

Experience the Changed Life

YOUR JOURNEY WITH CHRIST

**SADDLEBACK BIBLE STUDY SERIES
FOR
SMALL GROUPS**

My Name

My Phone Number

Preface

Becoming a follower of Jesus is the most important decision of your life. God desires a relationship with you. He delivered you from sin and isolation and brought you into a loving relationship with Himself. That's why He sent His son Jesus Christ to pay the penalty of your sins. Your sin was keeping you from experiencing all God has for you.

Welcome to the family of God. As Paul says in Ephesians 1:5, "Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ (What pleasure he took in planning this!)." As a member of God's family, God wants you to call Him your Father and get to know him through his son Jesus Christ. We can speak to Him in prayer and He will talk to us through His Word.

I encourage you to spend the next six weeks studying God's Word and growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Whether you have been a follower of Jesus for a day or a year, we all need to build a firm foundation for our faith. The six sessions in this curriculum are based on the six most common questions asked about faith in Christ.

Whether you do this study alone, with a friend, or in a small group, I encourage you to read through the session with your Bible open and your heart and mind willing to learn as the Holy Spirit teaches you.

Reflect for a moment on the front cover of this curriculum. What I didn't realize when I shot this photograph was its significance for our faith. You are looking at the sun rising over the Dead Sea in Israel. The Dead Sea has no life in it. Because of the high concentration of minerals in this body of water, no living thing can exist. Yet every morning the sun rises over the Dead Sea. New life appears out of death. You were once dead in your sins, the Bible says. But Christ made you alive. He has brought you from death to life!

I give special thanks to the maturity team, Rob DeKlotz who coordinates our Small Group Bible Study Curriculum, Rob's team in forming the template for this study, Lance Witt our Maturity Pastor, Teri Haymaker, Deirdre Cantrell, Phil Lauterjung, and a team of division leader readers, for their assistance in this project.

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Pastor in Maturity

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EXPERIENCE THE CHANGED LIFE

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Welcome to the Saddleback Bible Series for Small Groups

Your small group is about to embark on a life-changing experience. Studying God's Word together with other believers always impacts our lives in ways above and beyond our imagination.

As your group studies the Bible together, this study guide will help you strengthen and deepen God's Five Purposes in your lives.



You will help one another cultivate authentic relationships with God and each other as you **CONNECT** in your small group family.



You will **GROW** together in spiritual maturity by learning God's Word and responding to God's direction.



You will learn how to **DISCOVER** your God-given SHAPE for ministry both inside and outside the group.



You will see how you can impact the world for Christ by learning to **SHARE** your life mission in a natural way.



You will have the opportunity to deepen your heart for worship, experiencing the blessing of fully **SURRENDERING** your life to God.

The following sections outline the basic format of each lesson in this study. We hope this gives you a clear understanding of our process and plans for your group each week.

Plan for the Meeting – This is where we hope and pray each member of your group will end up at the end of the meeting. These purposes are statements of faith—what God can do as you study, talk, and pray together.

Memory Verse – Each week of the study includes a Scripture memory verse. We encourage you to memorize these each week. While this might be challenging, please take this opportunity to grow deeper in your walk with God in this key spiritual habit.

The Page # found after each New Testament verse in this curriculum helps you find the verse in your New Believer's Bible: New Testament (New Living Translation).



CONNECT with God's People – Your small group community is your spiritual family. CONNECT time provides the opportunity to think about what you learned at the last meeting and how it impacted your life this past week. It is a personal time for people to share how the study is changing them. Additional questions are designed to help people get to know one another and feel comfortable and accepted. We try to help break the ice and set everyone at ease as you begin your study together.



LEARN from God's Word – This is the first section of the Bible study. The goal is to look carefully at the passage and see what the Bible says. This section is designed to deepen your understanding of the Bible's teachings.



RESPOND to God's Direction – After we see what the Bible says, we need to answer the question, "**So what?**" In this section, you have the opportunity to talk about how the truths from God's Word impact your heart, life, and circumstances.



ACT on God's Purposes – You gain balance in your life when you understand God's purposes and determine to live according to His plan for your life. In this section, you will talk about the "**how to**" of living out God's Five Purposes for your life. In each lesson we apply the lesson's biblical principles to one of God's Five Purposes for the Church, and give you some practical ideas for taking the next step in your spiritual journey.



PRAY with God's People – This is an essential part of the life of your small group. It's important that each group member feels the love and prayer support of the other members. In this section, we direct you to pray for the struggles and issues that group members mention during the course of sharing. We also suggest you ask God to begin to grow specific aspects of the lesson into group members' lives. We strongly recommend you allow plenty of time for prayer. Groups that pray together bond well and see many miracles and answered prayers.

Additional Study – If your group wants a little more Bible study and has the time, we provide two or three additional questions to answer. This is optional.

Preparation for Next Week – This section is for groups or individuals ready and willing to do more study during the week. It will generally include cross-references relevant to the subject you will study the coming week. It will also include questions and practical ideas for applying the upcoming week's lesson.

Heart Check – This is a question presented early in each study to be reviewed with a "spiritual partner" in your group. Spiritual partners are group or team members you select to help you accomplish your personal goals. They offer encouragement regarding your goals from the Health Plan, scripture memory, etc.

Commonly Asked Questions

Please have each member review these questions or have someone read this section to the group.

What is the purpose of this group?

Great question! The group's purpose is to provide a six-week Bible study designed to deepen your love for God and one another. The material is highly relational and will help build a foundation for spiritual health in both your group and your life.

Who is the group open to?

The group is open to anyone you feel would benefit from this study. As you begin, we encourage each attender to invite at least one other friend for the next week's study. Having someone you know and/or someone with whom you would like to grow makes the study even more meaningful and helps motivate you to attend regularly.

How long will this group meet?

The group's longevity is determined by your group at the end of this study. Each group member will help by deciding whether they want to continue on to the next 6-8 week study.

What will happen in this study?

People like you will gather for a time of discussion, Bible study, sharing, prayer, food, and lots of fun. Be sure to jump in and make the group your own. You'll encounter numerous opportunities to grow and be a team member; don't miss those moments.

What if I don't know a lot about the Bible or spiritual things?

You're in good company! Most of our church attenders are not experts about the Bible, God, or spiritual things. All we ask is that you be open to learn and give it a try.

