

LifeGroup Study & Devotional Guide
January 21 - March 4, 2018

EXPERIENCING
GOD

Introduction



Welcome to “Experiencing God”! In 2 Peter 3:18 we read this - “... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The goal of this study is that you would grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Just like a plant needs a healthy environment to grow, God has given you resources to help you grow your relationship with Him. These include community with other followers of Jesus, the Bible, His Spirit and spiritual disciplines. As you gather with others in LifeGroup and work your way through this material, ask God to help you grow. You’ll be amazed at what He will do in your life as you participate with him to Experience God in these coming weeks.

Jeff Austen
LifeGroups and Adult Ministries Pastor
Creekside Church



I am extremely excited about the potential of this study to impact you and help you grow into Spiritual Maturity. The foundational ideas and some of the materials for this project come from Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California. Other contributions have been acknowledged in this guide.

May God be pleased to use this project for His praise and glory, through the building up of His church.

Ken Taylor
Lead Pastor
Creekside Church

NOTE: The teaching content of this guide is part 2 - “Nurture Your Faith” of a 4-part series we’ve designed at Creekside. This 4 class series begins with our class “Explore Creekside”. We highly encourage you to begin your journey at Creekside by participating in Explore Creekside (part 1).
creeksidechurch.ca/explore

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Understanding your Study Guide

Here is a quick explanation of the contents of your study guide.



CATCHING UP: Each week you'll start your time together by briefly discussing a question or two that will help focus everyone's attention on the session subject.



MEMORY VERSE: In each session you'll find a Bible passage for your group to memorize together. Have your group read it out loud together from the book, then have everyone close their books and quote it out loud together.



VIDEO TEACHING: There is a video teaching for the group to watch together each week. There are blanks for you fill in during the teaching.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS: Each video segment is complemented by several questions for group discussion. Please don't feel pressured to discuss every single question. There is no reason to rush through the answers. Give everyone enough time to share their thoughts. If you don't get through all the questions, that's OK!



LIVING IT OUT: This section helps your group members think about how to apply what they've been learning. You'll find some practical application questions that will guide you to live out the truths and instructions we find in the Scriptures.



MEETING WITH GOD: At the end of each session, you'll find 5 devotional readings with questions, journal space and a place to write out a prayer to God. These five readings are designed for you to do on your own, as a way of meeting with God 5 days of each week of this series. This regular habit of meeting with God is crucial for God to work in your life in this experience. When you meet for group, ask at the beginning, "How did your meeting with God" time go this week?"

Session 1

SPIRITUAL MATURITY DEFINED



NEW GROUP: Have everyone in the group share their name, how long they have been at Creekside and what they enjoyed about where they lived when they were 10 years old.

CONTINUING GROUP: Using one word, how would you describe your walk with God these days? (examples - close, steady, growing, stalled)

Key Question for this Session:
What does spiritual maturity look like?

Memory Verse

*"Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit."
1 Timothy 4:7 (Phillips)*



VIDEO TEACHING:

To me, growing into spiritual maturity is becoming less self-conscious and more God-conscious."
Mark Batterson

The goal of this study is that we would understand and live out spiritual _____

"...that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured." Colossians 4:12b

*"...we will no longer be infants ... instead ... we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."
Ephesians 4:14-15*

Spiritual maturity is _____

"...become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Romans 8:29

It is not _____

"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness." Hebrews 5:12-13

It is a _____

"...become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

It takes _____

"...train yourself to be godly." 1 Timothy 4:7b

Our part in the process of becoming spiritually mature is _____

Psalm 1

1 Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.

2 But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.

3 They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.

4 But not the wicked!

They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.

5 They will be condemned at the time of judgment.

Sinners will have no place among the godly.

6 For the Lord watches over the path of the godly,

A key way that we grow in our relationship with God is through obedience. Jesus said, "If you love me, obey my commandments." John 14:15 NLT. Although our relationship with God is not about our performance, the fruit of our relationship with Him shows up in the way we live, in our love for Him. An indication that we love Jesus comes from our intentionality and joy in doing what he tells us to.

1. OBEDIENCE GUARANTEES _____
"Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."
Joshua 1:8
2. OBEDIENCE DEMONSTRATES _____
"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." John 14:21
3. OBEDIENCE PROVIDES _____
"And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming." 1 John 2:28
4. OBEDIENCE MULTIPLIES _____
"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete". John 15:10-11
5. OBEDIENCE COMMUNICATES GOD'S _____
"No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:12
6. OBEDIENCE ENABLES _____
"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." 1 John 1:6-7
7. OBEDIENCE ENABLES _____
"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." John 14:21

"Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years,
but by obedience to the will of God."
Oswald Chambers



What was a highlight for you from the video teaching? (This could be something you see as particularly important or a question you have.)

- READ Psalm 1 out-loud as a group. Using this Psalm, how would you describe a spiritually mature person?

A spiritually mature person is ...

- Psalm 1 begins with “Oh the joys of those who ...” or “Blessed is the person who ...” depending on the translation you’re reading. How does joy or blessings show up in the life of the person who obeys God?
- Psalm 1 outlines 3 ways we can be influenced away from following God (v. 1). What do these look like in our day? Can you think of an example for each one?
- In Psalm 1 v. 2, the writer says that we are blessed when we meditate on God’s law (the Bible) day and night. What might that look like in our day? (also see Deuteronomy 6:7)
- Look again at verse 3. Do you consider yourself a “fruit bearing tree?” Why or why not?
- Vs. 4-5 speak of the destiny of wicked people. These days we don’t like to call anyone “wicked” because it sounds insulting or judgmental. What does it look like to live wickedly in our day?
- Read verse 6 again. God tells us each of us is on a path, either one that he watches over, or a path that leads to destruction. What do you think it means that God watches over the path of the godly?
- When it comes to God’s invitation to us to grow spiritually, He doesn’t want to us feel guilty, like we don’t measure up, neither does He want to us become apathetic. How can you stay fresh and motivated in your walk with God?

Sometimes when we read the words of those who have been more than conquerors, we feel almost despondent. I feel that I shall never be like that. But they won through step by step, by little bits of wills, little denials of self, little inward victories, by faithfulness in very little things. They became what they are. No one sees these little hidden steps. They only see the accomplishment, but even so, these small steps were taken. There is no sudden triumph, no spiritual maturity. That is the work of the moment.

Amy Carmichael

CASE STUDY

Tim is a friend of yours who also attends Creekside. He has been a follower of Jesus for over 30 years. Recently when you got together for breakfast, Tim shared that he feels like he has stalled in his walk with God. He let you know that he feels bored with church and distant from God. As part of the conversation, Tim tells you that he has been struggling to forgive another man at the church who used to be a friend. Tim also shares with you that because he felt he wasn't really getting anything much from reading the Bible on his own, he has stopped this habit. Using some of the insights from this session, how might you help Tim get back on track in his walk with God?



For this part of our study time, use the following statements to help you think further into how you might grow in your spiritual maturity in the coming weeks.

When it comes to my spiritual maturity these days, here's where I would rate myself -

1	2	3	4	5
I'm at the infant stage (just starting out)		I'm at the teen stage (on my way but lots to learn)		I'm at the adult stage (feeling confident in Christ)

In these coming weeks, here's what I would love to experience - (please circle your top two).

- a. A growing sense of closeness to Jesus
- b. Deeper friendships with other followers of Jesus
- c. Consistency with spiritual habits like Bible reading and prayer
- d. A better understanding of who I am in Christ
- e. A boldness to live for God

PRAYER: For your prayer time, get together with one or two others and share your Live it Out insights. Ask God to work in specific ways in your life to grow your spiritual maturity in the coming weeks!



DAY 1

READ: Philippians 3:12-14 *“I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not already achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”*

Spiritual maturity isn’t a 100-yard dash, it’s a life-long journey. The Apostle Paul wrote that he hadn’t yet reached the goal of spiritual maturity. Instead, he determined to “press on” in his journey. Do you ever feel like you’ve got a long way to go in your journey to grow closer to God? You’re in good company! The Apostle Paul didn’t allow his past to slow him down. Instead, he focused on the prize, to fully know God and to be fully mature in Him. As we begin this journey of nurturing our faith, allow God to speak to your heart and to give you the determination that Paul had to press on!

PRAYER -

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 2

READ Philippians 3:17 *“Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.”*

God wants us to help each other grow to spiritual maturity. Paul wrote, “... pattern your lives after mine.” In other words, “Do what I do!” How could Paul say that? Paul’s sincere desire was to grow in his walk with Christ. When our desire is like Paul’s, God can use our example to encourage others in their faith. God isn’t looking for perfect examples. He is looking for humble hearts, people who are willing to be used by Him to encourage others to grow. Are you willing to be used as an example to other followers of Jesus? Are you open to learning from others who are on the same journey? Ask God to make you a compelling example to the people in your LifeGroup and your faith community.

PRAYER-

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 3

READ Galatians 5:16 *“So I say let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.”*

Spiritual maturity isn’t something we do on our own. It’s about God’s Spirit working in us. God tells us - “... let the Holy Spirit guide your lives.” The idea here is to walk with a specific purpose in view. Our journey to spiritual maturity happens as we make it our purpose to walk with God each day. A key part of this process is our decision to say “no” to our sinful nature and “yes” to God’s will for our lives. As we trust in His power to guide our lives, we can keep walking in the direction of Jesus, a little closer to Him each day.

PRAYER -

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 4

READ: Galatians 5:22-23, 25
“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against these things! Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.”

Spiritual maturity bears fruit in our lives. As we grow in our walk with God, we begin to change in the way we relate to others and the way we conduct our lives. Many of us feel we fall far short of this list of character traits in Galatians 5:22. We wonder why we can’t just get our act together and live like we should! Remember this, the journey to spiritual maturity is a walk. It happens one step at a time. There will be steps back at times and steps ahead at others. The main thing is this. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have God’s Spirit living in you! Follow His lead. Listen for His whisper in your heart, showing you the way to treat other people in your life, and the way to live in His power. This step-by-step journey takes time, but with God’s help, you’ll get there!

PRAYER -

Dear Father, today I thank you that .

DAY 5

READ: 2 Peter 1:3
“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.”

When we follow Jesus, we are given all we need for spiritual maturity. Peter writes, “By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.” God has given us his Holy Spirit, the Bible, each other, and a host of other helps to move us toward Him. Peter goes on to say – “In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises.” Each of us needs to make the choice to fully embrace these gifts from God. To respond is to cooperate with God – to allow God to do the work that only He can do in our lives. Yes, it takes effort and intentionality on our part, but the real slogging is done by God for us. It’s about his divine power at work in us! Thank God today for the work He is doing in your life to grow you to be like His Son, Jesus.

PRAYER -

Dear Father, today I thank you that



Session 2

SIN - How to Deal With It



How has your "Meeting With God" time gone this past week?

Tell the group about a time you "missed the mark". How did the experience make you feel? (for example - this could be an archery or target shooting story, or a story of missing the mark at school.)

Key Question for this Session: How can I deal with the problem of sin in my life?

Memory Verse

"If we claim that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." 1 John 1:8-9



VIDEO TEACHING:

While we all desire the rewards for obedience we are prone to rebel against God's design for experiencing those rewards. The Bible calls this _____.

"Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, thought or of inner disposition or state." Millard Erickson

Sin is the failure to let _____ be _____.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

The Bible gives us two pictures of sin:

1. _____

Individual acts
Inner attitudes

2. _____

An inner force
An inherent condition
A controlling power

We Normally Try to Deal with Sin by ...

Using _____ and _____,

We determine never to do it again.

We pray against it.

We fight against it.

We set our will against it.

RESULTS: We often lose.

We become morally discouraged or externally righteous.

“We want to make it quite clear that we cannot free and purify our own heart by exerting our own will.” Heini Arnold

“Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!” Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.” Colossians 2:21-23 NLT

“The will has the same deficiency as the law - it can only deal with externals. It is incapable of bringing about the necessary transformation of the inner spirit.”
Richard Foster

HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN

So far in our video teaching we've heard about the issue of sin and how we often fail to deal with it in the right way. Let's take a look at what God says about how to deal with sin the way He wants us to. As we work our way through this part of the teaching, allow God to speak to your heart about the stubborn sins in your life. How might you put what you're learning into practice and gain some victory over sin?

