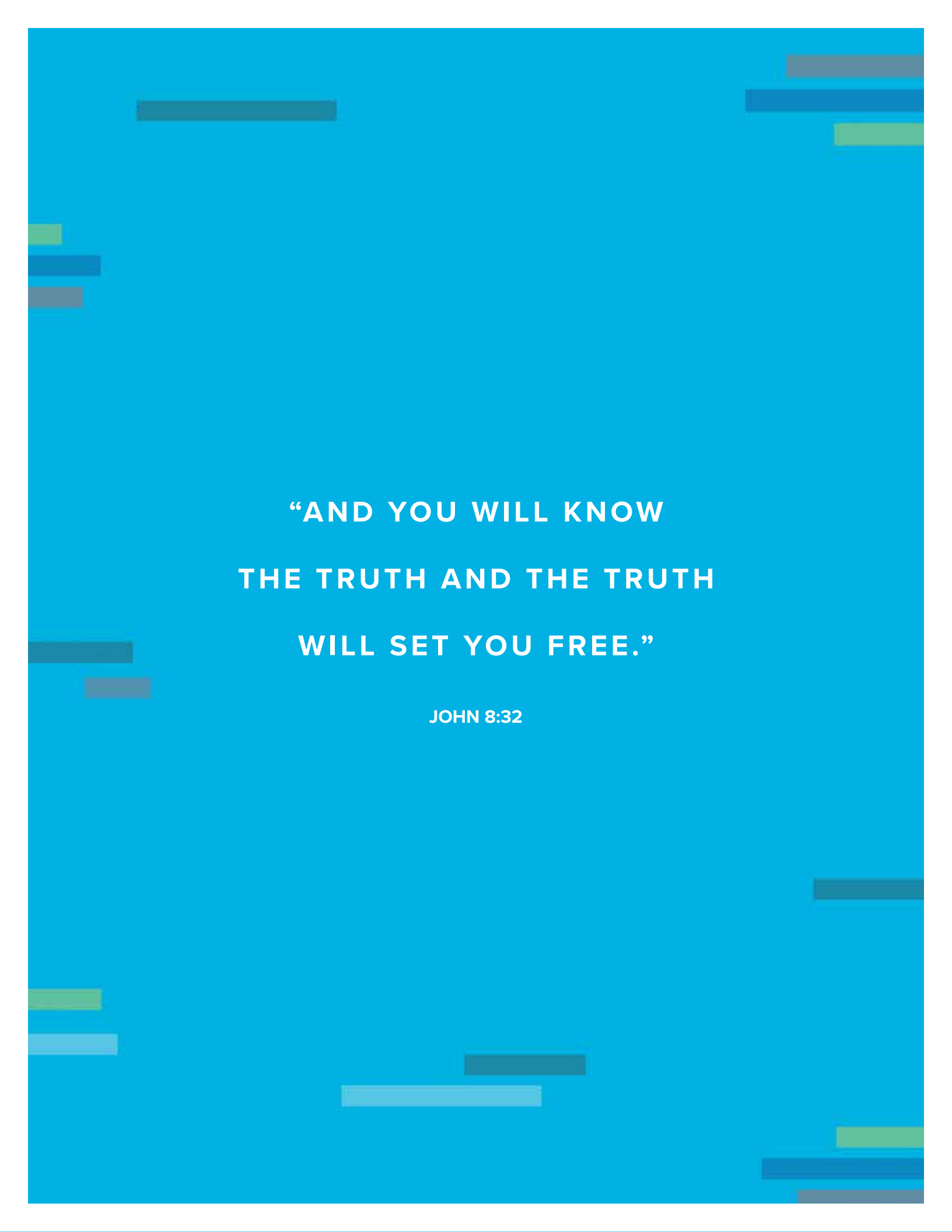


The logo for Freedom Groups is centered on a bright blue background. The word "Freedom" is in a large, white, sans-serif font, with a small red square on the dot of the 'i' and a small yellow triangle on the top of the 'm'. Below it, the word "GROUPS" is in a smaller, white, all-caps, sans-serif font. Scattered around the text are several horizontal bars of various lengths and colors, including shades of blue, green, and grey.

Freedom GROUPS

LEADER
GUIDE



**“AND YOU WILL KNOW
THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH
WILL SET YOU FREE.”**

JOHN 8:32

INTRODUCTION

Life as you know it may never be the same. No matter where you are in your faith journey, this curriculum will challenge you to take a step toward truth—about God, about faith, and about yourself.

It is for freedom that Christ set us free. That's what Paul wrote in Galatians 5:1, and Jesus Himself said that He came to the earth so that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Just imagine that: Life abundant. Not barely surviving, but truly living. It means days filled with hope, joy, and purpose. This is the kind of life God always intended for you to have.

God wants a relationship with you, and He sent his son, Jesus, to bridge the gap between earth and heaven so you could know Him. The journey may not be easy, but it will be rewarding. During this semester, you will be the one who decides how far you are willing to go to find freedom. Here is a promise from Jeremiah 29:13: If you seek Him with your whole heart, you will find Him.

The pursuit of *Freedom* begins today.

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WEEK ONE LEADER GUIDE

You will watch the Session One Video as a group this week. Videos are available for streaming and download at www.cityfirst.church/freedom.

Getting Your Group Started

- Give an overview of the semester and let your group know what to expect. Each section of the curriculum is designed to be read the week before it is discussed, and there are opportunities for response and reflection each week. Encourage your participants to go all in with the curriculum. They will get out of it what they put into it!
- Explain to your group what each meeting will look like. Let them know you want to respect their time and will start and end on time every week. Participants appreciate structure and knowing exactly what to expect.
- Share the dates of the Freedom Conference and encourage everyone to mark their calendars and make plans to be there.

Group Structure

- Play one worship song to help people settle their hearts and their minds.

- Facilitate discussion to help group members continue to process and get the most out of that week's teaching. Discussion questions are provided for you each week.
- Set aside time for prayer. This can happen corporately (as a whole group), in smaller groups, and individually. Be sensitive of the needs of your group in this area, and remember individual prayer is an important part of preparing your participants for the conference.

Tip: You may also offer for participants to share prayer requests on index cards. Not only does it provide a private way for participants to share requests, it also is a great way for you to remember how to pray for your group during the week.

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Overview

The second story in the Bible describes two trees from the Garden of Eden: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. It is the second story because everything in our Christian lives is filtered through the idea of the two trees. God gave Adam and Eve the choice between the two trees. We have the choice to filter our lives through one tree or the other. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil says, "You must do more to get to God." It keeps us stuck trying to get God's approval. The Tree of Life says, "Receive the fact that Jesus already loves you." Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thinking causes us to obey out of duty rather than obeying out of delight as we do in Tree of Life thinking.

