

Your Walk with God Is a Community Project

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Leader's Guide to be used with the conference on DVD
(Ten 25 minute sessions on 3 DVDs)
for Church-wide Events, Classes,
Small Groups or Personal Study

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Your Walk with God Is a Community Project Leader's Guide

Introduction

These study sessions can be used within church wide events, classes and small groups or they can be used for personal study. Each session has been designed to last for an hour. As the group leader, you will need to decide on the areas you will cover and where you will allocate most of the time as a group. If you are using this material for personal study you should work through the material at a pace that suits you. The following information is to help you think about how you might lead a study session. It describes the various sections within each session and gives an indication of allocated time. If you are leading a group it is important that you watch all ten of the DVD sessions yourself before starting session 1 with the group. By doing this you will know where the material is going and will help you guide the discussion.

Prayer Time

Anytime we come to study God's Word we should pray that the Holy Spirit would help guide and direct us in God's truth. As the group leader, you should begin each session with prayer. As other group members become more comfortable with one another, you should consider asking other people to open in prayer provided they wouldn't be intimidated.

Opening Discussion (5 minutes)

To introduce each session and to help facilitate conversation, there are two opening questions for discussion. You might want to select some of your group members to share their thoughts, as only a short amount of time should be spent in this area. These questions have been provided to generate a starting point. This enables your group members to see what they currently think before viewing the DVD. At this stage you might wish to withhold the participant's study guides in order to make the conversation less formal and to ensure group members do not simply read from their answers. You should not use this section to refine their answers and therefore non-objective answers should be encouraged and welcomed.

Watch DVD Session (app. 25 minutes)

When the DVD is played for each session, you should encourage the members of your group to take notes as they listen, especially on what they see as key points. It might be useful to have some Bibles, pens and paper available, should people need them. You might choose to read the selected Bible reading aloud or you could simply allow the group to follow the text when it is referred to in the DVD. At this stage you might still wish to withhold the participant's study guides in order to allow the group members to discover key points for themselves.

Key Points

If you haven't already given the members of the group their study guide, now is the time to do so. You should read out the two key points for the session and ensure that everyone is clear on the theme. You might wish to allow the group members to look over their notes to see if they highlighted similar key points.

Discussion Questions (20 minutes)

This is the section in which you want the group to spend most of its discussion. Depending on time, or if you decide to allocate the personal application questions to participants' private study, you might want to spend more time on this section. While you want to encourage open and honest discussion, it is important to steer the group to the more objective answers that have been given in the DVD. As group leader, you need to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak without feeling under pressure. Your goal at this stage is to ensure clear Biblical truths have been discovered and understood. To help you in this area, you should refer to the 'Pointers for Discussion Questions' section at the end of this leader's guide.

Personal Application (10 minutes)

This part is designed to help participants connect the theory of what they have learned to their everyday life. These questions are personal, so be aware that some members of the group

might not be open to sharing. You might want to spend less time in this area and encourage your group members to answer the questions in their own time.

Further Bible Study

This section provides an additional Scripture passage that can deepen your study and understanding of each topic. You should encourage members of your group to study these passages in their own time. You might also want to use these additional passages for discussion during a follow-up time with individuals, or you might want to devote an evening to reviewing some of these passages and helping group members in the area of personal Bible Study.

Your Walk with God Is a Community Project

Pointers for Discussion Questions

Session 1

Discussion Questions

1) This is a very common experience, in fact all of us can forget about these benefits for everyday life. As a result we become ineffective and unproductive and start to live like any other person rather than a child of God. We fail to produce the fruit of the Spirit and instead act out of our sinful nature. We start to find that facing our daily tasks as Christians is simply too much for us.

2) There could be several answers for this question. These could be struggles in family life, arguments with work colleagues, bad behavior patterns or selfish living. They happen because we forget who we are in Christ and therefore we live out of our fallen identity rather than having our identity in Jesus Christ.

