



LEADERS GUIDE

BE FREE

LIVING IN FREEDOM
EVERYDAY

The Center Of It All...
the *WorshipCenter*
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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LIVING IN FREEDOM
EVERYDAY

The Center Of It All... **the**
WorshipCenter
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Introduction

Note Taking Section

Leader's Guide Introduction

Our Leader's Guide is designed to minimize your stress and enhance your experience as a group leader. While no two Be Free groups look quite the same, our goal is to see each group present the weekly material in a consistent and concise way. We trust the Lord has created divine appointments with the participants in your group, which means you have been handpicked to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those you meet with each week. Isn't it exciting?

The goal of the curriculum is to point people toward true freedom. What an honor it is to be a part of such a ministry. Here's the good news: As a leader, it is not your job to fix problems or have all the answers; your job is to love well and live in the Tree of Life. From the gifts and talents you've been given to the experiences you've had, you have all you need to shepherd your group down the pathways of righteousness. The Holy Spirit will do the work; all you need to do is include Him.

Each week, the Leader's Guide will give you a summary of the material and key points to cover in your group. Your time together should be less about rehashing the entire week's study and more about connecting and applying the study to daily living. A good rule of thumb for any small group is the 70/30 Rule with approximately 70% of the conversation

from participants and 30% from leaders. Your aim is simply to facilitate conversation, engage participants, and reinforce the Word of God.

Weekly Talking Points

Key Elements for Each Group Meeting

The Overview provides a general summary of the chapter. It contains a list of the big ideas participants need to understand in order to move on to the next week.

The Main Focus pulls out key concepts from the teaching. It is not an exhaustive list; however, it can be used to make sure the main truths are covered.

The Discussion Points help you as a leader to engage your participants. No doubt, you may have questions and conversation starters of your own. However, you can use these questions to draw your group into each week's discussion. Their participation in the discussion is vital!

The Take-Aways are meant to help you reinforce the ideas presented that day. The Take-Aways summarize the weekly teaching and help participants apply the concepts in their spiritual walk.

The Prayer Focus gives you specific prayer points for your group's ministry time and matches the concepts presented for the week.

Introduction

Note Taking Section

Co-leaders & Leaders

The role of the co-leader is to support the leader, pray for the leader and participants daily, and take place in weekly discussion overviews in the Leader's Guide Introduction.

Boundaries

Establish boundaries for your group. Decide ahead of time what contact information you will share with your participants, how you will communicate, and what time of the day/night is too late or too early to talk or email. There may be a day of the week you are not available because of work, children's schedules, etc. Let your co-leader(s) know this information in advance and set up a safety net for any emergencies from your group.

Housekeeping

Handouts and extra information may be emailed to you, so it is wise to create a file or desktop folder for this information. You may need these documents in the days ahead and having them handy will save you time and energy. Also hold on to a copy of your group rosters. You may need them for future Be Free groups or to invite past participants to upcoming events. It is helpful to have some way for your participants to write down prayer requests each week. Many leaders use index cards. They should turn these in to you or your co-leader during prayer time. Encourage them

to write down personal requests, specifically for them. Although you may pray for their friends and family, emphasize this is their personal ministry time.

Prayer time is one of the best parts of Be Free. Make it a priority each week. Even if discussion has to be cut short to end on time, make time for prayer. If you have a participant who is not comfortable sharing needs, ask them to allow you to pray a blessing over them. Their comfort level will rise as they encounter the Holy Spirit. This intimate prayer time also helps prepare them for the Be Free Retreat at the end of the semester.

Many leaders divide the cards up after the group ends. Pray for the prayer requests daily. If the Lord gives you a verse for them, write it down on the index card and share it with them the following week. You may even create an electronic log of each participant's prayer requests each week. Doing so makes it is easy to share with your co-leader and to see how the Lord is moving in each person's life. Consider giving the individual prayer log to each person at the end of the semester as a testimony of the goodness of the Lord. It is recommended to only use first names on written prayer requests to protect the privacy of your participants.

Introduction

Note Taking Section

Team Effort

Now, you are ready to begin the semester! Remember, you are not alone. There are many resources for you.

Coaches

Every group has a coach. The role of the coach is to be your primary prayer covering, to answer questions and offer support, and to be a mentor who will help you become an excellent Be Free leader.

Your coach views their role as a privilege. Coaches are seasoned leaders who have asked to serve in this capacity; therefore, you are not intruding into their life by asking for assistance.

All coaches have been trained by the Be Free team and understand the flow of the semester. Coaches will help you to successfully navigate the flow of leadership in Be Free and the church. Your coach will contact you before the semester begins and set up a time to meet. Your coach will visit your group during the semester. His or her role is to pray for you during the meeting and help wherever you need them. Discuss ahead of time if your coach will help you pray for participants or assist you in any way. If there is a week you feel may need extra attention, consider asking your coach to visit during that time to support you.

Introduction

Note Taking Section

Life as you know it may never be the same. No matter where you are in your faith walk, this curriculum will challenge you to take a step toward truth—about God, about faith, and about yourself.

It is for freedom Christ set us free. Paul wrote it in Galatians 5:1, and Jesus Himself said He came to earth so we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Just imagine life abundant. Not barely surviving, but truly living. It means days that begin with gladness and nights that end in peaceful sleep. It means days filled with hope, joy, and purpose. It is the kind of life God always intended for you to have.

God wants a relationship with you and He sent his son, Jesus, to bridge the gap between earth and heaven so you could know Him. It may not be easy, but it will be rewarding.

During this semester, you will be the one who decides how far you are willing to go to find freedom. Here is a promise from Jeremiah 29:13, "If you seek Him with your whole heart, you will find Him." The pursuit of Freedom begins today.

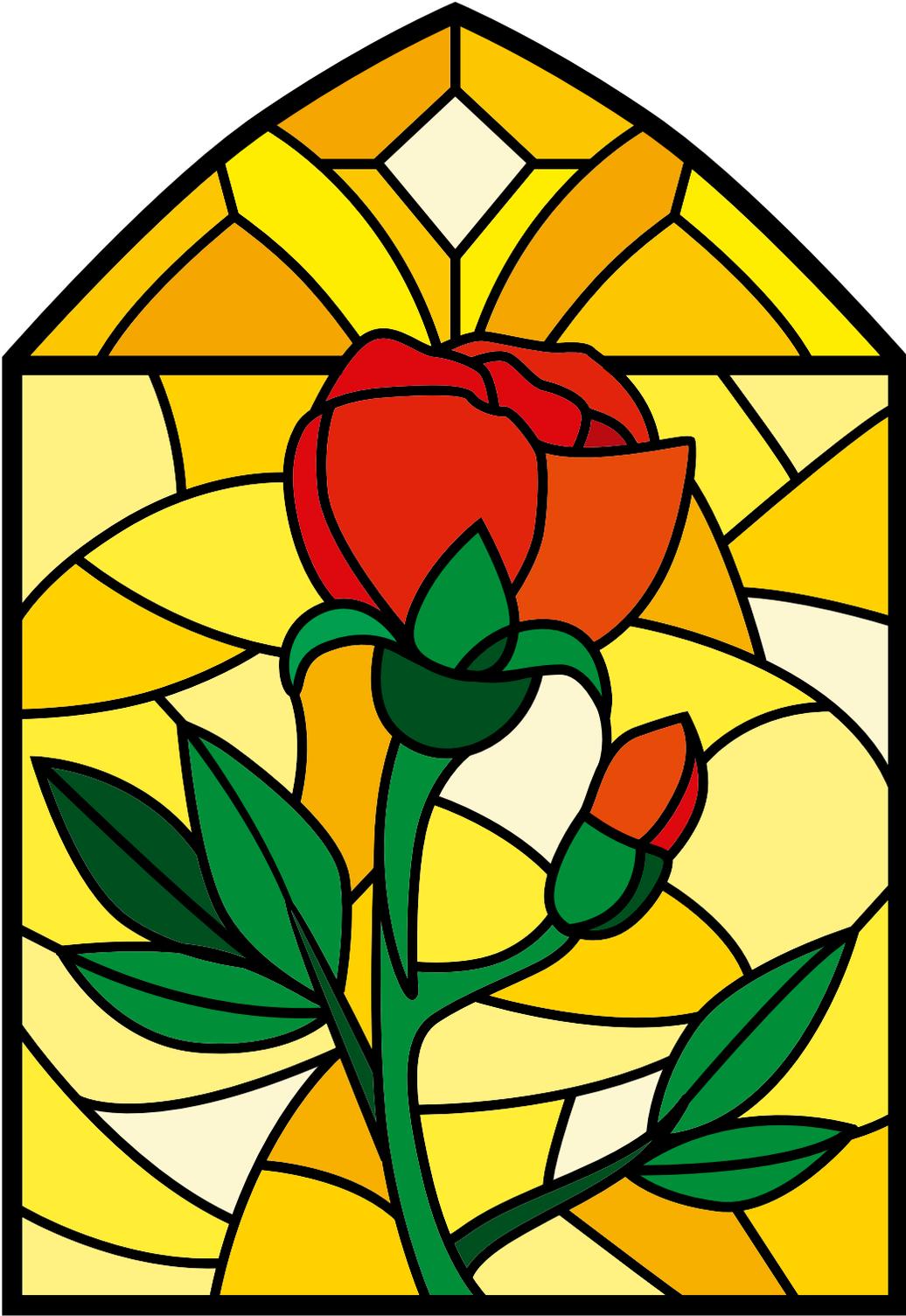
“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32).

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Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT). The other translations used in these materials are New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), The Amplified Bible (AMP), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and The Message Bible (MSG).



WEEK 1
SECTION ONE
VIDEO

WEEK 1 Section One Video

and revelation, produces death. The law reveals our sinful nature, but leaves us powerless to change. This leads an individual to feel shame and condemnation. In this tree, we offer God good works in exchange for an innocence and freedom we can never experience.

When we move to the Tree of Life (TOL), we trade information about God for a relationship with Him. It is here we accept the price has been paid for all past, present, and future shortcomings. We can now receive the extravagant love of the Father and be reshaped in His image from the inside out. Now, our new innocence produces good works from a grateful heart deeply in love with its maker.

Taking the Lead

A great way to talk about the retreat is to tell them how it changed you. If you have testimonies from past participants, consider sharing those with your group.

Discussion Points

- Is this the first time you have heard of these two trees/ life styles?
- How does this make you feel?
- Which tree do you think you live in and why?
- Talk about the difference between religion and relationship. Give everyday examples.

Take-Aways

Ask them to be conscious of their responses/thoughts to different situations this next week and mentally evaluate whether it is a TOL or TKGE response, particularly as it relates to sin in their lives. They will know which tree they are living in by their response to sin. Let willing participants share personal experiences next week.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for them to form good relationships with leaders and members of the small group; to be transparent where they are with the Lord and where they would like to be.
- Pray for transparency for your participants and for them to view the group as a safe place.
- Pray for them to invest the time for this small group through attendance and homework.
- Remember not all of your participants may be saved. They may have only experienced religion. Pray the Holy Spirit will reveal any person who needs to make Jesus the Lord of their life.

Participants Section

Note Taking Section

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil....And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:8-9, 16-17, NIV).

The Choice

The TKGE says: Getting to God means I must _____.

The TOL says: Receive the fact Jesus has already _____.

WEEK 1 Section One Video

Note Taking Section

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40 NIV).

The TKGE: Keeps you trying to get _____.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, NIV)

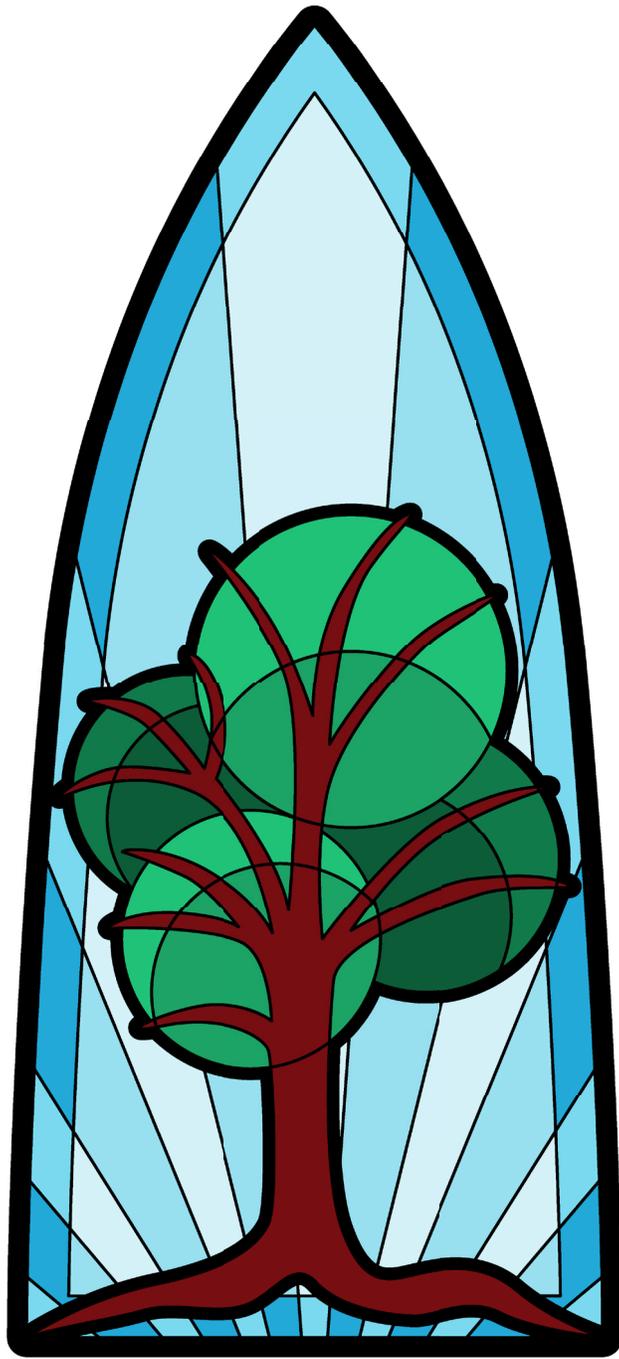
The TKGE says: _____ The TOL says: This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.... He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:3, 12, NIV).

Four Responses

1. Fall in love _____ If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15, NIV).
2. Serve God through _____ not _____ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17, NIV).
3. Respond to all sin with _____ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1, NIV).
4. Guard your _____ from going back.

What are you going to do to be godly?

This day I call the heaven and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live. (Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV).



WEEK 2
THE TREE OF THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD
AND EVIL

WEEK **2** The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

other trees). Today, he continues to try to impose on us this narrow view of the character of God.

Luke 16:16 tells us the Law of Moses has been fulfilled and the new era of grace has begun. Discuss this with your group.

Taking the Lead Discussion Points

Tell your group about a personal experience with TKGE thinking.

- Is this teaching changing the way you see God and the way you feel God sees you? Explain.
- What choices have you made that may have distanced you from God? Encourage them that their choice to join this small group was a good choice with good results to follow.
- Discuss the story of the young boy whose innocence is lost and how it affects his relationship with his parents.

Take-Aways

Ask them to share a TKGE incident from the past week. Encourage them to continue to be aware of long-standing thoughts or beliefs about themselves or God. Make sure these beliefs line up with what the Word says.

Prayer Focus

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal TKGE thinking to your participants.
- Continue to pray for them to feel a part of the group and to finish strong.
- Pray that any wrong thinking about God and who He is will be shattered as the Lord moves in their lives.
- Pray that any wrong thinking about God and who He is will be shattered as the Lord moves in their lives.

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

When we study Scripture, it's always a good idea to find the first place our subject is mentioned. In our journey to walk in communion with God and freedom, we must find out why we may be separated from God and why we may be in bondage. The first place in the Bible separation from God is mentioned is in Genesis 3. As we will see, a bad choice by the first people caused this separation (Romans 5:12).

Prior to Genesis 3, Adam and Eve walked with God and enjoyed His presence. The Bible says God walked with Adam in the cool of the day. Can you imagine their conversations? God revealing His master plan to man—it must have been incredible—a close-up-and-

personal relationship. The Word tells us God made these two humans in His image and gave Adam dominion over everything He had created. God gave Adam authority through the relationship He established. Without their relationship, there would have been no authority. When Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited this authority.

Through deception and rebellion, the serpent took the authority and dominion God had given to man. The Bible tells us Satan's desire was to exalt his throne above the stars of God (Isaiah 14:13). Until the fall of man, he lacked power and influence needed to set up rulership. Jesus called Satan the ruler of this world (John 12:31).

Write out 1 John 5:19.

THINK ABOUT IT

Through Adam, sin entered the world, and caused death and separation.

Colossians 1:21 tells us we were "once so far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions." Sin separates, and this separation costs us our freedom and the authority over Satan God gives to His children (Luke 10:19).

Praise God He made a way to end this separation! It was through Jesus that "God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of His (Jesus') blood on the cross." (Colossians 1:20).

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

Separation and the First Sin

“The Lord God planted all sorts of trees in the garden—beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden He placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil...But the Lord God gave him this warning: ‘You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die.’” (Genesis 2:9, 16–17).

Read Genesis 3:1–8 and notice who is doing what. In verses 7 and 8, what did Adam and Eve do?

Read Genesis 3:9. What did God do?

Don't miss this part: Adam and Eve hid; God came looking for them. The Bible says God is seeking after sinful man. God is in love with sinful man and sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue people.

Ask Yourself

Are there things in my past that have caused me to want to hide from God?

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

world view, you won't be able to understand Me and relate to Me." Satan says, "It won't hurt you to think like that." Note, God didn't say it's wrong to have knowledge. In fact, God said to Israel through Hosea the prophet, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6, NKJV). Aren't we glad when the surgeon has knowledge to perform an operation or the mechanic knows how to repair an engine?

"We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:1, NIV).

The issue isn't necessarily knowledge; rather, it's the motive behind its acquisition. In other words, why do we desire knowledge? Is it to gain God's wisdom and understanding, or is it to somehow exalt ourselves?

According to Colossians 2:3, what do we find hidden in Jesus?

2. The fruit is deadly.

The Lord God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16–17).

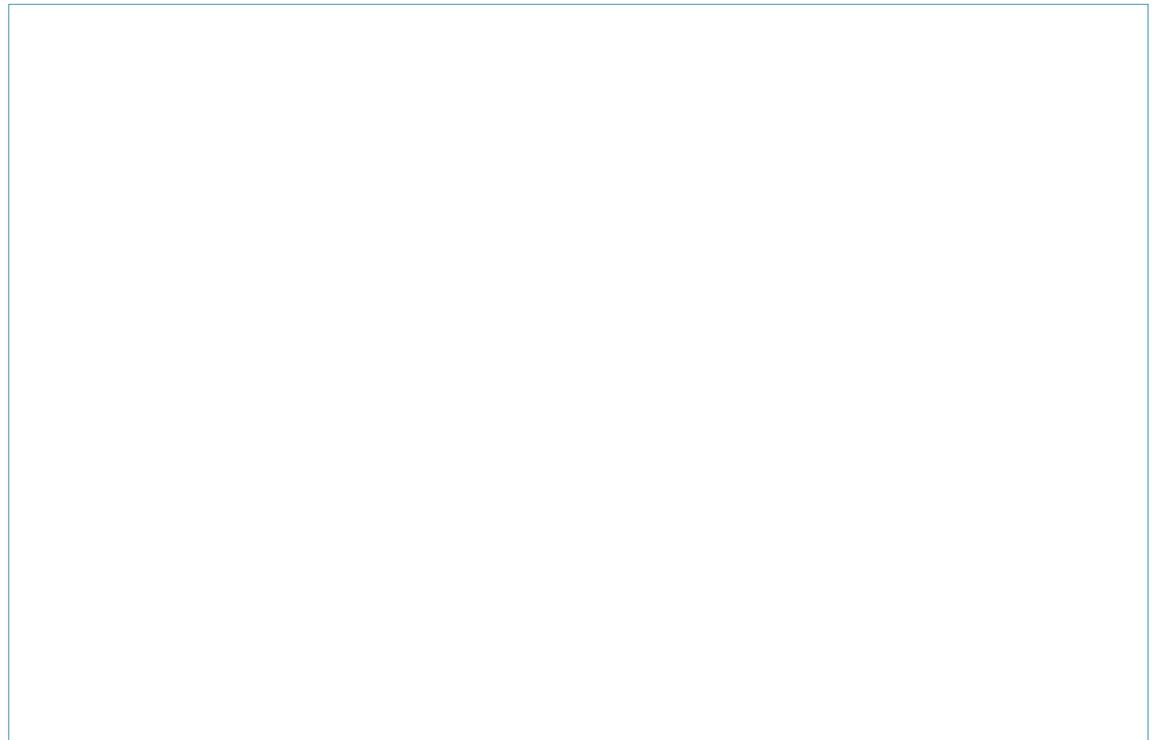
Notice God didn't say the fruit is bad, He said it is deadly. Eating from the tree of knowledge, consuming knowledge, in your pursuit of godliness is deadly. Satan didn't tempt Eve with blatant rebellion. He said, "Go ahead and eat this fruit. It will make you like

God." Satan tempted Eve with her desire to become like God. Often the desire to know is in direct opposition to the desire to trust. We can set out to gain all the information, all the ideas, and all the data needed to run our lives, and in a sense we will become like God. We can control our lives and be self-sufficient, but in the end we lose our lives.