There are four responses that will help us filter our lives through the Tree of Life:

1. Fall in love with Jesus.
2. Serve God through relationship not rules.
3. Respond to all sin with life.
4. Guard your heart from going back.

Discussion Guide

- Which tree do you think you live in and filter your life through the most?
- Do you find yourself “doing more” to get to God and earn His approval? If so, how?
- Discuss religion versus relationship. Do you feel like you obey God out of duty or delight?
- What are some practical ways you can choose life in your relationship with God and with other people?

Application

As they read the lesson for Week 2 this week, encourage your participants to look for ways they might act and react based on Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thinking. Ask them to be prepared to share some examples next week if they are comfortable.

Prayer Focus

- During your individual prayer time with group members, remember that some of your participants might not have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This could be their first introduction to the message of Jesus, or they may have only experienced religion rather than a relationship with God. Cover the topic of salvation with each of your participants during individual prayer, and if they are ready to give their heart to Jesus, pray the prayer of salvation with them.

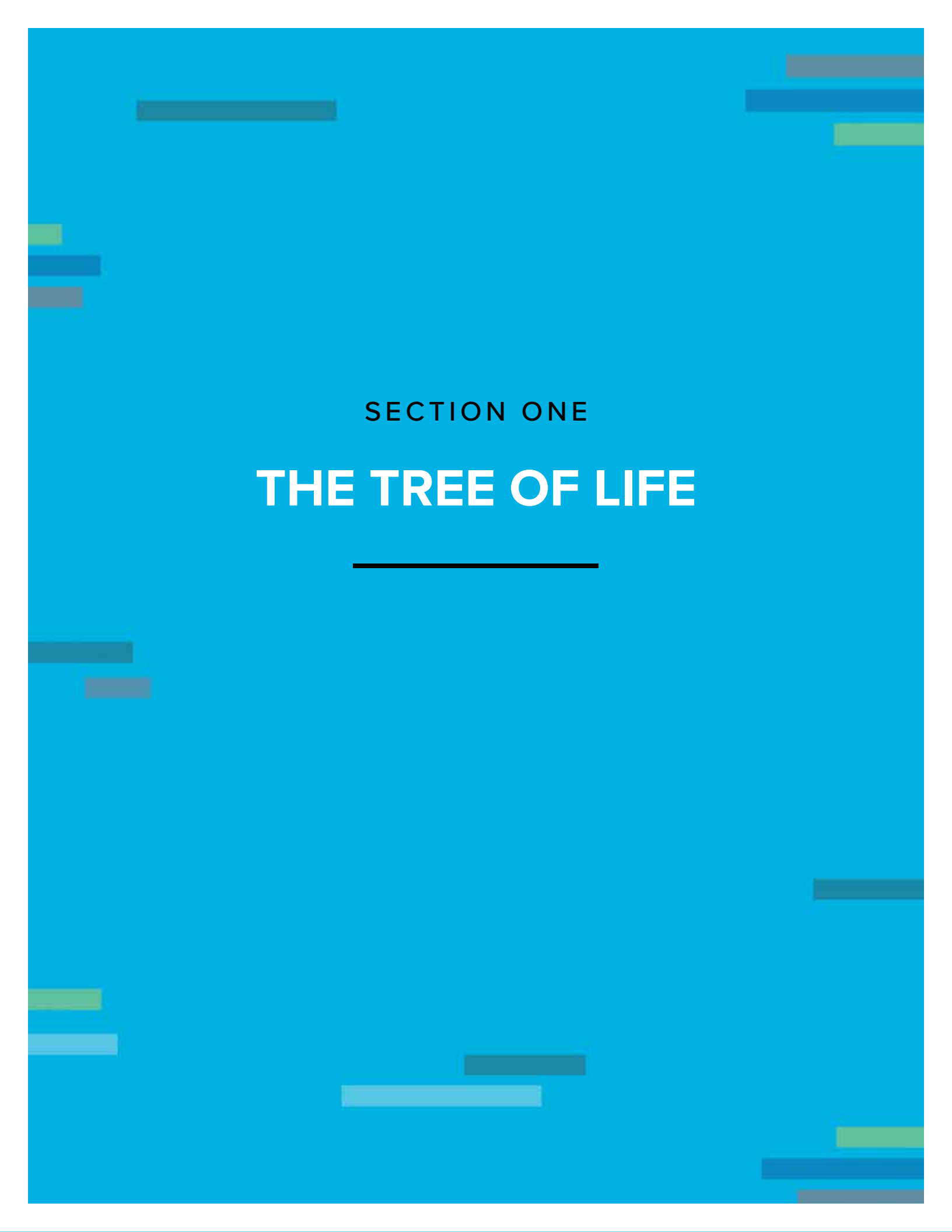
Prayer of Salvation:

Dear Jesus,

Thank You for dying on the cross and making a way for me to come to God. I receive this extravagant gift and ask You to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. I give You all of me and ask You to turn my life around for Your glory. Fill me with Your Spirit, and help me live the life You died to give me.

In Jesus name, Amen.

- During your daily prayer over your group during the week, pray for good, healthy relationships to be formed within the group and that the participants feel the group is a safe place and are transparent in discussion. Pray for your participants to go all in and experience all God has for them.



SECTION ONE

THE TREE OF LIFE

WEEK TWO LEADER GUIDE

Overview

Tree of Life:

Freedom, Grace, Eternal life, God is good, God is forgiving

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:

Bondage, The Law, Leads to death, God is only a judge,
We are condemned

After consuming the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve hid, but God came looking for them. God is in love with sinful man and sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue people.

Truths about the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:

- The fruit is knowledge. It is not wrong to have knowledge, but we must evaluate our motives to obtain it. Are we wanting to exalt ourselves or gain God's wisdom and understanding? Using godly wisdom allows us to become more like God as we emulate Him. Worldly wisdom leads us to sin, which alienates us from God.
- The fruit is deadly. The desire to know is in direct opposition to the desire to trust. Adam and Eve didn't die physically but died spiritually upon consuming the fruit.

- The fruit is consumed. Ideas are ingested in our minds and then sin is conceived. The first sin came about when Eve talked to Adam about it. Through a conversation, they consumed the idea and began to process it. This progression tells us that sin does not begin with the act, it begins in our minds.

- The fruit causes separation. God didn't separate Himself from Adam and Eve; instead, they hid from Him after consuming the fruit. God searched for them because He loved them. When we see His heart for us, we will run to Him instead of hiding from Him when we sin. We must get to the point where no matter what has happened in our lives, we take responsibility for our own lives. We can no longer blame anyone else for the quality of our relationship with God.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil produces shame and victimization. Shame causes us to separate ourselves from God. Victimization causes us to blame others, displacing our responsibility for the condition of our lives and souls.