Here's how to deal with sin from God's perspective:

1. DEVELOP A BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

- i. We must be committed to _____ and _____ what God says.

READ Joshua 1:8

"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do."

- ii. Our assessment of sin must be _____, not _____.

"We tend to mentally categorize sin into what is unacceptable and what may be tolerable. Our problem is not that we abhor certain sins but that we do not abhor every sin. In commenting on some of the more minute Old Testament dietary laws God gave to the children of Israel, Andrew Bonar said, "It is not the importance of the thing, but the majesty of the Lawgiver, that is to be the standard of obedience ... Some, indeed, might reckon such minute and arbitrary rules as trifling. But the principle involved in obedience or disobedience was none other than the same principle which was tried in Eden at the foot of the forbidden tree. It is really this: Is the Lord to be obeyed in all things whatsoever he commands? Is he a holy Lawgiver? Are his creatures bound to give implicit assent to his will?"

- iii. Our attitude toward sin must be _____ centred not _____ centred.

Judas said, ***"I have sinned."*** **Matthew 27:4**

BUT

The prodigal son said, ***"I have sinned against heaven and against you."*** **Luke 15:18**

We are more concerned about our own "victory" over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve the heart of God. We cannot tolerate failure in our struggle with sin chiefly because we are success-oriented, not because we know it is offensive to God.

Jerry Bridges, **The Pursuit of Holiness**

iv. We must practice regular _____ of sin.

“If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

2. REALIZE AND EMBRACE INNER RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A GIFT FROM GOD

READ: Romans 6:1-14

“1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? 3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. 6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. 8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. 9 We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. 10 When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. 11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

12 Do not let sin control the way you live;[a] do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. 14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace.”

We have been released from the guilt of sin. How can we be released from the power of sin?

Paul shares the answer by using 3 key words from Romans 6.

i. _____ who you are.

“... don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” Romans 6:3

“... we know that our old self was crucified with him.” Romans 6:6

“... we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again.” Roman 6:9

ii. _____ on it.

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 6:11

- What does it look like practically to count ourselves dead to sin?

iii. _____ yourself.

“Do not offer any parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” Romans 6:13

3. RESPOND TO TEMPTATION ACCORDING TO THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

James 1:14-15

“But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

STEP 1 DESIRE (:14)

Legitimate desires can be satisfied in illegitimate ways

STEP 2 DECEPTION (:14)

“dragged away” “enticed”

STEP 3 DISOBEDIENCE (:15)

Desire ... emotions

Deception ... intellect

Disobedience Will

STEP 4 DEATH (:15)

“It may take years for the sin to mature but when it does the result will be death.”

KNOW AND FIGHT SATAN’S LIES

John 8:44

“You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Satan lies to us in 3 specific ways -

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The key to defeating Satan is to know, count on and live the _____ .

John 8:32

“Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

Neither the language of medicine nor of law is adequate substitute for the language of [sin]. Contrary to the medical model, we are not entirely at the mercy of our maladies. The choice is to enter into the process of repentance. Contrary to the legal model, the essence of sin is not [primarily] the violation of law but a wrecked relationship with God, one another, and the whole created order. ‘All sins are attempts to fill voids,’ wrote Simon Weil. Because we cannot stand the God-shaped hole inside of us, we try stuffing it full of all sorts of things, but only God may fill [it].
Barbara Brown Taylor



What has been a highlight for you from the video teaching? This can be something you have found particularly meaningful or it could be a question you have.

READ Romans 6:1-23

6 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? 3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. 6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. 8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. 9 We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. 10 When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. 11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

12 Do not let sin control the way you live;[a] do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. 14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace.

15 Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! 16 Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. 17 Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. 18 Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

19 Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led even deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. 21 And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. 22 But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

- In the first few verses of Romans 6, Paul refutes an argument that we should sin because the more we sin the more we see God's grace. He goes on to say, "Since we died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?" (v. 2) What does Paul mean when he says that we have "died" to sin?
- In vs. 4. Paul makes the argument that we have died with Jesus and have raised with Jesus to live a new life. Since this is our experience, what can you do to identify with your new self rather than your old self? (see also Galatians 2:20)
- In verse 7, Paul says that we have been set free from the power of sin. How can we live out this reality? (see vs. 12-14)
- In vs. 15-22, Paul uses the analogy of slavery to help us understand the power sin can have over us and the choice we can make instead to be a slave to God. How does this imagery of slavery help you understand your old relationship with sin and your new relationship with God?
- Romans 6:23 is a key verse that summarizes the Gospel. How might you use this verse to help a friend understand what God has done for us by giving us His Son?

CASE STUDY

Your friend, Jackie, and you get together about once a week for coffee. Since you used to be in a LifeGroup together, it's quite natural to talk about your spiritual lives and to pray with each other. Over the three years you have known Jackie, she has regularly asked for prayer to put an end to a specific sin in her life. Lately she has expressed frustration that she can't seem to break free from this sin. Most recently she admitted to you that she has given up trying to stop. She says it just seems easier to live with this sin than to try any more to stop. Using Romans 6, how might you encourage your friend Jackie to take some positive steps forward in her battle with this sin?



For this part of our study time, use the following statements to help you think further into how you might deal with sin in your life.

When it comes to my seeing my struggle with sin I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Have a tough time seeing it in my life		Sometimes notice it		See it often

When it comes to battling temptation and sin in my life I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Often feel defeated		Try to fight in my own strength		Am counting on Jesus

PRAYER: This week, ask God to help you specifically in this area of battling temptation and sin. Ask Him for discernment to recognize temptation and sin for what they are. Ask Him for power to fight sin and win!



Week 2 Devotionals

DAY 1

READ: 1 John 3:1-3

“See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don’t recognize that we are God’s children because they don’t know him. Dear, friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.”

To battle sin, we must know who we are. Here is John 3, God reminds us of this incredible truth - we are his children, deeply loved by Him! Our life is our opportunity to live in anticipation of the day Jesus will return for us. Our quest to become more like Jesus will ultimately be fulfilled on that day. The hope we have of Jesus’ return is our motivation to live for Him here on earth and to keep ourselves pure from sin. We want to be pure because our Saviour is pure. Live each day in light of Jesus’ return. God loves you and one day soon He is coming back to bring you to be with Him. What a motivation we have to be pure!

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 2

READ: 1 John 3:4-6

“Everyone who sins is breaking God’s law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him. Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.”

Sin and purity don’t mix. We can’t consistently sin and be a pure follower of Jesus at the same time. John writes, “Anyone who continues to live in him [Jesus] will not sin.” John doesn’t mean that a follower of Jesus will never sin. All of us will battle sin until the day Jesus brings us home to be with Him. What John means here is that followers of Jesus will not live a life of sin. Recently my daughter did a science project for school where she poured several liquids of varying densities into a bottle. The liquids with heavier density sank to the bottom, while the liquids with lighter density layered on top. The cool part of this project is seeing how these liquids stayed separate and didn’t mix, even when they were in the same bottle! In a world saturated with sin, God calls us to live pure lives by abiding in Jesus (see John 15:1-8). Sin and purity don’t mix. Thank God today for helping you to pursue purity and avoid sin in your life.

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 3

READ: 1 John 3:7-8

“Dear children, don’t let anyone deceive you about this. When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.”

The power of sin is deception. John writes, “... don’t let anyone deceive you about this.” In other words, don’t let anyone fool you into thinking you can consistently sin and be a follower of Jesus at the same time. Satan’s oldest trick the book is deception. It’s what he used to lure Adam and Eve in the garden. It’s the tool he used to lure Judas to betray Jesus. When we’re deceived we believe a lie. This is why Satan loves to isolate us from other followers of Jesus. If he can keep us from community with other followers of Jesus and from the Bible, he can go to work on us and deceive us to the point where we sin. Be aware of this strategy of Satan. But always remember this, Jesus came so that you can be free from the deception and consequences sin. In Jesus, you have victory and you are free!

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 4

READ: 1 John 3:9
“Those who have been born into God’s family do not make a practice of sinning, because God’s life is in them. So they can’t keep on sinning because they are children of God.”

God has broken sin’s power over you. John writes, “Those who have been born into God’s family do not make a practice of sinning, because God’s life is in them.” Here’s an incredible truth. God’s life is in you! In John 14, Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit who leads you into all truth.” (v. 16-17). God’s Holy Spirit is living and active in your life, alerting you to temptation, warning you about the dangers of sin, giving you the power you need to live as God’s child. You’re not in the battle on your own. God’s Spirit is your constant companion, your life-long friend and the One who will always be there for you when sin comes knocking at your door.

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____

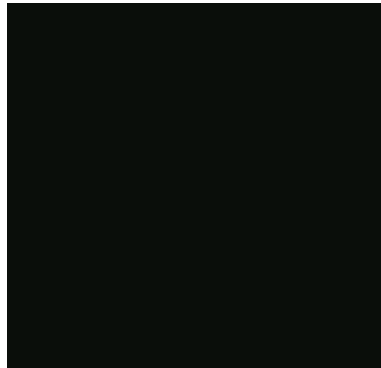
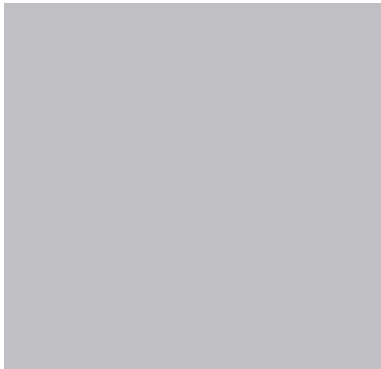
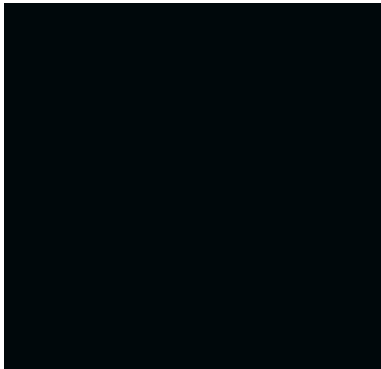
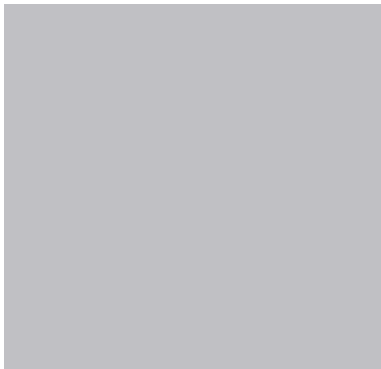
DAY 5

READ: 1 John 3:10
“So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God. This is the message you have heard from the beginning. We should love one another.”

The greatest way to battle sin in our relationship with other people is to love them. Sin is selfishness. It is consumed with me, my, mine. Relationships break down when we demand our way. When we look to other people only to see what we can get from them, we destroy the potential we have to live together as children of God. Instead of living selfishly, God calls us to live selflessly. Loving one another happens as we put the needs of other people ahead of our own. When we serve other people from a pure heart, when we desire the best for others, when we pray for others and give ourselves to others, we show Jesus’ love. Jesus said, “Your love for one another will prove that you are my disciples.” John 13:35 Allow God’s love to flow through you as you interact with the people in your life today.

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that. _____



Session 3

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - PART 1



How has your "Meeting With God" time gone this past week?

What discipline did you take on as a kid that has paid off in your life? Perhaps you practiced the piano, or participated on a sport team. Share your experience with the group.

Memory Verse

*"Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit."
1 Timothy 4:7*

Key Question for this Session:
What are the spiritual disciplines?



VIDEO TEACHING:

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24

God is looking for worshipers. Followers who will live out their lives in spirit and in truth. Followers who will be committed to pleasing God in all areas of their lives. Worshipers who will grow their relationship with God through the exercise of the Spiritual Disciplines.