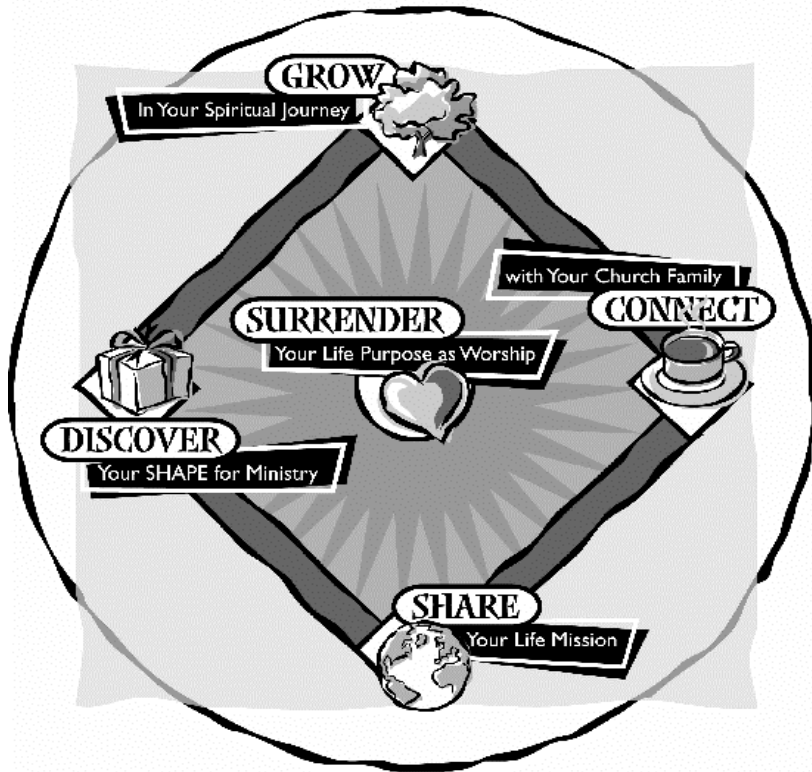
Who is the leader?

Most groups have a leader. If you do not have a leader, take a few minutes to talk about who will be the leader in your group. In addition, your group may select discussion group leaders and other team roles to help with the process. This booklet is an excellent resource for your leaders. It will walk you through every step. Enjoy the ride!

One more thing: the Bible says when two or more are gathered in His name (which you are) He is there in your midst. Ultimately, God is leading as well. Whether you meet at the church, at an office, or in someone's home, God is leading you each step of the way.

Living a life of health and balance is not always easy. It takes discipline, determination, and sometimes difficult choices. The benefits, however, are clear: strength, sustainability, and ultimately greater significance. In the end, this truly is The Journey of Life, as illustrated in the following visual.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE



As we journey down the path of faith in community, we discover new ways to live a life pleasing to God. Many aspects of faith are strengthened when we stand together in one accord.

At times, this will feel like a gift breathing into us life and hope. At other times it will feel unnatural and awkward. We encourage you to lean into both sides of this experience, as there are different lessons from each.

Below are several thoughts for the group as you begin.

1. Remember, as Paul shares, that above all else "the goal of our instruction is love." Seek to first listen to other group members as they share their thoughts. Loving other group members through genuine listening creates a safe environment for open and honest sharing.
2. Come ready to share your learning and leading from God each week.
3. We recommend you gather for an opening time together (connecting) and then re-gather into circles of 3 or 4 to increase the personal discovery and group sharing time throughout the study. Otherwise, some members may dominate a discussion while others may participate less.



Connect
Opening



Content
Bible Study



Closure
Closing Prayer

Session 1

How Can I Be Sure I Am a *Follower of Jesus?*

Plan for the Meeting:

- Understand God's plan for your salvation
- Discover how much God loves you
- Recognize that you have assurance of your salvation
- Identify people you know who need to know about Jesus

Memory Verse

"And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life."

I John 5:11-12 (NLT, p. 323)

OPEN YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

CONNECT with God's People15 Minutes



LEADER OR APPRENTICE READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

From the time of our birth we are conditioned to be followers. When we are young, our parents teach us how to follow after them. During our time in school, teachers tell us to follow the rules or suffer the consequences. Even when we get older we are bombarded by signs telling us how to drive, where to stand, and who's got the best hamburgers in town. Many of us have been so conditioned to follow, we think little about what who we are following or what we are following after.

Jesus said, "follow me." What does it really mean to be a follower of something or someone?

LEARN from God's Word 45-60 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Have you ever started a new job, found a new way home that's faster, discovered a new restaurant, or learned a new helpful shortcut on the computer? With new discovery comes excitement and anticipation of something new and rewarding. Faith in Christ can be that way. Whether you gave your life to Christ last week or a year ago, learning more about what it means to walk with Jesus is new and exciting. Where do we begin? The best place is at the point of decision and learning what that means for you.

Eternal life is given to those who receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. We'll learn how to be sure you've made that decision in this lesson. We'll look at God's word that gives you full assurance that you now have eternal life and a personal relationship with the Lord if you have truly become a follower of Jesus.

Eternal life in Christ ...

"And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life." I John 5:11-12 (NLT, p. 323)

1. What does I John 5:12 above say about how eternal life is given to us?

2. How does this verse help me know I am a Christian?

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5:24 (NIV, p. 112)

3. Consider Jesus' words in John 5:24. How does this verse help us see that we have eternal life in Christ? How do Jesus' words help us deal with doubts about our new relationship with Christ?

4. On what basis can I be sure I am a Christian?

Sinner Forgiven by Christ ...

Sin is the breaking of God's law that RESULTS IN a broken relationship with God. The consequence of sin is separation from God for all eternity. Jesus' death and resurrection gives us a new relationship with God.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23 (NIV, p.178)

"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Romans 5:8 (NIV, p. 180)

"When people sin, they earn what sin pays—death. But God gives us a free gift—life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23 (NCV, p. 182)

1. Reflect on the verses above. One or two of you share why you accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

2. In your own words, give a short definition of sin. Give some examples of sin.

Believer in Christ ...

"If you use your mouth to say, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. We believe with our hearts, and so we are made right with God. And we use our mouths to say that we believe, and so we are saved." Romans 10:9-10 (NCV, p. 188)

"But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (NLT, p.107)

1. Read Romans 10:9-10 and John 1:12 above. What did you actually do that made you a Christian?
2. According to these verses, what change has taken place in your life as a result of your decision?

Security in Christ ...