Application

The lesson for Week 3 goes more in depth on the Tree of Life. Encourage your participants to pay attention over the next week to how they might be acting and reacting based on Tree of Life thinking, and ask them to come prepared to share some examples next week.

Discussion Guide

- Application from Week 1: Ask participants to share examples of ways they acted and reacted out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil throughout the previous week.
- Are there things in your past that have caused you to want to hide from God?
- Have you used knowledge of God as a basis of your relationship with Him?
- What are some ways that you might have gotten caught up in religion and the Law versus the freedom and grace that result from a relationship with God?
- Have you ever been overcome by shame? The way to overcome shame is to start seeing ourselves the way God sees us. Throughout the semester, we will cover ways to align our perspectives with God's and to let Him move in our hearts.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that any incorrect views of God will be revealed to your participants and that they will be able to see Him as a loving Father who is searching for them.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas in which participants have operated out of shame and victimization.

WEEK THREE LEADER GUIDE

Overview

The fruit of living in the Tree of Life:

- The Tree of Life results in fellowship with God. The only way to experience abundant life is truly knowing the living God. He asked us to love Him, but only after His lavish display of love for us through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Fellowship with God results in innocence—not the other way around. As we spend more time walking with God, listening to His voice, talking to Him, obeying Him, worshipping Him, and enjoying Him, we will notice a transformation taking place, not only on the outside, but on the inside as well. We will become transparent and unashamed before Him.
- Innocence is a conduit of God's power. As we seek God and submit our lives to Him, He equips us for every good work.
- Innocence results in freedom. We will sin and fall, but if we sin with the Tree of Life as our perspective, we can easily receive forgiveness and get back up.

Discussion Guide

- Application from Week 2: Ask participants to share examples of ways they acted and reacted out of Tree of Life thinking throughout the previous week.
- Do you feel completely innocent before God? What would it be like to have true fellowship with God?
- Do you live your life as a son or a servant?
- Do your daily responses and decisions bring life to others? In what tree do you find yourself living in the most?

Application

Encourage group members to take practical steps to see the fruit of the Tree of Life in their lives by beginning with fellowship with God. Emphasize the importance of daily time in worship, God's Word, and prayer.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that your participants understand that it is a daily choice to live in the Tree of Life.
- Pray that they are able to grasp the extravagant love of the Father and that they begin extending that same love and grace in their relationships with others.

WEEK FOUR LEADER GUIDE

Overview

God created us with three distinct parts: a spirit that must be redeemed, a soul that must be restored, and a body that must surrender. At the moment of salvation, our spirit is made alive in Christ and immediately put in right standing with God (Romans 3:24, 5:1). The Bible calls this event justification: “just-as-if I had never sinned.” However, the soul and body will require time and effort to be conformed to the image of Christ. This gradual process is called sanctification. God’s plan is that our spirits become the strongest part of our three-part design and be the “command center” of who we are and what we do.

Our souls are also made up of three parts: the mind, the will, and the emotions. The soul enables us to experience relationships, appreciate the beauty of our surroundings, and think, reason, and express emotions. God formed our bodies from the earth. The body acts as a temporary house or shell that contains our soul and spirit. Our bodies have appetites, both good and bad. The Bible says to be careful of any sin that leads to our flesh getting anything it wants. Keeping our flesh in submission to our soul and our soul in submission to our spirit allows us to live in spiritual order, in tune with the voice of God.

Spiritual order provides a framework for living in the Tree of Life. It allows you to live with your spirit united with God, and your soul and body submitted to your spirit. Living in spiritual order brings witht

it incredible benefits, such as protection, spiritual growth, and power to overcome obstacles in our lives. Remember, if we fall short or give in to temptation, God convicts; He does not condemn. Godly sorrow for sin will lead us to repentance, which means “to turn and go the other way.” To walk in spiritual order, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. He is our counselor, our friend, our guide, and the One who reveals truth.

Discussion Guide

- How does knowing your spirit is redeemed and in right standing with the Father change the way you see yourself?
- Are your thoughts driven by emotions? (Soul)
- Are your actions driven by your cravings? (Body)
- What are you doing to feed your spirit? (Spirit)
- Do you feed your body, soul, or spirit the most?
- What are some ways that you can intentionally feed your spirit to stay in spiritual order?
- What are the benefits of walking in the spirit?

Application

Encourage your participants to be aware throughout this week of times when their soul and body are the strongest and times when their spirit is the strongest of the three.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that the Lord will reveal and reconcile any areas not in spiritual order.
- Pray that your participants develop a desire to know God more by spending time in His Word, in worship, and in prayer so that they can live in spiritual order.

WEEK FIVE LEADER GUIDE

You will watch the Section Two Video as a group this week. Videos are available for streaming and download at www.cityfirst.church/freedom.

Overview

This video sets up the second section of the curriculum, which includes surrender, forgiveness, and the power of the spoken word.

The condition of your heart is revealed by outward symptoms (giving in to temptation, depression, anger, lust, etc.). When these symptoms are present, there is a deeper issue, and it is associated with the heart. There are four blockages of the heart: selfishness, bitterness, rejection, and evil thoughts. In order to remove the blockage of selfishness, we must actively surrender our lives to God. Bitterness occurs and blocks our hearts when we hold on to a hurt caused by another person, and we must live a life of forgiveness to remove the blockage. A seed of rejection planted in our lives may also cause a blockage, and we can reverse this curse of rejection by discovering and receiving God's acceptance of us through the power of His Word. Evil thoughts result when we allow ourselves to be exposed to unholy things or speak lies over ourselves. These evil thoughts need to be replaced with truth from God's Word. We need to take steps to remove these blockages from our hearts in order to live in freedom. Invite the Holy Spirit to show you any ways in which your heart is blocked.

