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<< REBOOT YOUR LIFE >>



RESETTING
LIFE - From
Regret to
Repentance

STUDY GUIDE

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CTRL+ALT+DELETE... Resetting Life, from Regret to Repentance

Small Group Study Guide

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Resetting Life, from Regret to Repentance

Do you ever wish you could reboot your life like you reboot your computer? What is it that has gone wrong in your life that you wish you could go back and undo? The season of Lent is traditionally a season of repentance - a time to reflect on what has gone wrong in our lives and to reboot with the only One who can give us a truly fresh start, Jesus Christ. In this series, we'll look at some of life's most common regrets and then talk about how repentance can bring forgiveness, hope, and comfort in Christ.

SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS

THE FOUR KEYS 

Four key ingredients should be a part of every small group:

The Word of God: Whether we study straight from the Bible or study the Bible through devotional books/guides, we are committed to GROWING from the Word of God in Christ.

Growth: We are here because we want to GROW and see our lives transformed to be more like Christ. As part of this GROWTH we commit to pray for each other. We seek to encourage each other and hold each other accountable in the steps of our discipleship process: CONNECT-GROW-SHARE.

Acceptance: As members of this Life Group we seek to accept each other unconditionally as Christ does each of us, seeking to build strong friendships rooted in Christ.

Confidentiality: Everything shared in this group stays with this group. Gossip and slander are unacceptable. Like Christ, we seek the best for each other.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each week the format will be as follows:

Read the Small Group Essentials

We encourage the Small Group Essentials at the beginning of each meeting. This helps the group members to remember these guide lines and promotes a feeling of safety and confidentiality.

Opening Prayer

We encourage you to spend a few minutes praying for each other and the study.

Setting the Stage

Read the text for the lesson each week. Members are encouraged to bring their bibles and read from their bibles. This can be read out loud as a group, taking turns, or read by one member.

Unpacking the Theme

Read this together as a group out loud. One member can read, or the group can take turns reading.

Study Questions

Answering all the study questions is not expected or required. Your group may have robust discussion on just a few, or they may move quickly through many. If possible, answer at least one question from each section: Getting Started, Digging In and Application.

Challenge for the Week

Take a few minutes to read through the challenge(s). Consider committing as a group to complete the challenge. As a suggestion, consider holding each other accountable during the week by way of reminders through e-mails, text messages, phone calls, etc.

Closing Prayer

Please take time to note any praise reports and prayer requests. Please keep these in prayer during the week.

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 OPENING PRAYER

 **Setting The Stage - Read the following verses together:**

Romans 7:15, 20-25; Luke 5:27-32

UNPACKING THE THEME

Have you ever heard someone openly share something they struggle with? Maybe it was an addiction, anger, pride, lust, envy, gossip, overeating, a disease, a death in the family, a work problem, etc.... When someone is transparent about a struggle in their life we listen; especially if we have the same struggle.

In Romans chapter 7, the curtain is drawn and we peer through the window deep into Paul's heart and mind as he struggles. He's struggling with the yearning to be righteous, in right relationship with God, yet there is the recurring reality of sin in his life. Is Paul thinking of sin in general or certain sins that he repeatedly struggles with? In 2 Corinthians 12:7 Paul struggles with a thorn in his flesh, could that be a certain sinful behavior that he continually battles against?

I remember the first time I read Romans 7. I was at an after school Bible study for youth and one of the kids was talking about his struggle with sin. We all listened intently and knew what he was going through. Our youth director nodded from experience and said that we weren't alone. He opened Romans 7 to us and showed us the age-old struggle. We read those words of Paul, "...For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15). We were relieved and found great comfort that we weren't alone in our struggle. 2000 years ago St. Paul had the same struggle that we had and we were a bunch of youth. And, like us, St. Paul didn't understand it, "I do not understand what I do..." (Romans 7:15).

I don't understand what I do. I hate the idea of parents taking out their frustrations and yelling angrily at their kids. Guess what I did this morning on the way to school when my kids were misbehaving, "what I hate I do."

You and I could list a whole host of examples like that. I gave a more socially acceptable one, but we all could list far more shameful struggles, especially if we revealed our thoughts.