"Jesus is the only One who can save people. His name is the only power in the world that has been given to save people. We must be saved through him." Acts 4:12 (NCV, p. 140)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV, p. 238)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:27-30 (NIV, p. 118)

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life." John 6:47 (NIV, p. 113)

1. According to Acts 4:12, how are people saved? Is there more than one way to be saved?
2. If you have been given the gift of eternal life, how certain can you be that you can't lose it?

RESPOND to God's Direction15 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

We learned that we are saved through no one but Jesus Christ. He alone is our salvation. We also saw that if we have the Son, our salvation is secure. In a world where our security is threatened every day, isn't it a blessing to know we can find true security in Jesus Christ?

1. In what way should the security I have in God affect the way I live (refer to I John 3:18-19)?

2. How should knowing that Christ is the only way to heaven motivate us when talking to our friends who do not know Christ (see also Acts 4:12)?

ACT on God's Purposes..... 5-10 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

One of the most awesome privileges God has given believers is the opportunity to tell others about our relationship with Christ (I Peter 3:15). Chances are, you are here today because someone you know shared his or her faith in Jesus Christ with you. As we come to know Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, God wants us to share our faith with others. Is there someone in your life with whom you can share your new faith in Jesus Christ?

1. List at least three people you know who do not know Jesus Christ yet.

2. At Saddleback Church we offer classes 101, 201, 301, and 401. In these classes you will learn about Saddleback's membership (101), how to grow to spiritual maturity (201), to discover your S.H.A.P.E. for ministry (301) and how to share your faith with others (401). Start with class 101 and end with class 401, in which you will learn about how to share your faith. Have you taken class 101 yet? If not, when would you be willing to attend 101?

PRAY with God's People 10-20 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

If you discovered during this lesson that you have not yet established a personal relationship with Christ, you can ask Him to give you that relationship today through prayer. Don't worry about how you sound; just talk to God the way you would talk to a good friend. Your leader will first show you how to pray. Then after you have heard the prayer, if it is your decision to pray, you can repeat the prayer with him or her.

Pray the prayer out loud: *"God, forgive me for all of my sins and come into my heart and life. God, I believe with all I understand that Jesus Christ is the Son of God...and God, I believe with all I understand that when Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He paid for my sins and I receive Jesus right now as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus name I pray. Amen."*

Then pray for the people whose names you wrote down in the ACT on God's Purposes section. Ask God to give you an opportunity to speak with them about your new decision to trust Christ.

Preparation for next week.

Please make some time before our next gathering to complete, as best you can, the **Learn** section of Session 2.

Consider also looking up the verse we just studied in this session and highlight them in your own Bible. Use a pen, colored pencil or a special Bible highlighter that you can purchase at a local Christian bookstore. This will help you find those verses easier in future Bible reading and study.

Session 2

OK, I Believe in Jesus. But *What Does That Mean?*

Plan for the Meeting:

- Understand God wants to have a relationship with you
- Discover how to have a relationship with God
- Recognize your sins have been forgiven
- Determine what it means to be a follower of Jesus

What you will need for this lesson:

A large bowl, pieces of paper, pencils, and a red drink (grape juice or red food coloring—not for consumption).

Memory Verse

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!"*

II Corinthians 5:17 (NIV, p. 221)

OPEN YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

CONNECT with God's People15 Minutes



LEADER OR APPRENTICE READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Last session you listed three people with whom you would like to share your faith. During our prayer time we lifted up these people, asking God to give you an opportunity to speak with them about your new decision to trust Christ for personal salvation.

1. During this past week, did God open any doors for you to speak with any of these people? If so, were you able to share your faith? Briefly describe what happened.

2. Whether or not you spoke to someone about Christ this week, what do you think is your biggest fear about sharing your faith?

LEARN from God's Word 45-60 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

As new Christians, we are often not aware of what actually took place the moment we trusted Christ. Everything was so new and we likely got caught up in the excitement. As time passes, however, we know something took place because we begin to think differently about things. We recognize sin in our lives and sense a closeness with God and other believers that wasn't there before. Answer the following questions to understand more about your new relationship with Jesus.

You Have Become a Child of God

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Romans 8:15-16 (NIV, p. 185)

1. What happened to you when you accepted Christ?

2. This verse actually says we have become God's children; the word "Abba" is equivalent to our English word "Daddy." Thinking through what it means to be a child, what are some benefits of being God's child?

You are a New Creation in Christ

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" II Corinthians 5:17 (NIV, p. 221)

1. How does Jesus view you now?
2. What does this verse mean to you? How do you feel about these words about your life?

Your Sins Have Been Forgiven

"And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. First he says, 'This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts so they will understand them, and I will write them on their minds so they will obey them.' Then he adds, 'I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.'" Hebrews 10:15-17 (NLT, p. 293)

"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all" your sins and heals all your diseases..." Psalm 103:1-3 (NIV)

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." Romans 8:1 (NIV, p. 175)

1. According to these verses, what has happened to your sin?
2. Why should we not feel condemned by sin ever again?
3. How do you think your life might be affected by knowing you will never again be condemned by sin?

"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 (NIV, p. 317)

4. What does this verse say should we do if we sin as a Christian?

You are a Follower of Jesus

Now that we are God's children He wants us to live a life fully devoted to Him. He is our friend, and at the same time He is our Lord. Read the following verse and answer the questions below.

"And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me." Matthew 10:38-40 (NIV, p. 16)

1. What does Matthew 10:38-40 say we must be willing to do to become a disciple of Jesus?

2. What will you have to let go of in order to give Jesus control of your life?

RESPOND to God's Direction15 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Even though Scripture clearly tells us God has forgiven our sins and made us one of His children, sometimes we struggle to accept this and forgive our own sins. We hold on to the guilt like a noose around our neck. For the next few minutes we'll do an exercise that illustrates the blood of Jesus covering our sins.

Take out a small piece of paper. For a few moments just be silent before the Lord, meditating on Matthew 26:28 (NLT, p. 26): "...for this is my blood, which seals the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many."

After meditating for a while, write down in pencil what you think is the biggest sin or sins you have ever committed. This is between you and the Lord. **You will not be asked to share this publicly.** When finished, fold the paper in half. Have each person place his or her paper in one large clear bowl. Then get a red liquid such as punch, grape juice, or water mixed with red food coloring. Pour the red liquid over the pieces of paper. As you watch your paper being covered by the red liquid, see it as an illustration of Christ's shed blood for your sins. Now spend a few moments in silent prayer before the Lord, thanking Him for the sacrifice He made by shedding His own blood.

1. Did this illustration stir up any feelings you would like to share with the group?
2. The blood of Jesus covers all our sins from the past, present, and future. In light of this, when we do sin, how should we respond to it? (See I John 1:9.)