3) There will be various ways of trying to use the horizontal things in life for the wrong reasons. These could be using money to find contentment, dominating friends to ensure we have a sense of belonging, going after status to make us feel significant, or engaging in sexual sin to experience power and control. All of these things can start to dominate us as we make them our idols. These might become so obsessive that they lead to an addictive pattern.

Session 2

Discussion Questions

1) We continue to make mistakes because we carry a dual identity. Although we are children of God, we still carry around our fallen nature that, by default, reverts back to sin. Sometimes we struggle to confess our failure because we like to view ourselves as being righteous. Instead we

need to view ourselves as people that need God's grace every day. His grace and forgiveness enable us to confess sin rather than defend it.

2) When we are struggling or when we make mistakes, we automatically blame other people or our circumstances. It is easier and more natural for us to look at things outside of us rather than to look at self. When we begin to understand that our biggest problem is not outside of us but rather inside of us, we can start to address our responses. We can do this because we are now in a position to examine our hearts and discover what we really want or what desires we have. A healthy self-examination means we can confess sin, where necessary, and live in a more fruitful way.

3) God calls us to be holy and therefore calls us to a certain standard of living. When we set the gospel aside we will try to be holy and to live to God's standard in our own strength. This is when we fall into the trap of a do's and don'ts list. To avoid this we should confess that we are unable to be holy and live to God's standard. In this position, the only option for us is to embrace the gospel and trust Jesus Christ to empower us to live as God requires. At the same time, while we don't always live in this way, in Christ we are considered righteous before God.

Session 3

Discussion Questions

1) We tend to view tasks by looking at their size and how well we have done in our past experience. When the task looks huge and our past experience looks weak, then we will fear or avoid that task. Knowing who we are in Christ means that we view the task as small in comparison to Him. We also know that we can face that task without fear because ultimately we do it through Christ and not ourselves.

2) We often turn to other things rather than Christ because at this point we are not trusting Christ with the task. We believe that He might let us down, or we lack faith for Him to empower us. When we turn to other things we are putting our faith and trust in those things to deliver what we desire. When we discover that these things do not do what we thought they would, we can become even more disillusioned and end up in a bigger mess.

3) While it can be hard to admit, if we are not fulfilling what God asks us to do then it is called a sin of omission. Rather than ignoring the task, we should confess our worries, fears, desires, etc. to God. We are then in a position to step out in faith and trust Christ to equip us for that task.

Session 4

Discussion Questions

1) God uses people and community in our Christian growth. This is mainly achieved through the heated moments of everyday relationships. In these moments other people will be able to point out our own sin before theirs and vice versa. Community and people help us to see the depth of our need and sin and then collectively we can be used to build one another up.

2) While church and small group attendance is important, these should be viewed as platforms for community. In order to really grow in our faith, our communities need to be relational as well as programmatic. We also need some form of community on other occasions during the week (work, home, club) to allow us to see where we need to change or where we need to help others.

3) These words are self-explanatory but you should encourage each member of the group to understand them in his or her own way. In practice, this could mean having people who ask you the hard questions about your life. As they do so in a non-judgmental but loving way, they connect you to the grace of Christ, and through this type of community we are trusting that God will change our hearts.

Session 5

Discussion Questions

1) We naturally tend to look at life from our own viewpoint: what we desire and what we hope to do. When we live out of a self-focused attitude it means that other people will not be on our agenda. If they are not on our agenda then we will fail to see how God might want us to help them.

2) Whenever life does not go according to plan we should look towards God and trust in His sovereignty rather than looking towards what we desired. Instead of feeling sorry for ourselves or trying to make the failed plans work, we should realign our life to God's agenda and try to discover where He wants us to go or what He is teaching us.

3) When we see ourselves as part of God's ongoing story of redemption, then we can trust Him knowing that, although we might not always see it, God has a plan for our life and He is in the process of making us more like Christ. This is the ultimate plan of life and we should always view this plan rather than our own.