While there is a certain amount of comfort and community in knowing that our struggle with sin is something that others go through, that's not enough. If our struggle with sin would remain forever, ultimately that would lead us to despair, to cry out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me...?" (Romans 7:24), "is there any way to reboot?" St. Paul answers his struggle and ours, "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25). That deliverance will ultimately be realized when Jesus comes again. Until then, this season of Lent provides us an opportunity to be honest about our struggle with sin, to look deeply into the law and admit we are wretched, to repent of our lack of righteousness. Thank God he sent us a deliverer to rescue us. Indeed, that's why he came, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Repentance is the pathway to true righteousness, the righteousness of God given to us. "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Romans 1:17).

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever heard someone be transparent about their struggle with sin? If comfortable, share the situation. How was that helpful to you? Did you find a certain amount of comfort in knowing you aren't the only one who struggles?

2. If comfortable, share with your group any sins you are struggling with right now. Are there any areas that you would like to repent of and hand over to God during this Lenten season?

DIGGING IN

3. Read Romans 7:7. Some people don't struggle with sin because their knowledge of the law is limited or non-existent. Our culture often tries to redefine sinful behavior by saying that it is "natural" or justify it because "everyone does it." Review the 10 commandments (See Exodus 20:1-17 or Luther's Small Catechism). Are there sinful areas in your life that you have justified by ignoring or redefining God's laws?

4. Read Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2:25. How do these verses reconcile with what Jesus says about repentance in Luke 5:27?
5. Continue on in Romans and read 8:1-4. God delivered us through Jesus Christ! What does that deliverance look like in these verses of chapter 8?
6. If your group has time read Romans 7:7-8:39 and discuss the verses that are most significant to you and your walk with Christ right now.

APPLICATION

7. Just as St. Paul is honest about his struggle with sin, have you ever been transparent with your struggle with sin? How was that received? Is there anyone in your life right now who would benefit from you being honest with them about your own struggle with sin? Or is there an environment where you need to be honest with your struggle and trust that the Lord will use that to speak to others?
8. Paul struggled with sin. But rather than developing a plan to fix his lack of righteousness, Paul looks to Christ to rescue him from his lack of righteousness. When you struggle with sin, do you look to Christ or do you try to solve it on your own? What ways do you try to fix the problem on your own? What helps you to look to Christ and his righteousness instead of your own?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

9. Tell a close Christian friend or family member about a sin you are struggling with. Repent of it and ask them to forgive you. Perhaps they

could read Romans 8:1-4 to you. And perhaps you could do the same for them. If you have a spouse or children, this is a great way to bring God's grace and mercy into the midst of your family.

10. Read Romans 7 and 8. Write down anything you have a question about or wonder about. Write down every time you see God doing something for Paul, for humanity, for you! Review these items throughout the week and pray about them with requests and thanksgiving.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 OPENING PRAYER

 **Setting The Stage - Read the following verses together:**

Numbers 6:22-27, Philippians 4:1-9, Mark 6:30-34

UNPACKING THE THEME

Mark 6:30-34 records a time where Jesus and the apostles, exhausted by the demands of teaching and serving, retreated to a peaceful place for rest. However, their efforts to seek peace were quickly interrupted when they were met by a throng of needy people; “Like sheep without a shepherd,” nervous, alone, unprotected, without peace. Jesus’ compassion for the people led him to continue teaching and serving despite his own need for rest.

God calls us to a life of peace, but that can be difficult in a world fraught with danger, conflict, chaos, distractions, and demands. Often we are driven to seek peace in possessions or within ourselves. This kind of peace is shallow, at best. God promises something better, God promises a reboot. He tells us to bring all our worries to Him, all our problems to Him, place our faith in Him, and He will give us peace (Philippians 4:6-7). He calls us to repentance and graciously forgives our sins and looks upon us with acceptance and favor. God’s peace is rooted in a relationship with him. God’s peace sustains us through life’s challenges. God’s peace endures. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

In this study we trace God’s promises for peace throughout the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, the human search for peace is timeless. But God is there all along, faithful to his promises to provide peace and rest to his weary children. Scripture reveals God’s desire that we abandon worry and anxiety, turning to him to meet our needs. Only then are we able to live a life of inward peace and refuge from the demands of the world.

GETTING STARTED

1. How do you define peace? Is peace a neutral condition, or is it more than that?

2. Read Mark 6:30-31. How do you think Jesus and the apostles felt in these verses? Reflect on a time that you have needed relief from the demands of the world.

DIGGING IN

3. Read Numbers 6:22-27. This is known as the “Aaronic Benediction” because God commanded Moses to tell Aaron to use these words to bless the people. Who is active in these verses? What does it mean for the Lord to “make his face shine upon you?” What does this tell you about the source of peace? Compare to John 14:27.