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

“The activities of our mind and body purposely undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order. They enable us more and more to live in a power that is, strictly speaking, beyond us, deriving from the spiritual realm itself, as we ‘yield ourselves to God, as those what are alive from the dead and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’” Dallas Willard

“This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines – they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. The Disciplines are God’s way of getting us into the ground; they put us where he can work within us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing: they can only get us to the place where something can be done ... God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us.” Richard Foster

The Spiritual Disciplines are _____ that help the believer _____ on God and invite God to transform the character and conduct of the believer through fellowship with Him.

TRYING

I can do it.

A one time event.

Addresses the fruit.

Focus is on action.

Failure makes me a loser.

VS.

TRAINING

Christ will do it.

An ongoing process.

Addresses the root.

Focus is on the heart.

Failure teaches me a lesson.

DESCRIBED

Bible Reading

“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”

Joshua 1:8 NLT

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR READING RETENTION

1. BE READY AND EAGER TO HEAR FROM GOD.
“Speak, your servant is listening.” 1 Samuel 3:10 NLT

2. DEAL WITH ATTITUDES THAT PREVENT HEARING GOD.
“Consider carefully how you listen ...” Luke 8:18

A closed mind: Is fear, pride or bitterness preventing me from hearing God?

A superficial mind: Am I really serious about wanting to hear God speak?

A preoccupied mind: Am I too busy and concerned with other things to concentrate on what God has to say?

3. CONFESS ANY SIN IN YOUR LIFE.
“Get rid of all moral filth and humbly accept the Word ...” James 1:21

4. TAKE NOTES ON WHAT YOU HEAR.
*“We must pay careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away!”
Hebrews 2:1*

5. ACT ON WHAT YOU HEAR!
“Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22

Bible Reading Resources:

YouVersion.com: Easy access to the Bible on your smart phone or computer. Bible reading plans.

Biblegateway.com: Bible reading and commentary online. Bible reading plan.

BacktotheBible.org: Free Bible reading plans.

Meditation

“Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communication with God.” J.I. Packer

EASTERN MEDITATION

An attempt to empty the mind.

Stresses becoming detached from the world.

Emphasizes losing personhood and individuality and merging with the Cosmic Mind.

Personal identity is lost.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

An attempt to fill the mind.

To motivate an attachment to God.

Emphasizes becoming all God intends us to be.

Christlikeness is gained.

“What happens in meditation is that we create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct an inner sanctuary in our heart.” Richard Foster

“Mediation has no point and no reality unless it is firmly rooted in life.” Thomas Merton

MEDITATION PROVIDES ME WITH:

1. _____
“I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.” Psalm 119:99
2. _____
“Oh how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.” Psalm 119:97-98
3. _____
“My heart grows hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned, then I spoke with my tongue.” Psalm 39:3
4. _____
“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” Revelation 3:20

MEDITATE ON

i. SCRIPTURE

Why?

1. It is the key to becoming like Christ.
*“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 3:18*
2. It is the key to answered prayer.
“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” John 15:7
3. It is the key to successful living.
*“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night ...”
Joshua 1:8*

How?

1. Picture it.
2. Pronounce it.
3. Paraphrase it.
4. Personalize it.
5. Pray it.
6. Practice it.

ii.. CREATION

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

Psalm 19:1

“Look at the trees, really look at them. Take a flower and allow its beauty and symmetry to sink deep into your mind and heart. Listen to the birds. Watch the little creatures that creep upon the earth. These are humble acts, to be sure, but sometimes God reaches us profoundly in these simple ways if we will quiet ourselves to listen.” Richard Foster



What has been a highlight for you from the video teaching? This can be something you have found particularly meaningful or it could be a question you have.

In our day of information overload all of us are bombarded with opportunities to read from a multitude of sources and from many different perspectives on every topic imaginable! Many would ask, “Why read the Bible when there are so many other things to read?” Others would say, “I’m just too busy to read the Bible. I know I should do it but I just can’t seem to find the time.” Many followers of Jesus struggle to consistently read the Bible on their own. Your LifeGroup is going to spend some time looking at Scriptures and writings that speak to the value of reading and thinking about the Bible regularly and prayerfully. As you read through these Scriptures and writings and discuss them together as a group, allow God to speak to your heart about the value of reading the Bible.

READ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.” NLT

- Why is it important to understand that the Bible is inspired by God?
- According to these verses, how does God use the Bible in our lives?

READ the following quote from John MacArthur:

In every era, the centrality of God's Word to the life and health of His people has not changed. The personal study of Scripture is as vital for believers today as it ever has been. Studying the truth is how we nourish our souls. And no aspect of study is as important as your own personal time in the Word of God. John MacArthur

- What do you think John means by saying "studying the truth is how we nourish our souls?"
- Some people might say that hearing a sermon on Sunday is all they need for input from the Bible for the week. How might you use 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and John MacArthur's quote to encourage them to read the Bible on their own?

Look back at the chart in the video notes that highlights the differences between Christian meditation and Eastern meditation. How might you summarize Christian meditation in one sentence?

Christian meditation is ... _____

READ Psalm 1:1-2 out loud together as a group.

"Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night."
Psalm 1:1-2

- What do you think it means to "delight" in the law of the LORD (the Bible)?
- When we delight in something or someone we naturally want to spend as much time as we can thinking about that thing or that person. Where would you rate your delight of God's Word compared to your delight in other things or people these days?

READ Rick Warren's Devotional - Focus on Scripture, Not Worries

"I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread." (Job 23:12b NIV)

The Bible repeatedly urges us to meditate on who God is, what he has done, and what he has said.

It is impossible to be God's friend apart from knowing what he says. You can't love God unless you know him, and you can't know him without knowing his Word. The Bible says God "revealed himself to Samuel through his word" (1 Samuel 3:21 NIV).

God still uses that method today. While you cannot spend all day studying the Bible, you can think about it throughout the day, recalling verses you have read or memorized and mulling them over in your mind.

Meditation is often misunderstood as some difficult, mysterious ritual practiced by isolated monks and mystics. But meditation is simply focused thinking – a skill anyone can learn and use anywhere.

When you think about a problem over and over in your mind, that's called worry. When you think about God's Word over and over, that's meditation. If you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate! You just need to switch your attention from your problems to Bible verses. The more you meditate on God's Word, the less you will have to worry about.

The reason God considered Job and David his close friends was that they valued his Word above everything else, and they thought about it continually throughout the day. Job admitted, "I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread", (Job 23:12).

When you read your Bible or hear a sermon or listen to a CD, don't just forget it and walk away. Develop the practice of reviewing the truth in your mind, thinking about it over and over. The more time you spend reviewing what God has said, the more you will understand the "secrets" of this life that most people miss.

- What helps you think about the Bible rather than worrying?
- What practical step could you take this week to meditate on God's Word?

HOMEWORK!

Yes, that's right. This week you've got homework! Seriously, this is easy to do and it's super rewarding, so give it a shot! This week, read Psalm 1 out loud on your own on at least 3 different occasions. As you read, emphasize words that are particularly important to you. What images come to mind as you read this Psalm? How might God be using this Psalm to speak into your life this week? Get ready to share your insights with your LifeGroup the next time you meet!



For this part of our study time, use the following statements to help you think further into how you might deal with sin in your life.

When it comes to regularly reading the Bible, I'm ...

1	2	3	4	5
Not doing it at all	Doing it sometimes but not enough			Right into it.

When it comes to thinking about God and the Bible throughout the day I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Worry more than I do this.		Occasionally do this.		Do this often!

PRAYER: This week, ask God to help you specifically in this area of reading and thinking about the Bible. Wherever you are at, remember that God can give you the power to take a next step. Ask Him and then prepare to take that step!



Week 3 Devotionals

DAY 1

READ: Psalm 119:89, 91

“Your eternal word, O LORD, stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created. Your regulations remain true to this day, for everything serves your plans.”

God’s Word is relevant for today. Every day brings new circumstances and fresh opportunities into our lives. The best way to navigate these realities is through the lens of God’s Word. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is alive and powerful.” The Bible is not a dead book that is irrelevant today. Its truths stand as firm as the day they were written. God’s Word has power to speak into the exact circumstances you face each day. When you choose to make it a regular habit to read and think deeply about God’s Word, He will be faithful to use it to speak to you, to guide your life, to let you in on His plans and your role.

PRAYER - God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 2

READ: Psalm 119:97

““Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long.”

We love what we think about. My wife, Merlene, and I first met in Bible college. As our friendship grew into romance, I found myself thinking about Merlene more and more. In class, I would think about Merlene and the next time we would be together. When we were away from each other at Christmas break, I’d think about her and anticipate the next time we would get to talk or see each other. I thought about her all the time! God wants us to love the Bible. To love it, we need to regularly take the time to read it and think about his words throughout our day. Here are a few tips. Read the Bible first thing in your day. Read and repeat aloud a few words or lines that are particularly meaningful to you. Share what you’ve read with someone else. These are just a few simple tips to help us think about God’s words after we’ve shut the book. Take the time and trouble to think about God’s words throughout your day. You’ll be glad you did!

PRAYER- God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 3

READ: Psalm 119:98-100

“Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. I am even wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commands.”

Reading and thinking about God’s Word makes us wise. Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” As we read the Bible and think deeply about it, God shows us more and more about who He is and who we are. He shows us how to live in light of who He is, the Holy One. In our Information Age, our culture places a high value on acquiring knowledge. Learning is good, but knowing what to do with the knowledge we have is where wisdom shines. In our day when so many see the Bible as irrelevant to their lives, we have an amazing opportunity to show what true wisdom is. Make wisdom your number one priority by reading and thinking regularly about God’s words to you in the Bible.

PRAYER -God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 4

READ: Psalm 119:101-104

“I have refused to walk on any evil path, so that I may remain obedient to your word. I haven’t turned away from your regulations, for you have taught me well. How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding: no wonder I hate every false way of life.”

Reading and thinking deeply about God’s Word keeps us from evil. Christian philosopher, J.P. Moreland, said, “Evil is a lack of goodness. It is goodness spoiled. You can have good without evil. But you cannot have evil without good.” Anything that contradicts God’s holy nature is evil. Any direction that is less than what God wants for us is a false way. To walk the evil path is to embrace anything less than God’s goodness. You can refuse to walk on the evil path. You can choose to regularly walk God’s good path. When you do that, you’ll find God’s Word to be sweet. As you develop this habit, you’ll begin to see more and more the difference between the evil path and the path the leads to God.

PRAYER -

God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 5

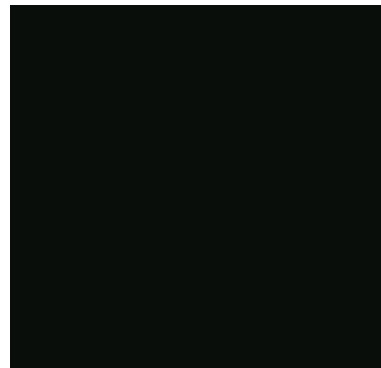
READ: Psalm 119:105-106

“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. I’ve promised it once, and I’ll promise it again. I will obey your righteous regulations.”

The Bible gives perspective, hope and guidance in the darkness. Years ago I helped to lead a church youth group camping excursion to Adirondack Park in New York. In the evening, one of our youth members (Mike) went missing. All of us leaders grabbed our flashlights and began walking through the woods looking for Mike. As we walked, the light in my flashlight began to fade. Low batteries! Having low light made it almost impossible for me to walk through the woods without tripping and getting lost myself. I was relieved when we finally found Mike and got back to camp and to our lights. The Bible is like a light in a dark place. It gives us perspective on our life, our circumstances and our relationships. It gives us hope beyond the challenges of the day we are facing. It guides us to take the right steps that lead us toward God. Like a hiker in the darkness of night, we need God’s Word to light the path before us. Wherever you go in your journey this week, remember to bring your light!

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____



Session 4

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - PART 2



How has your meeting with God time gone this past week?

Did you read Psalm 1 on your own this week? If you did, share your insights with the group.

Memory Verse

"Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit." 1 Timothy 4:7

Key Question for this Session:
What are the spiritual disciplines?



VIDEO TEACHING:

For part 2 of our study of Spiritual Disciplines, we're going to dive in and look at several more practical disciplines God can use in your life to grow your walk with Him. As we look at these disciplines, allow God to show you which ones He may want to use in your life over the next little while. Let's jump in!

