

MY SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY ONLINE COURSE

Facilitator's Guide

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Available for download at

[MySpiritualDiscovery.com](https://www.MySpiritualDiscovery.com)

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Dear Facilitator,

We are happy to share with you this facilitator's guide for small groups for the Spiritual Discovery Online Course. This guide is a result of leading Spiritual Discovery groups for several years and leading bible classes for decades. We are not professional counselors and a Spiritual Discovery group meeting is not a counseling session. This is a guide for leading an effective study of the online course *MySpiritualDiscovery.com*. Every group has its own strengths and weaknesses. This guide may need to be adjusted for your group.

This study will take 15 weeks to complete. That is a big commitment for most people; however, spiritual growth takes time. The topics covered in these lessons are foundational for growth, and each one builds on the previous one. We encourage you to take the time to go through all the lessons.

STRUCTURE AND GUIDELINES

Each participant will need their own login to the course. (We allow sharing of logins among family members at the same location. However, it is helpful to have your own login because the course tracks your progress.)

We recommend having separate men's and women's groups. The discussions are too personal to have men and women in the same group.

We allow 90 minutes for each meeting. We always start on time and end on time out of respect for the participants' schedules.

The most effective group size is 5 to 8 people. Participants benefit when others share what they are learning, but if the group gets too large, there will not be enough time for everyone to respond to the questions. If the group is smaller than 5 people, they will miss the benefit of a broader range of experiences.

If you are using the online course for a recovery group, you can find helpful suggestions for setting up and leading a recovery group in our Facilitator's Guide for Recovery Groups. The Recovery Group Guide was written for the book format, but you can adjust it as needed for the online course. It is available at www.SpiritualDiscoveryBook.com/guide.

STARTING A NEW GROUP

If you are forming a new small group, it will be helpful to have a private conversation with each of the potential participants. Following are a few questions that we ask:

- **“Why do you want to be a part of this group study?”**
 - Hopefully, the answer is “I want to grow,” or “I need to make some changes.”
 - Sometimes the answer is “My friend wants me to attend.”
 - It is important that every participant give their whole heart. If they feel pressured to come and their heart is not in it, they can struggle with attendance and doing the homework.
 - If they just want to observe, it will create an environment where other participants may not feel safe to share their personal experiences.

- If someone's heart is not in it, we ask them to wait until they are ready to fully participate.
 - **“Will you be able to attend all the meetings and do the weekly homework?”**
 - It's important for the participants to know ahead of time that there is homework to complete before each meeting.
 - **“Will you abide by the Guidelines for Group Meetings?”**
 - Read and discuss with them the Guidelines for Group Meetings on page 4 of this guide. It is especially important to emphasize the confidentiality of the discussions.
 - Ask the participants to get a spiral notebook or journal for their homework questions. If they have a paperback copy of *Spiritual Discovery*, they can use it to record their answers to the questions. The questions in the course are sometimes a little different than the book, but they will see the questions in the homework video and can add a question to their book, if needed.
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ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

You will need a facilitator for your group. The facilitator will help conduct the meetings and help the participants stay on task.

The facilitator can also be a participant in the course. Prior experience leading group bible studies is helpful but not required.

Tips for being a good facilitator:

- Be well prepared. Watch the course video once or twice to get well acquainted with the material discussed in the lesson. Do the homework.
- Set an example of openness and humility and share how you are applying the material to your own life. (This doesn't mean you have to be the first to share, but when you share, set an example of openness and humility.)
- Keep the group on task so everyone has an opportunity to share their answers to the homework.
- A facilitator must be patient and a good listener, but this does not mean you let someone monopolize the discussion. If they do, you must step in and respectfully redirect the discussion. (This is always a judgment call, but you will learn who in the group tends to get off track or monopolize the discussions.)
- If anyone in the group begins to offer advice to try to resolve someone's problem, remind them of the guideline of not giving advice. They can share their own experience in a similar situation, but they cannot give advice.
- Keep an eye on the clock. Starting and ending on-time shows respect for the participants and allows them to plan other activities after meetings. Don't let someone who is habitually late keep you from starting on time. (If someone is habitually late, have a private conversation with them about showing respect to the others in the group by being on time.)
- Do not give advice. It is not the facilitator's responsibility to “fix” anyone or take on the problems of the members. (We will explain more about this throughout the lessons.)

Note: If this is your first group to lead, you will find it helpful to have someone you can trust for spiritual advice when you feel you need more guidance.