4. Contrast Philippians 4:6 with Philippians 2:28, 2 Corinthians 4:8, and 2 Corinthians 11:28. What is the difference between the anxiety and pressure Paul describes in the latter passages and the anxiety that he discourages in Philippians 4:6?

5. Read Philippians 4:6 and Matthew 6:25-34. Where should we turn in times of trouble? How is our relationship with God changed when we depend on ourselves to solve problems rather than turning to him?

APPLICATION

6. Philippians 4:7 assures us that the peace of God guards our hearts and minds. Compare this to the language in 1 Peter 1:3-5. Think about God's protective work in your life. What images come to mind when you think about God's protection? How can this imagery bring you peace and comfort?

7. How can repentance bring peace to your life and relief from outside events as well? Refer to Romans 5:1-5.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Is there an area in your life wherein you seek relief from the everyday pace or demands? Do you have a relationship in need of peace? Begin by turning toward Christ. Accept the gift of God's peace through repentance and forgiveness. A focus on Christ will give you the strength, comfort, and discernment needed to achieve peace in your life. For added encouragement, prepare a list of scriptures that are meaningful to you and remind you of God's gift of peace. It will be ready in times of chaos, fear, or fatigue

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 OPENING PRAYER

 **Setting The Stage - Read the following verses together:**

Genesis 3:1-6, 1 John 2:15-17, Luke 15:11-32

UNPACKING THE THEME

A child throws a tantrum. A woman repeatedly shoplifts. A son steals money from his dad's wallet. A spouse commits adultery. Why? They all want something they cannot have.

Adam and Eve also desired something they couldn't have.

This first couple was put in charge of God's perfect creation. But Satan, wanting to steal their allegiance away from God, had to defame God's character. Satan is crafty, clever, and the master of deception. Martin Luther said of him: "On earth is not his equal."

With the question "Did God really say...?", Satan planted doubt in Eve's heart, directing her attention to the only tree in Eden prohibited by God. For Eve, that one tree became her desire. The problem with desire is that there is always something that we want and do not have. Satan deceptively asks each one of us: "If God really loves you why doesn't He give you what you want?"

Satan attacks God's character today when he says: "Go on and sin, there won't be any consequences." Pleasure (good for food), beauty (a delight to the eyes), and wisdom (to be desired to make one wise), were already God's gifts to Eve. She chose to receive them from Satan because she doubted God's goodness. When Adam and Eve doubted God and believed the Devil, sin entered the world. A sinful doubting heart has been passed on to every generation since.

"The wages of sin is death," (Romans 6:23). But God already had a plan to save mankind; God knew we would need a reboot, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." At the heart of every sin is the thought "I know better than God." In reality, God's way leads us to life, joy and peace. By doubting God's word and desiring to be like God, Adam and Eve brought sin and death on all mankind.

Yet, through his Son, God brought forgiveness and life.

A thoughtful scholar once said: “Christ is much more powerful to save, than Adam was to destroy.”

Daily we need to acknowledge that we are dead to selfish desires, allowing Jesus to live through us (Romans 8:1, 2). Using human strength alone, this would be impossible, but with the redeeming power of Christ and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can prayerfully overcome doubts and desires and intentionally live in ways that please God.

GETTING STARTED

1. List the three things that caused Eve to eat from the forbidden tree. (Gen 3:6) How are these three things similar to temptations that we face today? See also 1 John 2:15-17 and Psalm 1:1.

2. Was Adam deceived in the same way that Eve was? See also I Tim 2:13,14

DIGGING IN

3. How did Adam and Eve, prompted by Satan, doubt God’s goodness in this passage? Why is doubting God’s goodness the foundation of sin?

4. Why do you think that it is an especially effective temptation when Satan focuses on what is prohibited in our lives?

5. Man’s quest is, and should be, to be like God. (See Ephesians 5:1) How did Satan twist this godly pursuit in Genesis 3:5? Why was the serpent’s appeal so strong? How should we rightly pursue and imitate God?

6. Read James 1:14-15. Do you notice the 3 stage progression of temptation?

7. Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32. God is represented in the father figure. The older son is the Jews, especially the Pharisees. The younger son, the prodigal, represents the publicans, sinners and Gentiles.

As you read, think about the following questions:

- *Why do you think the Prodigal Son left home?*
- *What caused the Prodigal Son to come to his senses?*
- *When the Prodigal Son returned home, what was his father's attitude?*
- *What's the lesson for you in this parable?*

APPLICATION

8. How would you define temptation? What part do deception and desire play in temptation? If possible, share an example from your own life where you were tempted. How did you respond?

