

Week One: Starting the Journey

Genesis 25:29-34, Luke 4:1-2 & 11, Matthew 18:8-9

Objective for the Study: Today, our goal is to create disdain for sin and a vision for freedom! We must do violence to our sin and take a radical step as we step out in faith to receive God's freedom.

Opening Questions:

1. What are some things we inherit as a son or daughter of God? (Love, joy, peace, patience, relationship with Jesus, eternity with God)
2. How can sin get in the way of these gifts of inheritance?

Important to Know: We see in Genesis that Esau gives up his birthright, his inheritance, for a bowl of stew. Esau's immediate, temporal need outweighed his promise of inheritance. Esau does not consider the long-range implications as he sells his inheritance: he wants what he wants, when he wants it. Although Esau says that he is dying, he would not have died if he had gone without food that evening.

Sin is deceptive. Rather than providing nourishment or satisfaction, we find that the stew is full of maggots. Sin infests us, brings death into our lives, and deprives us of our inheritance as a son or daughter of God. Sin leaves us feeling empty and wanting; it is never God's will for us.

Questions from the Text:

Read Genesis 25:29-34 — Sin is Deceptive

1. What does Esau think he will get from Jacob's stew? (Nourishment, fulfillment, etc.)
2. How do you think he felt afterward? (Empty, deceived, regretful, etc.)
3. How does this compare to how *you* feel before and after you sin?

Read Luke 4:1-2, 13 — Opportune Times

1. According to this verse, when does Satan return to tempt us?
2. When might be opportune times in our lives? (Ex.: When we are lonely, before/after a big deadline, when we are stressed/insecure/fearful)
3. Why do you think Satan prefers to tempt at these times?

Read Matthew 18:8-9 — Radical Step

1. What does Jesus ask us to do when we sin?
2. Why do you think Jesus uses the images of your eye, hand, and foot?
3. What does this show us about the level of sacrifice and inconvenience we must be willing to take to embrace holiness?
4. Why do you think Jesus would say these Radical Steps are worth it? (He knows just how destructive sin is, he died for our freedom from sin)

Application Questions:

1. Have your group refer back to Matthew 18:8-9. Take some time to reflect, then pair up or get in small groups to discuss, what are the gateways to sin in your life? (e.g. a phone leading someone to look at inappropriate content leading to lust, or even a social media account causing them to grow in their sin of discontent and jealousy).
2. What would it mean to take a Radical Step to be free of these things? What will it take to meet our sin head-on?
3. Share with your partners or in your group. Leave with a *tangible action* for the times you are met with temptation — and don't accept excuses for "convenience" — holiness is worth it!

Examples of Radical Steps: texting someone for help, setting up an accountability partner, going for a run when tempted, getting rid of a smartphone or computer, deleting an account, getting Covenant Eyes, etc.

Week Two: Charting the Course, Part 1

2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Corinthians 10:13

Objective for the Study: In last week's study, we considered the cost of sin, and chose radical steps to overcome sin. Once we realize God's beautiful offer of freedom, now we can set up a plan to walk out our freedom. These next two studies will show how God teaches us to be set apart and walk in holiness through these three points from 2 Timothy 2:22 — Flee, Pursue, and Together.

Questions from the Text:

Read 2 Timothy 2:22

1. What are the two commands in this verse? (Flee, pursue)
2. With whom does Paul tell us to carry out these commands? (With other believers)

The three parts of a plan to overcome sin are as follows: Flee, Pursue, and Together. We flee from sin, pursue our righteousness by following Jesus, and do this together. We're going to look further at these ideas through other Scriptures.

Flee - Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

1. Are there any sins or temptations that are "new"?
2. What are the two things we can be sure that God will do when we face temptation? (Not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear; provide a way out)
3. We know that God provides a way out, every time. What does this mean for how we can respond to temptation? (You *always* have the choice to flee)
4. How does it feel to know that we *always* have the choice to flee from sin?

Pursue - adapted from the "Expulsive Power of a New Affection."

Consider this: When you are traveling, how odd would it be to purchase a ticket and say, "I'd like a ticket *not* to Los Angeles." You don't say that! Instead you ask, "I'd like to buy a ticket to New York." When you've chosen a destination, you don't fix your eyes on where you're *not* going. You fix your eyes on where you're going.

Read this excerpt from the competency, "Expulsive Power of a New Affection."

"The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy? ... In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away and all things are to become new."

1. If you buy a ticket “not to L.A.,” how likely are you to end up in New York? If you are avoiding one sin, how likely are you to end up at righteousness?
2. What would it look like to turn the focus from disengaging a sin to an addressing the worth and excellence of Jesus?
3. What are some ways in which you can increase your love of Jesus to displace the things of this world?

Application Questions:

Break up into small groups to consider together how you will carry out each part of “charting the course” towards freedom. Write down what you will do this week to Flee sin and Pursue righteousness.

Week Three: Charting the Course, Part 2

2 Timothy 2:22, Proverbs 27:6, James 5:16

Objective for the Study: As we set forth on the Journey Towards Freedom, we set up a plan by following these three parts: *Flee*, *Pursue*, and *Together*. Last week's focus was on what it meant to flee from sin, and to replace it with a desire for Christ. The objective of this study is to learn how and why we do this *together*.

Read 2 Timothy 2:22 again aloud as you continue this week's study in "Charting the Course." The focus for this week will be what it means to journey towards freedom "along with others."