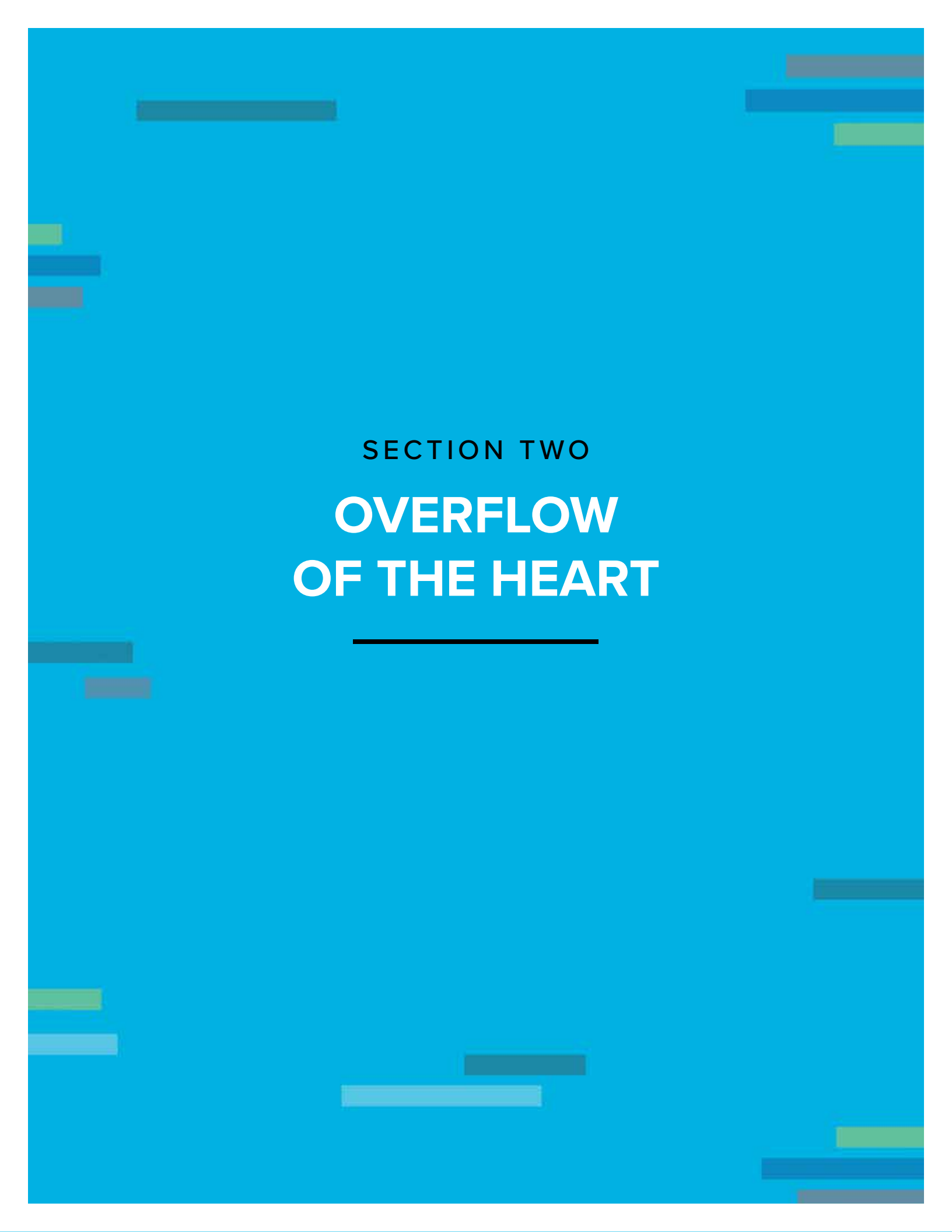
Invite Him to change you. Invite the Him to fill you so that your heart will be full of only what is good.

Discussion Guide

- Which one of the four blockages of the heart (selfishness, bitterness, rejection, evil thoughts) did you relate to the most? How might it be holding you back? What practical steps can you take to remove the blockage?
- Are there areas of your life that you have not surrendered to the Lord? Why do you think you are holding on to them?
- Have you ever thought about your words having power? Do you think you primarily speak words of life or words of death?

Prayer Focus

- Pray that each participant recognizes any selfishness, bitterness, rejection, or evil thoughts that are blocking their heart from all God has for them.
- Pray that they are open to the Holy Spirit showing them these areas, changing them, and blessing and filling them with truth!



SECTION TWO

OVERFLOW OF THE HEART

WEEK SIX LEADER GUIDE

Overview

When it comes to life with Christ, the act of giving up control to Him is actually the beginning of our freedom. A life of surrender requires trust, and that trust is developed in the context of relationship. Jesus left heaven and came to earth; He felt hunger, hurt, and rejection; He was beaten and crucified and three days later rose from the grave—all so He could prove His love, earn our trust, and be in relationship with us.

If you want to get to know God better, you will need to do what you would do when getting to know a friend: spend time with Him. This doesn't have to look a certain way. The key is to invite Him into your life. The Lord will reveal Himself to you as you do things that feed your spirit, like studying the Word, seeking Him in prayer, and building relationships with like-minded friends. God's way of thinking is much different—and much greater—than ours. As a believer, the only way you can live the abundant life God has for you is to fully surrender your life to Him and adopt His way of doing things.

God wants to make our lives smoother by being Lord over everything. It is only when He is in control that we can walk in spiritual order. Anything we decide to hold on to becomes our responsibility to maintain. However, if we surrender every area of our lives to Him, He will partner with us on this journey and bring us safely to our final destination. When we surrender everything to Him, we will find that His path to the fulfillment of our desires is better than we could have imagined on our own.

Discussion Guide

- What areas of your life have you not fully surrendered to God? Are you having a hard time trusting Him with those areas?
- This week, we learned that we will worship what we value most. What are some of the things you might value more than your relationship with God? How do you think your life would change if you pursued God with all your heart rather than those things?
- Do you have any relationships you need to surrender to the Lord? If so, how have those relationships come between you and God? How do you think your life will change once you surrender those relationships?
- Which of the “Six Ways to Stay Unoffended” spoke to you the most and why?
- Have you surrendered your past, present, and future to God? Do you trust that His way is better than your own? Why or why not?

Application

Encourage your participants to think about the areas of their life that need to be surrendered to the Lord. Have them pray about those areas this week, and encourage them to choose a Scripture to declare over each area.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that the Lord will reveal the areas that your participants need to surrender to Him.
- Pray that their hearts will be softened and that they will understand that surrendering these things to the Lord and letting Him be in control will bring freedom and peace.

WEEK SEVEN LEADER GUIDE

Overview

Because we live in a fallen world, we face the realities of hurt and offense. Harboring unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting another person to die; it does much greater harm to us than the person we refuse to forgive. Offense is the bait that the enemy uses to lure us into bondage, and it causes us to create walls. Walls may keep out the bad stuff, but they also keep out the good. With walls around our hearts, we not only protect ourselves from pain and rejection but from experiencing love and life-giving relationships. We think that it is up to us to protect our hearts, but the truth is, God never meant for this to be our responsibility; it is His.

Reasons we may struggle to forgive:

- We have the wrong idea of forgiveness. Remember, forgiveness is not minimizing the offense or forgetting what happened. Forgiveness doesn't necessarily bring reconciliation. Forgiveness is something that happens in our hearts, giving us freedom. Reconciliation is a two way street and requires repentance, the desire for restitution, and rebuilding of trust from both parties.
- We don't think it's fair to let them off the hook. We reason in our hearts that they don't deserve forgiveness. But God doesn't hand out forgiveness based on merit—and thank goodness,

because none of us deserve forgiveness! Since we have been forgiven so very much, we should extend what we have received to others. The forgiven forgive!