9. Is there a sinful desire, bad habit or negative relationship that you would like to overcome? Why is it important that you do so? Have you overcome any such issues in the past? What happened?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

10. Read James 1:14, 15. Notice the progression of Temptation: 1.) Temptation arises out of evil desires. 2.) Evil desire turns into a sinful act. 3.) Sin leads to death. Try to recognize this pattern in your own life and ask God to help you resist specific temptations.

11. Psalm 37 deals with those who are seeking to be righteous, faithful, moral, and just. As you read and meditate on this psalm, ask God to help you develop these qualities and give you Godly desires.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 OPENING PRAYER

 **Setting The Stage - Read the following verses together:**

Psalm 25:1-15, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

UNPACKING THE THEME

“Teenagers, tired of being harassed by your parents? Act now!! Move out, get a job, pay your own way while you still know everything!!” Have you ever heard this snarky line? Have you ever said something similar to the young people in your life? If we’re honest, we have probably all had youthful moments when this little bit of sarcasm was a well-deserved reminder of our poor attitude and impoverished position.

Thinking back, do you remember with embarrassment some of your own youthful antics? Did you drop goldfish in the High School toilets? Did you play a joke on your drunk friend? Were you the drunk? Were you cruel to the kid who couldn’t catch the ball or did you make fun of the nerdy kids behind their backs (or to their faces)? Did you cheat on a test, lie to your parents, steal, yell, get a little too close to your boyfriend? The list could go on.

Or worse, is there something on your “youthful indiscretion” list that is so uncomfortable, so painful, so raw, that you’d rather just leave it in the past – buried deeply – praying for the gift of amnesia. “Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways.” Please! Keep those memories from my mind, my heart, and if at all possible, from the minds and hearts of those I abused, affected...hurt. “And God, if you could forget about these things too, that would be really great, because... well... I’m probably not one of your best creations.” The Psalmist knows our situation. King David was no stranger to youthful (or even not so youthful) indiscretions.

The Psalms are an interesting gift from God. This Old Testament book is a compilation of examples of how we get to communicate with our heavenly Father. The Psalms are communication vehicles; God has given us a model for what He wants to hear, what He wants to discuss, how He cares

about everything we do and think and feel. For example, there are Psalms of thanksgiving, praise, anger and retribution. And there are Psalms of lament and sorrow, of repentance... of reboot; “Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellions ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good” (Psalm 25:7).

Do you have someone you lean on or share with? Someone who likes you, loves you, even though you are not, well, all that great? A friend who knows about your worst moments – and your best? God knows. “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me... Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:1, 7). “How can you possibly like what you see, O Lord?”

But He does, like us. In fact God loves us... in spite of ourselves. The apostle Paul makes it simple and clear, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Christ died for all of us – before we got it right, even with the baggage of our “youthful indiscretions,” and even with the baggage of our daily “adult” mistakes – He loves us so much that he sent his Son, to pay the price, to lift the baggage off our shoulders, to reboot our lives.

GETTING STARTED

1. Considering your past and present, do you ever have moments when you are certain that God can’t possibly want you? Do you ever wonder what you need to do to make up for all the stuff you’ve done?

2. If you were going to pick an all-star team to play on your side, to be part of your department, company, or entrepreneurial endeavor, or part of your mission team, what qualities would be on your list?

DIGGING IN

3. God’s all-star team is quite unusual. Read the scripture and fill-in some of the traits of the people on the following page.

Adam & Eve	Genesis 3:11-13	
Abraham	Genesis 20:1-4	
Moses	Exodus 4:10-13	
David	2 Samuel 11:1-4, 14	
Mary Magdalene	Luke 8:1-2	
Martha & Mary	Luke 10:38-42, John 11:20, 32	
Peter	Mark 14:66-72	
Paul (Saul)	Acts 8:1-2	

4. What do you notice about this list of people? Are there any moments of “indiscretion” in your own life that are similar?

5. Read Romans 3:9-18, 23. Now read God’s response in Romans 3:24-25 and John 3:16-17. Some people think I must do better so that I can be saved, others that I must be saved so I can do better. What is the difference between these two alternatives and why does it matter? How would you explain the difference to an unbeliever, or to someone who believes differently than you do?