Opening Questions:

1. When have you done something alone when you really needed help?

Questions from the Text:

Read Proverbs 27:6

1. What does the proverb say is the difference between a friend and an enemy?
2. How can you give your brothers or sisters in Christ the opportunity to share truth with you?

Consider this: The Scriptures repeatedly remind us that there is a communal aspect to overcoming sin — we are overcoming Satan's strategy of isolation. We need other people. But what does it mean to submit yourself to other person, and to choose to be accountable to someone?

Choosing to be accountable to someone doesn't just mean giving information to a friend when it is demanded of you. You willingly offer them your sin, and they have the power to demand something of you as you walk toward freedom. It means that you choose to receive feedback, correction, and help.

Remember, accountability in itself is not the goal — the goal is righteousness! We move toward righteousness by offering grace and exhorting one another in holiness. You are saying to someone else, "I submit to you to hear my sin, and you can demand things of me as I walk out this process."

3. Why does it matter that righteousness, not accountability, is the end goal?
4. We considered earlier in this study what it means to take a Radical Step to get serious about the sin in your life. Why might it be better to give someone else the power to say what your Radical Step should be?

Read James 5:16

5. What does James instruct us to do when we are met with temptation or fall into sin?

6. What holds us back from confessing to another person?
7. How does it feel once a sin is actually out in the open? How can this be part of our healing?
8. What does James tell us is the outcome of our prayer for one another?

Application Questions:

1. How will you ask another person to come alongside you in your Journey Towards Freedom this week?
2. How will you be the kind of friend that the Proverbs describe this week?

Week Four: The Traveler

Romans 6:1-14

Objective for the Study: We have considered in previous studies the gravity of sin, and the hope in Christ. Last week we considered the value of community as we combat sin. This week is about *who we are* because God has transformed us by His Spirit! The objective of this study is to identify ourselves as people being led to righteousness by Christ: dead to sin, alive to God.

Opening Questions:

1. How are you different now than five years ago?

Important to Know: This text in Romans is a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman church. The Book of Romans is known as one of Paul's most comprehensive writings that inform our Christian theology. In this passage, Paul is making the argument we are no longer under the control of sin. Because Jesus died to sin and rose again, we are united with Him and can claim that same freedom! This is an exciting week to recognize that we are no longer mastered by sin because of the redemption we find in Christ!

Questions from the Text:

Read Romans 6:11-14.

1. We find the first imperative statement in the book of Romans in verse 11. What is it?
2. If someone knocks on your door, how do you respond?
3. If you are dead and someone knocks on your door, how do you respond?
 - Do you answer? Can you hear them? Do you respond? Can you move? Do you think about whether or not to answer?
 - How does this image inform you on how we as Christians can respond to sin?
4. When you face temptation, how can you remind yourself that you are dead to sin but alive to God?
 - Ask your Core Group to consider using verse 11 as a memory verse, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." How much less likely are you to sin after saying to yourself, "I'm dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ!" Let's keep reminding ourselves of the status we are given in Christ.
5. Verse 13 commands, "Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness." What does it mean to be an instrument?
6. In verse 14, Paul writes that in Christ "sin shall no longer be your master." How does it feel to learn that you no longer must be mastered or controlled by sin?

Spiritual Activity:

In this prayer time, we will consider what it looks like to ask God to help us as we offer ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness, rather than as an instrument of wickedness.

First, ask the group to consider parts of the body that we may be tempted to use for wickedness, and name how they could be used. (Eyes for lust or greed, mouth for slander, etc.) Now ask, how can we offer them for righteousness instead?

Choose three body parts to pray over as a group. For example, your group chooses to pray over your eyes. First, pray against temptation in this area — against greed, lust, etc. After you have prayed against obedience to sin, ask the Lord how you may offer your eyes for His Kingdom — eyes to see hurt and offer compassion, eyes to see injustice, eyes to show others that you see them and care for them. Repeat these over a few more parts of your body, literally setting yourself apart for God's purposes.



Week Five: The Way Forward

2 Peter 1:3-4, Philippians 1:4-6

Objective for the study: As we reach the end of this study on walking a path of righteousness, we want to take the last week to be reminded that it is only by God's grace that we can live above sin. It is surely not in our own power, but it is God's power, which leads us to a righteous life!

Worship idea: Consider leaving worship until the end and singing a song of celebration or consecration!

Opening Question: What is something in your life that took a long time to complete?

Important to Know: 2 Peter is a letter written by Peter to a group of believers with the concern that God's people grow in godliness.

Questions from the Text:

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4

1. By what do we receive everything we need for a godly life? (His divine power, knowledge of God)
2. Looking at verse 3, how have we been called to the knowledge of Him? (By His own glory and goodness).
 - Take some time to share what this looked like in your life! How has God shown you His glory and goodness?
3. With these two questions in mind, who does Peter emphasize is inviting us and empowering us to live a godly life? What does this mean about God's attitude toward us?
4. What are some ways that we can increase in our "knowledge of Him"? (Prayer, time in Scripture, spending time with other believers)

Read Philippians 1:4-6

1. What is Paul confident in?
2. What does it mean to "carry it on to completion"?
3. How does this encourage you to be hopeful in your pursuit of righteousness?

Application Questions:

1. In small groups, consider the following questions: Where were you before these four weeks on learning about the Journey Towards Freedom? Where are you now? Where do you hope to be?
2. Take a moment to write down one of these two verses to commit to memory, as a reminder of the hope that we have in the power of God for our freedom from sin!

Spiritual Practice:

Take time to pray over each individual, asking God to help them as they journey towards freedom. Close Core Group by singing a song of celebration!

