



EVER WONDER WHY?

ANSWERS TO SOME OF LIFE'S TOUGHEST QUESTIONS

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

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SMALL GROUP TIPS

- 1. START & FINISH ON TIME.** Doing this will show your small group you value their time.
- 2. BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE.** Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.
- 3. CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT.** Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: "What is said in small group, stays in small group." **Nothing, nobody, never...** "*Share nothing, to nobody, never*" outside of the group.
- 4. MAKE GROUP A PRIORITY.** Communicate in advance when you will be unable to attend by either calling and/or texting your host or responding to the zoom email invitation by accepting or declining. This will help your host to plan accordingly especially if it is an in person small group gathering.
- 5. ALLOW SPACE FOR DOUBT.** Hosts and participants should allow people space and time to process their doubts. Genuine doubt and questions are healthy for spiritual growth and it is important to not discount and/or minimize genuine doubts. James 1:19: "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."
- 6. ENCOURAGE GROWTH.** Genuine doubt often leads to deeper faith. You are not there to address, "fix" or change the doubts of others. Share your perspective then encourage doubters to continue to pray for answers and to draw closer to God through the trial. Try not to speak in judgement and seek reconciliation/forgiveness for any resentment created through the discussion.
- 7. ASK FOR HELP.**
The Small Group Ministry is here to help. Email smallgroups@nhww.org to ask any questions, request training or other assistance for your small group.

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TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **MAKE GROUP A PRIORITY.** Communicate in advance when you are unable to attend by calling and/or texting your host or responding to the zoom email invitation by accepting or declining. This will help your host to plan accordingly especially if it is an in person small group gathering. Additional tips on page 3.

“Why Can’t I Stop?”

Breaking Free With the Power of Grace

ICEBREAKER

Share a time when you tried to break a habit by sheer willpower. How long did it last? Was it difficult to maintain? (Examples: Trying not to complain or worry, etc.)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking this step to grow deeper in your faith and build authentic relationships. Whether this is your first time in a small group or you're a seasoned member, you're in the right place. Together, we'll explore how God's grace doesn't just save us - it gives us the power to change.

We've all been there - promising ourselves (or God) that we'll never do "that" again, only to fall back into the same patterns days or even hours later. We find ourselves saying “WHY

can't I stop this?" In this session we're going to learn that real change isn't about trying harder. God has some solutions to transform us from the inside out.

NOTE: This series may lead to differing opinions on important matters. Challenging conversations might arise, requiring extra care. As you explore doubts and questions within your group, please be mindful that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, at various stages of our faith journey. Please approach discussions with empathy, respect, and understanding.

READ I

Consider these powerful words about the transforming power of grace:

*"For the **grace of God** has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 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 (NIV)*

It's not our willpower that transforms us - it's God's grace that both saves us and also supplies the power to change. The same grace that forgave our past is actively working to change our present, helping us to say "no" to what dishonors God and "yes" to what reflects His character.

How has experiencing God's grace and power help you overcome temptation? Describe a specific experience where you sensed divine strength (grace) working alongside your own efforts.

READ I

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence!" -Matthew 23:25-26 (NLT)

The Pharisees were religious leaders who mastered the art of appearing holy on the outside while their hearts remained unchanged - so much so that Jesus called them "*whitewashed tombs*" (Matthew 23:27). They were experts at following rules and maintaining appearances, but missed the transforming power of God's grace. Religion

focuses on cleaning up our outward behavior, while the grace of God transforms us from the inside out.

Have you ever caught yourself focused more on "looking good" and "saying the right thing" than actually "being changed"? What's the difference between these two approaches?

(Examples: Pretending a relationship is fine while remaining offended, saying "spiritual things" but not living it out, etc.)

READ |

"Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me....For when I am weak, then I am strong." - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10b (NLT)

When life hits hard, God's power works best through our honesty, not our attempts to look strong. Just like a broken bone needs to be properly set to heal, our weaknesses need to be brought into God's light to experience His strength. Paul discovered this truth when facing his own struggles - the more openly he admitted his need for God, the more of God's power he experienced.

**Think of a time when you tried to handle struggles through your own strength. What happened when you finally surrendered them to God?
How has viewing weakness as an opportunity for God's power (rather than something to hide) changed how you face challenges?**

READ |

Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." -John 4:10 (NLT)

There was a Samaritan woman who tried to fill her emptiness with multiple relationships (she had five husbands), yet still came to draw water from a well daily because her deepest thirst remained unquenched.

Jesus told her, *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst"* (John 4:13-14). Like her, we often try to satisfy our spiritual thirst with temporary solutions - whether it's through achievements, relationships, entertainment, or other earthly comforts. Just as a bubble bath might bring temporary

peace but can't provide lasting peace, we sometimes confuse momentary relief with real fulfillment. By finding our fulfillment in Jesus, we can gain the power to change any ungodly or sinful habits.

What are some ways you've tried to meet deeper spiritual needs with surface-level solutions? How has experiencing God's presence changed your understanding of what your heart is really searching for?

(Examples: Trying to fill the void by buying things, relying on others to meet our deeper needs, excessive media, etc.)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, let's practice living in grace:

- Be honest with at least one trusted person about an area where you're struggling
- Write down moments when you experience God's grace giving you strength
- Replace "try harder" thoughts with "trust more" prayers

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS:

- Each week, we encourage you to read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You that Your grace doesn't just save us - it gives us the power to change. Forgive me for the times I've relied on my own strength or focused more on outward appearances than inward change. Help us to stop trying to earn Your approval and start trusting in Your transforming grace. Give us the courage to be honest about our struggles and the wisdom to rely on Your strength rather than our own. May Your grace continue to shape me into the person You created me to be. In Jesus' name, amen.



Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*
--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

God is the one who began this good work in you, and I am certain that he won't stop before it is complete on the day that Christ Jesus returns.

--Philippians 1:6 (CEV)

Day 2:

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

--2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

Day 3:

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

--Romans 12:2 (NLT)

Day 4:

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

--Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

Day 5:

For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

--Philippians 4:13 (NLT)