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

Can you think of a personal example to illustrate the danger of consuming certain kinds of knowledge?



4. The fruit causes separation.

"The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8, NASB).

Again, remember it was man who hid from God. Many have been taught Adam and Eve sinned and God in His holiness and His righteousness turned His back on them because His holiness could not stand to be in the presence of sinful man. But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened, they covered up, and then

they hid. But God was walking in the garden, searching for them, and called out, "Where are you?" The truth is Adam and Eve made an incorrect judgment of God. He wasn't waiting behind a tree watching for them to fail so He could judge them. They actually judged Him! God is not on His throne holding an axe and waiting to cut us off. God is love (1 John 4:8), the Bible says love covers a multitude of sin (1 Peter 4:8). When we see His heart for us, we will run to Him instead of hiding from Him when we sin.

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

On several occasions Jesus rebuked the spiritual leaders and Bible scholars of His day for getting it all wrong. "You do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the

love of God in yourselves." (John 5:38-42 NASB).

It's a delight to the eyes. This kind of Tree of Knowledge thinking usually leads us to live by a set of rules that make us look very good on the outside to other people. The fruit is deadly because we become consumed with what others think of us rather than what God thinks.

Look up Matthew 23:27. What does this verse mean to you?

Has there ever been a time in your life when all looked good on the outside, but you knew there was death on the inside? Describe the time here.

The fruit is deadly because it is desirable to make one wise. But wisdom itself is not deadly. From the beginning, human beings have desired to be wise. God is actually pleased with this desire. In 1 Kings we have the account of God appearing to King Solomon in a dream at night and saying to him, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!" Solomon asked for only one thing - wisdom to govern the nation of Israel and the ability to discern good from evil. Read 1 Kings 3:10-13.

How did God respond to Solomon's request?

Wisdom from above:

Pure, peace-loving, gentle at all times, willing to yield to others, full of mercy and good deeds, shows no partiality, always sincere

Wisdom not from above:

Jealousy, selfishness, earthly, unspiritual, motivated by the devil

When do we need wisdom? All the time! We are making decisions, and even the smallest ones can be made with wisdom from above. Using Godly wisdom produces the results listed above. James 1:5-8 says, "If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask Him, and He will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. But when you ask Him, be sure that you really expect

Him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do." Worldly wisdom leads us to decisions to sin and therefore alienate us from God.

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

Read James 1:13–15. What is the progression of sin?

This progression tells us sin does not begin with the act; it begins in our minds. Like a train on track, the more we entertain thoughts that don't line up with God's Word, the faster we go down a deadly track. If we don't stop the thoughts, we go racing into deadly territory and crash into an act that brings us harm. We can't see sin from the outside at the point it becomes sin, so we must develop a hunger for God and His wisdom and keep that hunger stirred up by having our minds constantly renewed to the Word of God. Otherwise, we will find ourselves separated from Him before we even realize it.

The TKGE produces shame and victimization.

"Adam replied, 'I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.' 'Who told you that you were naked?' the LORD God asked. 'Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?' 'Yes,' Adam admitted, 'but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.' Then the LORD God asked the woman, 'How could you do such a thing?' 'The serpent tricked me,' she replied. 'That's why I ate it.'" (Genesis 3:10–12).

Imagine a young teenage boy who has always been a delight to his parents. He's been bright-eyed and innocent. There's been no hesitation about him until one day when his mother notices a change. He becomes serious and angry and begins to come home with droopy shoulders, his head hung low, and the

sparkle gone from his eyes. He barely speaks to his parents and goes straight to his room. One day while cleaning his room, his mother notices pornographic magazines under his mattress. She begins to understand. Her innocent, wonderful, bright, lively son has darkness and death inside of him."

He has been polluted; he is no longer a little boy. All the things he saw in the magazine were true — the issue is he didn't need to know. Because of what's inside him now, he can't relate to his parents the same anymore. He has become shameful. His parents haven't changed; it's he who has changed as he spent time looking at those pictures. His innocence has been polluted. Shame causes us to separate ourselves from God so we cannot operate in the freedom Christ has for us. Shame is a veil that comes between God and us. It covers us completely, even our eyes, so we can see only dimly who and where God is. God said to Adam and Eve, "Who told you that you were naked?"

His tone was most likely similar to that of the mother in the story above, with great sadness and angst, "Who gave you those magazines? You really shouldn't know that." God said, "Who told you that you were naked? You've eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, and it has polluted you."

Shame causes us to do all sorts of things that keep us from connecting with God. Shame is when we want to hide. Prior to eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). Afterwards they came up with the idea of sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves, and then tried to hide from God's presence in the trees of the garden.

THE RESULTS OF SHAME

- Covering up with religion and becoming works focused.
- Lying, deception, false pride.
- Making promises we can't keep.
- Getting our self-worth from the things we do.
- An inability to come to a place of honesty with God because we believe we have no true value.
- Concentrating on our sin instead of concentrating on our Savior.

Why is shame so deadly? It strips us of the power to change. It keeps us from receiving the provision God made for our sin through the blood of Jesus. There is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is about what we have done, but shame is about who we are.

With guilt we can always get a fresh start. With shame we are caught in a noose because the problem stays with us. In fact, with shame we are the problem. The solution for getting rid of shame is seeing ourselves as God sees us.

WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

Read Psalm 103:11–13 and 1 John 1:9. Are there any areas of your life—perhaps with your parents When are we to have shame and why?

Ask Yourself:

Have you ever been overcome by shame? What steps should you take to remove the barrier of shame from your life?

Victimization is a natural response to our sin. “The devil made me do it; the woman you gave me made me do it.” We blame others by displacing responsibility, and we point the finger saying, “You’re not good enough.” We blame ourselves and get into condemnation thinking, “I’m not good enough.” In blaming others, we look at

everything in terms of right and wrong. We say, “If my husband would just treat me right, I wouldn’t be so unhappy and manipulative. If my family wasn’t so backbiting, I wouldn’t be so hurt. If everybody would just live like they are supposed to, everything would work out right.”

THE RESULTS OF VICTIMIZATION

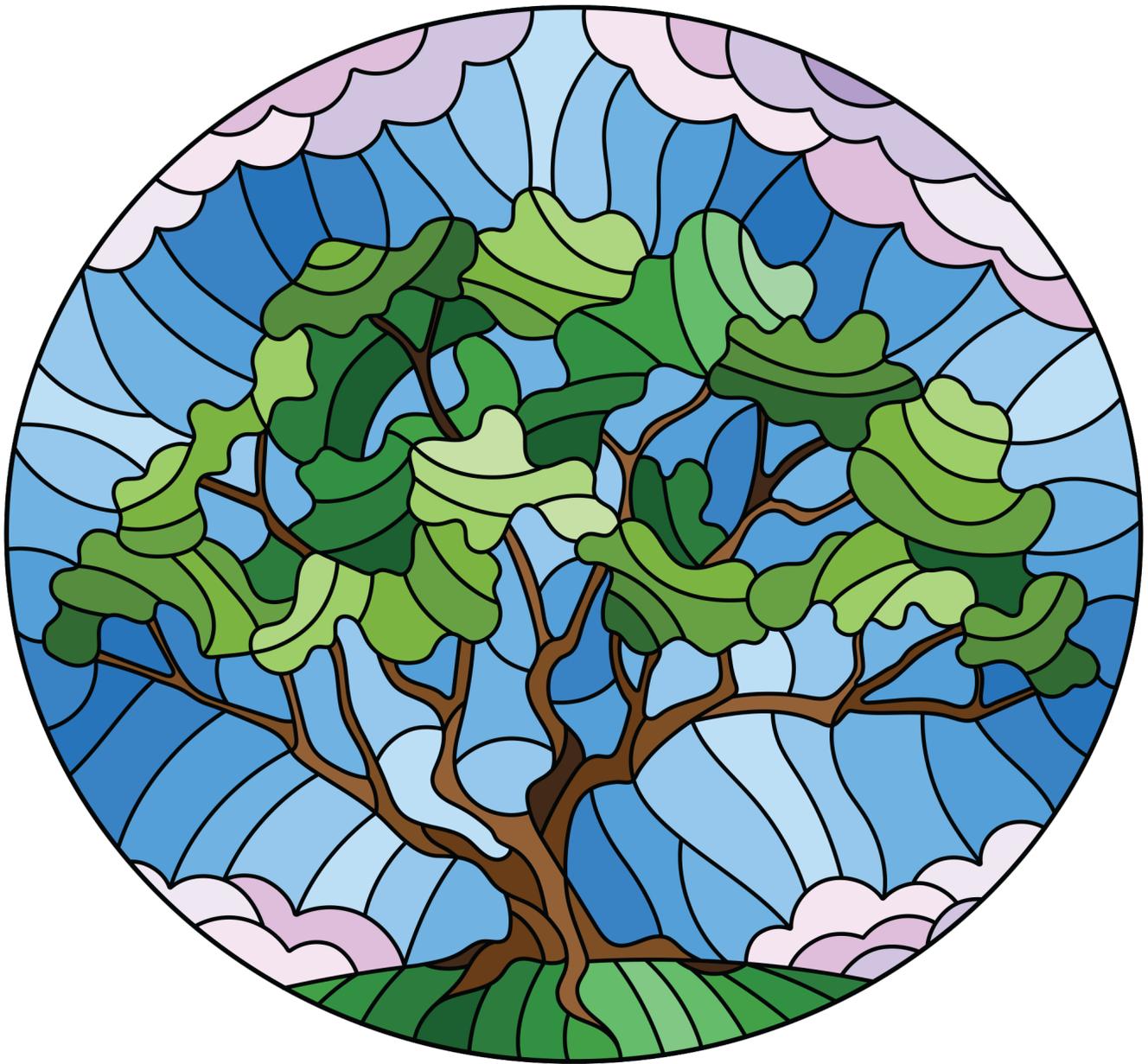
- We notice other’s sins, but not our own.
- We blame ourselves by saying, “I’ve just always been this way. I’ll never change. I’ll never be good enough.”
- We feel rejected.

Whether we blame others or ourselves with victimization, we are powerless to change! It’s the reason victimization is so deadly!

WEEK **2** The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Note Taking Section

“Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, ‘I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.’” (John 8:12).



WEEK 3
THE TREE
OF LIFE

WEEK **3** The Tree of Life

Tell your group about a time when Tree of Life thinking changed a situation for you

Discussion Points

- Describe your relationship with God. What keeps you from drawing close to Him?
- Think about this past week. Did you live in the TOL most days? Give examples for either answer.
- Jesus came to make us brand new, not better. Do we see ourselves this way?

Taking the Lead

Discuss practical ways to stay in the TOL. In the Tree of Life, we are quick to repent and quick to forgive; we offer solutions, not excuses, and we extend grace, not condemnation. We are goal-oriented, rather than needing to be right. Discuss.

As we die to our self (crucified with Christ), we become un-offendable. People cannot take advantage of us anymore because we live for the Lord and not for man.

Prayer Focus

People tend to see God the way that they see their earthly father. Therefore, a person who has had a difficult relationship with their earthly father may have incorrect thinking about God. For example, if their earthly father was judgmental and critical, they may see God as someone just waiting for them to mess up. Keep this in mind when you are ministering to your group.

- Pray that each member of your group understands that it is a daily choice to live in the TOL.
- Pray that as they receive the grace and love afforded to them by the Father, they will extend this love and grace to others—especially those that they live with each day.
- Pray for a restoration of their relationships, as they are enlightened to God's way of thinking.

WEEK 3 The Tree of Life

Note Taking Section

Write out Matthew 11:28–30.

Fruits of Living in the Tree of Life

The Tree of Life results in fellowship with God.

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” (John 17:3, NIV).

According to Vine's Bible Dictionary, “know” in this verse is the Greek word *ginosko*, which means to recognize, to understand, or to understand completely. It indicates a relationship. What is known of the other person is of value and importance and

establishes the relationship. The only way to experience the abundant life is by truly knowing the living God. He asked us to love Him, but only after His lavish display of love for us through the sacrifice of Jesus. “God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10). The Bible says in 1 John 4:19 the only reason we have any love at all is because He first loved us.

God so loved us He made a blood covenant with His son, Jesus, at the cross to make a way for us to be in relationship with Him. The cross represents more than a sacrificial death. It is a blood covenant God cannot break (Hebrews 6:17-18). In the Old Testament, God made covenants with man, and man always messed

them up. This time God sealed the covenant with the blood of His Son Jesus, so nothing could separate us from His love.

Fellowship with God results in innocence — not the other way around!

"They realized they were naked."
(Genesis 3:7, NIV) As we spend time walking with God, listening for His voice, talking to Him, obeying Him, worshipping and enjoying Him, we

will notice a transformation taking place, not only on the outside, but on the inside as well. We will become, in a sense, "naked" or transparent and unashamed before Him.

Nakedness, in Genesis 3:7, speaks of innocence. Adam and Eve were unaware of any reason to hide anything from God. They had no sin-consciousness. We might think of little kids running around with no clothes on after a bath. Childlike innocence is an amazing virtue. Adam and Eve's nakedness was part of the innocence and simplicity of their lives. They were actually clothed in the glory of God. Before they sinned, they had nothing of which to be ashamed. It is the same concept Jesus talked about when He said we had to be like little children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:14). Children are not technically innocent; they just don't have any hesitation about them. They are not weighted down with guilt, shame, and burdens.

I Corinthians 14:20 (NIV) says, "Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil, be infants, but in your thinking, be adults." God wants us to be mature in our thinking, but for the kingdom of God to work in us in power, childlikeness must be an ingredient. To some, this may look like naivety or simple-mindedness, but it is actually a biblical way to live. Jesus says to be as shrewd as a snake and as innocent as a dove (Matthew 10:16). It is a mysterious and rare combination for the world in which we live. Paul says in I Corinthians 1:27, "God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise." Dare to be misunderstood in your pursuit of friendship with God because only the pure in heart will see Him (Matthew 5:8).

Good works cannot produce innocence and fellowship with God. Innocence and fellowship with God produce good works.

Simple innocence is born out of a friendship with God. It means we rest in God. We abide in His favor and presence so when someone offends us, we can respond with kindness instead of anger. As we are being transformed into the image of God, the negativity of the world does not have an effect on our emotions. Once we understand that truth, the enemy has no ammunition. If we sin, we know how to receive forgiveness, and if someone offends us, we know how to forgive.

WEEK 3 The Tree of Life

Note Taking Section

What does Psalm 37:23-24 say happens when the godly stumble?

Freedom changes the way we live and think about every part of our lives. If you attend church in the Tree of Life, you will love everything about it. You will love the pastor, the people, and the worship, because you're thinking of the appropriation of life Himself. On the other hand,

thinking in terms of the knowledge of good and evil will result in ideas such as "These songs are too long and too loud," "The preaching is too simple," "The children are too noisy," or "No one talked to me."

Relationships change in the Tree of Life. We no longer hold people to impossible standards; we are quick to extend forgiveness, slow to take offense. Instead of looking for people to meet our needs, we look for ways to serve others. We live for Jesus and His Kingdom, so people are no longer able to "take advantage of us." It is true freedom

If there is a gap between where you are and where you long to be, take heart. Innocence and freedom are fruits from the Tree of Life, and they have always been God's plan for you.

Reading the Bible, praying, or serving others should be a source of life, security, strength, and delight to us. These should never be religious duties to be performed. Think about prayer. It is a miracle the God of the universe wants to fill us with His nature and His life as we simply dialogue with Him. Prayer will be powerful in the Tree of Life. Reading the Bible will be a refreshing of your spirit in the Tree of Life. No more guilt-ridden sittings where you plow through twenty chapters a day because it's what Christians do. Religion says, "Do it or suffer!" Relationship says, "Do it and live!"

Ask Yourself:

Do I feel completely innocent before God? What would it be like to have true fellowship with God?

WEEK 3 The Tree of Life

Note Taking Section

He is required to be faithful or suffer consequences. A son serves because he is part of the family. A son is faithful because of the love he has for his father. Through Jesus, God now sees us as sons and daughters.

Read Galatians 4:7 and 2 Corinthians 6:18. What does God say about your identity?

Ask Yourself: Do I live my life as a son or as a servant?

God has lavished His love on us by calling us His children (1 John 3:1). Just as our natural relationships are strengthened through time and fellowship, our relationship with God will become stronger and more meaningful as we spend time in prayer, read the Word of God, and experience communion with other

believers. Only in the Tree of Life, we realize these tasks are because of relationship, not responsibility. Falling in love with Him turns the idea of duty into devotion. It is a beautiful and wonderful thing.

Recognize the two environments where you can live: the Tree of Life or TKGE. Knowing you can choose a Tree of Life response and attitude in every circumstance is crucial to walking in freedom. It is a daily choice to respond with life and godliness. Throughout the Bible, God compares the fruit of godly decisions with the fruit of ungodly decisions. It is clearly God's desire that

we should live a life that produces godly fruit. It can only be done only by choosing to live God's way – in the Tree of Life.

In Matthew 11, Jesus compares His way of living to the religious Pharisees. The Pharisees were legalistic and self-righteous. Their approach to God was in the strict keeping of all Jewish laws.

WEEK 3 The Tree of Life

Note Taking Section

Renew your mind to what the Word of God says is true. Real change happens when we know what the Word of God says about our lives. Many times our worldview and past experiences shape our version of truth. We cannot make

the Bible line up to what we think is true, but we can line up our truth with the Bible. In order to do this, we must consume the Word. Changing our internal truth will change our external responses.

Romans 12:2 (NIV) says "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will." The pattern of this world will lead to death. God's will leads to life.

we practice putting God's Word ahead of our feelings and beliefs. In other words, don't just read the Bible, let it read you.

2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us every thought and action we have needs to be examined for godly accuracy. If it does not line up with what the Bible says, we must take it captive and make it obedient to the Word of God. It will become a way of life as

In Ephesians 4, Paul says we should let the Holy Spirit renew our thoughts and our attitudes and to put on our new self which is created in the very likeness of God in righteousness and holiness. It is a choice we must make. We must choose to renew our thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs in God's word and we must choose to put on holiness and righteousness.

Read Philippians 4:8 and write out a way to renew our minds.

Have you ever heard someone say they can't help what they think? It's not true. No longer will we allow the enemy free reign in our minds! Choose today to take hostage every thought

that does not line up with Scripture, and meditate on the life-giving words of God. God. Remember God loves you, and He is for you. Grace was His idea.



WEEK 4
SPIRITUAL ORDER

WEEK 4 Spiritual Order

Taking the Lead Discussion Points

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you think of a fresh way to explain spiritual order, and share it with your group.

- What are the benefits of walking in the spirit? To hear God's voice clearly (John 10:1-5), for spiritual protection (2 Timothy 2:26), to defeat the stronghold of sin (Galatians 5:16).
- What area of life do you feed the most?
- What are some ways we can feed our spirits?

Take-Aways

Make sure everyone has at least a simple understanding of their three-part design. Talk about ways you maintain spiritual order. Challenge them to find a specific Scripture for an area in their life that needs to be touched by the Father (see Freedom Song-Scriptures Appendix).

Prayer Focus

- Pray the Lord will reveal and reconcile any areas not in spiritual order.
- Pray for hearts of flesh instead of stone; and new hearts are consumed with right desires.
- Pull down strongholds that have exalted themselves above the word of the Lord.
- Some of your people may not have Christian friends. Pray for godly relationships for each participant.
- Pray they hear and understand the voice of the Holy Spirit.

WEEK 4 Spiritual Order

Note Taking Section

Ask Yourself: How does knowing my spirit is redeemed and is in right standing with the Father change the way I see myself?

Now being one with Christ, we have the ability to understand spiritual truths and discern right from wrong. We can adjust our lives to hear the voice of God. It is much like tuning a dial to pick up a radio station. Sometimes

there may be static in the airway (distraction, confusion, fear, etc.), but if we continue to seek the Lord and His way of doing things, our spirit will rise above the static and we will be able to tune in to the broadcast of truth.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14, and write why the world cannot accept the things that come from God.

The Soul

The soul is one of God's most beautiful creations. It enables us to experience relationships and appreciate the beauty of our surroundings. We have been made in the image of God with the capacity to think, reason, and express emotions. God could have programmed us to do and be whatever He wanted, but instead He gave us the ability to choose.

Our souls are made up of three parts:

- the mind, which thinks and reasons.
- the will, which makes choices.
- the emotions, which believe, feel, and remember.

Let's take a look at some examples from the Bible of things related to the soul.

WEEK 4 Spiritual Order

Note Taking Section

The Body

In Genesis 2:7, we learn God formed our bodies from the earth. The body acts as a temporary house or shell and contains our soul and spirit. First Corinthians 6:19 says our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the presence of God was housed in the inner sanctuary of the Temple called the Holy of Holies. At the death of Jesus, the veil of the Temple was torn and the presence of

God moved out of a structure and into the hearts of all believers. Just as we would not go to church and shatter the windows and destroy the furniture, we should not do anything to intentionally harm our bodies; they are special, designed by God, and given in order for us to carry out the plans He has for us on this earth.

Read Psalm 139:13-18. What does verse 14 say about you?

In a surrendered life, we're not looking for loop-holes in the law but rather falling more in love with our Savior and His plan for our life.