MEETING FORMAT

1. Preparation for meeting:

- Before each meeting, the participants will watch the video and complete their homework. When you meet together, you will discuss the lesson and homework. (You can also choose whether or not to watch the video lesson again as a group. This will add about 30 minutes to your meetings.)
- Some lessons also have an assignment. If you feel the participants need more time to work on the assignment, you can ask them to continue it through the next week.

2. Read the guidelines at the beginning of your meetings:

Guidelines for Group Meetings

1. Our standard is the Bible.
2. Come with a spirit of openness.
3. Show respect for others:
 - If you are unable to make a meeting, let your facilitator know.
 - Be on time.
 - Turn off your cell phone and put it away.
 - Raise your hand to speak.
4. You can share your own experiences and what's worked for you in the past, but you are not here to fix anyone else's problem or give advice.
5. Do not try to comfort anyone who is sharing. Give them room to feel what they are feeling. When you offer comfort to someone when they are emotional, you shut down their emotion and keep them from growing.
6. Be whole-hearted and do your homework! Completing your homework is vital for personal growth and prepares you to participate in group discussions. You will get out of this study what you put into it.
7. Always remember that our conversations are confidential. What is said here, stays here.

- These guidelines help create a safe and respectful atmosphere.
- If at some point, you feel the group is familiar enough with the guidelines, you can abbreviate this step by highlighting one or two of them. It is especially important to mention No. 7 about confidentiality.
- If someone in the group is not complying with a guideline, a gentle reminder may be all that is necessary. If that is not enough, speak with them individually about it.

3. Lead the group in a 3-5 minute time of meditation

- You will find examples of meditations for this purpose at the end of this guide on pages 17-18. You can give a copy of these meditations to the participants.
- This 3-5 minute time of meditation will help the participants clear their minds and be more focused. Learning to sit quietly before God takes practice.
- This may be a new practice for you or the participants in the group. Often participants find it challenging to quiet their minds and meditate on a Bible verse. However, if they will practice it on a regular basis, they will find that they are able to do so more and more. The goal is that by Lesson 8, they will be able to sit quietly before God in prayer as they begin to ask God for insight, wisdom and truth.
- End the time of meditation by leading the group in prayer.

4. Discuss the homework.

- Ask someone to read the first question, and have everyone share their answers. Continue through all questions. Occasionally, there will be an assignment to discuss.
- The homework discussion is the heart of the meeting. Find the most helpful way for your group to share their answers. It might be by going around the circle or you may just ask the question and wait to see who will answer first. But if you do it this way, make sure you call on everyone to give their response.
- Stress to your group the importance of including the questions in their notebooks. There will be times when the participants will need to review previous homework, and having the questions will be very helpful. A good way to encourage them to include the questions is to ask the group to take turns reading the questions as you discuss the homework. If someone has not included the questions, just remind them to do so.

5. End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.

FOLLOWING ARE SUGGESTIONS AND NOTES FOR EACH LESSON:

LESSON 1 – SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY

Lesson 1 is an introductory lesson to help the participants get to know each other and share their goals. At first glance, it may seem like a fairly light topic, but this lesson can set a good foundation for the coming lessons. The participants will discuss fears and distractions that could interfere with attending meetings and consistently completing their homework. It also addresses the need to “show-up” with openness, honesty, humility and vulnerability. Throughout the lessons, participants are reminded to “show-up.”

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Read the guidelines.**
- **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
- **Discuss the homework.**
- **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**

Note: At the end of each lesson, encourage the participants to watch the next video in a day or two and begin the homework. This will give them an opportunity to process the material throughout the week. If they wait till the day before your next meeting, they will miss an opportunity to put the lesson into practice.

LESSON 2 – YOUR SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Lesson 2 will raise everyone's awareness of their spiritual battle. It will help them to be more aware that Satan is their true enemy.

In Lesson 2 homework, the discussions may be more personal. As participants share their “strongholds” and the impact of these strongholds in their lives, thank them for sharing, then ask the next person to share. Even if they share with tears, thank them for their vulnerability and move to the next person. (Note: It's okay if the participants cannot identify a stronghold. Later lessons will help them.)

As the facilitator, your goal is not to “fix” anyone or resolve a situation that is shared. After everyone has shared their strongholds, thank them for their vulnerability, and let the group know that you care deeply about what they shared, but you will not be using the meeting time to comfort or counsel each other. The goal of the course is to uncover what is in their hearts and to learn to go to God for healing.