APPLICATION

6. Sin is a difficult church word. This tiny little three-letter word has people in the pews and in the population squirming in their seats. Who wants to be called a sinner? “Indiscretion” is a much easier word to swallow. Martin Luther explained sin through the image “Man turned in on himself.” Think about your posture as you hunch over your smart phone (even at the dinner table?), think about a child’s posture when they won’t share a toy, think about a posture where “I want, what I want, when I want it” – self-centeredness – is the *modus operandi*. Now compare Paul’s declaration (Romans 3:9-18, 23) in question 5 to all humans, stuck in this posture. Discuss what this means about the root of sin.

7. Read Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39. God calls all believers into a posture of open arms. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength (and mind), and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Arms reaching up to God, arms reaching out to neighbors. Considering the previous question, how does this change in posture and focus affect our own life? How can this affect our psychological and emotional well-being?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

8. Read Psalm 139. Note the places where the Psalmist reflects your own doubts and fears. Note the places where you see God’s redemptive love. Think about how this Psalm speaks into your life.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 OPENING PRAYER

 **Setting The Stage - Read the following verses together:**

Isaiah 43:1-5, Acts 2:36-41, John 21:15-19

UNPACKING THE THEME

All of us go through times where we make mistakes or are unlovable. Many times when we mess up, we have the hardest time forgiving ourselves. We continually replay the situation and think of all the ways we should have/could have handled it differently. Satan uses these “if only’s to cause us to doubt ourselves and “prove” to us how unworthy we are.

But as we see in the readings, God often reminds us of His goodness and grace. We will mess up and have a need for a Savior (Romans 3:23-24), we do mess up and need a reboot. In the reading from Isaiah, we clearly see that Yahweh has “redeemed you.” He stated “You are mine” and “Do not be afraid, I am with you.” Rather than beating ourselves up over what we have done wrong, we are to remember the promise that we are redeemed and He is with us.

In the final scripture we read, we see Jesus asking Peter three different times if he loves Him. Three times is likely significant as it could be symbolism for the three times that Peter, just days before, denied Christ (John 18). By the third time that Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, you can almost hear Peter’s exasperation, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

What is interesting to me is the slightly different command that Jesus gave to Peter each time he answered. First He said, “Feed my lambs.” A lamb is a young sheep. Perhaps Jesus is referring to little children or those new in faith? In the second reply, Jesus says, “Take care of my sheep.” Perhaps Jesus is referring to nurturing the church and its members? The third response from Jesus is “Feed my sheep.” Perhaps he is referring to spiritually helping the new ‘flock’ grow - to discipline them or maybe to grow in number?

In any case, it is quite clear. Peter is admonished to love. Jesus in effect says, “If you love me Peter, you will feed and take care of my flock. You are the shepherd of My (Jesus’) sheep. Love them!” Jesus concludes the section by giving Peter the same command He did back in John 1, but this time with emphasis - “Follow Me!” and everything will be alright, “follow me,” and all the mistakes will be forgiven, “follow me,” and daily you can reboot.

Thank God for incredible servants of the Lord who lead us and teach us, and remind us not to fear because we are loved and we are redeemed children of Jesus who are called to Love!

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you tend to beat yourself up for mistakes you have made? Is it easy for you to forget about mess-ups and move on? How do you get over beating yourself up?

2. Do you know of an adult who was baptized? Do you think it is more significant for them to “repent and be baptized” because they are acutely aware of their sins?

DIGGING IN

3. The name Isaiah means “The Lord (Yahweh) saves”. How do we see the Lord expressing ways He will save us in Isaiah 43:1-5?

- *Acts 2:36-41 is filled with lots of deep meaning:*

4. Peter calls Jesus “both LORD and Christ” in verse 36. How do you define these terms?

5. We are called to “repent” in verse 38. How do you define repent? Are there things in your life that need repentance?

6. We are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit through baptism. Is the sacrament of baptism just for those who are adults?

- *In John 21:15-19:*

7. Jesus asks Peter if “you truly love me more than these”. What is Jesus referring to when He says “these”?

8. Are there things in your own life that are like the “these” (things, people, distractions) in Peter’s life?

9. Jesus final words in this section are “Follow Me”. Is Jesus suggesting that loving God is as simple as following Jesus?

APPLICATION

10. We are all “ministers” in the church (1 Peter 2:4-10) and a part of the priesthood of all believers. How can God use you to love God and take care of His sheep?

11. In Acts 2:41, three thousand people were baptized in one day. Now that is a growing church! How can you spread the Gospel message of Salvation in Christ Jesus with those in your sphere of influence so that ultimately they will consider coming to the waters of baptism?