- We don't think we can do it. In our own human power, we may not be strong enough to forgive the great wrongs done against us, but we are empowered by the supernatural strength of God. It is important to remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. It is a choice that we have to make daily.

It is impossible to forgive others for their offenses until we receive forgiveness ourselves. If we struggle to forgive others, chances are we have not fully grasped what God has done for us. We have been given total forgiveness for past, present, and future sin. It is not that God forgets our sins, but rather, He chooses to remember our sin no more because He wants to be in relationship with us.

It's often difficult for us to receive God's forgiveness. The enemy loves to remind us of the mistakes we made in the past because guilt keeps us stuck, unable to move forward into the future that God has planned for us. We feel that we have to repent for our past over and over, but these thoughts come solely from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We don't have to earn forgiveness. It is a free gift we can receive by faith. When our past comes to mind, we can defeat the enemy by knowing and speaking truth from the Word of God. Forgiveness takes courage and strength, but it leads us to pathways of righteousness where we can live free from guilt and shame!

How do we keep our hearts pure and unoffended? We must recognize our own imperfections, focus on the real enemy (the devil, not people), and receive the forgiveness and love of God. Because it is a daily choice to forgive, remember the

steps for walking out forgiveness with those who have offended you: pray for them, bless them, and do good to them.

Discussion Guide

- Application from Week 6: What area did you pray about surrendering this week? Did you pick a Scripture to declare over the area?
- Did you have the wrong idea of forgiveness before reading through the curriculum this week? Are you harboring unforgiveness in any way?
- Have you received God's forgiveness for your past sins? If not, what do you think is holding you back?
- Think about this, in light of all the sin for which you have been forgiven, can you release those who have wronged you? Would you trade your forgiveness from God for the right to hold someone accountable for their offense?
- Are there people in your life who you have not released to the Lord? Do you think you might be trying to get revenge for their offense?

Application

Encourage the group to write down names of any individuals they need to forgive. Challenge them to pray for each person by name every day this week. You may choose to have your group read the "Let Freedom Ring" section out loud during your group meeting.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that your participants truly receive the Lord's forgiveness for themselves so they can freely forgive those who have offended them.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show your participants who they need to forgive and give them the strength to do so.
- Pray that the Lord will heal every wound in their lives and allow them to live a truly unoffended life.
- If they express that they are constantly reminding themselves of past failures and are bothered by the sin of their past even though they have asked for forgiveness, pray specifically over these areas.

WEEK EIGHT LEADER GUIDE

Overview

Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV) says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” The words we speak are a spiritual gauge, showing how much of our soul we have surrendered to God. A life surrendered to God and filled with the Holy Spirit will produce speech full of grace, mercy, love, and power.

With words, God spoke the entire universe into being. Words and language were His idea, and His words are literally life to us. Because God created man in His image, our words have power. Every time we open our mouths to talk, we either advance the kingdom of life or we advance the kingdom of death. When we were saved, we weren’t taken directly to heaven because we are Jesus’ body—His hands, feet, heart, and mouth designed to reach the lost and make a difference in this world.

Our words can either tear others down or build them up. God desires for us to speak words of life that build up, bring healing, and offer encouragement.

To be able to speak words of life, we need to guard our hearts. We must control what bombards our ears and saturates our souls. We also need to gauge our tongues. A gauge is a tool that determines the maximum amount of something. We need to decide that our words will not cross a specific line and manage that decision daily. Speaking words of life also requires garnishing our speech. At times, we need to say things because none of us deserve forgiveness!

that are difficult or may appear negative, but we can still speak in a way that will bless and encourage the other person.

If you have been on the receiving end of destructive words, you can truly be healed and set free from the effects of those words.

Pray through these steps:

1. Confess: Healing starts with admitting we were wrong. We must first acknowledge that we have believed something that is not true and have agreed with the lies of the enemy.

2. Repent: To repent means to change direction. When we repent, we choose to turn around and go the opposite way of our previous path. Stop your agreement with the enemy in its tracks and set your mind on a new course of thinking. If anyone has hurt you by reinforcing these lies in your life, forgive them and release them to the Lord.

3. Cast off: We must refuse to allow the enemy to continue to use destructive words or events against us. With the authority of the Name of Jesus, command the enemy to leave.

4. Bless: Once the enemy has been removed, fill the place that he held with truth and promises found in Scripture. Speak life over yourself by declaring an accurate view of how God sees you.

Discussion Guide

- Application from Week 7: How has your relationship with the Lord and your perspective changed as you prayed for the people you needed to forgive this past week?
- What does your day-to-day conversation say about your spiritual condition? Do your words reflect that God lives inside of you?
- Are you intentional to use your words to promote the Kingdom of God and minister to others?
- Do you say things about yourself, or others, that you quickly regret? What steps are you taking to be more careful with your words?
- If group members feel comfortable sharing, ask: what are some of the words of death and cursing that have been spoken to you by others? What are some of the words of death and cursing that you have spoken to yourself? Have you spoken words of death and cursing to others?
- Discuss “The Voice of Victory.” Encourage participants to repent and cast off words of death and agree with words of life by speaking Scripture over their situations.

Application

Here is an idea that can create a powerful moment during discussion: Provide pieces of paper for your participants, and have them write down any words of death that have been spoken to them by others or that they have spoken to themselves. Then, let each person tear up the pieces of paper as a tangible illustration that the participants no longer have to carry these words. Remind them to use God's Word to replace the words of death with truth. In this moment, either close in prayer as a whole group or with individual prayer.

Prayer Focus

Pray that participants understand the power of their words. Pray and break off any words of death that have been spoken over each participant.

WEEK NINE LEADER GUIDE

Overview

The same power that is in Jesus is in the Word. We have to receive that truth for the Word to work in our lives. If at some point we feel the Word has lost its power, it's not because the Word has changed, it's because we've stopped mixing the Word with faith. If you want to fall in love with Jesus, find Him in the Word, and make the Word a priority in your life. If you want more power, consume more of His Word.

We need the Spirit of God in order for the Word to come alive, and when it does, it will genuinely change our lives. "Rhema" is the Greek word for "word," and it means "revealed word." When the Word becomes revelation to you, no word God speaks will be void of the power for its fulfillment.