Session 6

Discussion Questions

1) People's interpretation of these words may vary but generally they are all viewed as things that we would like to avoid. God however uses these means to refine us and make us more like Christ. God is not using these means simply to annoy or upset our life.

2) If God is changing us through grief, trials and testing then when we experience these moments we should look for the bigger picture. This does not mean that we rejoice in these difficult circumstances themselves but rather we rejoice at how God is changing us through them. When praying during such times we should pray that God would teach us and change us rather than simply asking Him to remove these moments from our life.

3) We all know that life is not always easy and that, as human beings, we experience difficult times. When we fail to see God at work within His story of redemption, then we can turn to ourselves, or the things around us, in order to try and make life easier and more predictable. In the short term this can work and therefore we can be fooled into thinking our lives can be comfortable and predictable.

Session 7

Discussion Questions

- 1) Jesus Christ calls us to die to self and to live for Him. This means that our plans, our hopes, our ambitions, our possessions, our time, etc. are all to be considered no longer our own. We now live in a Christ-honoring way by handing our full lives over to Him and living for Him alone. As we love and serve Christ, a lifestyle of loving and serving others will continue to develop.
- 2) Living up to the gospel is considering yourself as having the ability and righteousness to live as God calls you to live. However, we will soon discover that we are fooling ourselves and start to find life and people frustrating. If we live out of the gospel we are admitting our inability to live as God wants us to and that we will no doubt get frustrated with life and people. Living out of the gospel means we cling on to Christ and His grace rather than relying on ourselves.
- 3) If we are living out of the gospel then we will have God at the center of our life rather than us. As a result, God will produce humility in our lives. If humility is not present in our lives, it will not be present in our relationship with others. Without humility, relationships will be frustrating and lack compassion and love.

Session 8

Discussion Questions

- 1) These are characteristics that Christ displayed in His own ministry. Because Christ humbled himself to minister to us with gentleness and patience, we are called to do likewise with others. These characteristics draw people towards Christ rather than pushing them away.
- 2) We can lack the quality of gentleness when ministering to others because we see their need or mess as an interruption or hassle to us. There could be several damaging results when gentleness is missing from our relationships, including that person turning away from Christ or else further sin being committed.
- 3) Changing God's redemption from a process to an event could result in a breakdown in our relationships, further damage or further sinking into sin, people feeling that the task is too much, or perhaps a false change of heart.

Session 9

Discussion Questions

- 1) Everyone in the group will have his or her own interpretation of what it means to be ensnared or caught in sin. This means to fall into sinful ways or to form habits of sinful patterns from which you cannot seem to escape. In most cases, ensnarement can happen before we know it. Fruitful responses could be love, patience, helping, etc. and unfruitful responses could be judging, hatred, ignoring, etc.
- 2) If we are trying to remodel people we simply want to change them so they become easier to be around. Such a process is more about what we want rather than what God wants. The right attitude is to help restore the person to what God wants them to be.
- 3) We can try to change a person's heart from the outside in through things such as punishment, anger, reward, blackmail, etc. Outside methods of change are only temporary and will not have a lasting effect.

Session 10

Discussion Questions

- 1) A wrecking ball response is forceful and does a lot more damage to a person, whereas a gentle response makes the necessary changes but in a much less destructive way. There could be several consequences of a wrecking ball response such as irreversible damage, hardness to being helped further, or failure to come back to Christ.
- 2) An understanding of our own sin and our own need of grace helps us to minister more effectively to other people because we see that we are no different to them. When ministering to others we can easily fall into the trap of thinking we are better, or thinking we don't need help ourselves.
- 3) There could be several ways to help carry people during a time of restoration. This might include devoting time to them, helping them to see what they cannot already see, doing things for them that they can't yet do for themselves. We can fail to carry others when we put our own plans and comforts before people.