12. After denying Christ three times, Jesus ultimately reinstates Peter as a disciple (John 21:19). Have you ever done something wrong and received the forgiveness of another? How did that make you feel?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Memorize Isaiah 43:1-4 "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you ...

Watch this creative skit on God's grace. If you have ever felt like you have done something unforgivable, maybe Peter's conversation with Jesus will help. Search YouTube for "Skit Guys - Grace"



www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhoFEuw2GPA

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

LEADER'S GUIDE

1: RIGHTEOUSNESS

GETTING STARTED

1. If your group is new, a generic and surface level example might help. E.g. an example of a pastor's sermon or a testimony you heard. If your group has been meeting for a while and has grown deeper with each other, you might be able to be more transparent and share deeper struggles.
2. Again, depending on the level of familiarity of your group will determine the appropriate level of transparency.

DIGGING IN

3. It can be helpful to be reminded that the Ten Commandments have to do with what we say and think as much as with what we do. Additionally, the distinction between sins of omission and commission is often helpful as we consider our sinfulness. The more we are aware of our sinful wretched state, the more we are aware of the immensity of God's grace.
4. Jesus seems to command repentance yet the apostles seem to talk of it as itself a gift from God. Just when we might be tempted to earn our way to God – when we might be tempted to turn the act of repentance into a good work that we have done to achieve righteousness—all Glory is given to God. He is the one who delivers us through Jesus Christ. Mysteriously, even repentance is a gift of God! Spending some time being in awe at the mysterious work and grace of God is appropriate during Lent.
5. 8:1 – no condemnation. 8:2 – set free from the law of sin and death. 8:3 God condemned sin. 8:4 righteous requirements of the law are met in us.
6. Answers will vary.

APPLICATION

7. Sharing our struggle with sin is a risk. We fear that we may face condemnation or judgment. Most of the time, however, we find hope, mercy and a chance to share each other's burdens with the Righteousness of Christ leading the way.
8. Worship, Bible study, relationships with other believers, time in God's Word, Christ-centered music and a whole host of other practices allow for God to communicate and deliver his righteousness to us.

2: PEACE

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary. Some may define peace as a neutral condition in the absence of conflict. God's peace is a positive condition of well-being, tranquility, and union with God.
2. Personal responses will vary.

DIGGING IN

3. God is the only active person in the Benediction. The Lord blesses, is gracious, and gives peace. For the Lord to “make his face shine upon you” is an expression of his acceptance, favor, and forgiveness. True peace—well-being, fellowship with God, tranquility—comes from God as a result of his forgiveness and a restored relationship with him. Likewise, John 14:27 remind us that peace is a gift from God through forgiveness and reconciliation with him.

4. In Philippians 2:28 and 2 Corinthians, Paul describes the anxiety, pressure, and concerns associated with ministry and spreading the Gospel. Conversely, in Philippians 4:6 he discourages his audience from engaging in selfish worry and an inward focus on temporary personal needs.

5. Throughout scripture God invites us to turn to him for all our needs. As the object of our faith, we trust in God to protect and sustain us through all of life's challenges. In this way, we grow closer to God. Conversely, when we depend on ourselves rather than God, we make ourselves the object of our own faith—in a way, we make ourselves our own god.

APPLICATION

6. 1 Peter 1:3-5 indicates that God shields us with his power. Answers will vary, but considering that God protects us as guard and shield, images of security or armed forces may be common.
7. When we repent of our sinfulness, Christ extends forgiveness and renews our relationship with him. This peace with God is the foundation for peace within, peace in all our earthly relationships, and relief from the demands of the world.

3: DESIRES

GETTING STARTED

1. a. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,

she took from its fruit and ate. In other words, she saw, she took and she ate. Sinning is the same downward spiral today. Some scholars compare the three temptations in I John to luxury, covetousness and ambition. **b.** Answers will vary but point to the fact that it is essentially the same today.

2. No, Satan deceived Eve by casting doubt on God's word. She saw the fruit, took it, and ate it. After Adam joined her, Eve turned from sinner to tempter. Adam ate. His sin was disobedience. He knew what he was doing.

DIGGING IN

3. **a.** Satan questioned God's word, making it seem unreasonable and unclear. Eve should not have even discussed anything with the devil. **b.** When we doubt God in any way, we doubt His power. When we doubt His goodness, we imply that He is not entirely good, and that He wants to do us harm. Satan tempts us to doubt God, which leads to denial of His love for us.