ACT on God's Purposes..... 5-10 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

We've seen how we are a new creation in Christ! The old has gone and the new has come. Probably one of the best illustrations of a new creation is a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. As a caterpillar grows and matures in order to turn into a butterfly, as believers we need to experience a similar transformation. Placing our faith in Jesus is only the first step. We now need to grow into mature adults in our faith.

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." Ephesians 4:14-15 (NIV, p. 240)

1. According to the passage above, what is one of the ways we become mature in our faith unshaken by deceptive people?
2. In C.L.A.S.S. 201, one of the things we learn is how to have a quiet time with God. In anticipation for C.L.A.S.S.201, for the next six days try to set aside 15 minutes every day to spend alone with God. Try to do this at the same time each day. Write it into your calendar as a "date" with God. If you miss a day, just pick up where you left off. Also, pick a specific place to meet with God each day. Write your thoughts on a separate piece of paper or in a spiral bound notebook or journal.

You will find some Time Alone with God exercises at the end of this session. If you have time, your leader can explain how to complete a Time Alone with God exercise.

PRAY with God's People 10-20 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Tonight we learned about Christ's shed blood for our sins. Spend some time acknowledging what Christ went through to shed His own blood for us. A few of you thank Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins.

When you first put your trust in Jesus, God gave you His Holy Spirit. One of the things the Holy Spirit does is help you to understand the Bible (see John 16:13). If you do not yet have a Bible be sure to tell your leader; he or she will help you get one. Consider buying a study Bible (Life Application Study Bible is a good choice). Take a few moments privately to ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand better what you are reading in your Bible.

Preparation for next week.

Please make time before our next gathering to complete, as best you can, the **Learn** section of Session 3.

Also, if you can, complete a couple of the Time Alone with God exercises.

Time Alone With God

Day One

- 1) Relax: Take a few minutes and just relax in God's presence. Try to clear your mind of the thoughts of the day. Even try taking a few deep breaths.
- 2) Read: Philippians 1:1-8
- 3) Reflect: Focus on the following words: servants, saints, together, and share. You are not in this alone. You have friends and the Lord.
- 4) Record: Record how you feel about God.
- 5) Request: Pray and thank God for the people who have shared in your life. Thank God for partnering with you and promising to complete your life in Jesus.

Day Two

- 1) Relax: Focus on Christ Jesus and how much He loves you.
- 2) Read: Philippians 1:9-11
- 3) Reflect: Meditate on the phrases: "I will feel this way," "in my heart," "I long for you."
- 4) Record: Think of the words pure and glory of God. Record areas of your life in which you need God's help.
- 5) Request: Ask God to fill you with love, knowledge, and insight so you can make solid decisions and do what is right.

Day Three

- 1) Relax: Think of how much God encourages you and is with you even in difficult times.
- 2) Read: Philippians 1:12-20
- 3) Reflect: Think of the words: courage, good will, sincerity, and rejoice.
- 4) Record: Write down what you expect and hope God will do in, with, and through your life.
- 5) Request: Write down the help you have received through the Holy Spirit and the prayers of others (see verse 20).

Day Four

- 1) Relax: Focus on the security we have in Christ.
- 2) Read: Philippians 1:21-26
- 3) Reflect: Think about the difference between joy and happiness. Does one depend on circumstances? Does one depend on God?
- 4) Record: Record your thoughts.
- 5) Request: Ask God to help you find another person with whom you can share the joy of the Christian life.

Day Five

- 1) Relax: Realize God is faithful and always has your best interest at heart.
- 2) Read: Philippians 1:27-30.
- 3) Reflect: Did you ever think suffering was a gift from God? The Christian life isn't always easy. Think of difficulties you may encounter. Verse 29 says difficulties are a gift from God for your growth.
- 4) Record: Write down how you have grown or how you could grow through difficulties.
- 5) Request: Ask God to give you strength for the trials you go through. Thank Him for considering you worthy of His growth and attention. He loves you too much to let you stay the same.

Day Six

- 1) Relax: Think about how great God is!
- 2) Read: Philippians 2:1-5
- 3) Reflect: Meditate on verse 3 by pronouncing each of the key words. Read the verse out loud several times, emphasizing a different key word each time.
- 4) Record: Which word held the most meaning for you and why?
- 5) Request: Talk to God about your family today.

Session 3

How Do I Deal With Sin *Now That I'm a Follower of Jesus?*

Plan for the Meeting:

- Understand temptation and sin
- Discover God's promises for dealing with temptation
- Recognize how to live according to God's promises
- Determine a next step for dealing with your sin

Memory Verse

*"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.
And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.
But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out
so that you can stand up under it."*

I Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

OPEN YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

CONNECT with God's People15 Minutes



LEADER OR APPRENTICE READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

1. Separate into pairs (preferably of the same sex). Share with each other the one bad habit you'd love to stop. (Don't feel pressured to share your deepest, darkest sin. This behavior could be nail biting, forgetfulness, indulging in chocolate, etc.)
2. Last week you were challenged to experience a time alone with God each day. Staying in your same pairsgroups of two, share with each other how it went. Was it hard to do? What did God show you during those times? If you were unable to do the assignment, talk about what kept you from doing it.

LEARN from God's Word 45-60 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Before we begin looking at God's Word, try to answer the following puzzle.

WHO AM I

You may know me...

I'm your constant companion.

I'm your greatest helper; I'm your heaviest burden.

I will push you onward or drag you down to failure.

I am at your command.

Half the tasks you do might as well be turned over to me.

I'm able to do them quickly,

and I'm able to do them the same every time...

if that's what you want.

I'm easily managed.

All you've got to do is be firm with me.

Show me exactly how you want it done; after a few lessons...

I'll do it automatically.

I am the servant of all great men and women;

of course, servant of the failures as well.

I've made all the great individuals who have ever been great.

And I've made all the failures, too.

But I work with all the precision of a marvelous computer,

with the intelligence of a human being.

Take me...

Be easy with me and I will destroy you.

Be firm with me and I'll put the world at your feet.

Who am I?

(For the answer look at the end of this section.)

Sin is something not too many people like to talk about today. We've rationalized sin today in the name of "tolerance" or "whatever is right for you." However, God sees it very differently. Let's explore what the conflict is, how we're tempted, and whether or not we have to give in to the temptation.

"I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things... Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." Romans 7:15-25 (NLT, p. 183)

1. How does Paul, one of the writers of the New Testament, describe the conflict between sinning and choosing to do what God wants?

