



The Resistance Core Group Study

Overview:

This is a three week study designed to go alongside The Resistance MNL series. This study goes through how to recognize and resist the three enemies of our souls: the devil, the flesh, and the world. Each week in this study has a passage for discussion, followed by a corporate exercise for you to do as a Core Group during your meeting, and then a follow-up practice for the group to do throughout the week. At the end of this document we have included a resource taken from practicingtheway.org which helps to synthesize the three weeks of the study. This resource can be given at the beginning of the study and progressively worked through, or it can be used as a one-on-one resource at the end of the study.

Objective:

Our goal for this study is to help you be more equipped to identify the primary strategy of the enemy and to cultivate practices that will aid you in your Spiritual formation.

Contents:

Week One: The Devil – John 8:31-47

Week Two: The Flesh – Romans 8:1-14

Week Three: The World – Romans 12:1-8

Additional Resource: Exposing the Devil's Strategy & Encountering Truth





Week One: The Devil

John 8:31-47

Introduction

As we talked about on Monday, our premise for this study is that in this life we are engaged in a battle for our soul. We have a real adversary, the devil, whose primary strategy is to sow lies that appeal to disordered desires and are normalized by sinful society. This premise will guide us throughout this series as we talk about how we combat the lies of the enemy.

Objective

1. Discuss how the Devil uses lies to change the way we think about the character of God, our identity, and our lives.
2. Practice identifying lies and replacing them with Truth.

Background

From the first pages of the Bible, the devil has been sowing lies into the minds of humanity. In its essence the temptation in the garden boils down to three fundamental questions that must be answered: Who is God? Who are we? And what is the good life? In the garden, the devil comes to Eve and tries to portray God as a tyrant who is limiting her freedoms. He sows the lie that God doesn't have your best interest at heart; in fact, he doesn't want you to be like him, that's why he's forbidden the fruit of that tree. Finally, the lies culminate in the belief that life would be better if you took the fruit and defined good and evil for yourself.

John Mark Comer points out that, "the exact nature of the lies change from generation to generation, culture to culture, and person to person, but they always run along these lines: Distance yourself from God. Do your own thing. Redefine good and evil based on your own gut and desire." Lies are the fundamental strategy the enemy uses to disrupt our peace. In our study today we will begin to look at how Jesus talked about the enemy and his strategies and engage in some practical exercises to deal with the lies of the enemy.

Read John 8:31-47

Text Questions

1. How do we know the truth?
2. What does it mean to be set free by the truth?
3. How does Jesus describe the devil?
4. What are some of the implications of Jesus calling the devil the "father of lies" (v. 44)?

Application Questions

1. How do we as followers of Jesus live with God as Father?
2. What are some ways that we engage with the truth of God?
3. Reread the quote from John Mark Comer in the study background. What are some of the lies prevalent in our generation and culture?
4. What are some of the lies that you find yourself believing?



Exercise for the Group: Digging Trenches of Truth

Today we have talked about the devil as the first enemy of our soul. Since we have a real enemy, we need a real strategy for how to resist his tactics. Jesus describes the devil as the father of lies, and when he lies he speaks his native tongue. If lies are one of the primary strategies that the devil uses as he wages war on our souls, we resist by replacing lies with truth. For this exercise, we are going to engage in a time of listening prayer followed by some time for discussion and processing. If listening prayer is something you are less familiar with, it is simply the discipline of opening our hearts to the Lord and being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In this time, don't feel like you have to say much, but listen to the Lord and when your attention begins to drift (and it will) use it as an opportunity to recenter yourself on the Lord. As the Lord speaks, it is helpful to have a journal to write things down. After 5-10 minutes, come back together and break the group up into smaller groups to discuss what came to mind. The hope in this discussion time is that for each lie that surfaced, the group could help replace it with God's truth. For this reason, it may be helpful to have at least one leader in each smaller group.

Steps for Listening Prayer:

1. Open in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to any lies you are believing about God, yourself, or the good life.
 - a. What lies do I believe about who God is?
 - b. What lies do I believe about who we are or who I am?
 - c. What lies do I believe about what the good life is?
2. As you are praying, wait on the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a lie that you have been believing.
3. When he brings something to your mind, write it down and pray that he will show you the truth to replace the lie.

Discussion Questions:

1. How was that time of listening prayer for you? Did the Holy Spirit bring to mind lies that you were unaware that you were believing?
2. What's the truth Jesus is calling me to believe (about God, myself, or the good life)? What does it look like for you to live in accordance with the truth in those areas?

Exercise for the Week: Reading Scripture

It is not enough to simply identify the lies of the enemy that we are believing, we need to be actively replacing lies with truth. In order to do this well, we need to know the truth. Jesus said in our passage tonight that "if you hold to my teaching...then *you will know the truth*, and the truth will set you free." We need to be saturated in the truth and know the teaching of Scripture deeply. The best way to do this is to spend time reading the Scripture. If you don't have a regular devotional life, try this week reading the book of Ephesians – it is 6 chapters, so by next Core Group you can read one chapter per day and have worked your way through the whole book. If you do have a consistent devotional life, try adjusting how you read. Maybe try reading slower and meditating deeply on the words you read.