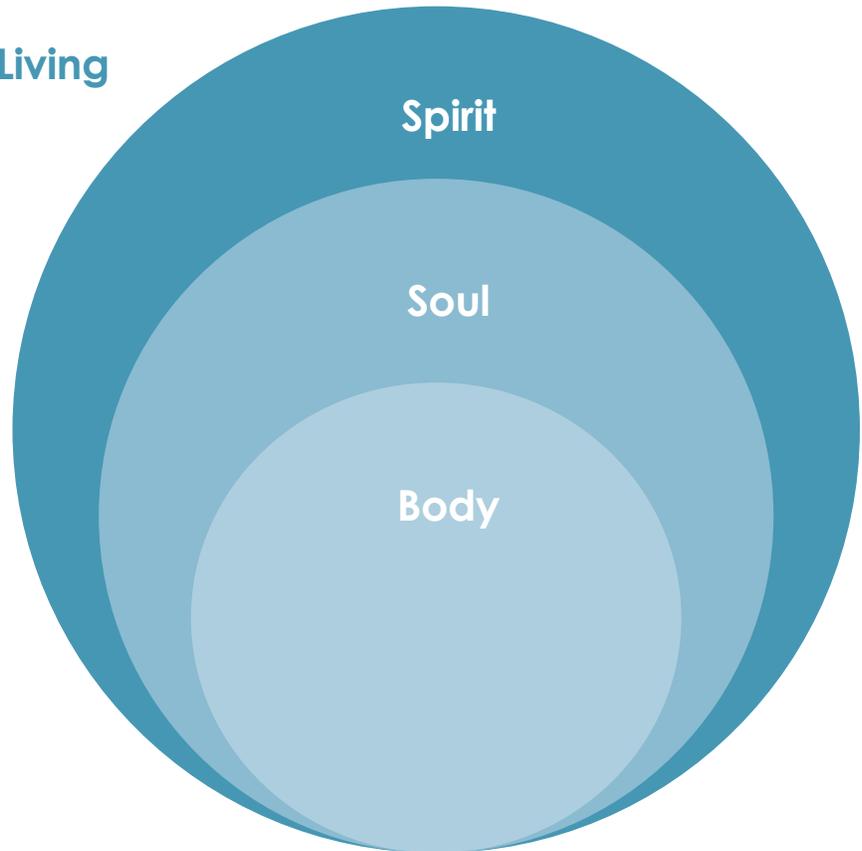
Our bodies are made up of appetites, both good and bad. The Bible says to be careful of any sin that leads to our flesh getting anything it wants. Often people want to know: How far can I sin and still enjoy the benefits of God's blessing? The snare with sin is it never satisfies. We are constantly looking to fulfill the next craving. Carnal desires will cause us to need satisfaction, and though we may satisfy them in the moment, the craving soon returns and brings with it increased intensity. The cycle will repeat itself time and again—until we break it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ask Yourself: Are my actions driven by my cravings?

WEEK 4 Spiritual Order

Note Taking Section

Ordered Living



Spiritual order provides a framework for living in the Tree of Life. It means you live with your spirit united with God, and your soul and body submitted to your spirit. In other words, your spirit (which is now one with God) calls the shots, and the soul and body follow. So here's the real question, if I am saved, why do I still struggle with sin? The answer is found in the process of sanctification and the principle of spiritual order. When you are born again, you receive everything you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), but you may still struggle because

your spirit is not in the lead. The area we give the most attention will become the most influential. Your spirit can take the lead only if you feed it more than your soul and body.

The world around constantly feeds our soul through everything we see and hear. And our bodies, if starved, let us know they are hungry. If we withhold gratification from our souls and our bodies, they get loud. Our spirit, on the other hand, when not fed, gets quiet. We have to be intentional to feed our spirit.

Ask Yourself: What am I doing to feed my spirit?

WEEK 4 Spiritual Order

Note Taking Section

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and selfcontrol. (Galatians 5:22-23).

According to Galatians 6:8, what happens to a person who lives a spirit-led life?

Daily Living

Living in spiritual order brings with it incredible benefits, such as protection, spiritual growth, and power to overcome obstacles in our lives. It is dangerous to live outside of spiritual order. When we choose to do things

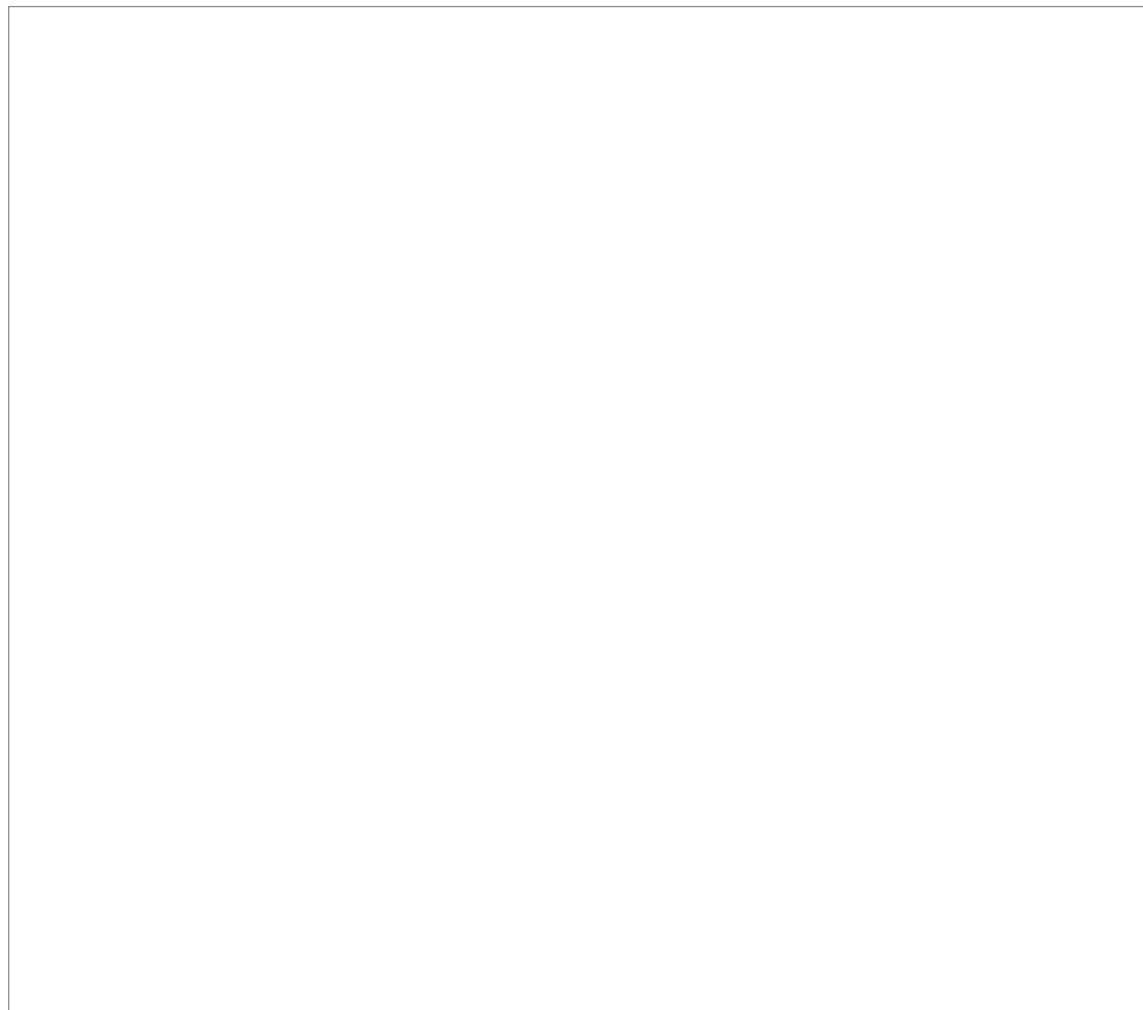
our own way, our lifestyle opens a door for the enemy to operate in our lives. There is protection from the enemy when we choose to do live life God's way and give control of our lives to Him.

Read Psalm 91. According to verses 9-10, who is afforded the benefits of protection and safety?

WEEK 4 Spiritual Order

Note Taking Section

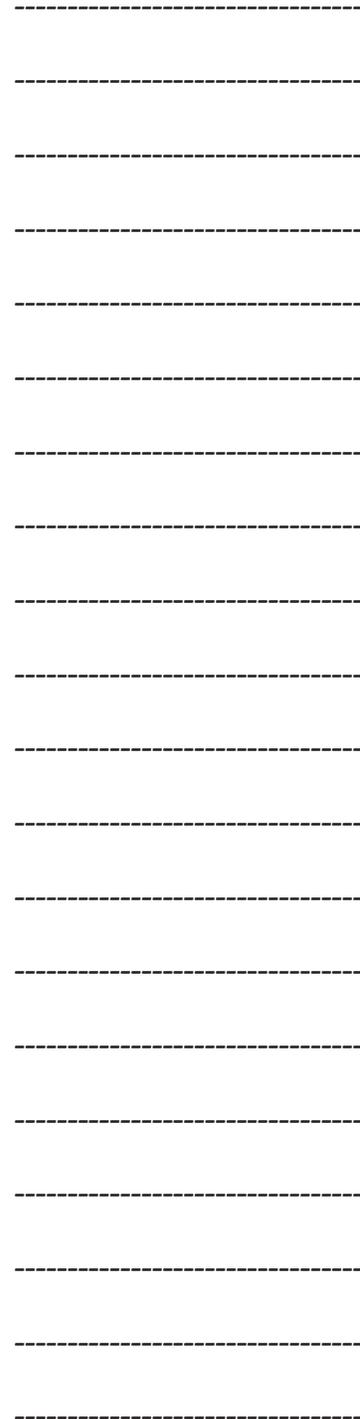
Write out Ephesians 1:4.

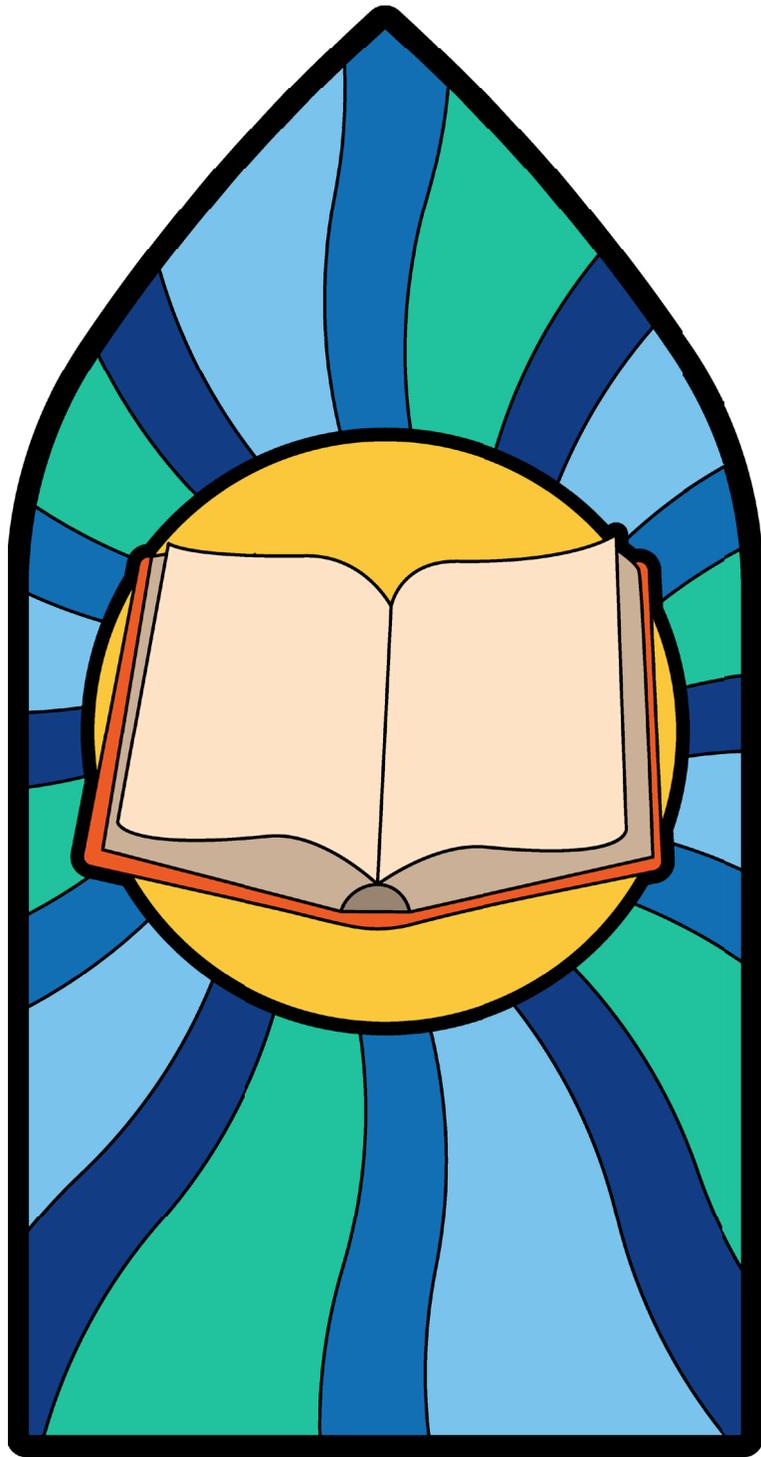


To walk in spiritual order, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. He is our counselor, our friend, our guide, and the One who reveals truth. Start getting to know Him today. In your new relationship with Him, Bible reading will become more enjoyable, worship more intimate, prayer more powerful, and living in the Tree of Life more tangible and exciting. When walking with Jesus, life is abundant indeed— and it is only the beginning!

Note Taking Section

Journal: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?





WEEK 5
SECTION TWO
VIDEO — NOTES

WEEK 5 Section Two Video

The Power of Positive Thinking is the counterfeit to Words of Life. Positive thinking is worldly. In order to speak Words of Life, we must find out what the Word of God says about our circumstances and allow it to be our confession.

Taking the Lead

Tell your group about a time you changed a circumstance by changing your words.

Discussion Points

- Are there areas of your life you have not surrendered to the Lord? Why are you holding on to them? What would you lose by letting go? What would you gain?
- Have you ever thought about your words having power? Do you speak words of life? Words of death?

Take-Aways

A journal is a good way to record the faithfulness of God and help to document a history with God. Talk about the areas of our lives which are easily surrendered. Next, talk about areas of our lives which are harder to surrender. If needed, ask participants to surrender the easier areas first and watch what happens. Later, surrender the harder areas. Remember to communicate to your participants all these principles (surrender, forgiveness, words of life, etc.) help us stay in spiritual order by feeding our spirit, and not our soul/body.

Prayer Focus

- Ask the Lord to show them any areas of their lives not fully surrendered.
- Pray they will trust the Lord with their whole hearts.
- Ask the Lord to make them aware of the connection between the words they speak and the condition of their hearts.
- Pray they will speak words of life over themselves, their families, and their circumstances.

WEEK 5 Section Two Video

Note Taking Section

Three Steps to Transforming the Heart

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27, NIV).

1. Invite the Holy Spirit to _____ .

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24, NIV).

2. Invite the Holy Spirit to _____ .

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10-11, NIV).

3. Invite the Holy Spirit to _____ .

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, NIV).



WEEK 6
A LIFE OF
SURRENDER

WEEK 6 Surrender

Taking the Lead

Your weekly worship is demonstrating to participants how to enter into the presence of God. Teach them the importance of making this a part of their lives outside the group.

Discussion Points

- Read Matthew 6:27-33 aloud. Much of our time is spent gaining or maintaining things. If you were to let go of material things and live for God, how would it change your life?
- Go over the six ways to stay un-offended. Let participants take turns sharing which one spoke to them and why. When we're offended it means a "right" has been violated in our lives. Yet, with our lives laid down for Christ we have no rights to violate! Discuss the freedom that comes from this understanding.
- Encourage them to see the real battle beneath the offense. How can we respond in a life-giving way to an offense?
- Of the three things (ourselves, our relationships, and our things) we must surrender to God, which is the greatest struggle for you to surrender and why?

Take-Aways

Encourage participants in their pursuit of spiritual order. Ask them to be aware of times their soul and body call the shots and times their spirit was the strongest of the three. You may consider a brief explanation of fasting here.

Ask them to identify an area of their lives not fully surrendered to the Lord. Let them write it down and commit to pray about it this week.

Now that they are learning about living a life without offense, the enemy will make sure they have an opportunity to be offended. Tell them to be aware of this during the week and to be ready to respond with their new information on page 51. It will be fun to quiz them about this next week.

Prayer Focus

- Pray they will understand they have been invited to come boldly into the throne room of God.
- Ask the Lord to show them how to enter into His Presence.

WEEK 6 Surrender

Note Taking Section

Man was created as a worshipper and we will worship what we value the most. In Exodus 20:3-4, God told the Israelites not to place any gods before Him or make any kind of idol. Sometimes we think of an idol as a carved statue or something of that

sort, but it can also be anything we desire more than God. Idols can be hobbies, sports, jobs, or even people. It is not wrong to enjoy or even admire such things, but they are unworthy of taking top priority. If we want to walk in spiritual order, God must be first.

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33).

More or Less

Being consumed with things is called materialism. When materials become the priority of our lives, we become victims to the pressure and stress in the race to have more. The enemy then

has an opening to attack our minds and emotions with incessant thoughts about what we have and what we want. The more we have, the more attention and care we have to give to our stuff.

Look up the following verses. What is the result of giving things and money the place of priority in our lives?

Matthew 13:22

Revelation 3:17

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Ask Yourself: Is there anything in my life that is more important than God?

Let's take a look at God's perspective on our wealth:

“And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.” (Ecclesiastes 5:19).

“Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.” (1 Timothy 6:17-18).

“Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then He will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10).

THINK ABOUT IT

We honor God with our wealth because it all comes from Him.

WEEK 6 Surrender

Note Taking Section

I Surrender All

There are many areas of our own lives to surrender to God including plans, goals, pleasures, ambitions, hurts, the future, the past, selfishness, ego, sin, pride, physical appearance, lust, anger, fear, and health. Even unforgiveness can fall under the category of "self," because holding on to an offense is essentially saying we have a right to withhold grace from someone. This type of pride is an idol that will cause a wedge between God and us.

Surrendering does not mean we have no goals or ambitions. On the contrary, God is the One who puts desires in our hearts. It doesn't mean our personality has to drastically change or we need to become someone else. However, it does mean we submit ourselves to His will and join with Him in His plans for us.

Ask Yourself:

Have I surrendered my past, present and future to God? Do I trust His way is better than my own?

Trust & Obey

Many years ago John Henry Sammis wrote the lyrics to a now famous hymn: "Trust and obey for there's no other way / To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." Those two words, trust and obey, sum up what it means to surrender.

As we walk through this life, many things will try to take the lead and capture the number one spot on our list. Surrendering daily will keep us walking down the right path. We won't turn to the right or to the left because of distractions or temptations because we will hear the voice of the Lord saying, "This is the pathway, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

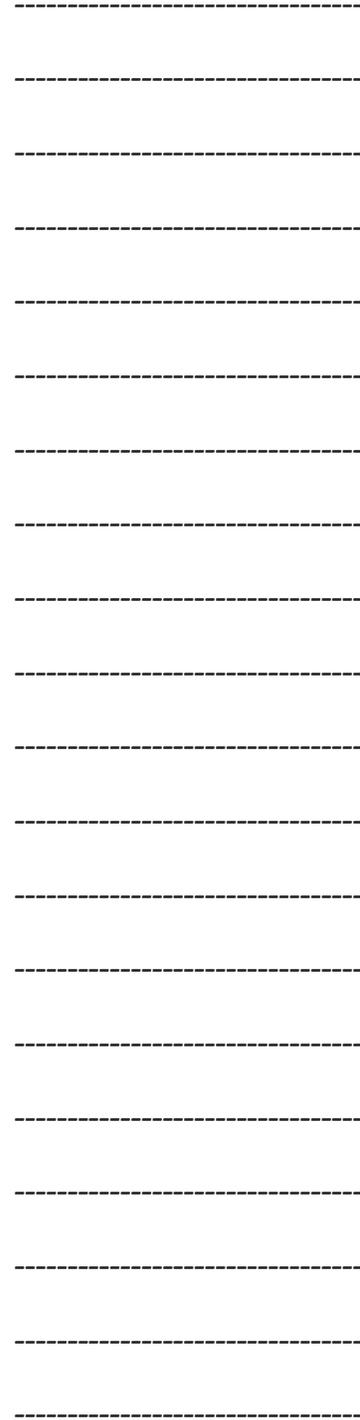
Spiritual Order in Action

Read Romans 12:9-19 below. Underline the actions. How would your life change if you lived life this way?

- Don't just pretend that you love others.
- Really love them.
- Hate what is wrong.
- Stand on the side of the good.
- Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
- Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.
- Be glad for all God is planning for you.
- Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful.
- When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out.
- And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.
- If people persecute you because you are a Christian, don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.
- When others are happy, be happy with them.
- If they are sad, share their sorrow.
- Live in harmony with each other.
- Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people.
- And don't think you know it all!
- Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.
- Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.
- Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.
- Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God.
- For it is written, "I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it," says the Lord.