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." I Corinthians 10:13 (NIV, p. 208)

2. What truths from God's Word can you be certain of when you are faced with temptation?

3. What does God promise to do for you when you are tempted?

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." James 1:13-14 (NIV, p. 298)

4. How are we tempted?

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Romans 6:6 (NIV, p. 181)

5. According to this verse, is there some controlling force at work making me sin now that I'm a believer? Why or why not? Then why do we keep on sinning?

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." 1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV, p. 310)

6. What should we do to protect ourselves from Satan's attacks?

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV, p. 241)

7. What are some practical ways we put off the old self (sin) and put on the new self (righteousness)?

(*Answer to "WHO AM I": I AM A HABIT)

RESPOND to God's Direction15 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

I Corinthians 10:13 teaches us two facts about temptation: 1) We will be tempted even though we have become believers; 2) God will provide a way out so we can stand up under temptation. Notice God did **not** say He would necessarily take away the temptation; He said He would provide a way out. Our part is to recognize that way out—and take it.

1. Think of one temptation in your life to which you know you shouldn't give in. Sometimes the "sin that so easily besets us" can be difficult to talk about among strangers. Choose a temptation you feel safe sharing with the rest of the group. What is one thing that tempts you?

2. One tool God has given us to help us escape temptation is common sense. If a believer knows that he is tempted in a certain situation, then he should stay away from that situation. What are some common sense things you can do to avoid or resist the temptation you shared with the group?

3. How will avoiding or resisting this particular temptation impact your life?

ACT on God's Purposes..... 5-10 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Many people feel very alone when they face temptations. They believe lies like "Nobody has ever faced this temptation the way I have," or "Nobody can really understand my situation." No matter what temptation you experience, others have faced the same kind of temptation. For this reason, Saddleback Church offers many different kinds of support groups.

1. The next time you are at church, look at the bulletin and see if any support groups are listed that might meet your specific need. You might also consider visiting with a pastor or a lay counselor at church. Do you think Christians should ask for help when they are struggling?
2. Do you plan to deal differently now with sin and temptation? If so, what will you do differently?

PRAY with God's People 10-20 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

1. At the beginning of the night we paired with partners. Get together with your partner and spend some time praying together. Pray for whatever is on your heart from tonight's session. Pray for the people who shared difficult temptations they are struggling to resist.
2. When you are finished praying with your partner, take out a piece of paper. Write one thing you would like someone to pray for you this week. Do not write your name on the paper. When everyone is finished, mix up all the pieces of paper and have each person pick one. For the next week, pray for the request written on your piece of paper.

Preparation for next week.

Please make time before our next gathering to complete, as best you can, the **Learn** section of Session 4.

Session 4

Prayer and Bible Reading: *Where Do I Start?*

Plan for the Meeting:

- Learn the importance of spending time with God
- Begin to talk with God on a regular basis through prayer
- Continue to read your Bible on a daily basis

Memory Verse

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

I John 5:14 (NIV, p. 323)

OPEN YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

CONNECT with God's People15 Minutes



LEADER OR APPRENTICE READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Last week we saw that Christians are not immune to temptations just because they believe in Jesus Christ and have given their lives to Him. However, we also saw that God has promised to provide a way out so we can stand up under temptation.

1. What impact did these two truths have on your life last week when you faced temptation?

2. How did you apply common sense in trying to find a way out?

LEARN from God's Word 45-60 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Last session you were encouraged to spend some time alone with God each day for six days. Whether or not you were able to do the assignment, this is something you will need to learn to integrate into your life on a daily basis. Like any other relationship, spending time with God is important if you want your relationship with Him to grow and stay healthy. Let's look at three aspects of a healthy relationship with God.

Spending Time With God

"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 (NIV, p. 44)

"As soon as Jesus heard the news, he went off by himself in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed by land from many villages." Matthew 14:13 (NLT, p. 22)

"In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my request before you and wait in expectation." Psalm 5:3 (NIV)

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground." Psalm 143:10

1. What do these verses teach you about the importance of spending time alone with God?

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

"Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong." Job 6:24 (NIV)

"Then I acknowledge my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD' and you forgave the guilt of my sin."
Psalm 32:5 (NIV)

2. What are some things we are to do during a quiet time with God?
3. According to these verses, what will God do during our quiet time with Him?

Prayer

Prayer activates the power of God. It's like breathing. We can pray at all times during the day. God desires us to talk with Him because it brings glory to His name and it works miracles in our lives.

"Let us have confidence, then, and approach God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it."
Hebrews 4:16 (TEV, p. 288)

1. On what basis can we approach God in prayer, and what can we expect to gain from doing this?

"Don't recite the same prayer over and over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again and again. Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! 'Pray along these lines: 'Our Father in heaven, we honor your holy name. We ask that your kingdom will come now. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. Give us our food again today, as usual, and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. Don't bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One. Amen.'" Matthew 6:7-13 (TLB, p. 9)

2. According to the prayer modeled in Matthew 6:7-13, what are some things we should pray about?

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 'Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!'" Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV, p. 11)

3. Based on the verb tense used in the original language, Jesus is actually saying, keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. Why do you think Jesus we should persist in our prayers (see also Philippians 4:6,7)?

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." I John 5:14 (NIV, p. 323)

4. What kind of prayers does God answer?

Reading Your Bible

Reading the Bible helps you grow strong as a Christian, enables you to defeat sin and prepares you to serve Him.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." II Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV, p. 277)

1. The writer identifies some useful reasons for reading the Bible. How could reading the Bible be helpful to you in your new relationship with God?

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." I Peter 2:2 (NIV, p. 306)

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." Psalm 119:18 (NIV)

2. What attitude should we have about reading God's Word?

"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 (NIV, p. 114)

"And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law—the law that sets you free—and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." James 1:22-25 (NLT, p. 299)

3. What should our response be to what we read?

"Do not let this 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 (NIV)

4. In this passage of Scripture, God asked Joshua to serve him by leading His people to the Promised Land. How will reading God's word make you successful?

RESPOND to God's Direction15 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

In 1987, ABC *Nightline* anchor Ted Koppel gave the commencement address at Duke University. In his speech he addressed the problem of moral negligence in society. He made an astonishing statement many could not believe he had spoken. He said, "Our society finds truth too strong a medicine to digest undiluted. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the

shoulder; it is a hallowing reproach. What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions; they are Commandments. Are—not were." Koppel assented to the fact that the Bible is God's Word to us for our benefit. His words are words of truth—words to be obeyed.