If anyone in the group begins to give advice or try to resolve someone's problem, remind them of the meeting guideline of not giving advice. They can share their own experience in a similar situation, but they cannot give advice. Also, keep everyone on track and do not let anyone monopolize the discussion.

Note: If someone shares a stronghold that is potentially life-threatening, encourage them to seek professional help.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Read the guidelines.**
- **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
- **Conclude the meditation time with a prayer.**
- **Discuss the homework and the assignment.**
- **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**

LESSON 3 - THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

This lesson helps the participants begin to identify what they truly believe about God. It addresses Satan's lies about God and the impact of believing Satan's lies. Some of Satan's most damaging lies are about God. The clearer picture we have of God, the more we will depend upon him and seek his help.

You may find that some participants harbor negative beliefs about God. Remember that you are not trying to "fix" anyone's beliefs in this lesson. The goal for the participants is to begin to identify their deeply held beliefs about God. Future lessons will help them overcome any wrong conclusions they may have.

Some participants may be uneasy about sharing their true feelings about God. It may take several weeks before some of their true feelings come out. If that happens, suggest that they revisit this lesson and rework the homework.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Read the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 4 - EMOTIONS

This lesson lays an important foundation for future lessons. God gave us emotions to help us navigate and enjoy life, but our emotions can become one of Satan's most effective ways to tempt us and disconnect us from each other and God. Understanding our own emotions and how Satan uses them to tempt us will help us fight our spiritual battles more effectively.

This lesson will also help the participants identify the "Emotional Rules" or "Family Rules" that they developed in their childhood that can still be impacting how they feel about their emotions as an adult. You will refer to these "rules" throughout subsequent lessons.

The first 3 Principles for Spiritual Growth will be introduced in this lesson. They will be used throughout the lessons to help the participants begin to change unhealthy patterns. Encourage your group to memorize them. You may find it helpful (and fun) to use incentives to motivate your group to memorize the 7 Principles. (You can find artwork of the 7 Principles at www.SpiritualDiscoveryBook.com/artwork. This artwork which you can download and print is formatted to fit a 4x6 inch frame.)

If a participant shares about a difficult situation, do not try to resolve the problem for them. Instead, ask them to Stop & Consider what they were feeling. It may seem trivial to name an emotion, but it is actually very empowering. When the participants can identify their emotions, they can begin to fight their spiritual battle more effectively.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
- **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
- **Discuss the homework and the assignment.**
- **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**

Note: Encourage the participants to download a copy of the Emotions Chart to keep in their notebooks. They will need it for future lessons.

Question from a Facilitator

Note: Following is a question from a facilitator regarding this lesson and our answer.

Question: How do I help a participant who is discouraged and considering leaving the class after this lesson?

Answer: This lesson can stir up some painful emotions, especially if the participant tends to stuff his or her feelings. If someone is struggling, I tell them, "I know this is hard, but going through this will help you get what you want: to like yourself better, to grow in your confidence, to have healthy relationships, and to be closer to God and more in love with him."

I remind them that learning to "sit in the pain" of an emotion will help them fight their spiritual battles more effectively. The goal is not to stay in the pain, but to sit in it long enough to name the emotion, recognize their battle and discover the truth about it. Subsequent lessons will help them uncover the lie at the root of the painful emotion and ask God for truth.

I take them through the exercise of using the 3 Principles for Spiritual Growth that were introduced in this lesson. This helps them see their spiritual battle more clearly.

Me: "Stop & Consider: What are you feeling?"

Participant: "I am feeling _____ (sad, overwhelmed, anxious, _____)."

Me: "Recognize Your Spiritual Battle. How is Satan tempting you?"

Participant: "I am tempted to _____ (give up, numb the pain by _____)."

Me: "Tell the truth. Tell yourself, tell God and tell a trusted friend."

- They are admitting this painful emotion to themselves and they are telling you (their trusted friend), but they need to tell God, too. I ask them to pray with me, and we both pour out our hearts to God about it and ask for his strength and guidance.

When participants begin to identify their most common painful/unpleasant emotions, it's natural that they want to move out from under this pain. However, leaving the group will not solve this problem. That's just another way to avoid dealing with painful emotions. Stuffing their feelings will just give Satan another opportunity.

I have seen a few participants step out of a class. Most eventually took the class again at a later time and were able to grow spiritually and emotionally. In the end, remember it's not up to you to fix their problems. It is their decision whether or not they will leave the class. If you take

responsibility for their choices, it will discourage you. Jesus let people walk away. We too must accept the choices others make. If someone chooses to leave the class, love them through their choice, and hopefully they will take the class at some future time.