Memorization

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11

BENEFITS OF MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE:

1. It helps me resist _____.
“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Psalm 119:11
2. It helps me make wise _____.
“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105
3. It strengthens me when I’m under _____.
“Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.” Psalm 119:49-50
4. It comforts me when I’m _____.
“When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God of Heaven’s Armies.” Jeremiah 15:16 NLT
5. It helps me be a _____ to unbelievers.
“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” 1 Peter 3:15

FOUR STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL MEMORIZATION

- STEP 1 _____ Understand what the verse means.
STEP 2 _____ Reading audibly is best.
STEP 3 _____ This should be done on a daily basis.
STEP 4 _____ The key to successful memorization is repetition.

Free Online Scripture Memory Tool

www.LearnScripture.net

Prayer

- I. APPROACH PRAYER WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE
Matthew 6:5-8

BE _____.

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men.” (v. 5)

- Don’t try to _____
- Don’t try to _____

BE _____

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (v. 6)

BE _____

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (v. 7-8)

II. USE THE MODEL JESUS GAVE US.

“This, then, is how you should pray ...” Matthew 6:9-15

THE SIX PARTS OF PRAYER

1. PRAISE: I BEGIN BY _____
“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.” v. 9 NLT

TWO KINDS OF PRAISE:

ADORATION: Praising God for who He is.

THANKSGIVING: Praising God for what He has done.

2. PURPOSE: I COMMIT MYSELF _____
“May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” v. 10 NLT

Pray for God’s will to be done in my family, my church, my ministry, my job, my future, my city, my nation, my world.

3. PROVISION: I ASK GOD TO _____
“Give us today the food we need.” v. 11 NLT

What needs can I pray about? _____

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Philippians 4:6 NLT

4. PARDON: I ASK GOD TO _____
“... forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.” v. 12 NLT

4 STEPS TO EXPERIENCING FORGIVENESS

a. ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO _____ EVERY SIN.
“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

b. CONFESS EACH SIN _____
“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” Proverbs 28:13

c. MAKE _____ TO OTHERS WHEN NECESSARY.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23-24

d. BY FAITH, _____ GOD’S FORGIVENESS.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

5. PEOPLE: I PRAY FOR _____

“I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.” 1 Timothy 2:1

6. PROTECTION: I ASK FOR _____

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:13



What has been a highlight for you from the video teaching? This can be something you have found particularly meaningful or it could be a question you have.

For today’s LifeGroup study, we’re focusing in on two spiritual disciplines that are key to our growth, memorizing Scripture and prayer. The point of looking at these two disciplines is not to beat anybody up or make you feel guilty, rather, our hope is that this study will encourage you to take a next step, regardless of where you are with these disciplines.

PSALM 119: A Tribute to God’s Word and to Prayer

Psalms 119 is a heartfelt tribute to the value of God’s Word and prayer. In this Psalm we find wisdom, lament, praise, thanksgiving and confession. There are eight Hebrew words used frequently throughout the Psalm that are translated as “instruction”, “laws”, “words”, “regulations”, “statutes”, “commands”, “decrees”, “commandments” and “promises”. All of these speak to the value the author placed on God’s Word. Throughout the Psalm, the author lifts up prayers to God as he cries out to his Heavenly Father. This Psalm is instructive for us not just in the value of prayer, but in how to pray.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE:

READ Psalm 119:1-8

- What happens in our life when we follow God’s Word?
- What does the author pledge to do when it comes to God’s Word?

READ Psalm 119:11-16 NLT

“I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

I praise you, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

I have recited aloud all the regulations you have given me.

I have rejoiced in your laws as much as in riches.

I will study all your commandments and reflect on all your ways.

I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word.”

Circle the words that describe what the author does to engage with God's Word.

- What benefits do these verses mention that come from memorizing Scripture?
- In Psalm 119 the author continually talks about the hardships he is facing. How do you think memorizing Scripture may have helped him through these life challenges?

Dallas Willard, professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California (now deceased), wrote, "Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization".

- What does Dallas Willard say is the reason we should memorize Scripture?
- Do you agree with Dallas Willard that memorizing Scripture is the most important spiritual discipline? Why or why not?

READ the following 5 Reasons Why Memorizing Scripture is Essential to Growing Spiritually.

1. We become more like Jesus. Jesus loved the Bible and often quoted it from memory. We FOLLOW JESUS well when we have this same life habit.
2. We have victory over sin and Satan. As we hide God's Word in our heart, we are able to spot sin more easily and we have an answer, as Jesus did, for Satan's lies.
3. We are able to effectively share our faith. God is holy, we are sinners. Jesus died in our place as a perfect sin offering. You can have new life in Christ! Memorize a verse or two around each of these truths and watch how God can use these verses to help you share your faith.
4. We can bring comfort and hope to our friends in need. God's Word has power to speak into the difficulties we all face. Memorizing key verses that speak about God's comfort and hope for us is key to being used by God to minister to our friends in need.
5. We have closer communion with God. As we memorize Scripture, we learn more about who God is and how he works. This will draw us closer to God as we delight in his Word. (Psalm 119:16)

What has been your experience with memorizing Scripture? What can you learn from each other in group about ways to do this well?

PRAYER:

READ Psalm 119:145-152 NLT

"I pray with all my heart; answer me, LORD! I will obey all your decrees.

I cry out to you; rescue me, that I may obey your laws.

I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words.

I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise.

In your faithful love, O LORD, hear my cry; let me be revived by following your regulations.

Lawless people are coming to attack me; they live far from your instructions.

But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true.

I have known from my earliest days that your laws will last forever."

- Circle the words in these verses that speak to how the author prays.
- What do you think it means to “pray with all my heart”? (v. 1)
- What might it look like in our day to “cry out” to God?

PRAYING LIKE JESUS PRAYED

Look back at your video notes on how to pray from the Lord’s Prayer.

What aspects of the Lord’s Prayer are you currently doing when you pray?

What components of Jesus’ prayer would you like to pray more often?

HOMEWORK! That’s right, we’ve got homework again this week! Here’s your challenge. Over this week, you are going to memorize the Lord’s Prayer. As you do that, you are also going to pray using the components of the Lord’s Prayer that we looked at in the video teaching. Get ready to share about your experience with your LifeGroup next week.

Matthew 6:9-13 NLT

9 Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,

may your name be kept holy.

10 May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth,

as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today the food we need,[a]

12 and forgive us our sins,

as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

13 And don’t let us yield to temptation,[b]

but rescue us from the evil one.[c]



For this part of our study time, use the following statements to help you think further into how you might deal with sin in your life.

When it comes to memorizing verses from the Bible, I’m ...

1	2	3	4	5
Not doing it at all	Doing it sometimes but not enough		Doing pretty well	

When it comes to praying throughout the day I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Am not doing it.	Occasionally do this.		Do this often!	

When it comes to praying the various components of the Lord’s Prayer, I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Am not doing it.	Occasionally do this.		Do this often!	

PRAYER: This week, ask God to help you specifically in this area of memorizing verses from the Bible and praying like Jesus prayed. Wherever you are at, remember that God can give you the power to take a next step. Ask Him and then prepare to take that step!



Week 4 Devotionals

DAY 1

READ: James 1:6

“... when you [pray], be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind”

Prayer is all about faith. When we pray, we act in faith that God is there, that He hears our prayer and that He is able to answer our prayer. James warns us not to waver when it comes to prayer. The wavering James is talking about involves wavering between faith in God and faith in something else outside of God. Too often we resort to prayer as a last ditch effort, after we've tried everything else. God wants us to come to Him first, trusting that He is always our best resource for navigating through life. To grow your faith in God when you pray, begin your prayer by thanking God for who He is. Jesus began His prayer this way - "Our Father, which art in heaven ..." This honours God and it will remind you that He is able to act on your behalf. When you pray, pray in faith.

PRAYER -

God, I thank you that _____

DAY 2

READ: John 16:23

“At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name.”

We are to pray in Jesus' Name. When Jesus was with his disciples, He taught them to pray in His name. In John 14:13-14 Jesus said, "You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask for anything in my name, and I will do it!" Praying in Jesus' name means praying for those things that will bring Him honour and glory. This is prayer that aligns with God's will. Jesus' prayer is a model for us - "May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." While we don't have to end every prayer with the words, "In Jesus' Name", using these words is a good reminder for us of whom we are praying to and whose authority we are calling on. When you pray in Jesus' name, in his authority, you can be sure that God will answer!

PRAYER-

God, I thank you that _____

DAY 3

READ: Romans 8:26

“And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.”

God's Spirit helps us to pray. Do you ever feel weak when it comes to your prayer life? Join the club! None of us can do a good job of this on our own. God knows this. That's why He's given us His Holy Spirit to guide us and even pray on our behalf. When you come to God in prayer, know that He is with you, guiding your thoughts and speaking to your spirit about what you can pray for. If you're feeling lost for words, ask Him to speak to your heart about what to pray for. As people or situations come to mind, take the time to pray. J.C. Lambert said this, "Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit." Thank God today that God has given you His Holy Spirit to help you to pray.

PRAYER -

God, I thank you that _____

DAY 4

READ: 1 Philipians 4:6-7
“Don’t worry about anything: Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

Worry about nothing. Pray about everything. Prayer is God’s antidote to worry and anxiety. Worry is focusing in on a problem repeatedly in our mind. We ask, “What am I going to do about this?” “What is going to happen to me?” over and over again until the problem becomes an obsession. Prayer is shifting our focus to God. We say, “God, I believe you are able to do something about this.” “Thank you that my life is in your hands.” We can’t know the outcome of every trouble we face in life. But we do know this: God’s loves us and he cares about our needs. As you tell God about your trouble, God promises that you will experience His peace. This happens as you focus your thoughts on Him (see vs. 8) In the middle of our trouble, we can know that God is there, guarding our heart and our mind with his peace that passes all understanding.

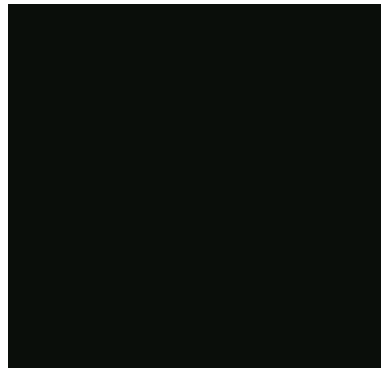
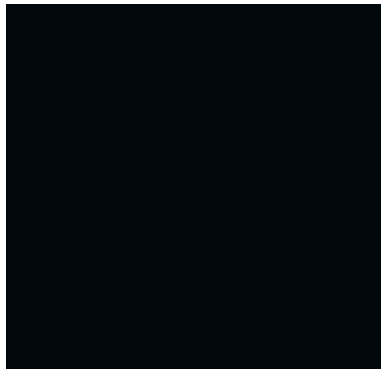
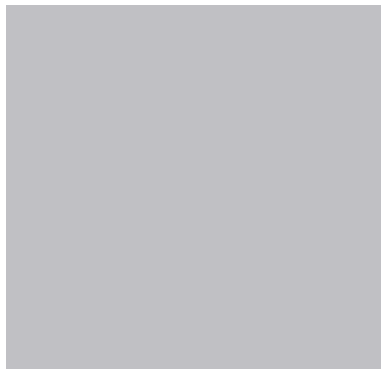
PRAYER
God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 5

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:17
“Never stop praying.”

Never give up on prayer. In Luke 18, Jesus told his disciples a story to show them that they should always pray and never give up. The story is about a widow who persistently brought her request before a judge until he finally gave her the justice she asked for. Jesus concluded his story by saying, “So don’t you think that God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly!” (Luke 18:7-8) Prayer is part of God’s spiritual fitness training for our life. As we persevere in prayer and don’t give up, we grow stronger in our faith and our ability to walk through life’s troubles with God’s perspective. When your situation looks bleak, don’t give up on prayer! Trust that God will answer you in His perfect time, in His way. He will surely bring you justice!

PRAYER
God, today I thank you that _____



Session 5

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - PART 3



How has your meeting with God time gone this past week?

Did you memorize and pray the LORD'S prayer this week? If you did, share your experience with the group.