Note Taking Section

Journal: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?





WEEK 7
FORGIVENESS

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Taking the Lead

Tell your group about a personal experience with unforgiveness/forgiveness.

Discussion Points

- Did the Holy Spirit reveal anyone they need to forgive? If this is difficult for them, let them ask themselves why.
- Have they had the wrong idea of forgiveness?
- Explore the question, "How would your life change if you chose to believe the best of everyone?"
- Have you forgiven yourself of past sins? What is holding you back?

Take-Aways

Ask your participants to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to them any person they have held in unforgiveness. Also, they should ask if they have forgiven themselves completely. It is a dangerous and yet wonderful prayer because the Lord will answer them! Encourage them so they may receive answers over time. Recommend journaling their prayer with its answers.

This is a lot of material for one week. Continue to reference forgiveness throughout the remaining weeks and allow participants to share what the Holy Spirit is revealing to them.

Look at the declaration, Let Freedom Ring, on page 77. Read it aloud in your group and let the power of the Scriptures minister to your participants.

Prayer Focus

- Pray they truly receive the Lord's forgiveness for themselves.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to gently reveal people they need to forgive.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help them to forgive those who have offended them.
- Pray the Lord would heal every wound in their lives that has been created by offense.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

Ask Yourself: Am I harboring unforgiveness?

Unforgiveness holds us in bondage and keeps us from living in the Tree of Life. So why is it so hard to forgive others? Let's look at three reasons we have a hard time extending forgiveness to people in our lives.

1. We have a wrong idea of forgiveness.

We don't offer forgiveness easily to others because we have an incorrect definition of what forgiveness means. We have not defined forgiveness properly. To truly understand what it means to forgive someone, we need to learn what forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness is not minimizing the offense. Offering forgiveness to someone who has wronged you is not saying, "It's no big deal" or "It didn't really hurt." It is a big deal and it did cause pain. What was done or said was not right, and harm never reflects the Father's heart for you. God's perfect will is to protect and nurture you. Rather, when you choose to forgive, you choose not to hang on to the offense because it robs you of freedom.

Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Letting go of offense does not mean you must reconcile with the person. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." God understands there are times when reconciliation may not be the best choice. If the offender is not ready to reconcile, it will only cause further pain and disappointment when you are exposed to the same circumstances. In such situations, rely on the Holy Spirit to lead you. Begin by allowing the miracle of forgiveness to happen in you.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

Jesus told Peter he would need to forgive his brother 490 times a day, or once every three minutes. At the rate our thoughts sometimes race, the number doesn't seem too farfetched, does it? In the parable you just read, the first man owed a debt of 10,000 talents, which is equal to about \$5 billion in today's currency. The master cancelled this debt. Like this man, we, as sinners, owed a great debt we could not pay, but God loves us anyway. Through the cross, Jesus paid our debt in full. We are forgiven much.

The second man owed a debt of 100 Denarii, equal to about \$10 thousand in today's economy. Is this an insignificant amount of money? No, it is quite a lot. In the same way, when someone hurts or offends us, it is significant. But because we have been forgiven much, we can extend what we have received to others. None of us deserve the forgiveness God has given to us. We should rejoice in the fact that God isn't fair. If He were fair, we would have to pay for our own sins. Thankfully, we don't get what we deserve; instead we have abundant life now and eternal life to come.

Ask Yourself

In light of all I have been forgiven, can I release those who have wronged me? Would I trade my forgiveness from God for the right to hold someone accountable for their offense towards me?

3. We don't think we can do it.

The third reason we don't forgive is we don't think we have the power and the strength to do it. This is the voice of the enemy. He is called the Father of Lies (John 8:44). We must recognize and silence the voice of our adversary.

If we measure our circumstances by our own abilities it will always seem like it can never happen. But we don't measure circumstances by our own strength, but by the power and strength of the Lord.

Write out Philippians 4:13. Commit this verse to memory.

Write out 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In the passage above, Paul is saying something incredible happens in the midst of his struggles—the power of Christ is at work! Forgiveness does not turn us into doormats. In fact, the opposite occurs; we become victorious.

THINK ABOUT IT

When we forgive an offense, we set a prisoner free, only to discover that we were that prisoner.

God is inviting you into a new reality. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling, and it will be a daily choice. We would like to wait until we feel like forgiving and then let our choices follow. But if we do it this way, we will always live according to the reality of this world

However, if we will dare to believe God, and choose first, our feelings will follow our decision. We will then shift from merely “responding” to what happens to us to choosing to live in the Tree of Life. Remember: Choices lead, feelings follow.

The Forgiven

Why is it so vital that we forgive? Because the forgiven forgive. Isaiah 1:18 says your sins were scarlet, and Jesus has made them white as snow; they were crimson, and He has made

them as wool. Notice the end of the scripture, “if you obey me.” Forgiveness is not a suggestion, but a requirement from our loving Father.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

The first step God takes in our relationship with Him is He forgives us. Romans 5:8 says while we were still sinners, God sent Jesus to die for us. He made the first move by choosing to forgive us before we asked. We must make the same decision—in every relationship. This is critical: It is impossible to forgive others of their offenses until we receive forgiveness for ourselves. If we struggle with

forgiveness, chances are we have not fully grasped what has been done for us.

We have received total forgiveness for past, present, and future sin. It is not that God forgets our sins, but rather He chooses to remember our sin no more. He chooses to never bring up our sin again—ever. Why? God desperately wants to be in relationship with you.

THINK ABOUT IT When we have difficulty forgiving others, we have not fully understood how large a debt God has forgiven us.

Write out Isaiah 43:25.

Write out Hebrews 8:12.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

The Unforgiveness Trap

Below is a chart of five common snares the enemy uses to lure us into unforgiveness. For each of the wrongdoings, Jesus also suffered the same offense. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He allowed Himself to be tempted in every way we are today because He wanted you to know that no matter what you face, He has been there—and overcome.

When we are . . .

Betrayed

a best friend who lied, a spouse who didn't stay forever, a sibling who chose a different path

Falsely

Accused - misunderstood, the subject of gossip and slander

Rejected

by a spouse, friend, trusted authority, or even the church

Abused

emotional, physical, verbal, and sexual

Humiliated

an embarrassing moment that just won't go away; shame, disgrace

Remember Jesus was . . .

Betrayed

by Judas, a trusted friend and one of His disciples

Falsely

Accused in several courts

Rejected

by Peter, one of His apostles and closest companions.

Abused

beaten, cursed, and crucified on a cross, an instrument of torture

Humiliated

was crucified and humiliated in a public setting

To get a better understanding of why Jesus had to suffer the way He did, read the following passage:

"That's why he had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when he came before God as high priest to get rid of the people's sins, he would have already experienced it all himself—all the pain, all the testing—and would be able to help where help was needed." (Hebrews 2:17-18, The Message).

It was important for Jesus to experience all of these offenses in a human body so He could understand every struggle we would encounter. Now when we come to Him with our hurts, He can honestly reply, "I understand. I went through it, too." Jesus did this for us. Now He wants to share a secret only He is qualified to teach.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

2. Focus on the real enemy. People are not our enemy, the devil is. Jesus made a choice to see the people with the hammer and nails as victims, too. If it is true that hurting people hurt people, then the guilty have their own story as well. Our goal should be to love people and hate the devil.

Write out 1 Peter 5:8.

3. Receive the love of God. It will give you the capacity to love people. If you continually struggle to love people, it may be because you have not fully received the love of God.

Write out 1 John 4:10.

Forgiveness in Action

The Bible's steps for walking out forgiveness are countercultural (the opposite of mainstream society) and counterintuitive (not normally expected). But, if you will follow them, they will change your life. Our way of thinking and God's way of thinking are not the same. Read 1 Corinthians 1:25-28 to gain the proper perspective of obedience to God's way of doing things.

THINK ABOUT IT

Receiving the love of God first is the only way to give it to others.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:27-28).

Write out Romans 12:14.

Do good to people who have offended you.

Doing so requires a change in our way of thinking. It is not that we are repaying good for evil; it is that we have made the decision to do only good to others. So whether someone is

serving or attacking us, our response should be to do what the Word says. God sees every detail of your life and will take care of every detail you trust Him to handle.

Forgiving Ourselves

Getting past your past may be the biggest obstacle you face. Every time you seem to be making progress, the old movie reel of the sinful things you have done begins to play in your mind. Peace and freedom slip quietly

away as your past rises up to become your reality. You think forgiveness is for others and not for you because you have done too many horrible things, and it's just too late.

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

A Prayer of Forgiveness

This is a simple prayer of forgiveness you can use to release anyone who has offended you. Insert the name or names of those you feel you need to forgive, and say the words aloud.

“Lord, I have not loved, but have resented certain people and I have unforgiveness in my heart. Forgive me for my sin of offense. I ask you Lord, to give me the power to release and forgive those who have hurt me. I do now forgive them and ask You to forgive me also. Give me the strength to pray for them, bless them, and want the best for them. Thank you for breaking these chains off my life. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.”

You may be surprised to know these feelings are actually common to many believers. It feels godly to pay for our past, over and over again. The enemy is quick to remind us of painful memories we are powerless

to change. Why does he do this? Because it keeps us stuck in the past, unable to move forward in the future the Lord has planned. These thoughts come solely from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Ask Yourself:

Am I constantly reminding myself of past failures? Does the sin of my past continue to bother me even though I have asked God to forgive me?

The Past and the Present

1 We try to bury it.

Have you heard the phrase, "You've got to bury the past?" Well, the fact is you can't. It will find its way to the surface at some point. We hear time heals all wounds, but time cannot - only the Holy Spirit can heal. Concealing the past never works. Proverbs 28:13 (NIV) says, "Whoever conceals his sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy." According to James 5, confessing our sins and praying for one another actually helps to bring healing and wholeness.

2 We beat ourselves up.

Some of us live in the land of regret. We dwell on the "if only" scenarios from our past. But "if only" is a trap. We cannot change the past and the enemy uses it to torment us. King David knew this type of grief. He committed adultery with his own soldier's wife, and then had him killed when she became pregnant with his child. When Nathan confronted David, he repented and cried out to God. Psalm 38:4-8 says, "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed. I groan in anguish of heart." We see unforgiveness can cause physical as well as emotional pain.

WEEK **7** Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

3 We blame others.

The tactic has been used since the times of Adam and Eve. When God asked Adam why he disobeyed, Adam blamed Eve. Eve's response was to blame the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13). We must take responsibility for our actions, repent, and move forward. Since these are incorrect responses to dealing with our past, how are we supposed to face it? We look to the Word of God. He has the right view about our past, and we must believe it. God says when we ask Jesus into our hearts, our old life vanishes and we become a new person. You may know this in your head, but is it your reality?

“For if a man belongs to Christ, he is a new person. The old life is gone. New life has begun.” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Even though the apostle Paul had a past of persecuting and killing Christians, he understood this truth and it reshaped his thinking.

“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” (1 Timothy 1:13-15).

WEEK 7 Forgiveness

Note Taking Section

Write out 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Allow God to turn it around for good. We can continue to focus on the past, or we can focus on the future. Whatever has happened, however tragic, God can turn it around for good.

Write out Romans 8:28.

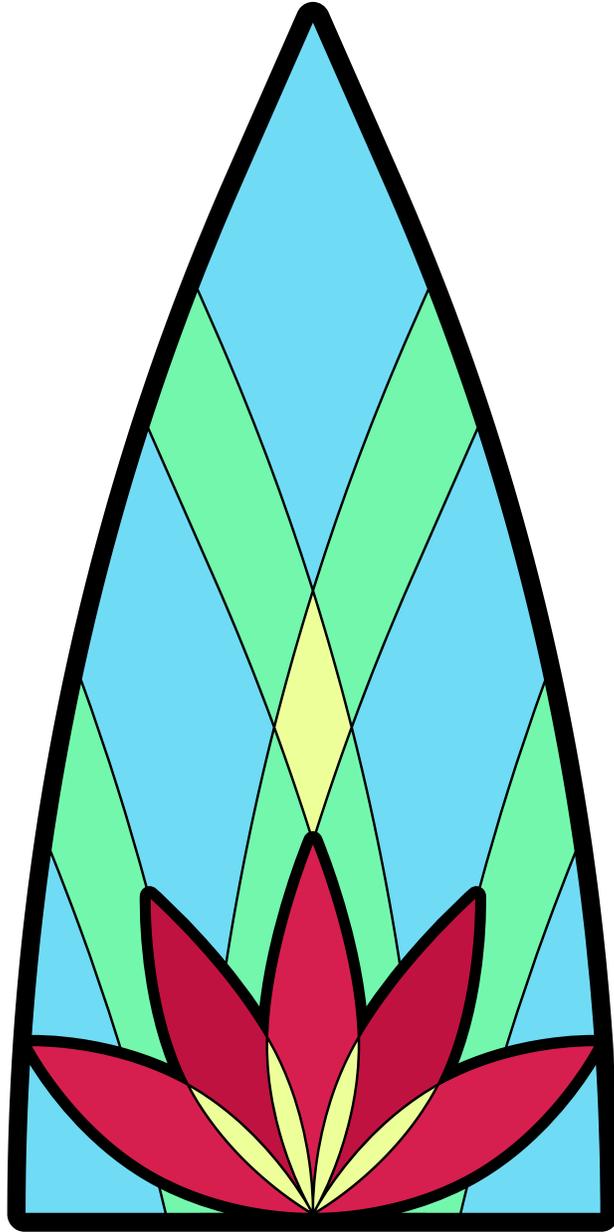
You can use your past to minister hope to others. Take the comfort you received from God and comfort others. Consider the story of Joseph. He was betrayed, falsely accused, rejected, and abused. But God made him prosper and used him to save his family and the nation of Egypt. Look at his bold statement:

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.” (Genesis 50:20).

God never said forgiveness would be easy. In fact, following the instructions in His Word takes courage and strength. But His instructions work. They will lead us into pathways of righteousness where we can live again, free from the ghosts of our past. No more guilt, no more hiding, no more shame. Free.

It takes faith to believe these words are true, but if you do, they will change your life. Trust that God's Word is true.

Believe you have been made new and clean and He can and will make you whole again. But be warned: Life as you know it will never be the same. As you begin to see yourself the way God sees you, you will begin to see others differently. You'll find yourself with open hands, releasing offenses, and receiving life abundant. You will be living in the Tree of Life.



WEEK 8
THE POWER
OF WORDS

WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Taking the Lead

Ask participants if they have had experiences with words of death. Use the Scriptures appendix to show them how to break off of those words.

Discussion Points

- Discuss words of death used in our everyday language like “you should be ashamed.” Ask participants to share words like these they've spoken or had spoken over them.
- Discuss the principle of “agreeing” words of death are robbed of power when we refuse to agree, and words of life gain hold in our lives when we choose to agree with them.

Be sure as we learn principles to help us live in freedom that they don't simply become religious activities. Speaking words of life shouldn't be viewed as something we “must” do, but a gift we've been given to keep our spirits strong and remain steadfast in our lives. To illustrate the power of words, ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the room. Aloud, pray a blessing over them (using scripture) and then ask them how it made them feel. They will be able to testify the words contain power! Getting control of our words is a huge adjustment for us as it is for most people. For some, it may help to journal their words. For others, they might enlist an accountability partner to hold them responsible for the words they speak.

Point out the handouts “LIFE Declarations” and “Who I am in Christ” in their book. It is time to be radical! Suggest the idea of putting scriptures on their mirror in the bathroom, the dashboard of their car, and on the front of their refrigerator. The Bible on YouVersion, Dwell, or Hallow is a great way to learn the Scriptures as they drive. Develop an “all in” approach.

Prayer Focus

- Pray each one of your participants will have a revelation of the power of their words. Lord, let them realize life and death are in the power of their tongues.
- Break off negative words that have been spoken over them. Ask the Lord to show them areas of their life in which they have agreed with these negative words and set them free.
- Pray for a strong desire to be a vessel of honor in the Kingdom.

WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

Read the verses below. What did Jesus say about the relationship between our hearts and our words?

“Whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good words from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil words from an evil heart.” (Matthew 12:34-35).

Write out Matthew 12:36–37.

Through these passages, Jesus communicates to us a life consumed with the cares and treasures of the world will lead to fruitless talk which will bring judgment on us. A life surrendered to God and filled with the Holy Spirit will produce speech full of grace, mercy, love, and power.

“By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.” (Hebrews 11:13)

With words, God spoke the entire universe into being. With words, He communicates to us. The Bible, with its thousands of words, is His way to reveal Himself to us. It is even better—Jesus is actually the living, breathing, Word of God (John 1:1). Words and language were His idea, and His words are

literally life to us. Because God created man in His image, we have the ability to speak words of life or words of death. Since Jesus is our example in everything, and we are to follow in His steps, let’s look at a few verses that demonstrate the power of His words.

WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

When we were saved, we weren't taken directly to heaven because we are Jesus' body — His hands, feet, heart, and mouth — designed to reach the lost and make a difference in this world. Jesus understood very well the pressures we would be under. God knew we would not be able to survive the pressures and temptations of the world, and He knew we would be completely powerless without help.

Ironically, Jesus actually told His disciples it would be to their advantage if He left and went back to heaven (John 16:7). Why? Because of God's incredible plan to leave us

the Holy Spirit, who would live inside us and help us to do the impossible— represent Jesus to the world. You see, Jesus, although fully God, was fully human—He could be in only one place at a time while He walked on earth in a human body. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit and have Him as our personal guide through life no matter where we are on the earth. Jesus said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears." (John 16:13, NASB). In other words, God will disclose to us, by the Spirit, all the guidance we need, including what to say.

Ask Yourself:

Am I intentional in using my words to promote the Kingdom of God? To minister to others?

Control Issues

When our soul is surrendered to God, even our words produce life.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan spoke to Eve to entice her. Eve didn't know it, but when she and Adam had a conversation about Satan's idea, she advanced the kingdom of death through her spoken words. God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." (Genesis

3:17, NASB). Satan didn't bring death to Eve by biting her and releasing poisonous venom or by wrapping his coils around her and squeezing the life out of her; no, he talked her to death. Then, she proceeded to talk Adam to death. Can you see the importance of controlling our words? Controlling what we say will require us to tame a part of ourselves containing the power of life and death: our tongues.

WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

Tongue-Tied

The book of James elaborates on the power of the tongue, our spoken words. In chapter three, the author tells us the tongue can defile the whole body, and he uses three vivid images to help us see his point.

THINK ABOUT IT

Words of life are like salt, bringing out good flavor in conversations and situations.

1. A Bit: The tongue is petite, weighing only about two ounces, but it is powerful, containing the power of life or death. Like the small piece of metal used to steer horses, the tongue can control the direction of our lives

2. A Rudder: Although ships are traditionally large and driven by strong winds, they are steered by this very small piece of metal. Too often we focus on the big things and forget one little issue of the tongue could determine the direction of our lives. The tongue can control us, or we can use it to control our destiny (James 3:4).

3. A Spark: A spark is a small, quick strike, and it can set off a wild fire. In the same way, what we say can be curt, but consuming. Some of the most hurtful things we have said or have been said to us are sharp one-liners or even one word. These can be abrupt, rude statements, likely quickly forgotten by the one who said them, but the impact remains (James 3:5).

Thousands of acres of forest can be destroyed by a fire hundreds of firefighters cannot put out. Similarly, the tongue can devour a life and cause destruction beyond belief. If you have been on the receiving end of these kinds of words, there is good news. You don't just need to learn to cope; you can be truly healed and set free from the effects of those words. Words can be petty and seemingly insignificant, yet at the same time they can be poisonous. And sometimes conversation and arguments can

make an unintentional turn. Although the one who said them often forgets these dialogues, the person on the receiving end remembers them for long periods of time. The truth is careless words can be harmful. Imagine a child struggling to read and a frustrated and worried parent listening to the child twist the words day after day. Finally, after losing all patience, the parent screams, "What's wrong with you? You can't read!" Those words have the potential to make the child feel stupid and give up

even trying. The parent may feel terrible about saying it, but then go to bed and completely forget about the statement. These kinds of words

can have a lasting effect which could change the course of a person's life and cause widespread destruction.

Write out James 3:7-8.

“Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can’t draw fresh water from a salty pool.” (James 3:9-12).

Ask Yourself: Do I say things about myself, or others, that I quickly regret?

We need God's help to change the way we speak, but know this - change is possible. Because we were made in God's image, we were meant to speak words of life that build up, bring healing, and offer encouragement.

WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

How to Tame the Tongue

1. Guard your heart.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:34, "Whatever is in your heart determines what you say." The mouth is automatically going to say what is inside of us. If we desire to control our tongue, we need to control the junk bombarding our ears and saturating our souls continually.

We can then become a person who speaks differently. According to God's Word, "A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart". (Matthew 12:35). It's the old "garbage in, garbage out" principle.

Write out Psalm 51:10.

Some of us grew up in homes where everyone was critical, where belittling remarks were part of the daily routine and yelling was the main form of communication. If you were raised in this kind of environment, you may have already made a decision to do life differently. Maybe you still experience great discouragement when you lash out at someone, wishing you had not reacted that way.