Week Two: The Flesh

Romans 8:1-14

Objective

1. Discuss what it means to live according to the Spirit as opposed to living according to the flesh.
2. Engage in the practice of fasting as a Core Group.

Debrief Last Week's Exercise

1. How did last week's exercise go for you? What stood out to you as you read Ephesians last week?
2. What might it look like and how could it influence your devotion to Jesus to make regular Bible reading a part of your Community life? Individual life? Both?

Background

Last week we talked about the first enemy of our soul, the devil, and discussed how one of his primary tactics is to use lies that appeal to disordered desires and are normalized by the world around us. Today we are going to look at the second enemy of our soul that we need to resist: our flesh. Before we get too far in, it's important to define what we mean and what the Apostle Paul means when we talk about the flesh. John Mark Comer explains the flesh this way, "The flesh is our base, primal, animalistic drives for self-gratification, especially as it pertains to sensuality and survival." (*Live No Lies*, 189).

Whether we use the language of flesh or not, we can all understand the very human experience of having competing desires. Allow me to illustrate with a silly example. Think for a moment about the experience of checking out at the grocery store. When you start going through the line, on your left you are faced with magazine covers showing celebrities, airbrushed and photoshopped to perfection, and then on the right there are rows and rows of candy and chocolates. At this moment, you are faced with two competing cultural messages, both of which appeal to our flesh. We want to look like that and still eat the chocolate. We are torn between these two desires.

However, our competing desires do not stop there; they go much deeper. On the one hand we may want to be generous, cheerful givers, but on the other we also are faced with the desire to spend what we have on ourselves and buy that new pair of shoes that we don't really need. We may desire to honor the people around us, but almost like an unbearable itch needing to be scratched, we are tempted to gossip behind their backs. We want to not objectify our brothers and sisters in Christ, yet we are also faced with the urge to go and watch that show on Netflix or to stare as that person walks down the street for our own sexual excitement.

One of the big cultural lies that we are led to believe is that the self is sacred. Believing this, we have idolized our desires in such a way that it never feels right to deny yourself. Almost daily, we are bombarded with messages of "follow your heart", "be true to yourself", and "live your truth" yet these messages are so counter to the way of Jesus. The way of Jesus starts first with the call to deny ourselves, and Paul expounds on this thought by saying in Galatians 5:24 that the way we deal with the flesh is to crucify it. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to crucify the desires of the flesh and live according to the Spirit.



Read Romans 8:1-13

Text Questions

1. According to Romans 8, why did God have to send his own Son? What are the implications of this?
2. Who is in the realm of the Spirit?
3. Romans 8 begins with "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death." (v. 1-2) How does knowing this truth that there is freedom instead of condemnation for those who are in Christ change the way we understand the battle against our flesh?

Application Questions

1. What does it look like to have your mind set on what the flesh desires? What does it look like to have your mind set on the things the Spirit desires?
 - a. What does it mean to live according to the flesh? What does it mean to live according to the Spirit?
2. What are some ways we need to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (8:13)?
3. How can you rely on "the Spirit that gives life because of righteousness" in the process of denying your flesh and living by the Spirit?

Exercise of the Week: Fasting

"Fasting is practicing suffering; it's teaching our bodies to suffer. Suffering is unavoidable in life; joy is not. In fasting we're learning how to suffer with joy." - John Mark Comer

One of the best ways to practice crucifying the flesh is by fasting. Fasting is the intentional practice of going without food for the purpose of starving your flesh. Until recent history, this was one of the core practices of the Christian church. For centuries, followers of Jesus have fasted twice a week, and then during the Lent season followers of Jesus would go without food from sunrise to sunset for forty days. The point of fasting is not to punish your physical body as if it is evil, but to train your body to not always get what it wants. Richard Foster in his book, *The Celebration of Discipline*, writes: "In many ways the stomach is like a spoiled child, and a spoiled child does not need indulgence, but needs discipline."

There is no one set time for fasting, but if this is a discipline that is new for you a good place to start would be to try to fast from sunup to sundown (roughly a 12 hour fast). There is no legalism in this, you can fast longer or shorter, the point is to give it a serious try. During this time of fasting, use the feelings of hunger to point yourself back to the Lord. In those moments, imagine yourself drawing your strength not from the food you eat, but from the Spirit who dwells within you.

Here are a few other things you might try during your fast:

1. Break a Habit – Identify a sin, habit, or pattern in your "flesh" that you want to break. Spend the day in prayer for freedom in that area.

Journal – Spend some time in self-reflection. Journal, take a walk, sit quietly and think. Richard Foster said, "Fasting reveals the things that control us." If you're afraid, short-tempered, or lacking in will power, ask yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" Treat yourself with compassion, as God does, but be honest.





Week Three: The World

Romans 12:1-8

Objective

1. Discuss what it means to not be conformed to the world but transformed by Jesus.
2. Practice identifying ideas from the world and discerning how they align with the way of the world versus the way of Jesus.