**Memory
Verse**

*"Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit."
1 Timothy 4:7*

**Key Question for this Session:
What are the spiritual disciplines?**



VIDEO TEACHING:

For this week's session we're going to look at 2 more spiritual disciplines, then we're going to explore how to have an impactful quiet time with God. Let's get into it!

Fasting

Biblical fasting is refers to the voluntary abstaining from specific activities for the spiritual purposes. It is primarily a private matter between the individual and God.

Jesus never commands fasting although he makes the assumption that his followers will fast when he says,

“When you fast ...” Matthew 6:16

“Jesus answered, ‘How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.’” Matthew 9:15

WHAT BIBLICAL FASTING IS NOT

1. A method of buttering up God.
2. A means of impressing others with our spirituality.
3. A quick cure for a spiritual ailment.
4. A guarantee that we will receive a desired answer to prayer.
5. A substitute for the Word of God.
6. A vehicle for changing God’s will.
7. A way to “diet” and lose weight.
8. A way to “punish” our flesh for our sin.

WHY FAST?

1. To gain spiritual _____ to overcome temptation. (Matthew 4:2)
2. To seek God’s _____ in a specific matter.
3. As an expression of _____ over sin (Nehemiah 9:1-3).
4. As an expression of _____ (Acts 13:2-3).
5. As a response to deep _____ (11 Samuel 12:16)

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS IN BIBLICAL FASTING?

1. Our mind must be focused on _____ (Zechariah 7:5).
2. Our attitude must be one of _____ (Hebrew word for fasting means “to afflict or humble oneself”).
3. Our heart must be _____ in its motives and position.
4. Our living must be _____.

Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God, and to ourselves, that we are serious about our relationship with Him. Fasting helps us gain a new perspective and a renewed reliance upon God.

Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer – John Piper

Journaling

Journaling is the regular act of recording one’s pilgrimage through life. For the believer this is especially significant since the writer is able to give expression to his spiritual growth and challenges.

ADVANTAGES OF JOURNALING

1. Helps us _____ our lives.
2. Helps us slow down and _____ on life.
3. Helps us get in touch with and express our _____ .
4. Helps us _____ to God.

HOW TO JOURNAL

1. Purchase a notebook or record your thoughts on your computer.
2. Write at a regular time each day (during your Quiet Time is best).
3. Use your journaling as a way to reflect on how God is at work in your life. You may want to write down a verse or two from the Bible and then write what you learn about who God is through those verses. You can also write a prayer to God, praising Him for who He is and asking Him to work in your life.
4. Record whatever else you wish, such as your interactions with various people, your appointments, decisions, thoughts, feelings, high points, low points, frustrations, what God has been saying to you, your failures, accomplishments, goals, challenges, praises and confessions.

“Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and fingertips.” Dawson Trotman

A Quiet Time

A Quiet Time is a daily time I set aside to be alone with God to get to know him through the Bible and prayer.

Quality time alone with God is a critical ingredient in the life of every believer. No one illustrates this truth better than Jesus. His life is characterized by regular, deliberate times in which we find him personally communing with God the Father. We too, need that intimacy with God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DAILY QUIET TIME

Your time alone with God should be the top priority in your schedule for five reasons.

1. We were _____ to have fellowship with God.
“And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:3
2. Jesus _____ to make a relationship with God possible.
**“God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord is faithful.”
1 Corinthians 1:9**
3. Personal time alone with God was Jesus’ _____.
“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35
4. Every person who has been effective in _____ for God developed this habit.- Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, etc.

5. You cannot be a _____ Christian without it!
“It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4

THE PURPOSE OF A DAILY QUIET TIME

1. To give _____ to God.
“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.” Psalm 29:2
 - God deserves our devotion! (Rev. 4:11)
 - God desires our devotion! (John 4:23)
2. To get _____ from God.
“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths.” Psalm 25:4
3. To gain _____ in God.
“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalms 37:4

FACT: The better I get to know Jesus, the more _____ .

The objective of your Quiet Time is not to study about Jesus, but to actually spend time with Him!

HOW TO BEGIN A DAILY QUIET TIME

1. Select a specific _____

The best time to have a quiet time is when I am at my best. Many of the people in the Bible and many Christian leaders throughout history have chosen the morning in order to start their day off with God.

2. Choose a special _____

“Jesus went as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.” Luke 22:39

3. Gather the _____ you’ll need.
 - A Bible
 - A Notebook
 - Your laptop or phone if you prefer to take notes or read the techy way!
4. Begin with the right _____ .

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

“Open my eyes that I may see the wonderful things in your law.” Psalm 119:18

“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” John 7:17

FOLLOW A SIMPLE PLAN

“FIFTEEN MINUTES WITH GOD”

(A plan to get you started)

1. _____ (1 minute)

Be still and quiet! Slow down! Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

2. _____ (4 minutes)

Begin reading your Bible where you left off the day before. Read until you feel God has spoken to you, then stop and think about it.

3. _____ (4 minutes)

Think about what the passage means to your life. Write down your thoughts.

4. _____ (2 minutes)

Write out a personal application statement that is practical, possible and measurable.

5. _____ (4 minutes)

Conclude your Quiet Time by talking to God about what He has shown you and making your requests from your prayer list.

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

“Father, I realize that I was created to have fellowship with you. Thank you for making this privilege possible through Jesus’ death. I know that daily fellowship with you is the most important thing in my life. I now want to commit myself to spending at least some time every day with you in a quiet time of reading the Bible and prayer. I am trusting in your strength to help me be consistent. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”



What has been a highlight for you from the video teaching? This can be something you have found particularly meaningful or it could be a question you have.

For your LifeGroup study time, your group members are going to spend some time practicing a quiet time with God. Using Psalm 23 as our reference, each of your group members will spend about 15 minutes on their own reading the Psalm, then writing their impressions and praying. After your group members have done this for 15 minutes, bring the group back together to share your insights.

MY QUIET TIME- 15 minutes with God.

READ PSALM 23 - slowly and prayerfully. Ask God to speak to you as you read.

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths, bringing honour to his name.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.

You honour me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

**Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.**

- Read the Psalm through a second time. What words do you sense God is using to speak into your life right now? Circle them.

- What images come to your mind as you read this Psalm?

- How does this Psalm help you understand who God is and how He relates to you?

Take a few minutes to write out a prayer to God. Begin by thanking him, for how He has revealed himself to you through Psalm 23. Write out any requests you have for him.

MY PRAYER -

God, I thank you that ...

Share your Quiet Time experience with your group. What have you enjoyed about it? What seemed unnatural for you to do? How might you incorporate this kind of experience into your life?



For this part of our study time, use the following statements to help you think further into how you might deal with sin in your life.

When it comes to having a regular quiet time with God, I'm ...

1 2 3 4 5
Not doing it at all Doing it sometimes but not enough Doing pretty well

When it comes to practicing other disciplines such as fasting or journaling, I ...

1 2 3 4 5
Am not doing it. Occasionally do this. Do this often!

PRAYER: This week, ask God to help you specifically in this area of having a regular Quiet Time with Him. Ask God to give you the discipline and desire to set aside this special time to meet with Him.



Week 5 Devotionals

DAY 1

READ: Philippians 3:8-9

“Yes, everything else is worthless compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law, rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith.”

The goal of spiritual disciplines is to know Jesus. The Apostle Paul’s greatest desire was to know Christ. In fact, he said that everything else was garbage by comparison! There is a key distinction between practicing a religion and pursuing a relationship with Jesus. Practicing a religion is about performing a series of spiritual duties. Pursuing a relationship with Jesus is about living in fellowship with our Creator. Paul said that we grow in this relationship through faith - faith in what God has done on our behalf to make it possible for us to know Him and faith that He gives us what we need to grow to maturity. As you practice the spiritual disciplines, remember that they are just a means to an end. The end goal of the disciplines is that we may know Him, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord.

PRAYER -

God, today I thank you that ...

DAY 2

READ: Psalm 51:1-2

“Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain on my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.”

To know Jesus more, CONFESS your sin to Him. In Psalm 51, David pours out his heart to God. He confesses his sin and he asks for God to cleanse him and purify him from his sin. God is holy, therefore He cannot be in the presence of sin. This is why Jesus’ sacrifice was necessary for us to have a relationship with Him. There are two levels on which we are forgiven for our sins. First, the price has been paid once and for all for your sin by Jesus’ death on the cross. When you receive the gift of salvation, your sins are forgiven and you have God’s promise that you will be with Him forever in heaven. The second level of forgiveness is that God asks us to come to him to confess our sin as He makes us aware of them. (see 1 John 1:9) To experience a close and growing walk with God, do what David did. Ask God to search your heart and as God reveals your sin, agree with Him about the offense and turn from it. Do this often. Keeping short accounts with Jesus when it comes to sin is key to growing closer to Him.

PRAYER-

God, today I thank you that ...

DAY 3

READ: 2 Peter 1:19

“... we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place - until the Day dawns, and Christ the morning star shines in your hearts.”

To know Jesus more, LISTEN for his voice. One of the primary ways God speaks to us today is through the Bible. The Apostle Peter said that we can be confident that what is written in the Bible is God speaking to us. When we read and pay close attention, God will speak into our life. Eugene Peterson, author of THE MESSAGE, writes this about how God speaks to us through the Bible in a unique way. “As we read, and the longer we read, we begin to “get it” - we are in conversation with God. We find ourselves listening and answering in matters that most concern who we are, where we come from, where we are going, what makes us tick, the texture of the world and the communities we live in and -most of all, the incredible love of God among us. This is new for many of us, a different sort of book - a book that reads us even as we read it.” As you read the Bible, remember this - God is speaking to you about who He is and who you are. Read to hear God’s voice and to grow closer to Him.

PRAYER -

God, today I thank you that ...

DAY 4

READ: Psam 119 - The Message
“I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you, I attentively watch how you’ve done it. I relish everything you’ve told me of life. I won’t forget a word of it ... My soul is starved and hungry, ravenous! - insatiable for your nourishing commands ...Your words are so choice and tasty; I prefer them to the best home cooking.”

To know Jesus more, THINK about what He says. The discipline of thinking deeply is called contemplation. To contemplate is to thoughtfully consider something for a long time. The author of Psalm 119 uses the analogy of enjoying a delicious meal. Just as you would enjoy your favourite food, anticipating it as it is being prepared, breathing in the aroma as it is set before you, relishing that first bite in your mouth, God wants us to relish His Word by thinking about it deeply. Here are a few tips to get you started. Write down a verse or two from the Bible that has special meaning for you. Read the verses at the beginning of each day for several days in a row. Commit the words to memory. Put the verses in a place where you will see them regularly, on your fridge or on the corner of your computer screen. Be aware of how God is bringing those verses to mind throughout the context of your day. The Bible is a primary way that God will speak into your life. Allow Him to do that through thinking deeply about what He says.

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 5

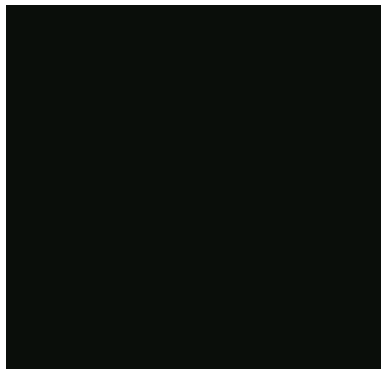
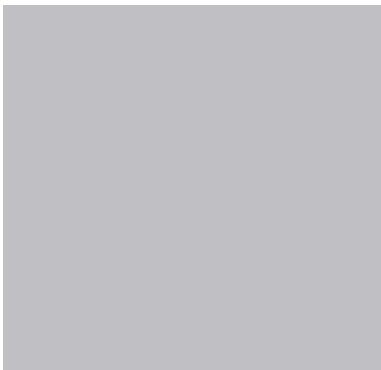
READ: James 1:21-22
“So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. “

To know Jesus more, APPLY what you are learning about God to your life. James writes, “... don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.” The danger of spiritual disciplines is that they can become a substitute for knowing God. We can read the Bible each day and put a mental checkmark in the box. We can attend church each Sunday and hear great sermons - check, another mark! God’s goal for our spiritual maturity is not just for us to hear. He wants us to be doers of what He says. This is why being in community with other followers of Jesus is so important. We need spiritual friends to keep us accountable, to encourage us and

to pray for us as together we wrestle through how to live out what we are learning. Applying God’s words to us in the Bible is essential to growing our walk with Jesus.