1. How do most people in our society treat the Bible?

2. Why do you think we might struggle with spending time with God in prayer and Bible reading?

ACT on God's Purposes..... 5-10 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

In some parts of the world, becoming a Christian is illegal and could lead to death. Thankfully, in America we can talk to God and read our Bibles whenever we desire. God desires to spend time with us. He wants us to speak to Him in prayer, and He wants speak to us as we read His Word. Since we have this awesome privilege, it's important for us to plan to spend time with God.

1. What tools do you think you'll need to spend time with God?

2. How do you plan to spend time with God? When?

PRAY With God's People 10-20 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Gather in groups of three. Share with your group a prayer request for yourself. This is to be a specific prayer for you—not for a family member or friend, but for yourself. Each person should write down the others' prayer requests, using the Praise and Prayer Report in the Small Group Resources section at the back of this booklet.

Spend a few minutes praying together for each other. Using the Praise and Prayer Report, pray for each other during the next week.

Preparation for next week.

Please make time before our next gathering to complete, as best you can, the **Learn** section of Session 5.

Session 5

Where's The Power to *Live the Christian Life?*

Plan for the Meeting:

- Learn what it means to be filled with the Spirit
- Discover how the Spirit can empower you to live as a Christian
- Recognize the influence of the Spirit in your life

What you will need for this lesson:

For this lesson you will need fizzies (candy that dissolves in water), Crystal Lite, or chocolate syrup.

Memory Verse

*"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.
Instead, be filled with the Spirit."
Ephesians 5:18 (NIV, p. 243)*

OPEN YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

CONNECT with God's People15 Minutes



LEADER OR APPRENTICE READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Last week we studied the importance of spending time alone with God in prayer and Bible reading. We discovered that no believer can survive without connecting with God. Share how your quiet times are going. What's one thing you have learned from spending time alone with God?

LEARN from God's Word 45-60 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

We live by power. Our homes operate by power. Think of all the appliances in your home. How about your car? Most of us have cell phones and computers. Could you imagine a day without power?

Without power, most of us would never be able to get done all we had planned.

Similarly, God never intended us to generate our own power to live the Christian life. He gave us the Holy Spirit to give us power to live the life God desires for us. Let's look at some passages of Scripture that describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He desires to do in our lives.

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

John 14:26 (NIV, p. 124)

"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment..." John 16:8 (NIV, p. 126)

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." John 16:13-14 (NIV, p. 126)

1. According to these verses, who is the Holy Spirit and what can He do for us?

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16 (NIV, p. 200)

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." Romans 8:9 (NIV, p. 184)

2. Where does the Holy Spirit reside now?

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.' In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'" John 3:1-8 (NIV, p. 109)

3. When did the Holy Spirit come into your life?

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." John 14:16-17 (NIV, p. 124)

4. What value is there in having the Holy Spirit reside in your life?

"Do not put out the Spirit's fire..." I Thessalonians 5:19 (NIV, p. 264)

"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?" I Corinthians 3:1-3 (NIV, p. 199)

5. How do we quench the Holy Spirit and hinder Him from working in us?

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." Ephesians 5:18 (NIV, p. 243)

6. According to this verse, what is the difference between having the Holy Spirit living inside me, and being filled with the Holy Spirit? (Hint: Paul draws a comparison between drunkenness and filling. What is he trying to say?)

7. How are we to be filled by the Holy Spirit, according to the following verses?

I John 1:9; Psalm 66:18 _____

John 7:37; Matthew 5:6 _____

Luke 11:9-11 _____

Romans 12:1-2 _____

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." Galatians 5:16-26 (NIV, p. 234)

8. What is Paul contrasting in this passage, and how do we experience the fruit of the Spirit instead of the deeds of the sinful nature?

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NIV, p. 134)

9. How do you think the Holy Spirit could make you more bold in sharing your faith?

RESPOND to God's Direction15 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Think of the person in your life most difficult for you to love. Now think about the worst habit you'd like to break. How about the person with whom you'd like to share Jesus? The Holy Spirit can empower you to do what you can't do on your own.

1. Identify any hesitation you have about being filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. What verse made the most sense to you in our study today? Why?

ACT on God's Purposes 5-10 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Have your small group leader get out the "fizzies," Crystal Lite, or chocolate syrup, and a glass of water or glass of milk, depending on which drink is being used. Pour a little water or milk into a separate glass. Ask a volunteer to drink the water or milk and describe the taste. Next, drop the fizzy or Crystal Lite into the water or pour the chocolate syrup into the milk, and mix with a spoon. Pour a little of the mixed liquid into a glass and have the same volunteer sample the taste and describe the difference.

1. What kind of a difference should the Holy Spirit make in your marriage, relationships at work, finances, thoughts, parenting skills, or even time management? How will the Holy Spirit change the flavor of my life?
2. What must you specifically do to experience the change the Holy Spirit can make in your life?

PRAY With God's People 10-20 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Pray as a group through the steps to being filled by the Holy Spirit that you discovered in this lesson.

Preparation for next week.

Please make time before our next gathering to complete, as best you can, the **Learn** section of Session 6.

Session 6

When I feel Discouraged or Confused, are There Other Believers I Can Turn To?

Plan for the Meeting:

- Understand the value of Christian fellowship
- Discover some ways to connect with believers at a deeper level
- Recognize why we resist getting closer to others
- Identify some Christian friends who can provide fellowship and support

Memory Verse

"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."

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV, p. 293)

OPEN YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

CONNECT with God's People15 Minutes



LEADER OR APPRENTICE READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Describe a close relationship that has influenced your life. Who is/was the other individual and how have they influenced you?

LEARN from God's Word 45-60 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

God never intended us to live the Christian life alone. Alone is lonely. Community is life-giving. Your friends and family were given to you by God to bring encouragement and strength into your life. In fact, God created you for community. Have you ever wondered why, when you spend a lot of time alone, you might go a little batty? It's not normal for you to spend your life alone. As a follower of Christ, you need others. Without others, you don't have

all the resources to accomplish all God desires for you. We help each other out. We encourage, challenge poor choices, celebrate milestones, and lean on one another in tough times. Let's look at some passages that give us a clear understanding of how others help us live the Christian life.