Debrief Last Week's Exercise

1. How was your experience fasting last week? Was it harder or easier than you thought it would be? What surprised you?
2. What would it look like for fasting to be part of your weekly/monthly/yearly rhythms?

Background

During the first two weeks of this study, we talked about lies we are tempted to believe, lies that come from the devil and how our flesh makes us more susceptible to believing in those lies. You practiced identifying and replacing lies with Truth and fasting as a practice to crucify the flesh. This week we are going to be talking about the third enemy of the soul: **the world**.

As human beings, we are easily influenced by what we are exposed to. A mundane yet classic example of the power of influence is the phenomenon of yawning. When you are with someone who yawns, your body's natural response is to also yawn. It is instinctual and you likely won't even notice the correlation. This is just one example of many physical behaviors that are mirrored, but we also see this with moral behaviors. You are more likely to wear what your friends wear, talk how your friends talk, and think like your friends think! The herd mentality is woven into our beings. If we let ourselves, we will shift and sway with the world's newest cultural trends, ideologies, and rhythms of life. What's the problem with this?

The problem is that as followers of Jesus we aim not to look like the world, but to bear the image of Christ more each day. In 1 John, John writes "For everything in the world- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." (1 John 2:16-17). John Mark Comer defines the world as "a system of ideas, values, morals, practices, and social norms that are integrated into the mainstream and institutionalized in a culture corrupted by the twin sins of rebellion against God and the redefinition of good and evil." (*Live No Lies*, 242). Due to sin, the world is at odds with the Kingdom of God.

The devil's deceptive ideas have the power they have on us because of our flesh. As this happens communally, the world begins to look less like Christ. Evil becomes labeled as good and good labeled as evil. Jesus' vision for the Church is to be a "town built on a hill" and we are called to "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." We are to be "salt" and "light" for Christ not to be mirrors of the culture around us. We have a call on our lives not just for personal transformation, but for communal transformation. To stand firm against being changed by the world and instead letting God transform us. How much easier is this to do in Christian community than alone! Jon Tyson defines Christian community as "a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, knotted



together in a living network of persons, in a complex and challenging cultural setting, who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world.” As the body of Christ, we are to live in the world, engaging with the world around us on a daily basis, loving the people of the world, but not to conform to the ways of the world.

Read Romans 12:1-2

Text Questions

1. What does it look like to conform to the world?
2. What’s the difference between “do not conform” and “be transformed”?
3. How are we transformed?

Exercise for the Group: Idea Audit

In Romans 12, Paul writes, “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2). Paul recognizes these three truths: 1) the world has a way of thinking (ideas, values, practices, and social norms, 2) the world’s way of thinking has a gravitational pull, and 3) if you think like the world, you will begin to live like the world.

The goal of this exercise is to identify the sources through which we intake ideas, recognize what those ideas are, and analyze whether or not they align with the world or the way of Jesus. We want to identify the ideas that are coming before us each and every day, so that we can allow ourselves to be transformed by Christ instead of the world.

Step 1: Identify where your ideas come from.

- Take a few minutes individually to think about where your ideas come from whether it is social media, movies, shows, music, friends, books, or something else. Write down 3-5 sources of ideas in your life, beginning with the most influential. Think about what sources take the most of your time, emotion, and thoughts. (Examples: TikTok, Instagram, News Sources, TV Shows)

Step 2: Recognize what your ideas are.

- Start with one person sharing their list of sources and choose one source as a group to start with that is influential in the lives of multiple people. Reflect individually for a few moments on the question: “What idea(s) is this source presenting to me?”. Try to think of specific examples or recent experiences with the source. Spend a few minutes writing down what comes to mind whether or not you would say you believe or agree with the idea. Remember: the goal is to identify what ideas are presented to us each day.
- Consider these examples:
 - Example 1: In the most recent episode of _____, the message behind the story was _____.
 - Example 2: In _____ popular TikTok, the message is _____.
 - Example 3: As I scrolled through Instagram last night, it left me feeling _____.

Step 3: Analyze your ideas together.

- Share what came to mind and discuss as a group.
- Questions to use:
 - How does this idea align with the way of the world?
 - How does it align with the way of Jesus? Or how is it contrary to the way of Jesus?

If you have time, feel free to go through these steps again with another source!



Read Romans 12:3-8

Application Questions

1. Right after the call to “do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”, Paul writes about what it looks like to live as the Body of Christ. What do you think the connection is between these two ideas?
2. How might community be able to help you to not be transformed by the world but by Christ?
3. What can your Core Group do together this week or this semester to encourage each other to be transformed by Christ?

Exercise of the Week: Media Break

1. Decide which form(s) of media you will take a break from.
2. Decide how long your media break will be.
3. Share your plan with your Core Group and have each other as accountability.





Exposing the Devil's Strategy & Encountering Truth

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1. What's the lie that I'm believing (about God, myself, or the good life)?	2. What's the truth Jesus is calling me to believe (about God, myself, or the good life)?
3. What's the disordered desire of my flesh behind that lie?	4. What's the reordered desire of the Spirit for my life?
5. How is this lie normalized in our sinful society?	6. What's Jesus's Kingdom vision of a new normal?