PRAYER

God, today I thank you that _____



Session 6

LIFE TOGETHER



- Have you had a regular Quiet Time with God this week? If you did, how did it go?

Key Question for this Session:
What is biblical community?

Memory Verse

"And let us not neglect meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Hebrews 10: 25

VIDEO TEACHING:



The church is pictured as a body, a bride, a building, a flock, a family and an army. In each case there is an emphasis on life together. That is, none of us is alone, we are all in relationship. This interconnectedness is a fact which every believer needs to recognize, respond to and relish. Life together is a powerful tool for spiritual growth. The primary way we experience life together at Creekside is in LifeGroups.

Here are four ways life together can be practiced in our LifeGroup:

i. ACCOUNTABILITY

In the context of the church, friendship accountability refers to the mutual agreement of friends to hold each other accountable for specific character and conduct areas.

FRIENDSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY INCLUDES ...

- Being willing to explain one's _____
- Being open, unguarded and non-defensive about one's _____
- Answering for one's _____
- Supplying the reasons _____

"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up ... I myself as convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Romans 15:1-2, 14

FRIENDSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY ENABLES US TO

1. ACT _____

“If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.” Proverbs 15:31 NLT

2. LIVE _____

“Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.” Proverbs 27:6

3. GROW _____

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.” Proverbs 27:17

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY FRIENDSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY INCLUDE MEETING ...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

II. ONE ANOTHERING

In LifeGroup we have the responsibility to give ourselves for the good of one another. This truth of ministering to one another is very clearly revealed in the Bible.

Here are four examples.

1. _____

“Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, while it is still “today”, so that none of you may be deceived by sin and hardened against God.” Hebrews 3:12-13

HOW CAN SIN AFFECT OUR HEARTS?

1. _____
2. _____

HOW SHOULD WE HELP PROTECT ONE ANOTHER?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. _____

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some do in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

WHAT THREE THINGS ARE WE ASKED TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HOW CAN WE DO THIS?

3. _____

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” James 5:16

WHAT TWO ACTIONS ARE WE REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN IN THIS PASSAGE?

1. _____

2. _____

WHAT DO THESE TWO ACTIONS IMPLY ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER BELIEVERS?

4. _____

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BURDENS WE COULD CARRY?

III. MENTORING

Part of the experience of being in LifeGroup is we have opportunity to influence each other to grow in all areas of life. What does it look like to be a godly parent? How can we have a thriving, healthy marriage? What practical skills does God want to teach me for His glory? These are some of the questions that can be answered through mentoring relationships that can form in your group or in the greater church community.

Mentoring is ... a deliberate transfer of wisdom from one person to another, with an emphasis on credibility, experience, time and relationship in the transfer process. Bob Shank

THE TYPES OF MENTORING INCLUDE

Role Mentoring _____

le. parenting, golfing, cooking, gardening.

Soul Mentoring _____

le. integrity, honesty, accountability

Whole Mentoring _____

le. Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy

THE PRIME ESSENTIALS IN MENTORING ARE ...

The Right _____

A Deliberate _____

A willingness to _____ the price.

THE PROCESS FOR BEING MENTORED INVOLVES ...

- Identify an area of your life you wish to change.
- Identify a potential mentor through prayer, observation and inquiry who exhibits strengths in that area.
- Ask the potential mentor to help you grow in a specific area.
- Outline a time frame for the mentoring process to begin.

THE PROCESS FOR MENTORING INVOLVES ...

- Identify the area in your life most likely to be marketable in a mentoring situation.
- Actively refine that area through education, self-study, and personal discipline.
- Acquaint yourself with how to mentor.
- Ask God to direct you to individuals whose interest in personal development would coincide with your strength.
- Offer yourself as a mentor.
- Look for opportunities through the relationship to share your faith.
- Allow God to orchestrate the outcome of the relationship.

IV. RESTORATION

When a believer sins the key response of fellow believers must be _____

PERSONAL RESTORATION

“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly [restore] that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each others’ burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct.” Galatians 6:1-5

1. _____ one another. (v. 1)

How?

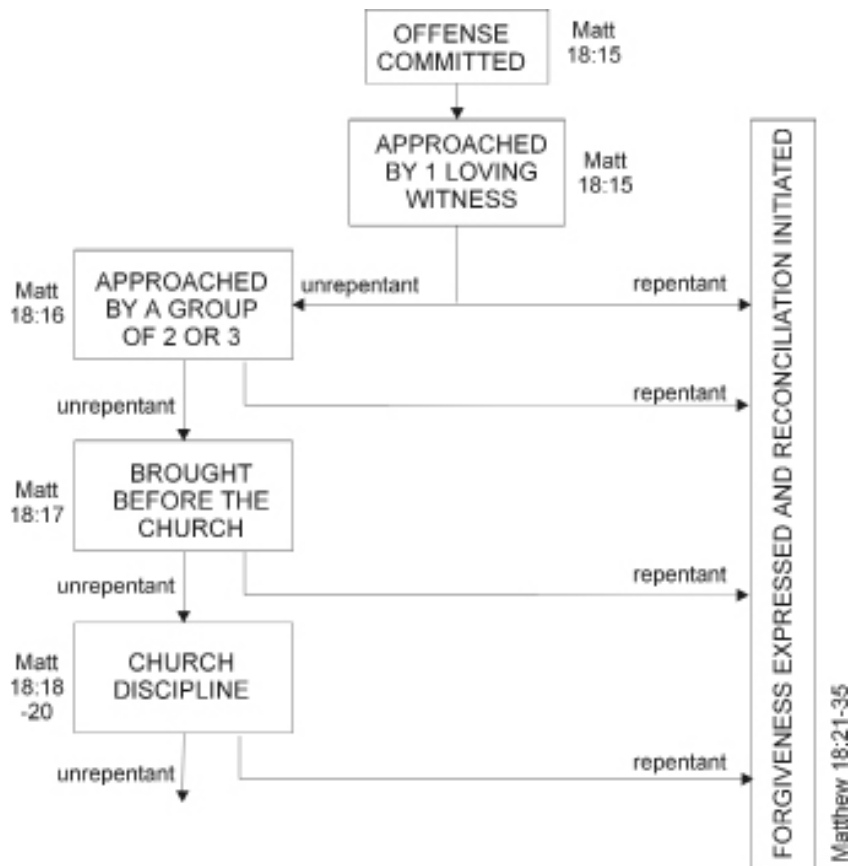
- Gently
- Cautiously

2. _____ one another. (vs. 2-5)

Two kinds of burdens – heavy and backpack.

CORPORATE RESTORATION

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17



What has been a highlight for you from the video teaching? This can be something you have found particularly meaningful or it could be a question you have.

For our LifeGroup study we're going to look at how to live out the four habits of life together we've looked at in the video teaching. As you look into this areas together as a group, consider how you might incorporate these habits into the relationships within your group.

ACCOUNTABILITY

READ Hebrews 10:24-25

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works."

Accountability has a proactive side to it. This is where you get to encourage one another in your LifeGroup to act in love toward other people and to do good things.

As a group, see if you can brainstorm 2 or 3 actions you might encourage someone else in your group to take.

2 or 3 ACTS OF LOVE I CAN ENCOURAGE SOMEONE IN MY GROUP TO TAKE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How might your group get better at being proactive in your accountability? For example, maybe you arrange to have groups of two or three from your group connect in some way during the week. See if you can come up with 2 or 3 ways you could grow your accountability with one another.

WAYS WE CAN BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER DURING THE WEEK

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Accountability also has a reactive side to it. When we sin, we are to confess our sin to another follower of Jesus.

READ James 5:16

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

James 5:16

- Why do you think God wants us to confess our sins to each other rather than only to Him?
- Are there times when it is OK to keep our sin to ourselves? Why or why not?

How might your group become more intentional in this area of confessing our sin to one another? See if you can come up with two or three ways.

1. _____
2. _____

WAYS WE CAN BECOME MORE OPEN AS A GROUP ABOUT OUR SIN STRUGGLES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ONE ANOTHERING

Take a look at the following list of “one anothers” from the Bible. Beside each one put a number to indicate how you think you’re doing with this as a LifeGroup. After you’re done, share 2 or 3 of your rankings with your group. What might you do to become more effective in “one anothering”?

- 1 - We’re not doing this, guys.**
2 - I think we do this - should probably do it more.
3 - We do this really well - YAY!
N/A - does this even apply to us ?? (some don’t!)

Unity. One third of the one-another commands deal with the unity of the church.

- ___ Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50)
- ___ Don’t grumble among one another (Jn 6:43)
- ___ Be of the same mind with one another (Ro 12:16, 15:5)
- ___ Accept one another (Ro 15:7)
- ___ Wait for one another before beginning the Eucharist (Communion) (1 Co 11:33)
- ___ Don’t bite, devour, and consume one another—seriously, guys, don’t eat each other (Ga 5:15)
- ___ Don’t boastfully challenge or envy one another (Ga 5:26).
- ___ Gently, patiently tolerate one another (Ep 4:2)
- ___ Be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to one another (Ep 4:32)
- ___ Bear with and forgive one another (Co 3:13)
- ___ Seek good for one another, and don’t repay evil for evil (1 Th 5:15)
- ___ Don’t complain against one another (Jas 4:11, 5:9)
- ___ Confess sins to one another (Jas 5:16)

Love. One third of them instruct Christians to love one another.

- ___ Love one another (Jn 13:34, 15:12, 17; Ro 13:8; 1 Th 3:12, 4:9; 1 Pe 1:22; 1 Jn 3:11, 4:7, 11; 2 Jn 5)
- ___ Through love, serve one another (Ga 5:13)
- ___ Tolerate one another in love (Ep 4:2)
- ___ Greet one another with a kiss of love (1 Pe 5:14)
- ___ Be devoted to one another in love (Ro 12:10)

Humility. About 15% stress an attitude of humility and deference among believers.

- ___ Give preference to one another in honor (Ro 12:10)
- ___ Regard one another as more important than yourselves (Php 2:3)
- ___ Serve one another (Ga 5:13)
- ___ Wash one another’s feet (Jn 13:14)
- ___ Don’t be haughty: be of the same mind (Ro 12:16)
- ___ Be subject to one another (Ep 5:21)
- ___ Clothe yourselves in humility toward one another (1 Pe 5:5)

Here's the rest:

- ___ Do not judge one another, and don't put a stumbling block in a brother's way (Ro 14:13)
- ___ Greet one another with a kiss (Ro 16:16; 1 Co 16:20; 2 Co 13:12)
- ___ Husbands and wives: don't deprive one another of physical intimacy (1 Co 7:5)
- ___ Bear one another's burdens (Ga 6:2)
- ___ Speak truth to one another (Ep 4:25)
- ___ Don't lie to one another (Co 3:9)
- ___ Comfort one another concerning the resurrection (1 Th 4:18)
- ___ Encourage and build up one another (1 Th 5:11)
- ___ Stimulate one another to love and good deeds (He 10:24)
- ___ Pray for one another (Jas 5:16)
- ___ Be hospitable to one another (1 Pe 4:9)

SOURCE: <https://overviewbible.com/one-another-infographic/>

I. MENTORING

READ: Mike Henderson's Insights on Spiritual Mentoring:

Jesus made His style of mentoring clear: He led so that we can follow. He said, "If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Because He is our leader and we are to follow Him, Christian mentoring is a process dependent upon submission to Christ. Neither the mentor nor the andidate controls the relationship. As such, the process is best characterized by mutual sharing, trust, and enrichment as the life and work of both participants is changed. The mentor serves as a model and a trusted listener. The mentor relies on the Holy Spirit to provide insight, change lives, and teach through the modeling process. [Making Disciples - One Conversation at a Time](#) **Mike Henderson**

- What do you think spiritual mentoring looks like today?
- What are some ways that you might mentor each other in LifeGroup?

II. RESTORATION

READ Galatians 6:1-5

"Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly [restore] that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each others' burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct." Galatians 6:1-5

- What might it look like to restore a fellow LifeGroup member who is overcome by sin?
- How can you share each other's burdens in group?