"The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

1. Why did God create more than one of us—male and female?

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17 (NIV)

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)

2. How are Christian friends important?

"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." Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV, p. 292)

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load." Galatians 6:1-5 (NIV, p. 234)

3. What can other believers do in my life?

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:42-47 (NIV, p. 138)

4. What did the early church believers do to stay connected with each other?

"Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." I Corinthians 12:14-19 (NIV, p. 210)

5. It might help you to know that this passage is talking about how Spiritual Gifts that are given to every believer are to be used to serve others. How does this passage describe the value of every person in your small group, including you?

RESPOND to God's Direction15 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Regardless of personality type, each of us needs others. Some of us are people-oriented. We're extroverts. Others of us are introverts. Some of us like conflict; others hate it. Humans tend to be all over the map when it comes to how we do relationships. Yet, no matter how you are wired, you have discovered you need others in your life.

1. What makes you hesitant to go deeper and open your life to others?
2. What benefits of fellowship can you see?

ACT on God's Purposes..... 5-10 Minutes



HAVE ANOTHER GROUP MEMBER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Learning about the value of Christian fellowship is one thing. Going after it is another. Being in a small group is a great first step. However, what you invest in a relationship determines what you receive from it.

1. What can you practically do to stay in fellowship with other believers?
2. Write the name(s) of one or two believers you would like to get to know better.

PRAY With God's People 10-20 Minutes



LEADER READ AND LEAD THIS SECTION.

Pray as a group that the truths you have learned throughout these six sessions will take root in your lives. Also, thank God for one other person in the group and tell God why you are thankful for him or her.

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES



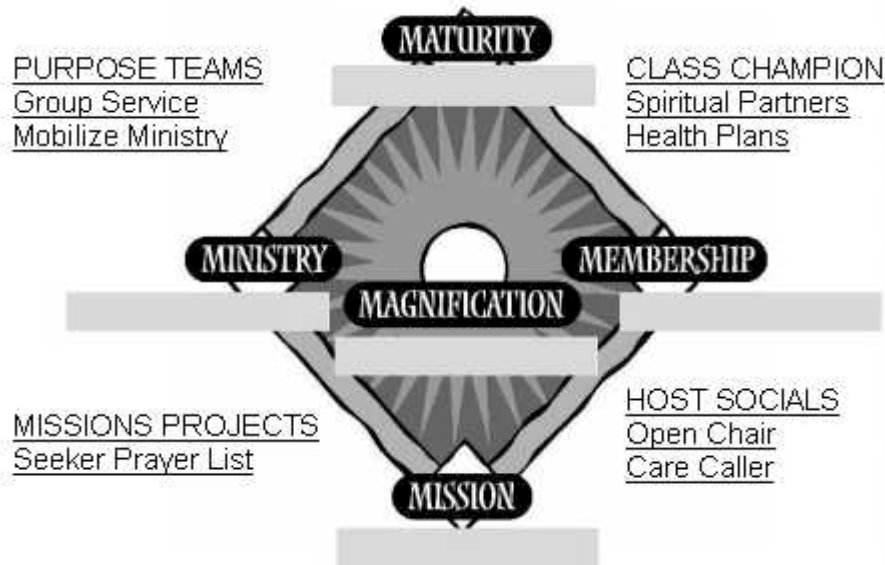
HEALTHY SMALL GROUP AGREEMENT

Discovering Your Shared Values, Roles and Expectations

We agree to the following VALUES:

- Clear Purpose** to grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community
- Group Attendance** to give priority to the group meeting (call if absent or late)
- Safe Environment** to help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (please, no quick answers, judgments, or simple fixes)
- Be Confidential** to keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
- Encourage Growth** to give group members permission to encourage your spiritual goals and participate in group and personal growth
- Welcome Newcomers** to keep an open chair and heart for others
- Span of Care** as the group grows, we will have discussion leaders for every four people.
- Shared Ownership** to remember every member is a minister and encourage each attender to pair up, join a purpose team, or share a small role
- Rotating Leaders** to encourage someone new to facilitate the group each week, and rotate homes and refreshments as well

We agree to the following ROLES:



We agree to the following EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/Mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best (some or all) to attend the following service together:
 Sat. 4:45pm Sat. 6:30pm Sun. 8:00am Sun. 9:45am Sun. 11:00am Sun. 5:00pm
- Review date of this agreement _____

SMALL GROUP PURPOSE TEAM ROLES

DISCUSSION GROUP LEADER (APPRENTICE)

Purpose: Facilitate the discussion of 3-4 members for the study and/or prayer time. *"These things which you have heard from me ... teach faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* 2 Timothy 2:2; Ephesians 4:11


Roles and Responsibilities:

- ✓ Gather a weekly subgroup of new or existing members.
- ✓ Help start another subgroup (discussion group) in another room or table.
- ✓ Help launch a new short-term group from the existing group.

Profile: Shepherd's heart, servant leadership, spiritual walk, and spirit of humility.

I am willing to join this team:

Discussion Leader 1 Discussion Leader 2

MINISTRY PURPOSE TEAM 

Purpose: Champion the personal SHAPE discovery process inside the group, around the church, and in the community. *Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 3:10*

Roles and Responsibilities:

- ✓ Discover a quarterly group service project.
- ✓ Confirm every member to a purpose team, role, or responsibility.
- ✓ Help each member discover his/her personal ministry in the church, attend 301, and commit to SHAPE ministry.

Profile: Cheerleader, goal-oriented, loves to see people develop and grow themselves.

I am willing to join this team:

Team Member Team Member

MEMBERSHIP PURPOSE TEAM 

Purpose: Champion the fellowship and community building activities within the small group. *Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 2:19*

Roles and Responsibilities:

- ✓ Coordinate socials and group celebrations (birthdays, dinners and group activities).
- ✓ Follow up on new and absent people with calls and cards.
- ✓ Encourage people to bring their friends and fill the open chair.

Profile: Social, fun-loving, encouraging and has hospitality gifts.

I am willing to join this team:

Team Member Team Member

MISSION PURPOSE TEAM 

Purpose: Champion outreach efforts to the community and the world. *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 20:24*


Roles and Responsibilities:

- ✓ Host quarterly "Matthew" parties, pray for unchurched friends or family members (Circles of Life).
- ✓ Encourage members to pray for unchurched friends or family members.
- ✓ Pray for mission opportunities and plan short-term mission projects.
- ✓ Send someone on an overseas mission trip or start a new small group at work, etc.

Profile: Heart for people (especially unchurched people in our community and around the world), cross-cultural experiences and involvement.