Because you saw those verbal attacks modeled, your reactions imitate what you saw; it is a vicious cycle which may lead to generational sin. Generational sin can be passed down from person to person until it is recognized and broken. To break the cycle, we need to put a filter on our minds and protect ourselves from the venomous effects of careless and evil speech.

WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

3. Garnish your speech.

A garnish is something you put on a plate to make it look good. It has been said 97 percent of the enjoyment of food is how it looks to the eye. What would it be like if we decide before we let anything out of our mouths, we are going to garnish it to make it sound pleasing to others?

Write out Ephesians 4:29.

At times, we need to say difficult or even negative words, but even so, we can speak in a way to bless and encourage the other person. Bad news can even be delivered in a positive way. Discipline can be done in a way to truly benefit the one being corrected.

The Bible says our speech can literally cause the Holy Spirit to grieve. Ephesians 4:30 says, "And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption."

Write out Ephesians 4:31.

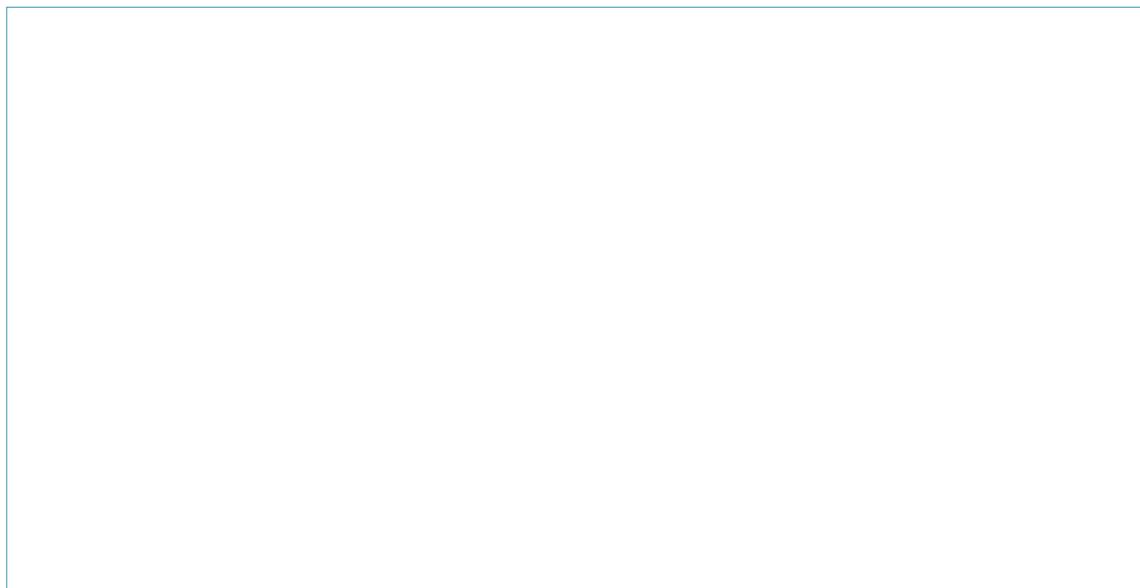
Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing at all. There are plenty of times Jesus held His tongue, even when He endured absolute brutality. In fact, although He never committed a sin, the Bible says He learned obedience by the things He suffered. "When He was reviled and insulted,

He did not revile or offer insult in return." (1 Peter 2:23, AMP). Sometimes, the life-giving and life preserving response to others is simply to keep quiet. Our soul will certainly protest, often vehemently, but our spirit will gain strength as we take another step toward living in spiritual order.

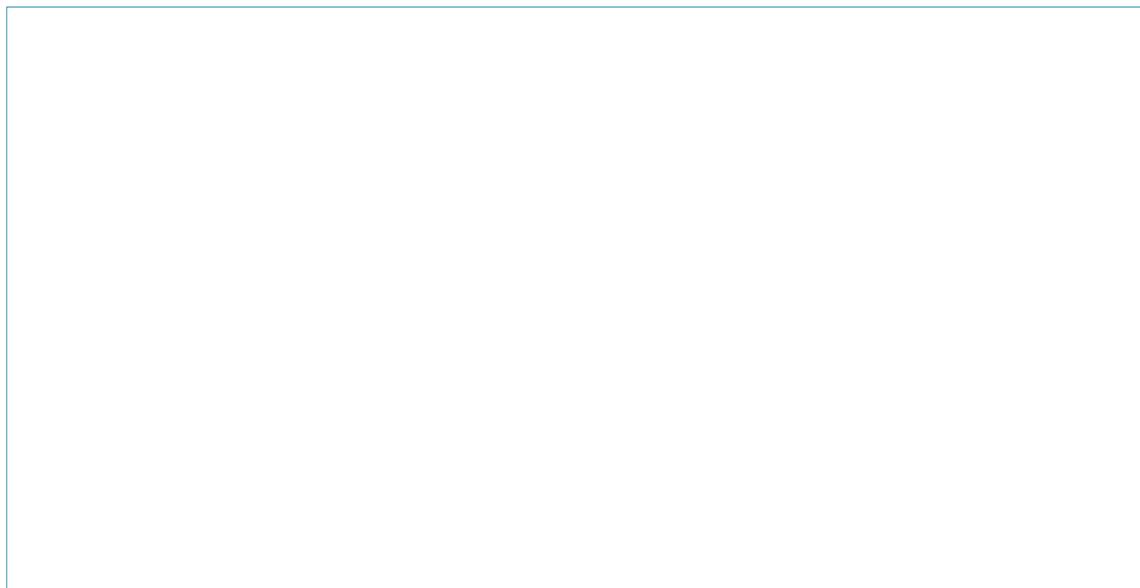
WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

Write any words of death and cursing spoken to you by others.



Write any words of death and cursing you have spoken to yourself.



WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

The Dream Killer

Billy Hornsby

As a boy, I had many dreams. I was Elvis, Rocky Marciano; I was rich and famous, a great football player. Like many of the kids I grew up with, I had aspirations for greatness. I didn't have a clue what it all meant, what it would cost me, or what the interpretation would be, but I dreamed and dreamed. From Superman capes to slicked-back, greasy hair and guitars, there wasn't anything I didn't dream of becoming. Then came the dream killer.

In my school days of the late '50s and early '60s, we had elementary school from first to sixth grade. After that came junior high. Wow, junior high, where you no longer had just one teacher, but changed rooms every hour to a new subject and teacher. You left on a bus early in the morning, went across town and didn't come back till the end of the day. This is where it all started to count. It was a bit scary, but it was reality. I was going to junior high.

My grades were decent in elementary school. I was in advanced math class and on occasion nearly made "straight A's." Notice I said "nearly." School was not my thing. Homework was out of the question, and with six rambunctious kids, Mama couldn't keep up with all of us. So, I just got by, with little effort. I knew seventh grade was coming and I would really

start trying once I got to Westdale Junior High. In the meantime, girls and football seemed to be enough to keep me busy.

It was the end of sixth grade and my teacher/coach was handing out report cards. It was my turn to get my final report card, get my final word of encouragement from my teacher, Coach Milligan, and wait for the summer to end so I could begin a new stage in my life. I approached the teacher's desk, he looked at me with a stern face and said these unfortunate words, "Hornsby, you will never make it!" I thought, "What did he mean by that?" It was like someone had tried to punch me in the nose, and I was trying to dodge the blow. "Never make it?" Oh well.

I went home, gave the report card to Mama and told her. "You know what Mr. Milligan said when he gave me my report card? He said, 'Hornsby, you will never make it.'" Mama just brushed it off. "Really? Oh, Billy, just forget it," she said. And that was it. Just forget it. The problem was, I never forgot it. When I finally got to seventh grade and for the next twelve years, I stopped dreaming. With every dream and with every failure came the words, "You will never make it." If I failed a test or missed a pass from the quarterback, I heard those words over and over again. These 99 words would follow me into my marriage, in every job failure, every day, every year. "You will never make it" became a state of being. Subconsciously, it began to dictate my actions and my thoughts. I was on the

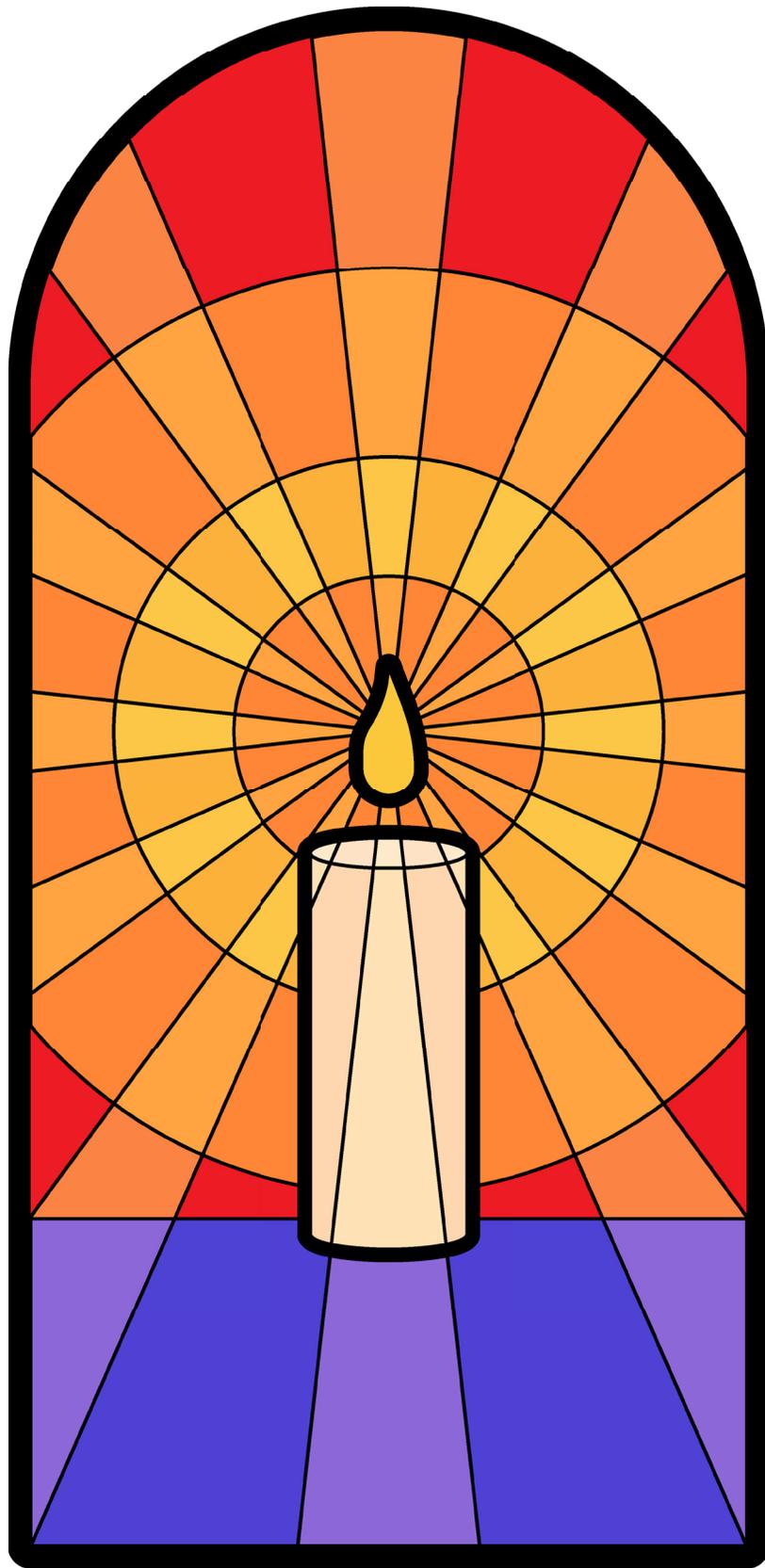
WEEK 8 The Power of Words

Note Taking Section

Life Declarations

Read these words aloud, and receive the truth from God's Word.

- I am blessed with God's supernatural wisdom, and I have clear direction for my life.
- I am blessed with creativity, with courage, with ability, and with abundance.
- I am blessed with strong will, self-control, and self-discipline.–I am blessed with a great family, good friends, good health, and with faith, favor, and fulfillment.
- I am blessed with success, supernatural strength, promotion, and divine protection.
- I am blessed with an obedient heart and with a positive outlook on life.
- I declare any curse ever spoken over me, any negative evil word that has ever come against me, is broken right now.
- I am blessed in the city. I am blessed in the country. I am blessed when I go in. I am blessed when I come out.
- Everything I put my hands to is going to prosper and succeed.
- I am blessed!



WEEK 9
THE LIVING WORD

WEEK 9 The Living Word

One of the enemy's tactics is to separate, isolate, and devour. Our first response to trials may be to isolate ourselves and hide what is happening from our peers. The solitude creates the perfect environment for the enemy to wield his web of lies. Encourage your participants to have someone who knows what is happening in their lives

and who will commit to pray for them. It is important to draw out deep truths from the Word - *rhema* knowledge. The Bible says once we have understanding of the Word of God, its truths belong to us and our children forever! We press into the Word for our families and ourselves. It is never "just about us."

Taking the Lead

When you speak about *rhema* knowledge, consider giving them an example from your life where the *logos* word became the *rhema* word for you. Personal stories are far more powerful than words on a page.

Discussion Points

- Read John 1:1-5 and ask them what it means to them.
- What are you doing to get more of the Word in your life? Suggest some practical ways to learn Scripture.
- Has there been a time in your life where the *logos* word became *rhema* for you?
- What is keeping you from taking in the Word daily?

Challenge the participants to read their Bibles daily. Ask them to carry their Bible with them in their cars or backpacks. Daily time in the Word requires discipline. Teach them this truth. If we DESIRE something (daily time in the Word), and DISCIPLINE ourselves to it, it will become our DELIGHT.

Ask them to identify areas in their lives where the enemy seems to be gaining ground. Then, speak the Word over this area. Speak and pray the Word over their marriage, relationships, children, and jobs. Share a time the Lord delivered you when it looked like you were sure to fail.

Prayer Focus

- Ask the Lord to create a hunger in your participant's hearts for the things of God.
- Pray the Lord would reveal Himself in the Word and for *rhema* times for each participant.

WEEK 9 The Living Word

Note Taking Section

Imagine a friend offering you a special gift guaranteeing direction, prosperity, and success. He says it will give you the ability to rise above any circumstance and stand against any enemy. It will keep you from sin, destruction, and despair. Wouldn't you want this? These guarantees are actually promises, and they are a gift to those who read the Bible and apply its principles to their daily lives.

Ask Yourself:

Am I regularly consuming the Word of God and letting its truth replace my old way of thinking?

Write out John 1:1-3.

There is power in the Word of God to change your life.

Jesus was present at the world's beginning, and He is the Word. Jesus and the Word of God are the same, which has profound implications! Jesus was manifested in the flesh as the Word, and we have the same words manifested on its written pages. If Jesus were to show up in the flesh right now where you are sitting, and there was anyone around you who was sick or depressed, you probably wouldn't have any trouble believing Jesus could and would heal them and set them free.

The same power that is in Jesus is in the Word. The Word of God is powerful. We have to receive that truth so the Word can work. The reason we feel the Word has lost its power is we've stopped mixing it with faith. It's not because the Word has changed; it's because we have stopped mixing our faith with the Word. If you want to fall in love with Jesus, find Him in the Word, and make the Word a priority in your life. If you want more power, consume more of His Word. Then the Word will come alive.

WEEK 9 The Living Word

Note Taking Section

In the passage above, Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, who knew the Scriptures better than anyone at the time—they could even recite the first five books of the Old Testament. But Jesus pointed out there was more to knowing God than intellectually knowing the Scriptures. If you think you can just wake up every morning and read the Bible to get your thought for the day, you have missed the big picture - the Bible can come alive and bring real change in your life.

Ask Yourself: Am I reading the Bible out of duty or out of desire to know God?

The Word Revealed

One of the most incredible stories of the Bible is the account of young Mary and her visit with the angel Gabriel. He tells her she is about to become mother to the Savior of the world. Take a look at the details in Luke 1:26-37.

THINK ABOUT IT

Readjust your beliefs, views, and opinions to line up with the Word of God, and not the other way around.

In this narrative, God's Word becomes life. Mary's initial response to the angel was to inquire how could she bear a child as a virgin. In verse 37 the angel Gabriel says, "Nothing is impossible with God." The word "nothing" in Greek is two words: *no rhema*. *Rhema* is the Greek word for "word," and it means revealed word. You may have experienced the *rhema* Word of God listening to a sermon—it may have seemed as if the words leaped from the microphone and landed right in your heart. Or maybe it happened while you were reading your Bible—the words jumped off the page and seemed to speak to the battle you were facing. That is the Word at work! When it becomes revelation to you, no word God speaks will be void of the power for it to happen.

Write out Luke 1:38 to discover Mary's response to the angel's news.

WEEK 9 The Living Word

Note Taking Section

Believe what you read – Choose to believe the Word is true. God says it is impossible to please Him without faith. The reason people don't like to pray is because their prayers don't seem to work. Faith makes prayer work.

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word about Christ. (Romans 10:17, NIV).

Psalm 1:2 says the righteous man delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. God gives us revelation through His Word. The revelation gives us faith. Faith makes things happen!

Food for Thought

“Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.” (Joshua 1:7).

WEEK 9 The Living Word

Note Taking Section

“Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.” (NASB). If the passage is not in first person, change it to first person by putting your name in it. When nothing seems to make sense, remind yourself, out loud, of the truth.

Read Luke 10:19 this way, “God has given me (put your name here) power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt me.” (KJV).

Write out the following verses, and put your name into them. Then say them aloud.

Romans 8:37

Psalms 27:1

Psalms 103:2-3

Philippians 4:19

WEEK 9 The Living Word

Note Taking Section

Do what is written.

Sometimes you are great at studying the Word, learning it, getting excited about it, but do you consistently do what it says? What would it be like if you started practicing the Bible? If you want to be prosperous and successful,

then here's the secret. "Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed." (Joshua 1:8). The promises of God are fulfilled when we walk in obedience to His Word.

Read James 1:22. According to this verse how can we deceive ourselves.

In James 1:23–25 we find a spiritual law of God. "For if you listen to the Word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard,

then God will bless you for doing it." The promise has a premise.

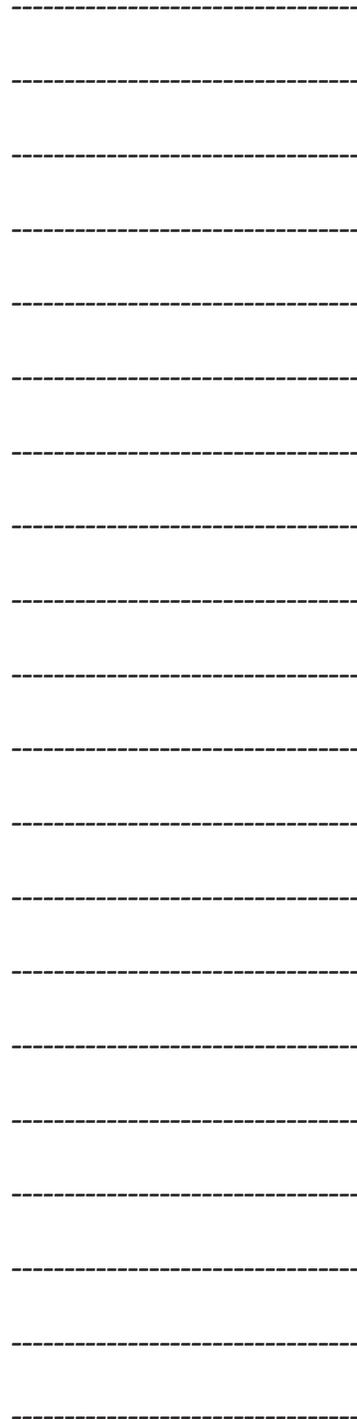
Make your Bible time sacred—don't let anybody interrupt. Get one verse that comes alive, say it aloud, think about it all day long, do it, and see what happens.