Note: If someone shares anything that is potentially life-threatening, encourage them to seek professional help.

LESSON 5 – SHAME AND SELF-WORTH

This lesson gives an in-depth look at the painful emotion of shame and the power it has to disconnect us from each other. It will help participants identify how feeling shame impacts their behavior. It will also help them begin to evaluate their measures for self-worth and whether their measures are healthy or worldly measures. Being able to identify shame is an important step in fighting our spiritual battles.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework and the assignment.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 6 – UNSPIRITUAL DEFENSES

This lesson will help the participants identify how they typically move out from under painful emotions and how their response can keep them stuck in a painful cycle. It is important for the participants to identify not only how they “move” but then how they justify their reaction to the pain.

The homework in this lesson is very important for the participants. It will help them understand their “knee jerk” response to emotional pain and the impact their response may be having on those around them.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 7 - IDENTIFYING THE LIES YOU BELIEVE

In this lesson, the participants will again look at what they believe about God. They will also begin to look at their core beliefs about themselves and others. Identifying lies that we believe can be challenging, because a lie can feel like the truth, especially when you are experiencing strong painful emotions.

The participants will begin to make a list of core beliefs that stir painful emotions. They will add to this list throughout the rest of the course. They will begin to pray through these beliefs and take them to God in the next lesson.

Remember that you are not trying to “fix” anyone’s beliefs shared in this lesson. However, you can help the participants identify their core beliefs by asking:

- “How did that make you feel?”
- “What did you come to believe about yourself, God or others based on that situation?”
- “Does that still feel true today?”

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework and the assignment.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 8 - THE POWER OF TRUTH

In this lesson, participants will begin to ask God for insight, wisdom and truth regarding the beliefs they listed in the assignment for Lesson 7 Homework.

Participants may face a few obstacles as they contemplate this prayer for insight, wisdom and truth:

- For many Christians, this is a new kind of prayer, and it may seem awkward at first.
- Some will struggle to clear their minds and listen for God to answer. It will take practice to “be still” before God.
- Some participants will think they already know the answer so they will not ask God.
- Some participants will ask a different question from the one they really need to ask. (Perhaps because they are afraid of the answer.)
- Some participants academically know that a core belief they have uncovered is not in line with the Bible, so they stop short of asking God for insight, wisdom and truth. However, knowing it’s probably not true and receiving insight from God are not the same thing. Evidence that they still need to ask for insight, wisdom and truth is if they are still stirred by their emotional pain and continue living in an unhealthy cycle.
- Some will still have misconceptions about God that they have yet to identify. Asking God for truth is especially challenging for those who believe that God is not on their side. Just the thought of asking God for something will stir their emotions.
- As a facilitator, you may be tempted to help participants “manage” their emotional pain. For example, if a participant shares that they feel unloved by God or that God is against them, you may be tempted to share your favorite scriptures about God’s love and

compassion. In some cases, the participant can already quote those verses, yet they still struggle in their relationship with God.

- If someone has not asked God for truth, we find it helpful to ask them to Stop & Consider what emotion they feel as they consider asking God for the truth.
- Practicing the first 5 Principles for Spiritual Growth will help them discover their obstacle.
- The participants need to take their core beliefs to God and ask him if it is true:
 - o "God, is it true that you do not love me?"
 - o "God, is it true that you are against me?"
- Participants have shared beautiful insights about God they received as a result of these prayers, and they were able to overcome traps in which they had lived for a very long time.

God invites all of us to ASK for insight, wisdom and truth. He promises to give generously to anyone without finding fault (James 1:5). He promises to give like a good father gives to his children (Matthew 7:7-12).

- Encourage the participants to set aside time every day to ask, seek and knock, and allow time to listen. Remind them to be patient and to not give up. They may find a review of Lesson 3 helpful.
- Resist the temptation to suggest how God may answer their prayer.
- Be patient with the participants. Some will quickly seek God's help and escape their traps. Others will need more time. They may have layers of lies they have to work through. Be careful not to shame them or try to drive conviction in an effort to "help" them. They may need to review this lesson at some point in later lessons.
- As participants work through this process, they may identify more lies they believe. Encourage them to add them to the prayer list they started in the assignment for Lesson 7 and continue to ask God for insight and truth.

