understand and apply

Ambitions need not be abandoned, but outcomes must not become our source of identity or permission to compromise. Hold plans with open hands.

James challenges arrogant certainty about tomorrow. In Matthew 6, treasure and competing masters frame the teaching about the eye. Use that passage in its context rather than turning it into a wordplay about personal vision.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

Could you remain faithful if this particular plan changed?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Write a goal, its cost to others, and one change that aligns its pursuit with faithful responsibility.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 7

Active Obedience Over Passive Thought

Read in Scripture

James 1:19–27; John 13:12–17

Understand and apply

Learning should become practice. Thoughtful study serves faithful action; activity without understanding can also harm people.

James describes hearing without doing as self-deception. John 13 connects understanding Jesus' example with practicing servant love. Neither passage rewards rushing into action without discernment.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What truth can you explain that you still need to practice?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Within 48 hours, practice one clear teaching in a suitable way and record the result.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 8

An Identity Rooted Beyond Circumstances

Read in Scripture

Philippians 4:10–13; Ephesians 1:3–14; Romans 8:14–17

Understand and apply

Success and failure can influence feelings without determining a person’s worth. Identity in Christ supports honest celebration, grief, correction, and growth.

Paul’s statement about strength concerns contentment in both need and abundance. It is not a guarantee of winning every challenge. Adoption passages provide the foundation for belonging in Christ.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

How do praise and disappointment affect the way you view yourself?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Write an identity statement using the assigned passages, separate from your title or accomplishments.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 9

Responding Wisely to Misrepresentation

Read in Scripture

1 Peter 2:11–25; Nehemiah 6:1–9; Matthew 18:15–17

Understand and apply

Wise responses may let a petty distraction pass, calmly clarify facts, or seek intervention. The goal is truthful, responsible action rather than compulsive self-defense.

Nehemiah declines distracting invitations and also answers a false allegation. His example supports discernment rather than a rule of silence. Accountability and protective intervention must not be replaced by pressure to handle every matter privately.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What distinguishes a distraction from a matter requiring accountability?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Apply the three response options to a fictional or real situation; explain your choice.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 10

Stooping to Rebuild

Read in Scripture

Nehemiah 4:6–23; Galatians 6:9–10

Understand and apply

Rebuilding can require humble, patient work. Faithfulness also includes discerning whether to restore, redesign, or release a project or relationship.

Nehemiah’s workers faced fatigue and danger; the response included organization, protection, and shared responsibility. Do not use perseverance to require a person to return to an unsafe relationship.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What evidence would help you decide whether rebuilding is appropriate?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Identify one small step toward restoration, redesign, or responsible closure.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 11

Grieving Honestly and Beginning Again

Read in Scripture

Psalm 62:5–8; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7; Genesis 50:15–21

Understand and apply

Grief is not a failure of faith. Honest lament, support, and small next steps can coexist. Students need not disclose a personal loss or meet a timetable for recovery.

Psalm 62 invites people to pour out their hearts. The poem's instruction never to speak about loss must be challenged by Scripture, not imposed on a grieving person. Returning to the same loss in conversation does not itself prove bitterness.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What kind of support would feel helpful rather than rushed?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Write a private lament or reflect on a biblical lament. Choose a manageable next step; sharing is optional.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 12

Faithfulness, Rest, and Renewed Strength

Read in Scripture

Isaiah 40:27–31; Mark 6:30–32; 1 Kings 19:4–18

Understand and apply

Faithfulness includes bodily limits, rest, food, community, and shared responsibility. Endurance depends on God rather than proving limitless willpower.

Elijah receives food and rest before continuing; the wider narrative also provides renewed direction and companionship. Jesus invites tired disciples to rest. Exhaustion alone does not reveal a lack of commitment.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What limit do you need to acknowledge honestly?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Plan a sustainable rhythm of rest suited to your responsibilities, and identify one task to share.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 13

Grounded Influence & The Common Touch

Read in Scripture

Philippians 2:1–11; Luke 8:43–48; Romans 12:16

Understand and apply

Growing influence should deepen service rather than produce favoritism. Every person deserves dignity, including those who cannot advance our interests.

Philippians directs believers to Christ's humility and concern for others. Accessibility does not mean unlimited availability; respectful boundaries can coexist with attentive care.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

Does a person's status change how patiently you listen?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Listen attentively to someone outside your usual circle without treating the encounter as a publicity opportunity.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 14

Relational Boundaries & Discernment

Read in Scripture

Mark 1:35–39; John 2:23–25; Proverbs 4:23

Understand and apply

Love does not require giving everyone unrestricted access. Boundaries protect faithful responsibilities while leaving room for counsel, mutual care, and accountability.

Jesus withdraws to pray and continues His mission rather than letting every demand set His direction. Do not use relational discernment to surround yourself only with people who agree with you.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

Which boundary would protect care rather than simply avoid discomfort?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Practice a specific boundary while remaining open to wise correction.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 15

Stewardship of the Unforgiving Minute

Read in Scripture

Psalm 90:1–17; Ephesians 5:15–20; Colossians 4:5–6

Understand and apply

Time stewardship means wise priorities, not constant production. Sleep, recreation, relationships, work, prayer, and unhurried presence can all be faithful uses of time.

Psalm 90 considers human frailty and asks God for wisdom. Ephesians connects wise living with discerning God’s will. Neither demands filling every moment with visible ministry output.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

What deserves more attention, and what could be reduced?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Track three days without self-condemnation. Adjust one habit to support your actual responsibilities.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

MODULE 16

The Coronation & Laying Down Crowns

Read in Scripture

Revelation 4:1–11; 1 Corinthians 15:9–11

Understand and apply

Achievements and gifts are received with gratitude and stewarded for God’s glory. Course completion recognizes learning, not superiority or automatic appointment to ministry.

The elders’ worship directs honor to God as Creator. Casting crowns offers an illustration of surrendered honor, not a promise that finishing a course confers heavenly rank. Paul credits grace while describing real labor.

Read the assigned passages in context using your CSB Bible. Work at your own pace; coaching and community discussion are optional.

Reflect privately

How will you steward learning without using it to claim superiority?

What does the passage teach, and how would you apply it in a real or fictional situation?

Practice at your pace

Prepare two growth examples, one continuing learning area, a sustainable rule of life, and a 30-day plan. Fictional applications may replace private disclosures.

Review what you learned before attempting the module quiz. Passing checks understanding, not overall spiritual maturity.

My next step: _____

What I learned: _____

Your formation portfolio

Complete these four reflections after Module 16. Use your private journal; coaching is optional. You may use fictional situations instead of personal disclosures.

1. Two application examples

Describe a situation, the principle involved, your response, and what you would change.

2. One continuing learning area

Name an area to practice without making claims of perfection.

3. A sustainable rule of life

Plan a realistic rhythm of Scripture, prayer, relationships, service, work, and rest.

4. A 30-day next-step plan

Choose one specific practice, a manageable frequency, and optional support. Identify how you will review what happened.

Assessment and care

The scored exam assesses understanding and practical discernment. Personal reflections are not graded by AI for spiritual maturity. Grief, emotion, or a need for support do not reduce a student’s worth. Honest feedback and repeated practice are part of learning.