Activate the Word of God in your life by making God's Word a priority, believing what you read, and meditating on Scripture. One of the great ways to meditate on the Word of God is to speak God's Word out loud. Find declarations in Scripture that you can speak out loud to strengthen your spirit. Another way to meditate on the Word is to think about it day and night. Bring your world and God's world together and make them one. You can also make meditation practical. Choose a verse and study it throughout the day. The promises of God are fulfilled when we walk in obedience to His Word. Meditation will turn into revelation, revelation will activate your faith, and when your faith is activated, things change!

Discussion Guide

- Are you regularly consuming the Word of God and letting its truth replace your old way of thinking? If not, what do you think is standing in the way of you reading the Word?
- Do you think you read the Bible out of duty or out of desire to know God?
- What are some practical ways you can get more of the Word in your life?
- Can you remember a time when you experienced the rhema Word of God—a time when God’s Word came alive in a situation in your life?

Application

Here is an idea to help your group members apply the Word to their lives: write Scripture on index cards and have participants select one that speaks to them or have them read a verse from the Appendix that applies to them or their situation.

Prayer Focus

Ask the Lord to create a hunger in your participants’ hearts for God’s Word, and pray that God’s Word would bring revelation to each participant.

WEEK TEN LEADER GUIDE

You will watch the Section Three Video as a group this week. Videos are available for streaming and download at www.cityfirst.church/freedom.

Overview

In the first two sections, we have discussed two reasons why you were in the condition you were in when we began the Life Group. We are all greatly affected by both our own sin—the choices we have made—and what other people have done to us. While we have already covered these two factors, there is a third we must address: There is an enemy of your soul who has a plan for your life. We must acknowledge the fact that demons are real and they want to destroy us; however, demons respond to higher authority: the Name of Jesus, the Word of God, and the blood of the cross. In order to engage in spiritual warfare and ensure we are fighting the enemy proactively, we must submit any open doors, and confront our enemy daily.

Discussion Guide

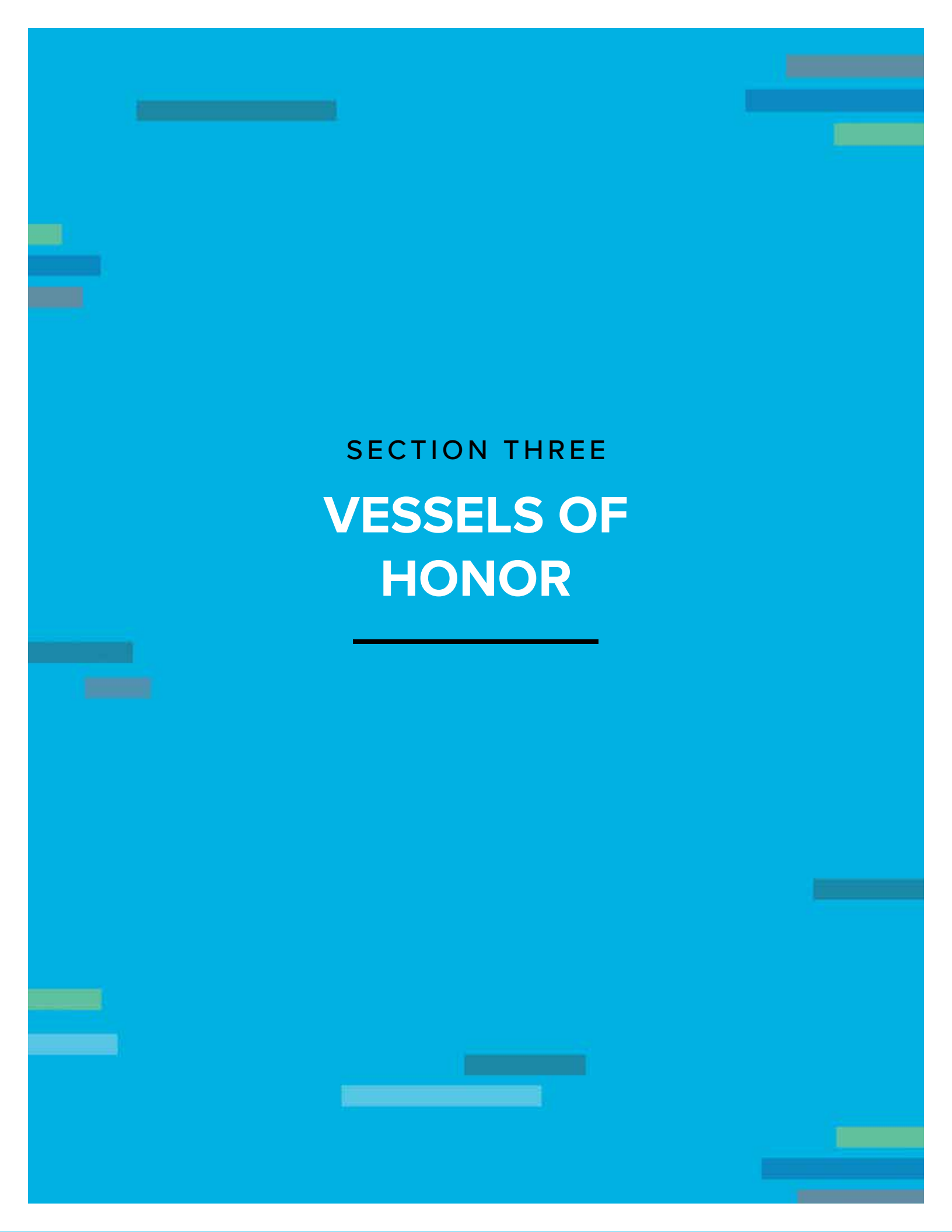
- Have you seen a pattern in how the enemy attacks you? What do his attacks typically look like in your life?
- What doors are open in your life right now that you might need to close so that you can stand strong against the enemy?
- What are some practical ways you can engage in spiritual warfare to fight the enemy?

Application

Reference “The Armor of God” in the Appendix. Encourage your participants to put on the Armor of God every day by praying through each piece of armor.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that your participants are aware of the enemy’s plan to steal, kill, and destroy their lives.
- Pray for them to realize that they have the power to fight the enemy and that they are fighting from victory, not for victory!



SECTION THREE

VESSELS OF HONOR

WEEK ELEVEN LEADER GUIDE

Every person is at a different place in his or her walk with Christ. No two stories are the same, and no one starts out as silver or gold; it is a process. If you're unsatisfied with where you are in the process, God is eager to take you to the next level. He is the One who prepares us, refines us, and makes us honorable. You are not defined or limited by your past. He says in His Word that He makes all things brand new (2 Corinthians 5:17), and He wants to help you become a vessel of honor.

Remember, justification is an event that takes place when we are saved. When Jesus becomes our Savior, at that very moment, every sin of our past is wiped clean. Sanctification, however, is not an event— it's a process. It's a journey through which God molds and transforms our character.