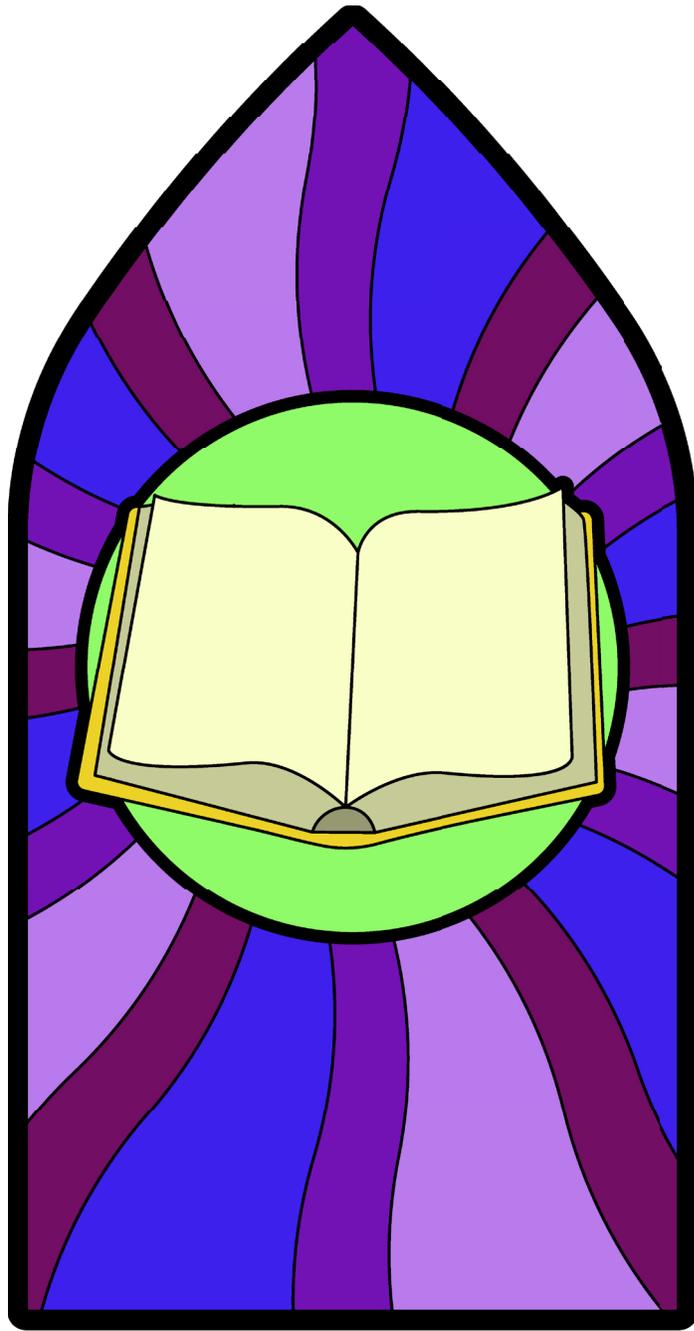
Meditation will turn to revelation. Revelation will activate faith. When faith is activated, things change!

As you have studied the Word of God in these last few lessons, hopefully your faith has been activated. Meditating on God's Word always has that result. With God's Word in your heart, your words will bring forth life, and you will be an agent of change in your own life and the lives of others.

Note Taking Section

Journal: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?





WEEK 10
SECTION THREE
VIDEO – NOTES

WEEK 10 Section Three Video: Video

Note Taking Section

Taking the Lead

Share about a time you were afraid and the Lord gave you courage.

Discussion Points

- What place does warfare have in your life? Discuss what it is and why we don't have to be afraid.
- What kind of strategies does the enemy use to attack us? Discuss ways to identify and defeat the enemy.
- How did God display His grace, love, and friendship for us through the cross? Discuss the benefits of the cross—payment for sin, healing from sickness and disease, eternal life with Christ.
- Read 2 Corinthians 13:14 from the Message translation. "The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you." Discuss the three persons of the Trinity and how we can experience the grace, love, and friendship of God.

Take-Aways

In your daily life, focus on the cross of Christ rather than focusing on your sin. Take note of each time you experience guilt and condemnation. The enemy brings condemnation; the Holy Spirit convicts and forgives. Immediately set your mind on things above, where you are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

Ask your participants to be aware over the coming weeks of the conflicts and challenging situations which may have a spiritual root they may not have been aware of in the past. Discuss next week. Point out the Armor of God Prayer on page 165. Encourage them to begin to pray and put on the full armor of God each day.

Prayer Focus

- Ask the Lord to give them eyes to see how Satan is attempting to steal, kill, and destroy the lives of participants.
- Pray for participants to gain insight to the cross and encounter its power.
- Pray participants are constantly reminded of their victory in Jesus, and pray they would gain insight on how being aware of their enemy and spiritual warfare is a position of strength and should not lead to fear.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to each participant the extravagant love God has for them, and pray they would encounter Him in deeper levels of intimacy.

Participants Section

Note Taking Section

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” (Acts 10:38, NIV).

Three Things to Know

1. Demons are _____.

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Revelation 12:7-9, NIV).

2. Demons want to _____.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith... (1 Peter 5:8-9, NIV). Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:11, NIV).

3. Demons respond to a _____.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:10-12, NIV).

WEEK 10 Section Three Video: Video

Note Taking Section

Authority

1. The highest authority _____.

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke 10:17-19, NIV).

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. (Philippians 2:10, NIV).

2. The authority of _____.

Matthew 4 and Luke 4 ... "It is written:..."

3. The authority of the _____.

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. (Matthew 10:1, NIV).

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons ... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ. (Romans 8:37-39).

Three Daily Steps

1. Submit yourself _____.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:7-8, NIV).

2. Close any _____.

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:10-11, NIV).

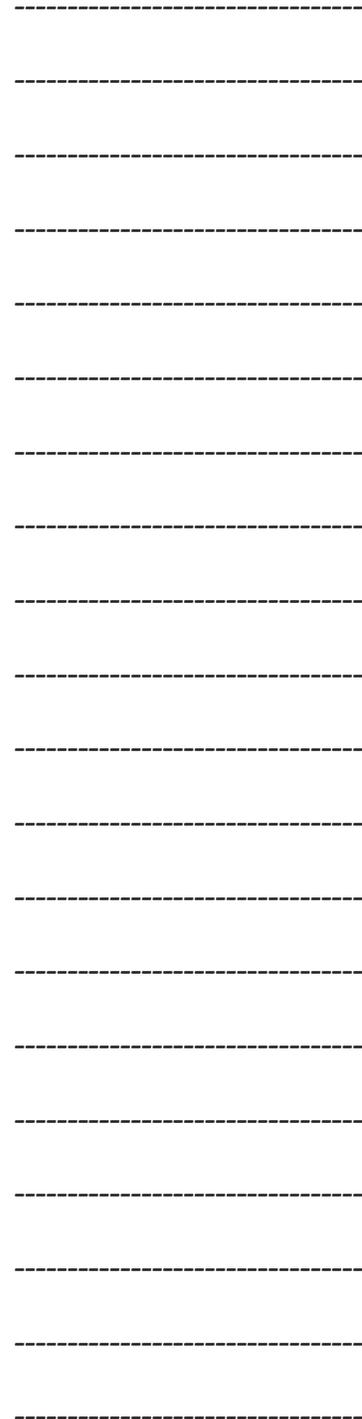
In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV).

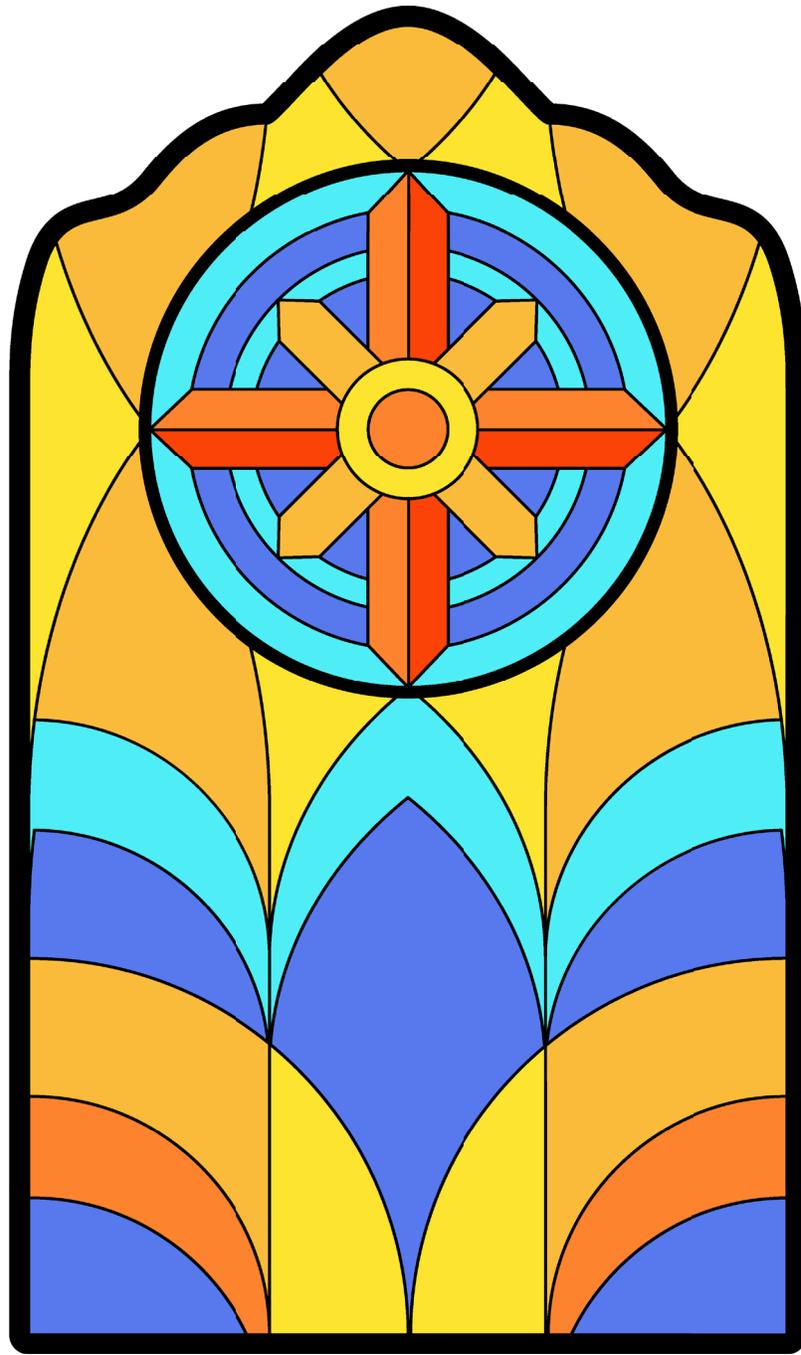
3. Confront your. _____.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NIV).

Note Taking Section

Journal: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?





WEEK 11
VESSELS OF HONOR

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Examples of Open Doors

- Anger, resentment, unforgiveness (By this point your participants may be comfortable enough to release some of these. Allow the Holy Spirit to move.)
- Unresolved conflict in relationships
- Known sin in our lives like addictions, adultery, pornography
- Movies, books, friends, which draw us away from God

Discussion Points

- Review justification and sanctification. Discuss them again if the group is still unclear.
- What are some of the lies the enemy tells us about our ability to be used by God? Discuss solutions to the problem.
- What are you allowing into your eyes and ears daily that may be drawing you away from spiritual order and thereby limiting your use in the kingdom? Talk about ways you can put guards over your eyes and ears.
- Are there any open doors in your life? Give them examples of open doors (see list, left), and explain how to close them through casting off the hooks and filling/loosing fruits of the Spirit and life-giving blessings.

Take-Aways

Being a Vessel of Honor is not about serving more, reading more, or even praying more. It is rather, connecting to your purpose, realizing the gifts the Lord has placed inside of you, and then leveraging them for the Kingdom. We do it because we have an eternal perspective - we are Ambassadors for Christ, here to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth.

Encourage your group to remember not only will the Lord use them right where they are, He also has a plan greater than any they could ever imagine!

Prayer Focus

A life with the Lord is filled with blessing and provision. If He only offered us eternal life, it would have been more than enough, but He goes beyond that and offers us complete healing and restoration in every area of our life. Then, He allows us the privilege of serving others and setting them free. God unlocks us from our past and hands us the keys to unlock others.

Spiritual order, reading the Word, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and daily prayer are great weapons to help us to continually win our battles against the enemy. Open doors give the enemy access to our lives and relationships.

Taking the Lead

Share an area you have struggled with and testify how the Lord set you free from the struggle.

- Pray participants will have supernatural boldness to stand up to the enemy in any area he has taken ground and for courage to enforce the victory they have in Christ.
- Ask the Lord to show participants any open doors in their lives.
- Pray the Lord will give participants a desire for more of Him.

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

Silver & Gold

In the passage beginning this chapter, Paul uses an analogy of items in a house to describe believers and how we can be useful to God by serving Him and fulfilling our respective destinies. We see some items are inexpensive and ordinary, but others are honorable, used for special occasions. In the Master's hand, these utensils can accomplish great things. Every person is at a different place in his or her walk with Christ. No two stories are the same, and no one starts out as silver or gold; it is a process. It is

God who prepares us, refines us, and makes us honorable. Fine china is used for noble purposes, not paper plates. If you decide you aren't satisfied with being a paper plate and want the next level of Christianity, you can have it! You may not feel special or honorable at this moment, but God sees you this way. You are not defined or limited by your past. He makes all things new, brand new (2 Corinthians 5:17), and He wants you to be a vessel of honor.

Ask Yourself:

Am I satisfied where I am with God? How do I want my life to be different?

We may look at another person's life and think he or she is a stellar Christian. He may look holy and righteous, but looks can be deceiving. We can't tell from the outside what is going on inside a person's heart. When you look at the dishes in a dishwasher, sometimes you can't tell if they have been washed. Even if you inspect them closely and they look clean, they may be covered in tiny germs. You wouldn't want to eat on a dirty plate no matter how clean it looks

on the surface! The Lord knows when there is something in our lives keeping us from being fit for His use and every good work. Will you let the Lord put the spotlight on your life? John 16:8 says He convicts the world of sin, and He will judge us according to His righteousness. The Lord wants to bring you to another level of personal integrity and move you from the paper plate domain to the fine china realm. The Lord will do a miracle in your life if you will allow Him.

Can you think of any areas of your life you are willing to let the Lord shine His light on and clean up? Write them here as a way of offering them to the Lord.

Justification and Sanctification

In Week Four, Spiritual Order, we discussed justification and sanctification. Remember, justification is an event that takes place when you are saved. When Jesus becomes your Savior, at that very moment every sin of your past is wiped clean. God removes the junk of yesterday, just as if you had never sinned. When He looks at you, you are perfect in His sight.

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.” (Romans 8:33).

THINK ABOUT IT

You begin to live only when you give your life away.

Sanctification is when we let God make us more like Him. It is not an event; it's the process of becoming fit for the Master. It's a journey to allow God to mold and transform our character. Let's look again at 2 Timothy 2:21 where it says, "If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work." Here, the word "master" is the Greek word *dispotus*, which means a person who is a ruler with absolute power and authority over others. We often think of God as Friend, Savior, Protector, and He is all of those things—but He is also Lord. This means He calls the shots! We must become servants of the Lord before He can fulfill His purpose in us. The servant level of our journey is actually the highest level.

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

Why the body? It is the place where sin functions. It could be what we say with our mouths, something we look at with our eyes, or things we touch. In Job 31:1, a righteous man says, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman." When we are intentional, our decisions will be different. You will be well on your way to becoming a vessel of honor if you are willing to say each day, "Here I am Lord, clean me up. Take each member of my body and the things that I have done and wash me. Take my appetites, my addictions, my habits, my tongue, my attitudes, and consecrate them."

Underline the first word of each command in the following.

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right. Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. (2 Timothy 2:22).

Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires. Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:12-14).

Here is a way you can offer your body to God. Use Romans 6:12-14 (above) as a prayer guide. Write it down in the box below, and say it aloud. You could start your prayer this way. "Lord, I don't want sin to control the way I live. Show me the areas where I have allowed sin into my life and used my body dishonorably."

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

Renew my mind.

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” (Romans 12:2).

Why renew my mind? We are living sacrifices that keep crawling off the altar. Sin functions in the body, but the mind controls the body. Sin begins in the mind.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5, NIV) .

The Bible tells us spiritual warfare is a part of following Christ. Many Christians love God, but have no clue how to fight. It is a necessity because your enemy, the devil, is scheming to destroy you (1 Peter 5:8).

One of the ways we fight is by demolishing arguments. An argument is an idea. The devil's job is to give you thoughts contrary to God's thoughts. There are a lot of ideas, even about God, which are simply wrong because they are contrary to Scripture. Don't listen to these voices; listen to the Word of God. For example, if the Bible says, “By His stripes you are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5), believe it! Warfare is exchanging the report of the world for the report of the Lord. Peace can reign and rule in your heart simply because the Word says it can.

Here is the main question in spiritual warfare, “Can the devil get you to believe him?” We must take our thoughts captive and compare them to what the Bible says is true. Minimize your exposure to worldly thinking, such as music, TV, movies, books, and entertainment, and saturate yourself with His Word. When you turn off the programming of the world, the voice of God will become clearer to you.

Renewing our mind by the Word of God means we use Scripture to combat the lies of the enemy. In the following chart, write the truth from Scripture that would take captive the lie of the enemy.

Lie of the Enemy

You are confused.

Truth from Scripture

1 Corinthians 2:16

Note Taking Section

You are fearful.

2 Timothy 1:7

There is no hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

You're going to die.

Psalms 118:17

Something bad is going to happen.

Psalms 91:10

God can't hear you.

Psalms 34:17

Nothing will ever change.

Isaiah 43:18-19

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

Surrender my will.

“Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is.” (Romans 12:2).

Why surrender my will? The body acts out sin; the mind controls the body; but the will controls my mind. As we surrender our will, His perfect will becomes the goal of our lives. Jesus told us to pray this way. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done.” It means don’t come to prayer with

your agenda. We cannot manipulate God. Instead approach Him with this mentality. “Lord, you are my Shepherd, I shall not want. What I want is what You want.” Come to Him with a neutral heart. If you are strongly leaning one way or the other, God’s voice will be difficult to discern.

Write out Luke 22:42.

When we pray this way and surrender our will, we are able to honor God with every part of our lives. When we do so, we become honorable and useful to the Lord. He will stir up purpose, and we will begin to realize our dreams and reach others with the Good News about Jesus.

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

God never tempts us! Satan and his hosts of demons are the tempters. Satan is a created being and cannot be everywhere at the same time. The Bible says when he fell from heaven, he took one third of the angels with him (Revelation 12:4). Demons are Satan's servants sent out to destroy our lives. Satan has had the role of tempting mankind since he tempted

Eve in the garden. Even Jesus was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). Jesus, our High Priest, "understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same temptations we do, yet He did not sin." (Hebrews 4:15). Because He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, we can stand against temptation (1 John 4:4).

Write out Ephesians 6:12.

Often the ideas the enemy attacks us with are so subtle and tailormade for us we will believe the thoughts are our own. But the Bible says we as believers have the power within us to withstand every temptation of the enemy. Read James 4:7. What happens when we choose to resist the devil's temptations?

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

Golden Rules

“Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will believe the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.” (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

To combat enemy attacks (oppression), we need to repent of sin and cast off the powers of darkness. Often people believe simply the admission of sin clears their conscience and frees them from any consequence or responsibility. Admitting a sin is a part of

repentance, but it is not repentance. Repentance means to turn away from the sin and choose to no longer continue in it. Titus 2:12 shows us we can say “no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.”

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What might be missing in a person who struggles with turning from sin?

Read Romans 2:4. Name something else that leads us to repentance.

If you find yourself in a cycle of sin, don't give up hope! God desires to help you break the cycle. Ask Him to give you godly sorrow which leads to repentance. Meditate on His goodness and His kindness. And remember, “The

steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.” (Psalm 37:23–24).

WEEK 11 Vessels of Honor

Note Taking Section

- rejection
- abuse
- self-hatred
- unworthiness
- depression pride
- unforgiveness
- greed
- guilt/shame
- lust/ sexual
- impurity
- control anger
- fear

Honor Roll

You were made to be a Vessel of Honor. This status includes fighting the enemy and reordering your life. Though it can be challenging and messy at times—battles typically are—the rewards are immeasurable. Obedience brings blessing to your life (Deuteronomy 11:27). In addition, God will use you as a catalyst for peace in your family, joy in your neighborhoods, and change in your schools and places of business.

Though the big vision may seem a bit overwhelming, success will come by simply doing the little things. Spend time with the Lord, and apply Tree of Life living to the decisions you make each day. In this way, you will automatically begin to shine a light before men capable of driving away darkness and filling a lost, broken, and lonely world with great hope.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Write down any areas the Lord has shown you where you need deliverance from a foothold or stronghold. Use a concordance to look up this topic, and write out Scriptures that apply. These verses are weapons to stop the advancement of the enemy and his condemnation and keep you in line with the Tree of Life.



WEEK 12
WORSHIP

WEEK 12 Worship

Taking the Lead

Share how prayer and worship have changed for you since you started growing closer to the Lord.

Discussion Points

- Do you have a place at home where you can go to worship and pray? Discuss other ways and places where you can go to worship.
- How do you schedule time with God? Talk about the importance of making this a priority, and challenge participants to schedule a meet-up time with God. Ask them to write it on their calendars.

Take-Aways

Mention using worship music as the background for their prayer time. We need corporate as well as personal worship. Our ability to worship corporately is a reflection of our personal worship time. If God seems silent on their prayer requests, encourage them to worship through it. Share with them how they can worship the Lord throughout the day. We should walk in constant communication with the Lord. Discuss practical ways participants can worship, like acts of service, submission to authority, and speaking words of life over situations and people. Encourage participants to review Set Apart - preparing for the retreat in the appendix.

Prayer Focus

- Ask the Lord to give them a worshiper's heart and for them to be counted among the people who worship in spirit and truth.
- Pray for them to experience the secret place of the Lord in their worship time.
- Pray the Lord uses what they have learned this semester to catapult them into their ministry and purpose.
- Bind the enemy from stealing spiritual progress from them.
- Pray the Lord works out all the details for them to be at the retreat. Ask the Holy Spirit to meet them there and radically change their lives for the glory of the Father.

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

Love & War

Worship is actually an act of warfare against Satan and demonic forces! Our worship puts the devil on the run and increases our ability to fight against powers of darkness in the heavenly realm. Psalm 149:6 says, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand."