I am willing to join this team:

Team Member Team Member

MATURITY PURPOSE TEAM 

Purpose: Champion the spiritual steps and personal growth of each member in your group. *Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:15*


Roles and Responsibilities:

- ✓ Encourage people to take spiritual next steps in CLASS (101, 201, 301, 401, 501).
- ✓ Encourage people to complete the *Health Assessment & Health Plan* (personal and group).
- ✓ Encourage every member to establish a daily quiet time.
- ✓ Help every member develop a "Spiritual Partner" for accountability.

Profile: Loves learning, heart for God's Word, desires a growing walk with God.

I am willing to join this team:

Team Member Team Member

MAGNIFICATION PURPOSE TEAM 

Purpose: Champion the purpose of worship and whole life surrender in your small group. *Romans 12:1-2; John 4:24*

Roles and Responsibilities:






- ✓ Coordinate a weekly praise and prayer list by email or fax
- ✓ Coordinate your group attending worship services together. (Encourage people to attend in subgroups of 2-4, if not all together.)
- ✓ Host a simple worship time for your small group (CD, video, or acappella).

Profile: Encourager, heart for personal and corporate worship, desires a deeper walk with God through prayer, enjoys music and singing.

I am willing to join this team:






Team Member Team Member

PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE HEALTH PLAN

Purposes (Scriptural Mandates)	Priorities (Significant Values)	Plans (Strategic Steps)	Progress (Seasonal Evaluation)
<p>CONNECT How can I connect with my church family and cultivate depth in my relationships? (MEMBERSHIP)</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/friends • Relational/emotional • Small group community 			
<p>GROW How can I grow in my spiritual journey with Christ? (MATURITY)</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual disciplines • Financial stewardship • Character development 			
<p>DISCOVER How can I further discover my SHAPE for ministry? (MINISTRY)</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry to the Body • Vocational development • Continuing education/training 			
<p>SHARE How can I share my life mission with the world? (MISSION)</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission to the world • Seeker friends/family (work/neighborhood) • Cross-cultural involvement 			
<p>SURRENDER How can I surrender my heart in worship? (MAGNIFICATION)</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular church attendance • Worship tapes and devotionals • Personal health and balance (Romans 12:1) 			

PURPOSE-DRIVEN SMALL GROUP HEALTH PLAN

Group Leader _____ Current Date _____

Purposes	Possibilities	Plan (make one goal for each area)	Purpose Team Members
<p>CONNECT with our church family</p>  <p>(Membership Purpose of Fellowship)</p> <p>Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 2:19</p> <p>How can we develop our relationships with God's Family?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a family barbeque • Share our extended life stories 		<p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p>
<p>GROW in our spiritual journey</p>  <p>(Maturity Purpose of Discipleship)</p> <p>Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:15</p> <p>How can we grow in our spiritual journey with Christ?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit as a group to regular quiet times • Memorize one verse a month • Read a book on spiritual growth 		<p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p>
<p>DISCOVER our SHAPE for ministry</p>  <p>(Ministry Purpose of Service)</p> <p>Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 3:10</p> <p>How can we further discover our SHAPE for ministry?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share ministry involvement, stories, and plans • Pray for everyone to find a ministry by the fall • Serve together at a church event 		<p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p>
<p>SHARE our life mission in the world</p>  <p>(Mission Purpose of Evangelism)</p> <p>Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 20:24</p> <p>How can we share Christ and fulfill our life mission in the world?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for our family and friends • Share plans and progress for inviting people to church • Pray for a missions team 		<p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p>
<p>SURRENDER our hearts as worship</p>  <p>(Magnification Purpose of Worship)</p> <p>Romans 12:1-2; Psalm 27:6b</p> <p>How can we fulfill our life purpose through our personal and corporate worship?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faithfully use the prayer/praise list • Experiment with group worship. • Host a communion service this quarter 		<p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">name</p>

PURPOSE-DRIVEN SMALL GROUP HEALTH PLAN

Progress (renew & revise)	Progress (renew & revise)	Progress (renew & revise)
30 days/Date _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly Heart-Check with spiritual partner	60–90 days/Date _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly Heart-Check with spiritual partner	120+ days/Date _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly Heart-Check with spiritual partner

SERVING THE LORD'S SUPPER

"...The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." I Corinthians 11:23-26

Steps in Serving Communion

1. Open by sharing about God's love, forgiveness, grace, mercy, commitment, tenderheartedness, faithfulness, etc., out of your personal journey (connect with the stories of those in the room).
2. Read the passage: *"...The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'"*
3. Pray and pass the bread around the circle (could be time for quiet reflection, singing a simple praise song, or listening to a worship tape).
4. When everyone has been served, remind them that this represents Jesus' broken body on their behalf. Simply state, *"Jesus said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Let us eat together,"* and eat the bread as a group.
5. Then read the rest of the passage: *"...In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"*
6. Pray and serve the cups, either by passing a small tray, serving them individually, or having members pick up a cup from the table.
7. When everyone has been served, remind them the juice represents Christ's blood shed for them, then simply state, *"Take and drink in remembrance of Him. Let us drink together."*
8. Finish by singing a simple song, listening to a praise song, or having a time of prayer in thanks to God.

Several Practical Tips in Serving Communion

1. Prepare the elements simply, sacredly, and symbolically.
2. Be sensitive to timing in your meeting.
3. Break up pieces of cracker or soft bread on a small plate or tray. Don't use large servings of bread or grape juice. We ask that you only use grape juice, not wine, so you will not cause a group member to struggle.
4. Prepare all of the elements beforehand and bring these into the room when you are ready.

Communion passages: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; I Corinthians 10:16-21, 11:17-34

MEMORY VERSES

Memory Verse – One of the most effective ways to drive deeply into our lives the principles we are learning in this series is to memorize key scriptures. For many, memorization is a new concept or one that has been difficult in the past. We encourage you to stretch yourself and try to memorize these six memory verses. If possible, memorize these as a group and make them part of your group time.

"Hide Thy word in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11

*"And this is what God has testified:
He has given us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son. So
whoever has God's Son has life;
whoever does not have his Son
does not have life."*

I John 5:11-12 (NLT)

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
the old has gone,
the new has come!"*

II Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

*No temptation has seized you except
what is common to man.
And God is faithful; he will not let you
be tempted beyond what you can
bear. But when you are tempted, he
will also provide a way out
so that you can stand up under it.*

I Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

*"This is the confidence we have in
approaching God: that if we ask
anything according to his will, he
hears us."*

I John 5:14 (NIV)

*"Do not get drunk on wine, which
leads to debauchery.
Instead, be filled with the Spirit."*

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

*"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.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

"And on Thy law I meditate day and night." Psalm 1:2