It may surprise you to discover that the highest level of our journey as Christians is servanthood. Our greatest goal as Christians is to fulfill the purpose for which God created us, and that requires us to become His servants. There are three steps we can take to become vessels of honor: offer our bodies, renew our minds, and surrender our wills. When we are intentional to give God our bodies each day, we are able to make conscious decisions to avoid sin. Sin functions in the body, but the mind controls the body. Sin begins in the mind, which is why it is so important to renew our minds to the Word of God. The enemy's goal is to plant thoughts in your mind that are contrary to God's thoughts.

Warfare is exchanging the report of the world for the report of the Lord. Peace can reign and rule in our hearts when we align our thoughts with the truth of God's Word. We know that the body carries out sin, and the mind controls the body, but the will controls the mind. As we surrender our will to God, His perfect will becomes the motivation of our lives.

Being useful to the Kingdom is the greatest honor of our lives, but it comes at a price. When we begin to walk in our purpose, we will get the attention of the enemy. We should anticipate his attacks and take them as a sign of encouragement. We are a threat to his plan to keep the world in darkness. When attacks come, remember, you belong to God and the enemy cannot change that. We need to remember the truth that "He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world" so we can stand against temptation. To do so, we must keep the dialogue going with God. Open communication keeps us safe and aware. If we find ourselves in bondage, we need to repent of our sin and cast off the powers of darkness in our lives. When we repent, our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus, but there are times we might still feel like we are not forgiven. When this happens, we need to tell the enemy to leave by casting him off in the name of Jesus. This destroys the demonic hold in that area and releases us to experience the complete peace of God's forgiveness.

Though becoming a vessel of honor may seem like an overwhelming process, intentional time with God every day will help you become useful for the Kingdom, allowing you to shine a powerful light that drives away darkness.

Discussion Guide

- Are you satisfied with where you are with God? How do you want your life to be different?
- Review justification and sanctification. Make sure your participants understand that justification is an event and sanctification is the process that allows us to become vessels of honor.
- If your group members feel comfortable sharing, ask: what areas of your life might need to be confronted and cleaned up by the Holy Spirit?
- What are some of the lies the enemy tells you about your ability to be used by God?
- What are some practical ways you can renew your mind to the Word of God so you can silence the voice of the enemy?
- What are some of the areas in your life in which Satan tends to have a foothold (areas might include rejection, abuse, self-hatred/unworthiness, depression, pride, unforgiveness, greed, guilt/shame, lust/sexual impurity, control, anger, fear)? Remind your participants to use the prayer outline provided to repent and cast off the enemy's hold in these areas so that they can walk in freedom.

Application

Here is an idea to help illustrate the idea of vessels of honor: Use the visual aids of a paper plate and a china plate, talking about the difference between the two. Ask your participants: In what kind of environments is each plate used? What kinds of food do each hold? What kind of plate do you want to be? We can all be fine china. The choice is ours!

Prayer Focus

Pray that your participants' eyes are opened to any footholds of the enemy and that they will be bold in standing up to the enemy regarding these areas.

WEEK TWELVE LEADER GUIDE

Overview

When we truly embrace the love God has for us, we begin to trust Him, and, as our relationship with Him grows, we develop a great love for Him as well. What we once saw as duty has now become devotion. It is our delight to know Him and follow His commands. Worship is a natural response when we fall in love with Jesus. It is also an act of warfare against Satan and demonic forces! Psalm 149:6 says, “Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands.”

In Ezekiel 47:1-12, we find a vision of a river, which symbolizes the presence of God. As we venture forward in our relationship with God, we have a tendency to want to keep our toes on the ground, ensuring our head stays above water and we are in control of our lives. But God is inviting us to trust Him, to go deeper, to experience the fullness of His presence. As we surrender control to God, we will be swept away by His love and freely enjoy our journey with Him. When we see that God is worthy of our trust, we will more easily give up control and live in spiritual order.

Ways to be a true worshipper:

1. Give God your affection.

God wants to be in a covenant relationship with you that involves much more than signing songs. He wants you to desire and enjoy His presence.

much more than signing songs. He wants you to desire and enjoy His presence. Worship Him out of the overflow of your heart because He is worthy of the best you can offer Him.

2. Commit to unconditional worship.

True worship means praising God even when we don't feel like it. It's common for us to take a conditional approach to worshipping God. We praise Him when our lives are going well, but disengage and withdraw when things get difficult. The truth is, God is worthy of our worship in good times and bad. We must make a commitment that whatever comes in our lives, we will continue to posture ourselves to worship God.

3. Include God in your daily life.

When our everyday world looks different than our "church world" we compartmentalize our lives and limit God's access to our hearts. Including God in all areas of our lives reveals our level of surrender to Him. As we invite Him to be a part of everything we do, we will have moments of worship every day.

4. Be obedient.

The greatest sacrifice we can give to God is a heart of humility willing to serve Him with unconditional obedience. This kind of worship moves the heart of God toward us.

5. Show reverence.

Our God is like no other—almighty, awesome, and beyond comprehension. It is only appropriate that we approach Him with awe and reverence. True worship requires that we fear the Lord. When we both fear God, and love Him, we feel safe in the shelter of His immense greatness.

Discussion Guide

- Are you living the life of a worshipper? If so, how? If not, what are some things you can change to ensure you are living the life of a worshipper?
- Looking at the four levels of worship, at what level are you currently? What steps can you take to move to the next level?
- Do you feel like your worship is coming from a genuine place in your heart? What are you doing to create an atmosphere of worship in your daily life?
- What are some practical things you can do to worship the Lord throughout the day?

Application

Consider starting this week's group off with an extended worship time (two or three songs) to prepare everyone's hearts for a more focused discussion on worship.

This will be your last Life Group meeting before the Freedom Conference. Set a date for your group to meet after the conference. This meeting will give participants an opportunity to share what the Lord has done in their lives this semester and at the conference. Try to plan the meeting on the same day and time your group has met throughout the semester.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for each participant to live a life of genuine worship. Bind the enemy from stealing spiritual progress that has been made this semester.
- Pray that the Lord will work out all of the details for them to attend the Freedom Conference and experience all God has or them.

FREEDOM CELEBRATION MEETING

This meeting will give participants an opportunity to share what the Lord has done in their lives this semester and at the conference.

Ask your participants the following questions and give every participant the opportunity to share:

- What has been the most powerful truth you have learned this semester?
- What did the Lord teach you at the Freedom Conference?