4. One commentator says of the fruit: "It was the more coveted because it was prohibited." Unfortunately, it is in our nature to desire what is prohibited.

5. **a.** Satan suggests that they would be better off after eating the fruit. They would be like God, omniscient and omnipotent. **b.** He implies that they are less than perfect in their present state and that they really deserve to like God. **c.** Through Jesus' death on the cross we are sanctified and made righteous (Romans 5:19), enabling us to pursue God with all our heart.

6. The progression of Temptation: 1.) Temptation arises out of evil desires. 2.) Evil desire turns into a sinful act. 3.) Sin leads to death.

7. The Prodigal Son... **a.** Answers will vary, but center on the fact that he was impatient for his inheritance and tired of his fathers' rules. **b.** He came to his senses because he was at rock bottom. He spent all his money and was hungry, miserable and felt completely lost. **c.** His father welcomed him with great love, affection and compassion. His actions represent the mercy, grace and forgiveness of God to those who repent of their sins. **d.** Answers will vary.

APPLICATION

8. **a.** Temptation is the act of enticing someone to commit a forbidden act. It is the allure of evil. **b.** Deception is to mislead or falsely persuade. It is the tool for temptation. Desire is to want, long for or crave. It is the object of the temptation. **c.** Answers will vary.

9. Answers will vary.

4: YOUTH

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary, but normally we would all look for positive qualities like honesty, hard work, strong morals, intelligence, etc...

DIGGING IN

3. **Adam & Eve:** Adam blamed God “this woman **you** put here...,” Eve blamed the serpent “The serpent deceived me...” neither sought forgiveness **Abraham:** Abraham lied, he placed his wife at risk, compelled her to join in the deception, he did not trust in God’s protection and put others at risk **Moses:** refused to follow God (If you read through all of Exodus 3 & 4 you will see just how many times God offered signs, answers, and direction – Moses’ refusal was a clear sign of disrespect, unbelief and faithlessness.) **David:** David was an adulterer (perhaps bordering on rape – did Bathsheba have the ability to refuse the king’s request?), David was a murderer **Mary Magdalene:** demon possessed **Martha & Mary:** Martha was distracted and putting “works” before “faith”, Mary was too distracted by mourning to have “faith” in Jesus **Peter:** Peter denied knowing Jesus **Paul (Saul):** Before his conversion, Paul was called Saul. Saul (Paul) was a persecutor of Christians.

4. This is not a comprehensive list of God’s all-stars. The bible is a narrative about the lives – the ups and downs, the good and the bad – of people on God’s team, of believers. Not one is without sin, not one is without “indiscretions.” Have you ever blamed someone else or let someone else take the blame for something you did? Have you ever lied? Have you ever taken something that did not belong to you? Have you ever disparaged someone’s reputation (murdered their character) to protect yourself – or just out of gossip? Have you ever been filled with anger or hatred? Have you ever been so distracted that you missed out on family, friends, and Jesus? Have you ever decided not to speak up about your faith? Were you once an unbeliever – maybe even mocked of Christians?

5. **a.** The first choice requires me to get better – but the question is “how good do I need to be, in order to be saved?” Can we ever be good enough? Can we ever do enough good things? Is it even possible for us to be truly “good?” This is the check-list methodology of religion which says, if you complete these tasks, if you do these things correctly, then you will, by your own power, be good enough. This perspective makes us our own god. The second choice, the correct choice, is to recognize that we need a power greater than our own to enable us, to fill us with goodness so that we might possibly do something good. The Holy Spirit came to fill us, to

comfort us, to enable us, Jesus came to die for our sins. There is nothing that we have or can do, without the love of God. **b.** Answers will vary. Hopefully everyone will be able to share ideas and thoughts about how to bring the Gospel message to an unbeliever or someone from a faith background that believes in works. Think about how to start from their perspective – think about what it would be like to convince you to let go of some long-held belief – how would you do it?

APPLICATION

6. Answers will vary. Sin is by definition placing our desires over God's directives, placing ourselves at the center of our world instead of placing God at the center of our world. While we can make laundry lists of "sinful acts" or outward manifestations of our inward condition, it is our soul, our heart, our inner-self that is the root cause – the acts are simply the effect. When I am at my center, I become my own god. And when I am turned inward the world becomes darker and smaller.

7. Answers may vary. When we are reaching up and out it is difficult to turn in toward ourselves. When we are focused on serving God and neighbor, it is difficult to focus on serving ourselves. When God and neighbor are more important, we become vehicles of His love, we become more filled with His love.