For this part of our study time, use the following statements to help you think further into how you might deal with sin in your life.

When it comes to accountability, I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Am not really interested		Know it's something I should do		Am doing it!

When it comes to being mentored, I ...

1	2	3	4	5
Don't think I want to be		Would like to know more		Am being mentored already

PRAYER: Spend some time together asking God to work in your lives in this area of mutual fellowship. Ask Him to help you grow in your ministry to one another and bring glory to Him!



Week 6 Devotionals

DAY 1

READ: John 17:20-21

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one - as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you have sent me.”

Life together is about being one. In Jesus’ final prayer before going back to heaven, he prays for us! His prayer is that we would be one. In our church, we are to be one. In our LifeGroup, we are to be one. Jesus said our oneness would be a testimony to the world, to those who were not yet his followers, so that they would believe in Him. What does being one look like? We express our oneness by our agreement about who God is and what His purpose is for us. We show we are one by our unity with each other and the way we relate to one another. A primary way we express our oneness is through our love for one another. As we care for one another and pray for one another and walk with one another, we show our love. This love attracts a world that is looking for authentic oneness and truth and it points them to Jesus. Life together is most beautifully expressed in our oneness with each other.

PRAYER -

Dear Father, today I thank you that. _____

DAY 2

READ: 1 Corinthians 12:27

“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”

Life together means that we are all a part of the body of Jesus. As Jesus’ body, we represent Him here on earth as we act on his behalf. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul compares our role in the church to the various parts of a human body. Just as the human body has individual parts that all work together to make the body function in a healthy way, so each of us has an important role to play the body of Christ. In LifeGroup and at church each of us has a unique role to play. Your role may include helping to lead the study in group, or coordinating who will bring the next snack, or keeping track of prayer requests. At church, your role may include serving in Kids ministry, or helping people find a seat in the auditorium on Sundays. God has given you unique gifts, skills and wiring to serve within His body. You are needed as an active part! What role is God calling you to take in his body? As you are active in that role, you’ll find yourself maturing in your faith in Him.

PRAYER-

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 3

READ: Acts 2:42

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.”

Life together thrives with fellowship. The Greek word for “fellowship” in this verse is koinonia. The word describes a close relationship and participation in life together. God has created you to experience this in the church. The early followers are a role model for us. They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teachings (the Bible), and to fellowship (being together) to sharing meals and to prayer. In LifeGroup, you have opportunity to experience the same kind of fellowship these early believers experienced! As your group commits to reading and talking about God’s Word together, and being together regularly, and sharing meals together and prayer, you will find yourself experiencing koinonia and you will nurture your faith..

PRAYER - *Dear Father, today I*

thank you that _____

DAY 4

READ: Acts 2:43-45

“A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.”

Life together is about generosity. As these early followers of Jesus met together, God nurtured their faith by teaching them how to be generous. These believers shared everything they had with each other. If one of them was in need, the others would generously share from their own resources to meet the need. Their generosity cost them something. Many of them sold their property and possessions to raise funds to give. They generously shared their resources with each other and as they did that they experienced life together. God wants to teach us to have an open heart when it comes to the needs of others in our church community. He wants to grow us in our generosity as He shows us opportunities to give and support those around us in the body of Christ. What needs might God be making you aware of in your LifeGroup or in the greater body of Christ? As we grow in generosity, practical needs are met, we nurture our faith and God gets the glory.

PRAYER: God, today I thank you that _____

DAY 5

READ: Acts 2:46-47

“They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

Life together draws other people to Jesus. When people outside the body of Christ saw the faith of these early believers, many made decisions to follow Jesus. The early church grew like crazy. There were 120 believers present at the first prayer meeting (Acts 1:13-15). After a mighty outpouring of God’s Spirit at Pentecost, the number of Christ followers increased to about 3,000 (2:41). Then, after Peter and John preached, many more came to faith and the number of Christ followers was about 5,000. The early church grew not only numerically, but also geographically and spiritually. As your group practices life together, you’ll find that others outside of the faith will want in. Together, your LifeGroup can be an example of what it looks like to live the Jesus life today. Just like in the case of the early church, God can use your experience of life together to draw other people to Jesus.

PRAYER-

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____



Session 7

BECOMING A FAITHFUL STEWARD



- Have you had a regular Quiet Time with God this week? If you did, how did it go?

Key Question for this Session: What is faithful stewardship?

Memory Verse

*"You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure."
2 Corinthians 9:7*



VIDEO TEACHING:

GENEROSITY - BECOMING A FAITHFUL STEWARD

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2 NKJV

A steward is the _____ of another person's property.
A believer is both the _____ of God and the _____
for God.

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all ... that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them." 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen!" Romans 11:36

As a follower of Jesus, I must be a faithful steward over

- Who I am.
- What I have.
- What I do.

To the glory of God!

WHO I AM

Who I am involves my spiritual gifts, personality, schedule, energy, abilities, etc.

WHAT I HAVE

What I have involves the management of the possessions God has entrusted to my care. This session will focus on finances as they relate to giving our money to the church and other compelling causes.

WHAT I DO

What I do is all about applying WHO I AM and WHAT I HAVE in my ministry and my life.

WHY GIVE?

God wants me to.

“Just as you excel in everything else ... see that you also excel in this grace of giving.” 2 Cor. 8:7

Giving helps me to grow.

7 WAYS I AM BLESSED WHEN I GIVE

1. Giving makes me _____ .
“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ...” John 3:16
2. Giving draws me _____ .
“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21
3. Giving is the antidote to _____ .
“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with every thing for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”
1 Timothy 6:17-19
4. Giving strengthens _____ .
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”
“Honour the Lord with your wealth.” Proverbs 3:5, 9
5. Giving is an investment _____ .
“... be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves, a firm foundation for the coming age ...” 1 Timothy 6:18-19
6. Giving blesses me _____ .
“Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor.” Proverbs 22:9
“The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.” Proverbs 11:2
7. Giving _____ .
“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35

GIVING HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO GOD

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WE FIND ...

The _____ tithe.

10% every year

Funded the Priesthood

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.” Leviticus 27:30

The _____ tithe.

10% every year.

Financed a National Feast

“You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose ...” Deuteronomy 12:17-18

The _____ tithe.

10% every third year

Fed the needy

“At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” Deuteronomy 14:28-29

PLUS

Profit sharing with the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Temple charges (Nehemiah 10:32-33)

Offerings - first fruit (Proverbs 3:9-10) - free will (Exodus 25:2)

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WE FIND ...

GOD FOCUSES ON _____ GIVING.

“excel in this grace of giving.” 2 Corinthians 8:7

Grace is the unlimited, unmerited, free favour, goodness and blessing of God.

WHAT IS GRACE GIVING?

I. THE PATTERNS FOR GRACE GIVING

1. Macedonian churches
2. Jesus

Pattern # 1 MACEDONIAN CHURCHES

“... the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

CHARACTERISTICS

- + _____
- + _____
- + _____
- = _____

CONDUCT

- “gave as much as they were able”
- “beyond their ability”
- “entirely on their own”
- “pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing”

KEY

- “the gave themselves first to the Lord”

JESUS CAN HAVE OUR MONEY AND NOT HAVE OUR HEARTS BUT HE CANNOT HAVE OUR HEARTS AND NOT HAVE OUR MONEY.

Pattern # 2 THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” 2 Corinthians 8:9

COMPARING THE TWO PATTERNS

- Both _____ a great deal.
Both _____ to meet another’s need.
One _____ and the other _____.

II. THE PRACTICE OF GRACE GIVING

1. _____
“their overflowing joy ...” 2 Corinthians 8:2
2. _____
“ ... rich generosity.” 2 Corinthians 8:2
3. _____
“... they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability.” 2 Corinthians 8:3
4. _____
“... they eagerly pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing.” 2 Corinthians 8:4
5. _____
“ ... they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to us ...” 2 Corinthians 8:5

III. THE PORTION FOR GRACE GIVING

BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ...

3 FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS RELATED TO GRACE GIVING

1. WE _____ BUT GOD OWNS.
*"The earth is the LORD'S and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."
Psalm 24:1*
2. WE EARN BUT GOD _____ .
"You may say to yourself, 'my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth ...' Deuteronomy 8:17-18
3. WE ARE GOD'S THEREFORE _____ IS GOD'S.
*"... they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will."
2 Corinthians 8:5*

WE CONCLUDE THEN THAT ...

100% of the money I possess belongs to God.

I am a steward of God.

I channel God's money for God's glory.

HOW MUCH DO I GIVE?

1. _____
"... they gave as much as they were able ..." 2 Corinthians 8:3
"according to your means." 2 Corinthians 8:11
"according to what one has" 2 Corinthians 8:12
2. _____
"entirely on their own ..." 2 Corinthians 8:3
"You must each decide in your own heart how much to give." 2 Corinthians 9:7

REMEMBER THIS ... *a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully. And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8*

IV. THE PRODUCT OF GRACE GIVING

1. _____
"... he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.." 2 Corinthians 9:10
2. _____
"Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous." 2 Corinthians 9:11
3. _____
"And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God." 2 Corinthians 9:11
4. _____
"... the needs of believers ... will be met." 2 Corinthians 9:12
5. _____
"... they will joyfully express their thanks to God." 2 Corinthians 9:12
6. _____
"... your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ." 2 Corinthians 9:13
7. _____
"And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you." 2 Corinthians 9:14



What has been a highlight for you from the video teaching? This can be something you have found particularly meaningful or it could be a question you have.

TAKING OUR GENEROSITY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

OK - let's kick it into high gear with this habit of generosity. To get things started, take 5 minutes on your own to do the following Generosity in the Mirror test. Share whatever insights you want to with your group.

GENEROSITY IN THE MIRROR - SELF TEST

1. What's your history with generosity? Did you see it practiced a lot in the home you grew up in or not?
2. Would you consider yourself a generous person? Why or why not?
3. When you see a need, are you the kind of person who wants to jump in right away and meet it, or do you have to talk yourself into helping?
4. What is getting in the way of you being more generous?
Debt?
Lack of savings?
Lack of motivation?
Not aware of needs?
Other?
5. How have you seen God work through you, or through someone else who inspires you in this area of generosity?

THE GREAT GENEROSITY LIFEGROUP ADVENTURE!!!

Alright, here's a challenge for your group! Find a way that you can be generous together over the next four weeks. This can involve collecting some money to give, or giving something you have besides money.

Here are three questions to get you going.

1. What need can you meet as a group? (Think out of the box. Think big!)
2. Who can you surprise with your generosity? (Could be someone in the community, someone who is totally not expecting it.)
3. How will you go about this plan? (Get the strategy going! Put a timeline on it. Who's in charge? How will you measure success?)

Share your story on the Creekside LifeGroup Leaders Facebook page!



Week 7 Devotionals

DAY 1

READ: Acts 20:35

“You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

When we’re generous, we’re blessed. To be blessed is to be truly happy because we are living as God designed us to. Jesus is the most generous person who has ever lived. He had the most to give up. He set aside his godly rights and privileges to become one of us (see Philippians 2:1-11). He gave his life on the cross so that we could be saved. Jesus taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” We can fool ourselves into believing that the greatest blessings in life come from what we get. We think - “If I get that new car, then I’ll be happy. When I get that job promotion, then I’ll be satisfied.” But story after story shows that getting doesn’t equal blessing. True blessing comes from giving because when we give we are most like the greatest Giver of all time.

PRAYER -

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 2

READ: 1 Corinthians 13:3

“If I gave everything I have to the poor and have even sacrificed my body; I could boast about it, but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.”

I can give without loving, but I cannot love without giving. If we try to be generous without loving the people we are giving to, we are wasting our time. Generosity is meant to be an expression of love. Remember the last time you gave someone a gift? When you hand the gift to the receiver, what you are really saying to them is, “I love you.” Jesus said, “For this is how God loved the world. He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 When God wanted to show us how much he loves us, he gave. This is true generosity – giving from a heart motivated by love. Ask God today whom he would like to show his love to through your generosity. .

PRAYER-

Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 3

READ: 2 Corinthians 9:7

“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.”