ANSWER KEY

Week 1

- Do *more* to get to God.
- Receive the fact that Jesus has already *done it*.
- Keep trying to get *God's approval*.
- Receive the fact that He *already loves you*.
- The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil says: *Obey out of duty*.
- The Tree of Life says: *Obey out of delight*.
- Fall in love with Jesus.
- Serve God through relationships not rules.
- Respond to all sin with life.
- Guard your heart from going back.

Week 2

- Read Genesis 3:1-8 and notice who is doing what. In verses 7 and 8, what did Adam and Eve do? *Realized they were naked, sewed fig leaves for covering, hid*
- Read Genesis 3:9. What did God do? *He called out, "Where are you?"*
- Read James 4:8 and 2 Chronicles 15:2. What do these passages teach us about our relationship with God? *Come near to God and He'll come near to you. He is with you if you're with Him. Seek Him, and you will find Him.*
- According to Colossians 2:3, what do we find hidden in Jesus? *Treasures of wisdom and knowledge*
- Read 1 Kings 3:10-13. How did God respond to Solomon's request? *Granted him wisdom and included riches and honor because God was pleased with his desire for discernment for administering justice*

- Read Genesis 3:22-24. Why were Adam and Eve driven from the Garden of Eden? *Because they knew good and evil, making them like God*
- From Romans 8:38-39, name all the things that cannot separate us from the love of God. *Life, death, angels, demons, present, future, powers, height, depth, anything in all creation*

Week 3

- Read Matthew 5:39-44 and Luke 6:27-36. In these passages, Jesus tells us how to live as a child of God in innocence and freedom. Using the Scriptures as a reference, describe what living in innocence looks like.
Answers vary – turning the other cheek, loving your neighbor, praying for those who persecute you, giving up rights freely, giving justice and mercy, loving those who don't love you.
- What does Psalm 37:23-24 say happens when the Godly stumble? *They will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.*
- Read Galatians 4:7 and 2 Corinthians 6:18. What does God say about your identity? *You are no longer a slave, but a son/heir. He is our Father, and we are His sons and daughters.*
- Read Matthew 11:28-30 and write out Jesus' response to the heavy burden that comes from trying to keep the law.
Come to me, and I will give you rest.
- Read Philippians 4:8 and write out a way to renew your mind.
Answers vary – Think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy.

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Answers vary – Think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy.

Week 4

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:14 and write why the world cannot accept the things that come from God. *Answers vary – They seem foolish. The world cannot understand because the things from God are spiritually discerned.*

- Write out the verses below and identify which of the three parts of the soul they address.

Proverbs 2:10 – Mind

Psalms 119:167 – Will

Psalms 139:14 – Emotions

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NIV) and fill in the blanks:

“I have the right to do anything,” you say – but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything” – but I will not be mastered by anything.

- Read Galatians 5:19-21 and list the works of the soul-led nature. *Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, envy, discord, fits of rage, selfish ambition, drunkenness*

- According to Galatians 6:8, what is the result of living a life that gratifies the body? What happens to a person who lives a spirit-led life?

Body – sows to please sinful nature, reaps destruction

Spirit-led – sows to please the spirit, reaps eternal life/a harvest

- Read Psalm 91. According to verses 9 and 10, who will receive the benefits of protection and safety? *Those who make the Most High their dwelling*

Week 5

- Four Blockages of the Heart

1. *Selfishness*

2. *Bitterness*

3. *Rejection*

4. *Evil Thoughts*

- Three Steps to Transforming the Heart

1. *Invite the Holy Spirit to show me.*

2. *Invite the Holy Spirit to change me.*

3. *Invite the Holy Spirit to fill me.*

Week 6

- Read the following verses. What happens when we give money and things the place of priority in our lives?

Matthew 13:22 – The Word becomes unfruitful.

Revelation 3:17 – We don't realize we are actually wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 – We fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge us into ruin and destruction.

- Read the following verses: Psalm 62:10, Hebrews 13:5, Luke 12:22-31. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how these passages apply to your life. *Answers vary – Do not set your heart on riches, be free from the love of money, be content with what you have, do not worry about your body – what you will eat or what you will wear*

Week 7

- Read Matthew 18:21-35. Through this parable, Jesus explains the profound and undeserved forgiveness we receive as believers. What instruction does Jesus give us regarding forgiveness? Forgive not 7 times, but 70 x 7, extend the same grace/forgiveness God has offered you.

Week 8

- Read Matthew 12:34-35. What does Jesus say about the relationship between our hearts and what we say?
Whatever is in your heart determines what you say.
- Read Proverbs 10:19. What happens when we talk too much? What do sensible people do? Talking too much leads to sin, sensible people keep their mouths shut.
- Read the following Scriptures and write the instruction given.
Proverbs 4:24 – Don't use perverse or corrupt words.
Proverbs 15:1 – Use gentle words.
Proverbs 16:13 – Use honest and righteous words.
Proverbs 16:28 – Don't gossip.

Week 9

- Write Luke 1:38 and note Mary's response to the angel's news. *I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.*
- Read Psalm 119:97-100 and list the benefits of meditating on God's Word. *Meditation makes us wiser than our enemies, gives us more insight than our teachers, and makes us wiser than our elders.*
- Read James 1:22. According to this verse, how can we deceive ourselves? *Merely listening to the Word and not doing what it says*

Week 10

- Three Things to Know
 1. *Demons are real.*
 2. *Demons want to destroy you.*
 3. *Demons respond to higher authority.*
- Authority
 1. *The highest authority is the Name of Jesus*
 2. *The authority of the Word*
 3. *The authority of the blood of the cross*
- Three Daily Steps
 1. *Submit yourself to God.*
 2. *Close any open doors.*
 3. *Confront your enemy daily.*

Week 11

- Write the truth from Scripture that will dismantle the enemy's lies:
 - 1 Corinthians 2:16 – *I have understanding because I have the mind of Christ.*
 - 2 Timothy 1:7 – *God has not given me a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*
 - Jeremiah 29:11 – *God has good plans for me to give me a future and a hope.*
 - Psalm 118:17 – *I will not die; instead I will live to tell what the Lord has done.*
 - Psalm 91:10 – *No evil will conquer me; no plague will come near my home.*
 - Psalm 34:17 – *The Lord hears me when I call to Him for help. He rescues me from all my troubles.*
 - Isaiah 43:18-19 – *God is doing something new. He is making a pathway through the wilderness and rivers in the dry wasteland.*
- Read James 4:7. *What happens when we choose to resist the devil's temptations? He will flee from us.*
- Write 1 Corinthians 10:13. *What will God do for you when a temptation seems unbearable? He will provide a way out.*
- Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. *What might be missing in a person who struggles with turning from sin? Godly sorrow*
- Read Romans 2:4. *What else leads us to repentance? God's kindness*

Week 12

All answers for Week 12 are found in Scripture.