



Helping Students with Life-Controlling Issues

Someone confessed to you a major issue that is addictive or perpetual in their life. Now what?

This resource is meant to be a guide to help walk with someone into the freedom Jesus offers (John 8:31-36). It is suggested that you look over this resource before your meeting, and become familiar with it so that you do not need to bring the papers with you. Be prepared so that the Spirit can remind you of things in your meeting! In no way must you go through all this material in four sessions, nor does every person need all of the information. Pray, and listen to the Holy Spirit before your meeting. Perhaps you should focus on one or two things for each meeting. Less can be more - so the student doesn't walk away overwhelmed. If at any time you feel inadequate or over your head, please talk to someone on staff.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" Titus 2:11-12.

Please note that the order of these meetings can be adjusted to suit the individual's greatest need at the time. But ultimately all of these sessions are helpful in seeing people walk in freedom.

Initial Conversation

Usually, you can start by interviewing him or her and asking questions to help them process their experiences and their past. As you speak truth into their lives, remember that sometimes, less is more. Sometimes bite-sized, timely truths are what we need most. Then, respond and plan for this time together. Lastly, don't forget to pray! Never underestimate what can happen in times of prayer.

Three Aspects of Life-Controlling Issues

1. Flesh. We are told to crucify it and flee from it. (Read 2 Tim. 2:22, Gal. 5:16, Rom. 6.)
2. Demonic. Resist the devil and he will flee. (Read 1 Pet. 5:9, Jas. 4:7.)
3. World. We're told to renew our minds. (Read Rom. 12:2.)

First Meeting: A Radical Step

In the first meeting, give them a space to confess. Then affirm them for getting their sin out of darkness and into the light (1 Jn 1:7-9). Ask some follow up questions. When did it start? Read Genesis 4:7 together and talk about when the door opened to sin. This is a great point to talk about the danger of opening doors. How does someone go from a faithful and free believer to bound in habitual sin? Small compromises in their walk with God leads to opening the door to sin. Ask when the sin happens and where. Read Luke 4:13. You're looking to identify opportune times. Scripture says that the devil knows them, so should we. In your conversation, look for where there are patterns that need to be broken and for what may be a symptom of the issue versus the root (i.e. fear, pain, loneliness, control, etc.).



I talk about how Jesus taught us to *take radical steps* to get rid of sin from our lives. Mark 9:43-49, Matthew 5:29-30. For them to get free it is going to take some dramatic steps on their part! How committed are they to freedom? What are they willing to do to see it happens? (i.e. for porn—where they will put their computer, covenanteyes.com, etc). Talk about concrete steps they can take to be victorious this week! Crucial pieces of a good plan include accountability, spiritual disciplines (as in Jn. 15), a radical step, a plan for alternative response, and what the ramifications will be if they do not walk out the plan. Remember, this can take time and patience. With habitual sin, a path has already been formed and beaten down, and it takes time and discipline to create a new path.

End the meeting by praying for them to be cleansed. Pray that the door to this sin in their life will be closed and for God to deliver them and empower them to be victorious. Invite them to close out in prayer, and agree with them as they pray!

Second Meeting: Godly Sorrow

Open the meeting by asking how they have been doing. Celebrate victories and talk about defeats. Talk about what they can learn from this week's experiences. Talk about the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow over sin. Read 1 Corinthians 7:10 together. Other examples you can use are the life of Saul in 1 Samuel 15:30 and David in Psalm 51. See how Saul and David responded differently when they had sinned.

Worldly sorrow is that sense of sadness because you got caught or because you were forced to give up what you really wanted to do. Such *sorrow is self-centered* and does not call an evil thing evil. Worldly sorrow is reluctant to change—you change because you have to but not because you really want to. They don't understand just how ugly their sin is.

Godly sorrow leads to life. It causes us to see vividly our need for a savior and for forgiving grace. Our guilt actually functions as a blessed grace because it wakes us up to our need for Christ and leads us to salvation. Basically we see our sin for how evil it truly is and how it offends God and *God is the focus of our sorrow* and the effects that our sin has. For them to get freedom, it is imperative that they enter into true repentance, which comes from godly sorrow. You can also use the Jacob stew illustration from Genesis. Talk to them about the deception of sin and how it leaves us feeling empty and doesn't really satisfy but leaves us feeling regret. Use this to lead into a conversation about the consequences of sin.

Sin affects our walk with God. It doesn't end our relationship but definitely hinders our fellowship with God. We lose the joy of our salvation. (Read Ps. 51, Eph. 4:20.) Talk about God's view of sin and how to fear the Lord is to hate evil (Eph. 2:1-3, Rom. 6:11-23, and 2 Tim. 2:26). Talk about the ramifications of sin on our relationships (Gal. 6:7-8). When we intentionally resist the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we lose sensitivity to the Holy Spirit which is the key to the Christian life. This helps them to have the courage to walk in holiness. When the cause is greater than the circumstances, they will have courage. End your meeting by praying together. Encourage them to write down how God sees the sin/issue and how it impacts all circles of relationships and people, both present and future.

Third Meeting: Power and Process

Open this meeting by asking them how they've been doing. Celebrate victories, talk about defeats, and see what you can learn from them! Review what they wrote down about God's view of their sin/issue



and talk it out. Encourage them to read it often to renew their mind. This could be part of their daily devotional life routine.

Talk about the importance of both the *power* and the *process* to walk in freedom. Read Acts 19:8-12. Paul was a person of the process, purposeful and persistent, and He saw God's power. It was the combination that brought a revival to Ephesus. Read Matthew 12:43-45. This person was freed from the demoniac and experienced God's power, but it was not followed up by a walk with God so the house was left unoccupied. The process puts us in position to receive God's power and then the process helps us walk out what God has done! The process is like the bread that holds the meat of the power to make a life-changing sandwich.

Encourage them to memorize and immerse themselves in Scripture. You can use Psalm 119:9,11 and Psalm 1 as references. The power of Scripture memory can't be underestimated! After all, Jesus used Scripture to overcome temptation.

Talk about how we must detox and starve the flesh of its sinful cravings. We have to come to terms with the fact that the choices we make will help us walk in freedom or stay in bondage. They can't make bad choices and then blame God for not delivering them. It comes down to the *Principle of the Path*. Your destination is determined by your direction, not your intentions (via Andy Stanley).

End your meeting by praying together over the direction of the upcoming week.

Fourth Meeting: Forgiveness

Ask them how they've been doing! Celebrate victories and talk through defeats. Remember to celebrate even what feels like the smallest victory to them. That is a step forward in the process!

Focus your conversation this week on forgiveness. Talk about the necessity of forgiving yourself, and how we *experience Christ's forgiveness* in our lives. Read 1 Kings 15:5. This is a powerful verse in that God considered David's failure "the exception not the rule." We tend to be people who define ourselves by the exceptions in our lives. Often our own inability to forgive ourselves is our own pride that wants to pay the price for our own sin. If we do this, we are saying the price that Jesus paid on the cross was not enough. Jesus paid it all! We must be people who take grace seriously.

In Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah shares that God forgives us and washes us white as snow, not white as a peach. Talk about the significance of this in your meeting. John 1:9 talks about how we are not just forgiven, we are also purified. Read these verses and talk together about what it means for us to live a forgiven and purified life.

Continual Meetings

For the rest of the time you meet up, you will keep them accountable to the process. You will remind them of the truth you may have already covered, or other passages from Scripture. Sometimes it takes a while for truth to go from our heads to our hearts! Remember Titus 2:11-12, it's only by God's grace we can live godly lives!