The goal of generosity is to bring pleasure to God. Paul reminds us, “... God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” The Greek word for cheerful here is hilaros. It’s where we get our word, “hilarious”. God is looking for generous hearts, hearts that can’t wait to give, hearts that get excited and happy and bubble over with joy at the prospect of helping someone in need. The first time our two daughters met each other, our older was 2 years old and our younger was a newborn. When our older daughter saw her new baby sister she gave her blankie to her! When I think of that moment, I still have joy from having watched that act of generosity. When we have a hilarious heart, God’s heart is hilarious too! Imagine God in heaven, smiling, laughing, overjoyed at watching his kids as they give. Our goal in generosity is to put a smile on God’s face. When you give with a cheerful heart, you can bet that God is having a great time watching you!

PRAYER - Dear Father, today I thank you that _____

DAY 4

READ: 2 Corinthians 8:14

“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when they need it. In this way, things will be equal.”

Generosity promotes unity in the body of Christ. God has designed the body of Christ to function much like a human body. When one part of our body is in need, other parts of the body will go into action to supply that need. The goal is the overall health of the body. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul is making the Corinthian believers aware of their opportunity to give to another part of the body. He reminds them that generosity would promote equality and unity in the church. When we generously give to meet the needs of others in the body of Christ, we are acting like a healthy body should, giving and receiving within the body. What needs are you aware of in the body of Christ? How can you give to meet those needs? Remember, when you give, you will be strengthening the unity that God has created the body of Christ to experience.

PRAYER- God, today I thank you that _____

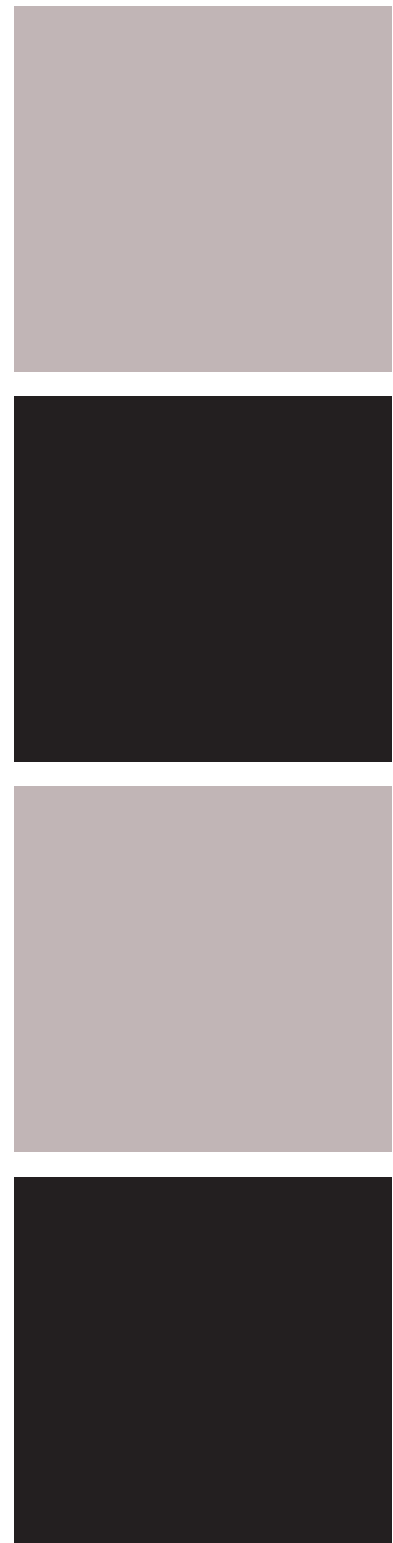
DAY 5

READ: Matthew 6:19-21

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and dust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.”

Generosity focuses our mind and heart on heaven. You’ve probably heard the statement, “You can’t take it with you.” We can’t take it with us, but we can send it ahead! Here in Matthew 6 Jesus gives us some great advice when it comes to what to do with our money and possessions. “Don’t store up treasure here on earth ... store up treasure in heaven.” In other words, don’t set your heart on collecting money and things for yourself. After all, Jesus says, they’ll be destroyed sooner than later. Instead of doing that, store up treasure in heaven. When we are generous, God focuses our mind and heart on heaven. We begin to care less about accumulating things here on earth and our true joy comes from investing in God’s kingdom that will last forever. As you grow in the habit of generosity, God will let you in on the greatest investment strategy of all time. Set your heart on heaven!

PRAYER-
Dear Father, today I thank you that _____



LifeGroup Guidelines

In your first meeting together, go over the following guidelines as a group. These guidelines will help lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to add or modify these guidelines to what will be suit your group experience.

We agree to the following values:

Clear Purpose:

To FOLLOW JESUS, LOVE GOD and LOVE PEOPLE together.

Group Attendance:

To prioritize our group meeting and let the group know if I'm going to be late or absent.

Safe Environment:

To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments or simple fixes).

Confidentiality:

To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.

Conflict Resolution:

To avoid gossip and immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15-17.

Spiritual Health:

To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God.

Welcome Newcomers

To invite friends who might benefit from this and warmly welcome newcomers.

Building Relationships:

To get to know other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

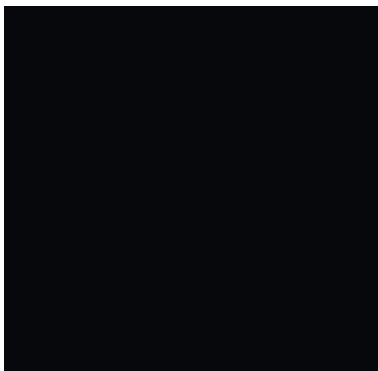
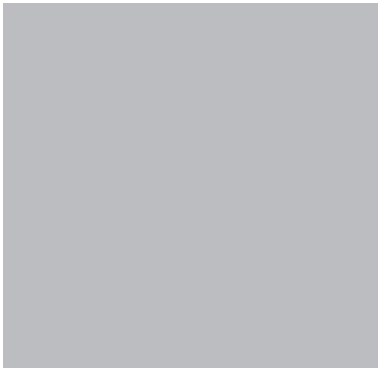
Other:

We have also discussed and agree upon the following items:

Child Care: _____

Starting Time: _____

Ending Time: _____



Lifegroup Roster

Tale a few minutes to pass around your guide and have each member complete the info below.

name

email

phone

Group Calendar

The best group experience will happen when everyone shares responsibilities and roles. This is also a key way for each of us to grow through the experience! Take a few minutes to outline a plan for the next seven weeks. Feel free to add other roles and events as you see fit.

DATE

LOCATION

FACILITATOR

SNACK/MEAL

session 1

session 2

session 3

session 4

session 5

session 6

session 7

Group party

Prayer & Praise Report

Use this space to write each other's prayer requests. You can also note when God answers prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's OK to pray silently or to pray by just using one sentence.

session

requests

praises

1

2

3

Prayer & Praise Report (cont'd)

session

requests

praises

4

5

6

7

Leader Tips

CONGRATULATIONS! As the leader of a short-term LifeGroup, you are agreeing to lead your group for the seven weeks of this series, EXPERIENCING GOD. Your role as a leader is to encourage your group members to grow their relationship with Christ through your love, your prayers and your example. Remember this - God doesn't expect you to be perfect! Jesus loves you and He will be with you in this experience. God promises, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you." (Hebrews 13:5 TEV) As you trust in Him, He will give you what you need to have a fantastic LifeGroup experience.

Top 10 Ideas for New Leaders

1. **Don't try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. God's plan is that each of your group members would have an active role each week in the group. Don't miss this opportunity. So set the tone in the first meeting by using the group calendar to plan your roles in group. Roles can include hosting the group, leading the study, leading the prayer time, leading a worship experience, coordinating the food, group communications and whatever else your group sees as important to function well.
2. **Be friendly and be yourself.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people as they arrive with a big smile ... this can set the mood for the whole gathering. The more true you can be to who you really are, the more your group members will see that, although you're not perfect, God is at work in your life.
3. **Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.** Take time to watch the video and review the questions before the group meets. Allow God to get the material into your heart and He will use you to inspire the rest of the group.
4. **Pray for your group members by name.** Before your group arrives, take a few moments to pray for each member by name. Ask God to use your time together to speak to each person in the group. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge. When we ask, He works!
5. **When you ask a question, be patient.** Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. That's OK! When someone does respond, affirm the response with a simple, "thanks" or "great answer". Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared yet like to add anything?" For people who are new to a group experience, it can be hard to share. You can let them know how glad you are they are a part of the group. Over time many people become more comfortable and willing to share if they know they are accepted and loved.

6. **Provide transitions between questions.** Ask if anyone would like to read the next sentence or Scripture passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, then be patient until someone jumps in. Be sure to thank the person who reads.
7. **Break into smaller groups occasionally.** Consider grouping men with men and women with women for the prayer time, or study time. Smaller groups allow for everyone to share more and get to know one another more. Same gender groups will grow the comfort level for many to share their stories and struggles.
8. **Use smaller same gender groups for your prayer time.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable if they are with just two or three others. Fewer people allows for more sharing time and prayer for each request. This smaller group setting also helps new leaders develop as your group members develop confidence to lead others.
9. **Rotate facilitators.** The beauty of this study is the teaching is on the video! The facilitator simply plays the video and then asks the questions in the book. This study is intentionally created to help people who are new to facilitating a study to gain confidence and learn "on the job".
10. **One final challenge.** Before your group meeting, read through each of the six passages below. Allow these passages to speak to your heart about your role in the group and your ministry to help others in your group grow closer to Jesus. As you do this, God will prepare your heart for your first meeting.

Matthew 9:36-38

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

John 10:14-15

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep.

1 Peter 5:2-4

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the glory that will never fade away.

Philippians 2:1-5

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12

... but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us ... For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.



Session 1: SPIRITUAL MATURITY DEFINED

- page 6 maturity
- page 7 Christlikeness, automatic, process, discipline, obedience
- page 8 success, love, confidence, joy, love, fellowship, communion

Session 2: SIN - HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

- page 13 sin
- page 14 God be God, conduct, condition, willpower, determination
- page 15 knowing, doing, God's, ours, God, people
- page 16 confession, know, count, offer, know
- page 17 count, offer
- page 18 accusation, deception, temptation

Session 3: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - PART 1

- page 24 activities, focus
- page 26 insight, instruction, inspiration, intimacy

Session 4: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - PART 2

- page 34 temptation, decisions, under stress, sad, witness, realization, read, re-read, review, real, impress others, impress God, relaxed
- page 35 revealing, expressing my love to God, to God's purpose and will for my life, provide for my needs, everything, forgive my sin, reveal, specifically,
- page 36 restitution, accept, other people, spiritual protection

Session 5: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - PART 3

- page 43 alertness, will, repentance, worship, sorrow, God, humility, pure, right
- page 44 examine, focus, inner feelings, listen, created, died, regular habit, service
- page 45 mature, devotion, direction, delight, I become like Him, resources, attitudes, reverence, expectancy
- page 46 willingness to obey, relax, read, reflect, record, request

Session 6: LIFE TOGETHER

- page 52 actions, motives, life, why
- page 53 wise, righteously, spiritually, regularly, specifically, mutually, authentically, practically, protection, unbelieving heart, hardened heart, be alert to the possibility, encourage, encourage reconciliation, motivation, love, good deeds, fellowship with other believers,
- page 54 support, confess our sins to one another, pray for one another, sharing life's burdens, task oriented, spiritually oriented, whole person oriented, attitude, desire, pay
- page 55 restoration, lift up, hold up

Session 7: BECOMING A FAITHFUL STEWARD

- page 63 manager, property, steward
- page 64 more like God, closer to God, materialism, my faith, for eternity, in return, makes me happy
- page 65 Lord's, festival, poor, grace
- page 66 severe trial, overflowing joy, extreme poverty, rich generosity, gave, gave, rich, poor, joyfully, generously, sacrificially, eagerly, willingly
- page 67 possess, enables, all we have, as I am able, as I determine
- page 68 increase in good works, increased ability to give, thanksgiving to God, meeting needs, God being praised, Gospel verified, prayers for the giver