5: LOVE

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary. Insert God's truth/scripture into the "conversation" in your head and recite scripture to combat the devil.

2. Those who have been baptized as an adult sometimes have a more vivid view of repentance. They were far from God for a portion of their life and can reflect back on poor behavior. They may have felt the weight of sin, but didn't know Jesus as their Savior and Redeemer, and so, felt hopeless.

DIGGING IN

3. V1 - I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. V2 - I will be with you; the rivers, they will not sweep over you; the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze V3 - I give Egypt for your ransom V4 - I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life V5 - I am with you; I will bring your children and gather you.

4. **a.** LORD – God, the Supreme Master. Printed in small capital letters in many Bibles, this is the proper name of the God of the Hebrews -

"Jehovah". **b.** Christ – Messiah, Son of God.

5. Repent – a complete, 180 degree turn from your actions or beliefs. Like a U-Turn. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, if you are heading down the wrong path, you will sooner arrive at the right place if you turn around and go back. Daily we need to repent of those things that keep us from loving God and loving others. Maybe it is an idol (money, a person, etc.); a bad habit, activity or thought pattern (anger, pornography, etc.); a selfish activity ... God invites us to simply turn around, turn back to Him.

6. No – see verse 39.

7. Some believe it could be the fishing gear, but most believe it referred to the other disciples that were gathered around Jesus at that time -- meaning do you love me more than you love your friends? In either case, turn away from that which is keeping you from me (Jesus).

8. Answers will vary.

9. Yes – that simple and yes, and that hard!

APPLICATION

10. Answers will vary. We all have influence wherever we are. We can all take time to listen and encourage those around us with reminders of God's provision. As we live our lives with those around us, we can be careful to model how we live close to God through our devotions, prayers, attendance at church, and service to others.

11. Answers will vary. Invest the time in relationships. Get to know your neighbors, the checker at the grocery store, and the nurses at the doctor's office. Ask about their lives and LISTEN. Show you care by asking follow up questions the next time. Let them see how you live. Live with peace and joy despite trying circumstances -- If the love of God is in your heart, it should show on your face!

12. Answers will vary

ICE BREAKERS

to do with your group if time allows

Take something from your wallet/purse and tell how it relates to you.

Tell about the most positive conversation that you had today.

Tell about the most interesting thing that happened to you today.

Tell about the most humorous incident that you experienced in the last year.

My favorite fun activity when I was a child was...

The thing that drives me crazy is...

We celebrated Easter when I was a child by...

My favorite movie of all times is...

My idea of a great vacation is...

My favorite food is...

If I could visit any era of history, I would visit...

My favorite childhood memory is...

My favorite leisure activity is...

Tell about the best birthday present you ever received.

Share one of the happiest days of your life.

Describe what your day was like today.

If you had to move and could only take three things with you, what would you take?

While growing up I saw God as...

What would you do if someone willed you a million dollars?

If you could do anything you want this time next year, what would it be?

THANK YOU

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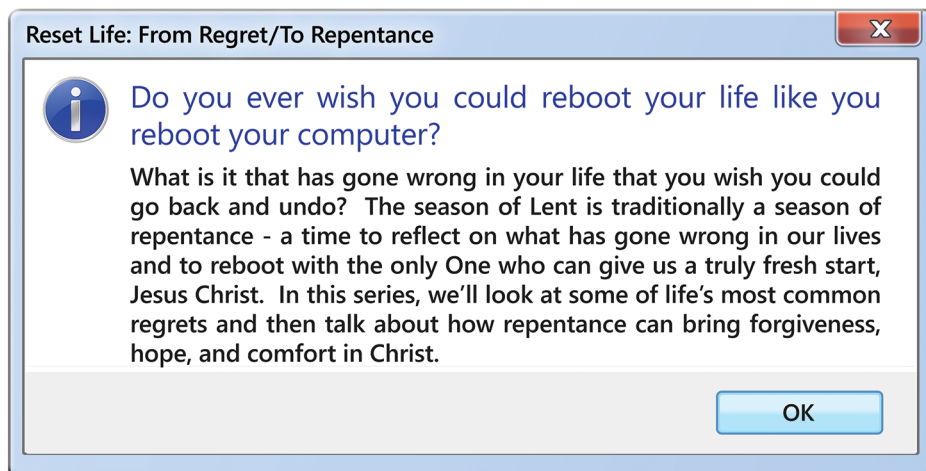
TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

NOTES

NOTES

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