When you give God your high praises, it is warfare against Satan. When we give God all our attention, we strip the enemy of any power over our souls or our bodies. In His Presence, we are

protected from all the schemes of the enemy. We become like Jesus who proclaimed the ruler of this world "has nothing in Me." (John 14:30, NASB).

How are we able to come boldly into the presence of God? The blood of Jesus. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." Without the forgiveness of sins there is no presence of God. The blood of Jesus has removed every spot and stain from your life and invites you into the presence of God.

Ask Yourself:

Have I considered the power and the privilege of my role as a worshipper?

Nothing but the Blood

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God said, "You will surely die." Obviously, He was referring to spiritual death because they went on to live very long lives after they were banished from the garden. Remember, sin has consequences. Even though God departed from man's spirit when man sinned, He did not abandon His creation. For Adam and Eve, He covered them with garments of animal skins. This was the first blood sacrifice.

Throughout the Old Testament, the forgiveness of sins could happen only through sacrifices of certain animals. God considered these blood sacrifices to be acts of worship. The blood of the animals would be poured on the horns of the brazen altar at the entrance to the tabernacle. Then, it was taken into the Holy of Holies, a sacred place containing the Ark of the Covenant, which housed the tablets with God's Law written on them (the Ten Commandments). The blood would be put on the mercy seat of the ark, and when the sacrifice was appropriate and right, the presence of God would fall.

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

Read Revelation 12:10-12. God says Satan, the accuser of the believers who accuses them before God day and night, is overcome. Write out verse 11.

The blood of Jesus has overcome Satan. As believers, we are fighting from victory and not to victory! The veil has already been torn; the victory has already been won; Satan is a defeated foe. There is nothing separating us from

God's Presence! Now, we can be in an intimate relationship with Him. Like a groom, He has already declared and expressed His love for us; we need only to receive His love and learn how to love Him in return.

First Love

The one thing God wants more than anything else is our hearts. In Matthew 15:7-9, Jesus says there are people who honor Him with their words, "but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce." Genuine worship comes from a heart consistently connected with God, and those connections happen in two ways: corporately (at church or other gatherings with fellow believers) and personally (anytime, anywhere).

THINK ABOUT IT

Worship is the highest priority of the believer.

Corporate worship is important because our faith increases when we join together with other like-minded believers. Even if you come to church or small group distracted and burdened by cares, your attitude can quickly change in a worshipful environment. Personal worship can only be accomplished if we take the initiative, adjust our attitudes, and cultivate an atmosphere of praise. Wherever we are, any time of day, we can have the attitude of a worshiper and enjoy the presence of God.

Ask Yourself:

Am I still fighting for control of my life? What is keeping me from letting go?

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

Read Ezekiel 47:1-12.

The interesting thing about the vision is the river symbolizes the presence of God. The bottom, or the ground, which includes the bank of the river, represents the world. As we give up control to God, we will begin to experience His Presence, which will in turn help us live in spiritual order.

Most people want to be wet and in ankle-deep, knee-deep, or even waist-deep water, but they want to stay in control. In other words, many want to do the "God thing," but want

to reserve just enough control so God doesn't take them too far. Those who live this way have believed the lie if they abandon themselves to His control, He will make them do things they don't want to do. They think He would embarrass them or send them to some faraway place they don't want to be. But the truth is God has only good things for His kids. You will never come to the place of true worship until you are honestly able to say, "God, have Your way."

Write out Psalm 36:7-9.

God led Ezekiel back to the riverbank, and suddenly, to his surprise, there were many trees growing on both sides of the river, and the river was now teeming with life! Ezekiel 47:10 says, "Everything will live where the river goes." (NASB). The leaves of the trees will not wither, their fruit will not fail, and they will bear fruit every month because of the living waters. The trees represent healing and the fish represent harvest. Two wonderful things will happen when we abandon ourselves to God's will and His presence: Souls will be saved and people will be healed!

Write out Proverbs 3:5-6.

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

3. Include Him in your life.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5).

We often struggle because our Sundays do not look like our Mondays. From the clothes we wear to the words we speak, we need to be consistent. When the “church world” becomes different than the rest of our world, it forces us to compartmentalize our lives. Our secular and sacred world should look the same.

Often we don't know how to make God fit into our marriage, parenting, jobs, vacations, or hobbies. What would

happen if we made God a part of all our lives? This is the ultimate sacrifice of worship. Give Him 24 hours a day, seven days a week! When you have a headache, call upon Him. When someone wrongs you at work, call upon Him. Don't compartmentalize; He wants all of you—because He cares about you and what happens to you. (1 Peter 5:7).

THINK ABOUT IT

This is the only relationship you will ever have where you get to choose the level of intimacy.

Write out Psalm 74:16.

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

5. Show reverence.

Worship and the fear of the Lord go hand in hand. In fact, Jesus said they are actually the same thing! In Matthew 4, we find the account of Jesus overcoming the temptation of Satan in the desert. The Bible says He was tempted in every way we are tempted (Hebrews 4:15). In response to each temptation, Jesus gained victory with a powerful weapon of warfare, the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), which is the Word of God.

After the first two temptations, Jesus accurately quoted the Scriptures; but after the third temptation, He

did something very interesting. He said, "Get out of here, Satan, for the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.'" This quote was taken from Deuteronomy 6:13. The curious thing about His response is He alters the Scripture. Deuteronomy 6:13 actually says, "Fear the Lord your God." His statement is Jesus' commentary on worship. Jesus was the Word, so he didn't misquote Himself, He was giving us insight. The kind of fear He was talking about and the word "worship" are interchangeable, and Jesus, who is the Word, had the liberty to give us this commentary.

"But the time is coming and is already here when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship Him that way." (John 4:23).

The Greek word for "worship" in this verse is *proskuneo*, which literally means "to kiss the master's hand in reverence." It indicates love and respect. Instead of fright, this kind of fear induces esteem and reverence.

When we fear the Lord, we actually feel safe. The word worship means you enjoy resting in His presence, but if He tells you to jump, you say, "How high, Lord?"

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise." (Psalm 111:10, NIV).

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

In Spirit & Truth

“Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

Each day we have an opportunity to live and love well, in ways which line up with the Word of God. We can't separate our love for Him from our submission to Him. God says He wants us to not only worship Him in spirit with expression, gratitude, and intimacy, but also in truth.

So, how do we worship in spirit and in truth? We need to ask Him to purify us. Real worship is pure worship. We can't come into church, jump up and down and clap our hands with outward expressions of praise, while not allowing God to deal with our secret sin and the areas where we have fallen short.

Hear the heart of humbleness in this prayer:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” (Psalm 139:23).

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your life which has grieved or quenched Him and be willing to come to a place of truth. Know this. The Holy Spirit convicts, but the devil condemns. Condemnation says, “Here's the problem. There's no way out.” It is not

the voice of God. Our Heavenly Father tells us there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 12:2). He sent His Son to save you, not condemn you (John 3:17). Conviction through the Holy Spirit says, “There's the problem, but there is hope.”

WEEK 12 Worship

Note Taking Section

Journal: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?



WEEK 13
SOUL CARE

WEEK 13 Soul Care

Taking the Lead

Share with your group the ways spiritual formation has impacted your life and your relationship with the LORD.

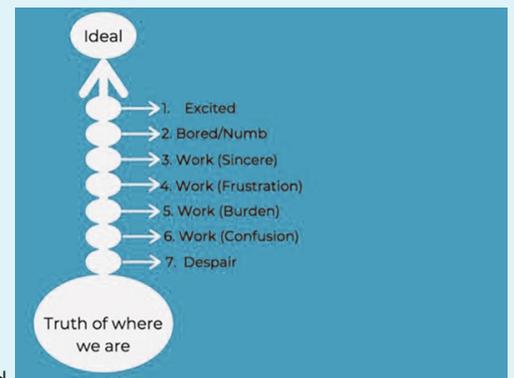
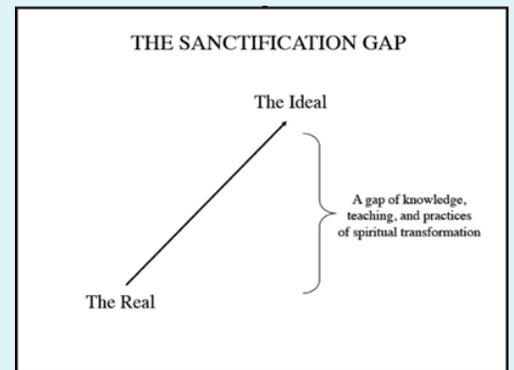
Discussion Points

- **Do you have tips on addressing soul care in your life?**
Share the ways you have learned to effectively care for your spiritual core?
- **How has your understanding of spiritual formation helped you enjoy the good life?**
Share the good life moments you have personally experienced as a result of cultivating spiritual formation.
- **How has soul care helped you help others?**
Share specific examples of growth in your ability to help others as a result of your own spiritual formation.

Take-Aways

Explain the sanctification gap – the gap of knowledge, teaching, and practices of spiritual formation – separates our reality from God's ideal. The truth of where we are to the ideal (excited about life in Christ) are often separated by our despair, confusion, frustration, burden, or boredom.

Soul care and spiritual formation aren't magic, though we don't know exactly how the Spirit changes us. It is a mystery but the changes aren't magical. The Holy Spirit doesn't show up and instantly "zap" away sin or "zap" joy into our lives. It also doesn't happen through sheer willpower as in the willpower theory of growth. While we can try to be really, really good, there is no way we can be good enough to be counted as holy on our own. And if we fail to be holy, with the willpower theory of growth, we try to redouble our efforts and try harder. The Holy Spirit is largely out of the picture except as the One who convicts us when we do wrong and kicks us in the butt to get with the program.



Prayer Focus

- Ask the Lord to open participants' hearts and minds to their need for spiritual formation.
- Pray for them to experience the good life the Lord wants for them.
- Pray each participant's spirit is transformed by the Holy Spirit so they can begin to find their place and purpose in ministry.
- Bind the enemy from preventing spiritual formation in them.
- Continue to ask the Holy Spirit to meet them there and radically change their lives for the glory of the Father.

WEEK 13 Soul Care

Note Taking Section

Relational Formation

The central idea is human beings were made (like a fish was made for water) for an interpersonal attachment/ communion with God the Father by Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Relationship with God is an ontological (state of being, existence) reality for the believer and the relationship is inherently transformational.

We read in I John 4:18, "perfect love casts out fear." Paul testifies in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom." In Galatians 5:16, Paul declares if you "walk by the spirit, you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

In Matthew 6:31 and 32, Jesus reminds us, "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already

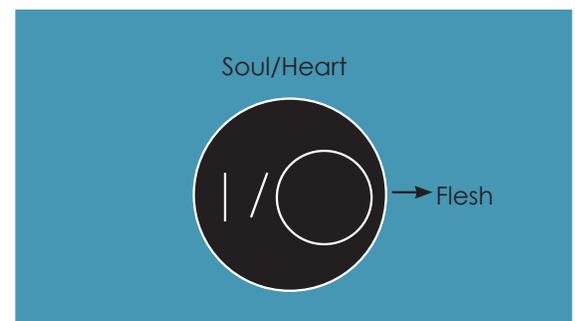
knows all your needs." In John 15:4, He tells believers, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

In these passages it is clear neither doctrine nor ethics alone can define our discipleship. We are instructed to remain in Christ in order to be nourished and thrive as believers, much like branches are nourished and strengthened by the vine. The relationship Jesus describes is not negotiable but a part of following Him which provides transforming spirituality – soul care. Genuine transformation, which is spiritual formation, in Christ comes through abiding, ongoing, personal intimacy with God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son and by the Holy Spirit.

Ask Yourself: Have I experienced spiritual formation and if so how?

The Challenge with Spiritual Formation

Original sin is the premise of all humans having inherited the consequences of the first sin in the garden of Eden. The concept of original sin leaves us disconnected from God at conception.



WEEK 13 Soul Care

Note Taking Section

The Recalcitrant Nature Of The Flesh

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of

one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world? When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting just like people of the world? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

Write out 1 Corinthians 3:2.

Paul says, "you weren't ready for anything stronger," in other words, not able to receive it because of their fleshly nature. In modern terms, they weren't ready because they continued to grab at what made them feel good or made them look more important. They were content when life was going well, exactly the way they wanted it to go. The flesh is in constant conflict with the spirit.

Write out Galatians 5:17.

Paul tells us, the desires of our flesh are contrary to the Spirit. In like manner, the desires of the of the Spirit are against the flesh. The flesh is, of course, our sinful nature always seeking to do evil, opposite of the Spirit's desires. In a believer, the two are always battling, often keeping us from carrying out the good we want to do. We must let the Holy Spirit guide our lives, so we can avoid doing what our sinful nature craves.

Write out Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:24, and Romans 8:13.

The Word tells us we can put our sinful nature to death, essentially crucifying the flesh. But what does that mean? These verses explain it as fleeing from sexual promiscuity, selfish desires, lust, evil, impurity, greed, and doing whatever you feel like when you feel like it! It sounds hard because it is. We can't put to death our sinful nature without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ask Yourself: What area do I need the Holy Spirit's power to help me overcome my sinful nature?

The Relational Dimension

As believers, many of us also struggle with the remains of the old fleshly principle that tempts us to live independent from God as we read in Galatians 5:17. Man in the fleshly state is weak, and yet God provides the strength we need to overcome our fleshly weakness by His Spirit.

Answering the Hard Questions

Why don't we grow? The truth is as believers we all still sin. Wouldn't you agree? It leads us to the next question, "What is wrong?" It is apparent the control of the Spirit does not happen automatically. As we saw in the verses above, Paul tells believers they cannot live the full life Christ has for them if they continue to obey their flesh (their sinful nature). Given Paul's instructions to believers, it appears as believers we have the freedom to choose whether we will follow our sinful nature or live by the Spirit. Living by the Spirit is the only way to be truly free, but to do so we must make the choice to do so.

WEEK 13 Soul Care

Note Taking Section

The Flesh as Relational Resistance

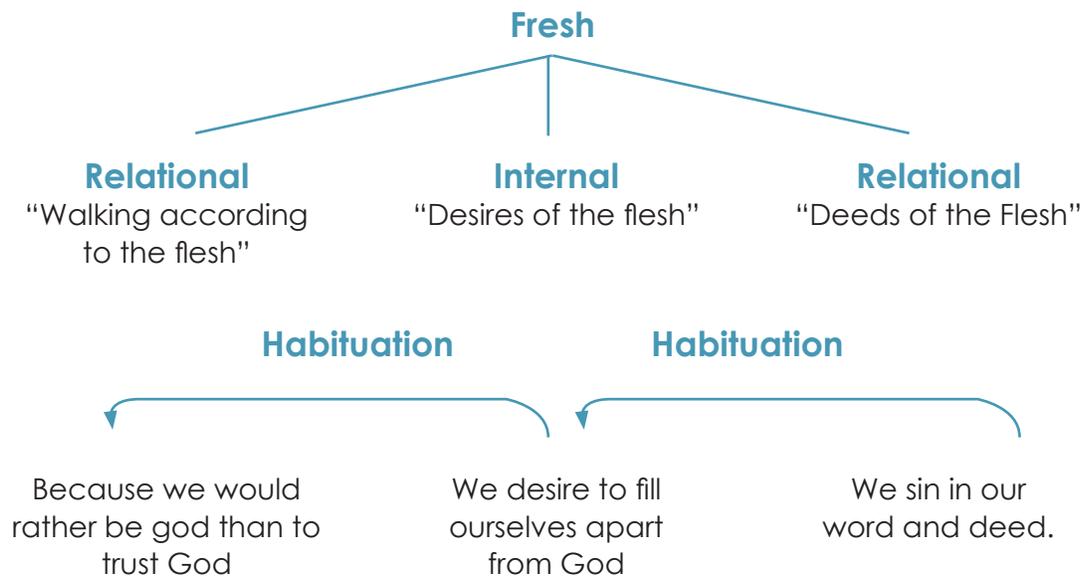
The word the apostle Paul uses for "flesh" is the Greek word *sarx*. In the original language, the word means not only the flesh, as in the body of a human or animal, but also the human nature or sensual nature of humans apart from God. Paul uses *sarx* in an implication of the dualistic nature of flesh and spirit. In other words, the flesh relies on human independence and accomplishments. On the other hand, living by the Spirit is founded on our dependence on God, which requires submission to His rule and plan.

Living independently from God requires dependence on human values, systems, and customs in order to gain position, power, and the ability to indulge oneself. In this form, independence is rebellion from the Spirit-filled life God wants for us and the full life He has made provision for through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the Word explains, trusting in the flesh may seem to lead to the good life, but it only leads to death.

The Flesh has multiple layers: relational ("walking according to the flesh"), internal ("desires of the flesh"), and behavioral

("deeds of the flesh"). Relational is based in our desire to be god rather than trust God. Internal is founded in our longing to fulfill ourselves apart from God. Relational relates to the fact we all sin in thoughts, words, and actions.

C.S. Lewis explains it thusly, "... Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in the state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself period to be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, joy and peace and knowledge and power period to be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and internal loneliness. Each of us and each moment is progressing to the one state or the other." (*Mere Christianity*, 92).



Answering the Hard Questions

- Why is it so hard? We are deeply habituated to find life elsewhere, basically, we are distracted. Even when we come to God, whether through Scripture, Prayer, or His people, we still carry our idols with us, essentially, we are defended. Our idolatry/resistance has served us well and it requires death to bring new life, in other words, we don't want to die.
- So what do we do now? The most important moves we can make are to:
 - Cultivate a posture of receptivity to the Spirit's presence and meaning.
 - Give up on (i.e. die to) our attempts to find presence and meaning apart from the Spirit.

The discipline of confession and repentance, understood as acknowledging specific ways we idolatrously resist the spirit and turning to the spirit's resources in place of the very ways we tend to idolatrously resist is crucial.

The Flesh as Relational Resistance

Write out Ezekiel 36:26-27.

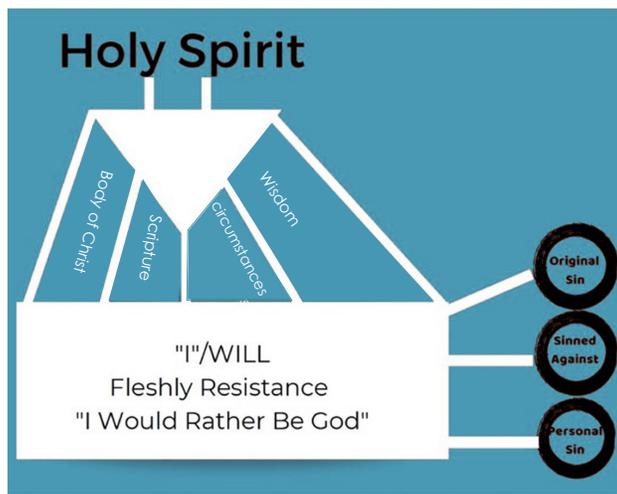
God promises a new heart, a new spirit to believers. God's Spirit allows us to live in a way that is God-willed. As His people, we have the power to live a Spirit-filled life, in obedience to God, and receive His favor and blessing.

WEEK 13 Soul Care

Note Taking Section

Write out Jeremiah 31:31 and John 14:16-17.

These verses further confirm what was prophesied in Ezekiel. The prophecy is fulfilled in the new covenant, ushered in with Jesus death and resurrection. As believers in Jesus, God's Word is written in our hearts as His people. Equally significant is the Holy Spirit living within us and guiding us in all truth.



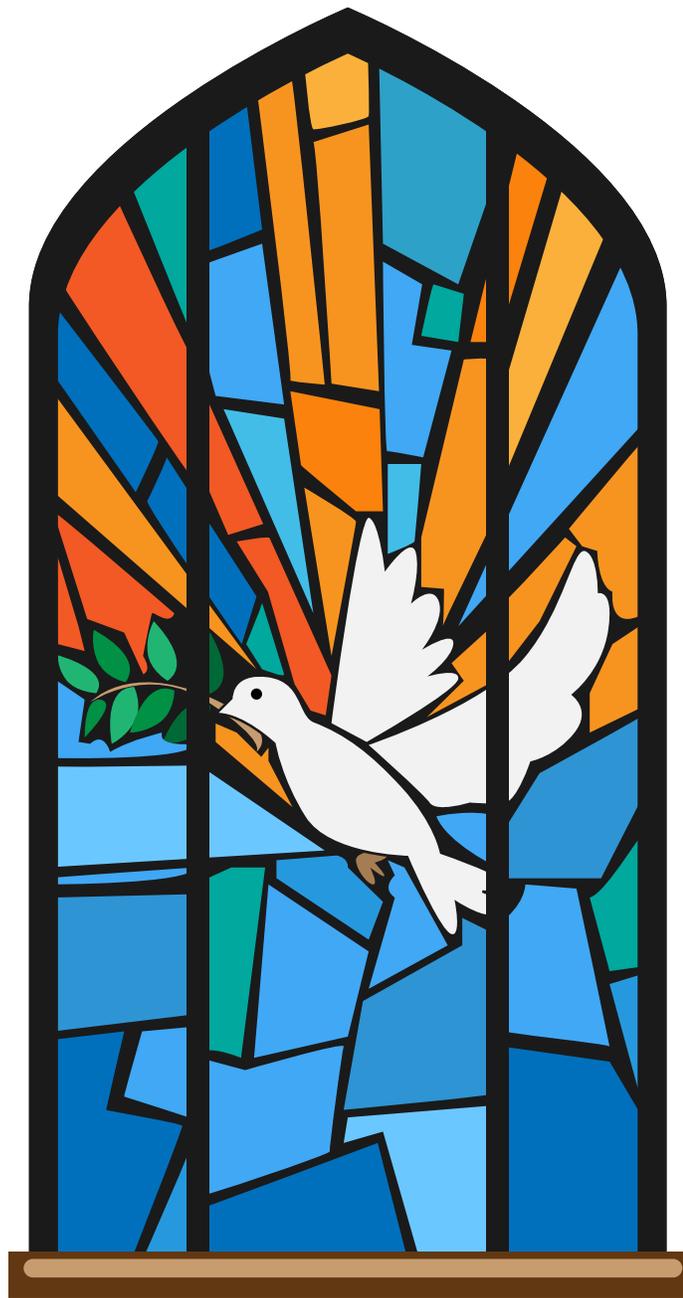
THINK ABOUT IT

You are a beloved child of God. God is a being of unlimited intelligence, power, and goodness who knows what you need and has committed to love and care for you forever.