Note: People grow at different rates. If some participants become discouraged when others share their victories, remind them that nothing good comes from comparison. They are each on their own journey and they need to stay focused on what will help them make progress.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 9 – LIVING FORGIVEN

This lesson will help the participants identify what they believe about God's forgiveness and evaluate if what they believe is in line with the scriptures. They will continue to look for Satan's lies in what they believe about forgiveness and continue to ask God for insight, wisdom and truth.

The goal of this lesson is to help participants evaluate whether or not they feel forgiven by God and if they have forgiven those who have sinned against them. This lesson may bring out a lot of emotions. Some participants may have difficulty looking back at painful events. Some may struggle with forgiving others or even themselves. They will need to identify the emotion(s) they are feeling and use the Principles for Spiritual Growth to uncover what they believe, then look to God and his Word for the truth about forgiveness.

If they uncover more core beliefs that stir painful emotions, they should add those to their prayer list from Lesson 7. Then encourage them to pray for wisdom and insight regarding those beliefs.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework and the assignment.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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REVIEW AND REFLECT

This is a pdf document that summarizes the main principles in the first 9 lessons. You can choose whether or not to discuss this as a group.

LESSON 10 – ENTANGLED RELATIONSHIPS

This lesson will help the participants identify unhealthy relationship patterns and evaluate whether or not they are in an entangled relationship.

Remind them that the goal is to be able to use the Principles for Spiritual Growth when they are triggered by painful emotions.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - **Discuss the skit.**
 - **Discuss the assignment.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 11 - OVERCOMING ENTANGLED RELATIONSHIPS - PART 1

This lesson will help the participants understand the thoughts, desires, motives, emotions and beliefs at the root of an entangled relationship. To make lasting change, we must begin with what's in our hearts.

This homework digs into the "why" behind the actions of entangled relationships. Identifying the thoughts and purifying the desires at the root of an entangled relationship will take thoughtful reflection and honesty.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - **Discuss the assignment.**
 - "What are you learning about your thought patterns?"
 - "What is the impact of taking your unhealthy thoughts captive?"
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
-

LESSON 12 - OVERCOMING ENTANGLED RELATIONSHIPS - PART 2

This lesson will help the participants identify sins that are at the root of an entangled or codependent relationship. Identifying our own sin can be challenging, especially if we think the other person's sin is the root of our problems. Recognizing our own sinful behavior helps us focus on the part that we can change, and this change can be the beginning of untangling an entangled relationship.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework and the assignment.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 13 – BAD HABITS AND ADDICTIONS

This lesson explains the physical, emotional and spiritual battle surrounding an addiction or bad habit. It will help participants identify whether or not their painful emotions move them toward a bad habit or an addiction.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
-

LESSON 14 – PURSUING RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the previous lessons, the participants have considered unhealthy or sinful behaviors that God is calling them to leave behind. In this lesson, the goal is two-fold:

- **To understand the many benefits of righteous living; and**
- **To help the participants recognize the difference between trying not to sin and actively pursuing righteousness.**

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
 - **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
 - **Discuss the homework.**
 - Encourage the participants to come up with a plan for overcoming any unhealthy behaviors by using the 4 ways to flee sin and pursue righteousness.
 - Look for the way out.
 - Make level paths for your feet.
 - Put sin to death.
 - When you suffer, move toward God.
 - **Discuss the assignment.**
 - The group may need more time to practice this assignment. If so, ask the group to continue this assignment until the next meeting when they can share more about how God provided a way out for them.
 - **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
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LESSON 15 - THE POWER OF YOUR STORY

This final lesson will help the participants look back at their personal rescue by God and understand the power of their testimony. Understanding your rescue story can be very empowering. It can give you a better picture of God's love, and it will give you a powerful testimony to share with others who are looking for a way to overcome their struggles.

MEETING FORMAT:

- **Remind the participants of the guidelines.**
- **Have a 3-5 minute time of meditation.**
- **Discuss the homework.**
- **Discuss the optional homework assignment with your group to make a decision about whether or not to complete this assignment as a group.**

LESSON 15 OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

In this exercise, the participants take another look at any stronghold they want to overcome using all the principles in this course. Because we are complex beings and our hearts are deep waters, there is often more to discover. Writing this journal after completing *Spiritual Discovery* is a great opportunity to find more healing and freedom.

There are two decisions each participant will make regarding this assignment: 1) whether or not to complete the assignment; and 2) whether or not to read their journal to the group. Remember, this assignment is optional, and the participants should not feel pressured to participate. If they choose to not read it, they should not attend the meeting where others read their journals to the group.