WEEK 13 Soul Care

Note Taking Section

*“Abiding is weakness trusting itself to be kept – it is the unfaithful one casting self on the One who is altogether trustworthy and true. Abiding in Him is not a work we have to do as the condition for enjoying His salvation. It is a consenting to let Him do all for us, in us, and through us. It is a work He does for us: the fruit and the power of His redeeming love. Our part is simply to yield, to trust, and to wait for what He has engaged to perform. It was Jesus who drew you when He spoke the Word ‘Come’ (Matthew 11:28), so it was Jesus who keeps you when He said ‘Abide’ (John 15:4).”
(Murray, Abide in Christ)*



WEEK 14
DARK NIGHT
OF THE SOUL

WEEK 14 Dark Night of the Soul

Taking the Lead

Share with your group the ways desolation has impacted your life and your relationship with the LORD.

Discussion Points

- **Do you have tips on facing trouble, tribulation, and trials in life?**
Share ways you have learned to trust God in times of desolation
- **How has your understanding of consolation and desolation helped you mature in Christ?**
Share the lessons you've learned (how you grew in your relationship with Christ) during "dark nights."
- **How has learning to trust God fully helped you help others?**
Share specific examples of your spiritual maturity and how the lessons you have learned have helped you.

Take-Aways

Explain the beginning stages of loving God and how it relates to consolation rather than desolation.

Explore the sins of the beginner – how we often credit early changes in ourselves to self rather than God (Holy Spirit).

Discuss how the dark nights allow us to grow in our love for God, specifically how we learn to love God for God's sake rather than for all He has done for us.

Participants will learn God is always present and always keeps His promises and will never leave us. They will also come to see the difference between spiritual feelings and true maturity as we compare consolation and desolation.

Consolation and desolation are less about actions and more about God's gifts to us in order to achieve His purposes in our lives. Through this week, participants will learn the purpose of consolation and the significance of the gift of desolation.

Prayer Focus

- Ask the Lord to open participants' hearts and minds to the purpose of consolation and the gift of desolation.
- Pray for them to experience spiritual maturity as they trust God through the "dark nights."
- Pray each participant grows as to love God more deeply in the times of desolation.
- Continue to ask the Holy Spirit to meet them there and radically change their lives for the glory of the Father.

Participants Section

Note Taking Section

“I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” 1 (John 2:12-14).

Over these past months we have learned a great deal about our freedom in Christ. We have experienced God's great love for us in numerous ways. We have learned to trust Him and grown in our love for Him. We have discovered the ways soul care and spiritual formation allow us to abide in Him and experience the rich, full life He has for us.

This week we will consider stages and seasons of spiritual development and how God uses the dark times for His purposes – to grow us to maturity in Christ and to love Him more. The Dark Night of the Soul is not a new idea. In fact, it has been studied for centuries. Among the first to study the subject was St. Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most influential clergy of 12th century, followed by St. John of the Cross, reformer and doctor of the church, in the 16th century, who wrote much on the subject. Here, we will explore the purpose of consolation and desolation are less about actions and more about God's gifts to achieve His purposes in our lives.

WEEK 14 Dark Night of the Soul

Note Taking Section

Stages and Seasons of Spiritual Development

1. Beginner: Love of God for Pleasure's Sake

As believers, we are God's children. Our sins are forgiven and we know the Father. This stage of spiritual development is characterized by spiritual pleasure. As a mother gives milk to her children, God feeds us while we are in our love of pleasure. God gives us as believers the "bottle of spiritual pleasure" without any labor on our part. There is a new affection at our core in which The Holy Spirit dwells. Others may not be able to see the change in us at the beginning except as it manifests in our excitement. Our souls are moved to "spiritual things" due to the "consolation" of pleasure we get from them. These "spiritual things" are sought for their pleasure and not for God's glory alone. It is in this state that some of our spiritual strength begins.

2. Sins of the Beginner

Our spiritual "change" deludes us to think our changes are self-made, we mistakenly believe our energy and fortitude brought the consolation of God. In fact, the structure of our desires and capacities are similar to our preconverted days – while we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, much of our character is still filled with the flesh. The only difference is the Spirit giving pleasure without which we would not go on in the first place and we have a new affection at the core. Our appetite for pleasure has as its goal to feel good in our spirituality.

3. The Dark Night

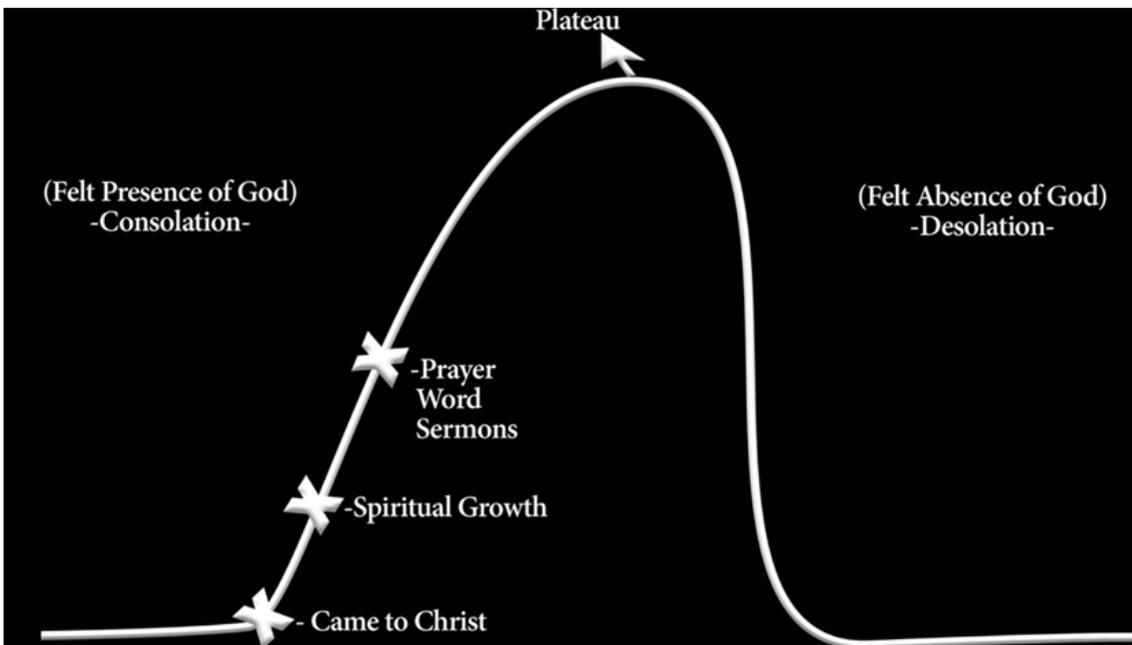
God is growing us during these times to love God for God's sake. Our true self and our hidden heart is revealed here. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Peter, and many others faced the dark night of the soul in their lives.

Write out 1 John 2:13-14.

The following illustration demonstrates the stages and seasons of spiritual development.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is happening during the time of desolation? We experience “desolation” at times (not all the time) when we are more character logically mature than when we were a beginner. Ancient theologians believed spiritual feeling do not necessarily or always correlate with maturity. They also believed feelings of “consolation” and “desolation” are less the result of our actions and more the gifts of God according to His purposes.



Ask Yourself:

How should we understand these times in light of New Covenant Truths?

WEEK 14 Dark Night of the Soul

Note Taking Section

1. God is Always Present

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35,37-39.

Write out 2 Peter 1:4.

Write out 1 Corinthians 6:17.

Write out Colossians 1:27.

WEEK 14 Dark Night of the Soul

Note Taking Section

The Purpose of Consolation

The purpose of consolation is to give us as believers a taste of the presence of God even before our character development which is designed to direct our heart toward Him. Character development comes in the form of prayer, reading and studying the Word, fellowship, service, and more. It is what the psalmist describes in Psalm 34:8, "taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes

refuge in him" and in Psalm 119:103, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

As we experience our season on consolation, we can give ourselves over to the spiritual disciplines of the Word, prayer, fellowship, services, etc. as God's consoling love is reinforced in these behaviors.

The Gift of Desolation

Times of desolation reveal what is truly in our hearts, what is really going on inside. Times of desolation allow us to see ourselves as we are – to see the hidden parts of our hearts which have yet to be yielded to God – to see the places we continue to cling to our idols – to see areas where we want to be God ourselves. The desolation – the

dark nights of the soul – are significant and meaningful in our spiritual journey. It marks the point in time in which God thinks you are ready to see the truth about yourself – what is truly in your heart. He withdraws the bottle of spiritual consolation so you can clearly see your need and to make you hungry for Him.

Write out Deuteronomy 8:2-3.

WEEK 14 Dark Night of the Soul

Note Taking Section

God Is Not Withdrawing

During the dark night of the soul, God is not withdrawing from you. He is, in fact, withdrawing the feeling of consolation. In this time, God is drawing near to us to speak truth to us. His desire is to take us to new places of need and dependence on Him. During this time, your vices, which are kept hidden from your heart, are on display – center stage. God can handle us, but we often cannot handle ourselves. In times of desolation, our true character is revealed because our will is at a great low.

Signs of Being in The Dark Night

- It is difficult to stay focused on spiritual disciplines.
- You have no desire to perform spiritual disciplines (often because they make you feel guilty).
- Spiritual things cause you to feel anxious and nervous.
- You wonder if you are backsliding.
- You think a new place or environment will make you feel better.
- Things “feel” different. You yearn for how you used to “feel.”
You believe the issue is everyone else's not yours.

Temptations While in The Dark Night

- Feeling Guilty - “I should be making my spiritual life work.” (Spiritual Pride)
- Working Harder – “I need to get back that loving feeling.” (Spiritual Gluttony)
- Worrying/Despairing – “I'm doing all the spiritual disciplines so where is the payoff?”

Ask Yourself:

- “God, what are you doing?”
- “How can I cooperate with You?”
- “God, what are trying to show me?”

Pray:

- God, open my eyes to see what you are doing, what you are showing me, and how I can cooperate.

WEEK 14 Dark Night of the Soul

Note Taking Section

JOURNAL – Record your time in the dark night and how God’s love manifested in your life during your time of desolation.



WEEK 15
LIFE AFTER LIFE

WEEK 15 Life after LIFE

In this fallen world, we face the harsh reality of dark things: abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, verbal, and spiritual), violence, and betrayals. Though these things create deep, serious wounds, healing is possible; freedom is possible, and it is for you because God is good and gracious. His heart's desire is for you to be completely whole, alive, and new in every way, and He wants to see this restoration happen even more than you do.

The path you are on, the one that led you to Be Free, is part of your healing. This season is part of the greater work the Lord wants to do in your life. By committing to this study, you're growing closer to the One whose Name is Healer, and in turn, He will bring you into a new place of healing and restoration.

Go after God, respect the process, and allow Be Free to be a piece of your healing journey. But also understand this - sometimes the Lord heals deep wounds, particularly childhood wounds or sexual abuse wounds, in the context of counseling, community, prayer, and time. But the Lord does heal. Wherever you are on the journey, keep pressing in to the Father, and let Him show you the path He has for you. There is no recipe for instant results, but through a trust filled relationship with Jesus, there is incredible hope for healing authentically.

If this study brings up things you'd rather not remember, don't let the enemy tell you to "just forget it and move on." It requires immense courage to look into deep wounds and not turn away. It requires strength of character to reach

out for counseling and to trusted friends. You see, the enemy wants to keep you shrouded in shame and anxiety, thinking, "What if people find out," or "I do not deserve good things," or even "It's partially my fault." Please know as a victim of abuse, it's never your fault. Choose to believe what Jesus says about you instead of the lies of the enemy; the Holy Spirit will help you. The Lord has plans for your life, and they are to prosper not to harm you, to give you a hope and future (Jeremiah 29:11). Know your leaders care about you; it is one of the reasons why they chose to lead this particular group. So don't hesitate to ask them for resources or a referral to Christian counseling.

No matter what happened in the past, there is good news. You have a choice in regards to how you live today: Will you allow yesterday to dictate today, or will you turn, look at yesterday, and deal with the wounds inflicted?

Will you stick with it if it takes longer than anticipated? Our prayer is you will be brave, courageous, and strong, and you will look at yesterday and ask the Lord prayerfully how He will set you free from it. Because He wants you to be free. In fact, He wants it so desperately He was willing to die so you could experience it. The cross doesn't minimize your circumstances, but it does change the outcome. It represents a power that conquered every sin and even death. There's great hope!

WEEK 15 Life after LIFE

Note Taking Section

Focus on the Prize

1. Live by the Word of God.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105).

Choose to rearrange your thinking to line up with the Word of God and don't try to make Scripture line up with your thinking.

2. Put on the Whole Armor of God.

“Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11).

Memorize Ephesians 6:10-18 and daily put on each piece of its protective armor.

3. Become a worshipper.

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 150:6).

Allow the power of worship to keep you pure and be an offensive weapon to wield against the enemy.

4. Walk by faith.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Decide you will trust God and His Word even if, in the natural, it seems unlikely to happen.

5. Maintain a daily prayer life.

“Never stop praying.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Continual prayer is simply talking to God and listening for His answers.

6. Change old habits.

“Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true.” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Make the decision when God shows you something in your life which holds you back from His best, you will give it to Him.

7. Submit to the Lord and to those in authority.

“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. (Romans 13:1).

Obedience is what we do with our bodies, but submission is how we feel with our hearts. God wants submission, not just obedience.

WEEK 15 Life after LIFE

Note Taking Section

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”
(Galatians 5:1, NIV).*



APPENDIX

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

Freedom Song — Scriptures for Living in Freedom

The secret to staying free lies within the Word. The scriptures are living and active, and they will show you how to live in the Tree of Life every single day as they strengthen your spirit. In dark times, the Word will illuminate your path; in trials, the Word will bring you peace. It will help you separate soul from spirit and reveal to you the purpose behind your unique passions and talents.

Ask the Lord to inscribe these truths on your heart, and they will become a part of you and all you do. No longer will old ways govern your decisions; instead, you will be transformed into a new creation radiating the hope of heaven in joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Your life will be a love song in a lost and lonely world, echoing an anthem of great hope, redemption, and freedom.

How to Fight for Freedom

It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. (2 Samuel 22:33).

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6).

For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. (Romans 6:6).

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14).

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20).

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1).

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24).

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13).

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:8).

When You Struggle with Authority

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. (Romans 13:1).

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17).

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority. (1 Peter 2:13).

When You Struggle with Pride or Surrender

Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38).

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:39).

Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:4).

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12).

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20).

God is with You

The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14).

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1).

But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you when you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west." (Isaiah 43:1-2, 5).

Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5).

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3).

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:16).

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

When Anger Arises

Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. (Psalm 4:4).

A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless. (Proverbs 14:16).

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick tempered man displays folly. (Proverbs 14:29).

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. (Proverbs 29:11)

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. (Psalm 37:8).

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. (Psalm 145: 8-9).

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7).

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more. (Hebrews 8:12).

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10).

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. (Psalm 119:9).

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23).

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8).

When You Struggle with Purity

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2).

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8).

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:14).

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22).

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

When You Face Temptation

I will set before my eyes no vile thing. (Psalm 101:3).

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. (Matthew 26:41).

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:14).

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27).

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because

When You Have Been Wronged

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7).

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends. (Proverbs 17:9).

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Matthew 5:44).

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (Matthew 6:14).

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him,

of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:2-6).

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22).

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:11-14).

so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11:24-26).

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:17-18).

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32).

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15).

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9).

When You Feel Condemned

Note Taking Section

They looked to Him and were radiant; their faces were not ashamed. (Psalm 34:5).

Do not be afraid, you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated; you will forget the shame of your youth. (Isaiah 54:4).

Instead of your shame you shall have double honor. (Isaiah 61:7).

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. (John 3:17).

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, He straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw.

a stone at her . . ." Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:7, 10-11).

When he [Satan] lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44).

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1).

For the accuser of our brothers (Satan), who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. (Revelation 12:10).

When Your Heart Is Broken

I am the Lord, who heals you. (Exodus 15:26).

He is near to those who have a broken heart and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18-19).

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3).

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. (Isaiah 61:1-3).

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35, 38-39).

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

Moving Past the Past

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” (Isaiah 43:18-19).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14).

When You Have Money Issues

The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. (Deuteronomy 28:12).

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for every-thing in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. (1 Chronicles 29:11).

If your wealth increases, don't make it the center of your life. (Psalm 62:10).

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. (Psalm 102:25-27).

Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money; it robs them of life. (Proverbs 1:19).
He who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. (Proverbs 11:18).

Greed brings grief to the whole family. (Proverbs 15:27).

Whoever loves money never has money

When You Need Peace

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27).

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7).

enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his in-come. This too is meaningless. (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure. (Isaiah 33:6).

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. (Isaiah 65:17).

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty. (Malachi 3:10-12).

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21).

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24).

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

When You Feel Afraid

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. (Exodus 14:13)

The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9).

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4).

Though an army besieges me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. (Psalm 27:3).

For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in his dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. (Psalm 27:5).

You are my hiding place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:7).

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. (Psalm 34:4).

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? (Psalm 56:3-5).

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. (Psalm 55:22).

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2).

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name." (Psalm 91:14).

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:10-12).

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? (Psalm 118:6).

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid. (Proverbs 18:10).

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10).

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. (Isaiah 43:2).

Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one. (Isaiah 44:8).

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. (Matthew 7:25).

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

When You Face Trials

Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10).

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5).

My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:3,5).

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. (Psalm 126:5).

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18).

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-3).

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (Psalm 51:12).

Reasons to Rejoice

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11).

This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24).

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12).

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11).

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13).

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4).

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:10).

WEEK Appendix

Note Taking Section

Who I Am in Christ

I Am Accepted

John 1:12

I am God's child.

John 15:15

I am Christ's friend.

Romans 5:1

I have been justified.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

I have been bought with a price. I belong to God.

1 Corinthians 12:27

I am a member of Christ's body.

Ephesians 1:5

I have been adopted as God's child.

Ephesians 2:18

I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:14

I have been forgiven of all my sins.

Colossians 2:10

I am complete in Christ.

I Am Safe

Romans 8:1-2

I am free forever from condemnation.

Romans 8:28

I am assured that all things work together for good.

Romans 8:31-34

I am free from any condemning charges against me.

Romans 8:35-39

I cannot be separated from the love of God.

Philippians 1:6

I am confident the good work God has begun in me will be completed.

Philippians 3:20

I am a citizen of Heaven.

2 Timothy 1:7

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and of self-control.

Hebrews 4:16

I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need.

1 John 5:18

I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.



**ANSWER
KEY**

WEEK Answer Key

Note Taking Section

Week 11

Often the ideas the enemy attacks us with are so subtle and tailor-made for us we will believe the thoughts are our own. But the Bible says we as believers have the power in us to withstand every temptation of the enemy. Read James 4:7.

What happens when we choose to resist the devil's temptations?

He will flee from you.

Write out 1 Corinthians 10:13. What will God do for you when the temptations seem unbearable?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What might be missing in a person who struggles with turning from sin? Godly sorrow

Read Romans 2:4. Name something else that leads us to repentance.

The kindness of God

Week 12

Look up the following verses. What does each say about the fear of the Lord?
Proverbs 1:7 –It's the beginning of wisdom.
Proverbs 8:13 –It's the hatred of evil.

Proverbs 14:26 –Those who fear the Lord are secure; he will be a place of refuge for their children.

Proverbs 14:27 –Fear of the Lord is a life-giving fountain; it offers escape from the snares of death.

Proverbs 19:23 –Fear of the Lord gives life, security, and protection from harm.

Week 13

Look up the following verses. What do you learn about the relational transformation which comes through life in Christ and soul care?

Philippians 4:11-13 – to be content in all circumstances/situations due to Christ's strength and our relationship with Him

2 Timothy 4:16-17 – to understand the Lord gives strength and deliverance even when all others abandon us

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 – to know God;s grace is sufficient and Christ's power rests on us so that when we are weak, we are strong in Him

2 Timothy 2:1 – to know we can be strong in the grace afforded us by Christ



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