Some participants may choose to write the journal but not read it to the group, or they may choose to read it to just one trusted friend. If your group or part of your group wants to do the assignment and share their stories with each other, you will need to schedule an additional meeting to read the journals.

WRITING THE JOURNALS

There are 5 different journal outlines that can be used depending on the particular challenge a participant is facing. These are available in the course for download:

- Bad Habits & Addictions
- Food Addictions and Bad Habits/Overeating
- Entangled Relationships
- An Anger Problem
- A Victim Mindset

Some participants may find it useful to combine 2 of the journals. For example, if someone has an anger problem and an addiction, it will be helpful to use both outlines as they write their journal.

Discuss with the participants the importance of using the 7 Principles if they are stirred by painful emotions and are tempted to stop writing. Encourage them to call a trusted friend, if needed.

- **End your meeting by asking someone to lead the group in prayer.**
- **Note:** You may want to have a celebration meal to give the participants an opportunity to celebrate their victories, share the insights they have gained and to give thanks to God.

LESSON 15 OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

READING THE JOURNALS

If your group completed journals, you will need an additional meeting for the participants to read them to the group.

The journals can be very personal so it's important to set up a respectful atmosphere for the participants who read their journals. In addition to the usual group guidelines, include the following guidelines when reading journals:

- Listen attentively;
- No note-taking;
- After the participant finishes reading his or her journal, the others can respond, but not give advice.
 - They can share how they relate to an aspect of the story.
 - They can share how the story helped them to understand someone in their own life.
- Thank the participant for sharing their story.

Note: Be encouraging and patient. Participants grow at different rates.

- Some have a great deal of success their first time through the course.
- Some find it helpful to review the course again on their own or with a friend.
- Some need to take the course a second or third time in a group.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

- Psalm 77:12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.
- Psalm 119:15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Christian meditation is a practice of taking time to reflect upon a scripture or an attribute of God. It's asking questions and seeking insight and wisdom from God. This form of prayer can help you become more aware of God and his love.

Do you know how to meditate? If you know how to worry, in one sense, you know how to meditate. Worrying is setting your mind toward unpleasant or painful events. In worry, you consider a worst case scenario, "What if this terrible thing happens." In spiritual meditation, you set your mind and heart toward spiritual things. You ponder the greatness of God and his promises and you put your requests before him. Both worry and meditation involve the unseen. Worry wears you out, but spiritual meditation strengthens you.

Meditation will help you step away from a busy lifestyle and slow down. Learning to spend time in silence before God can help you gain insight and remember what is really important in life.

- Psalm 4:4 ...search your hearts and be silent.

Following are examples of silent meditation to help you come before God. If you are just beginning to practice silent meditation, you may find it helpful to set a timer for 3 to 5 minutes. This might seem like a long time if you have not practiced meditation, so the timer can help you stay the course until you find that you are no longer hurried when you meditate. Even if 3 to 5 minutes seems difficult, do not give up. It will be worth the effort it will take. There are many benefits.

It can help you gain deeper insights about God and his word.

It can help stir up your faith and love for God.

It can help you remember what is really important in your life.

Meditation #1: Be Still

This meditation will help you focus your mind and remember who God is.

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

- Close your eyes and imagine God saying this to you as you still your mind and heart. Recite each of the following lines several times. Notice how each line has a different focus that can help bring you before God. If your mind wanders, gently bring your thoughts back to the scripture and focus on coming before God.

"Be still and know that I am God."

"Be still and know that I am."

"Be still and know."

"Be still."

"Be."

Meditation #2: Don't Be Anxious

Worry and anxiety can keep you from experiencing the joy and peace the Holy Spirit offers you. The goal of this meditation is to help you be more peaceful before God.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything... present your requests to God.

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

- Read these verses and consider the possibility of God carrying the weight of all your worries and anxieties.
- God is not saying that your concerns are not valid, but he is offering to carry them for you.
- He makes this offer because he cares for you and he is strong.
- Close your eyes and imagine casting off your worries and anxieties and leaving them with God. Imagine him helping you take each one off your hands in a caring way.
- If your mind wanders, gently bring your thoughts back to God

Meditation #3 Count Your Greatest Blessings

The goal of this meditation is to remember your greatest blessings. Remembering all that God has done for you and knowing you are deeply loved by him will help you face your challenges.

Psalm 104:34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

Psalm 103:10-12 ...he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

- Read these verses and consider all that God has done for you and why he did it. Close your eyes and sit in silence as you contemplate this.
 - If your mind wanders, gently bring your thoughts back to God.
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