

Life Group Preparation Notes:

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

Session 3 - Going back in order to go forward.

Purpose: To grow in my awareness of how my family patterns have negatively impacted me, so that I do not repeat them.

Worship: Suggested song is “Grace to Grace” By Hillsong Worship. After singing or reading the words, chose one line from the song that affected your emotions and share this with the group. Don't go around in a circle; wait for each person to pray.

Pray: Take 2 minutes of silence to “be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10. Then pray prayers of thanks for His presence.

Check-in: How would you describe the family atmosphere you grew up in? Try to use just a word or two (like affirming, complaining, critical, approachable, angry, tense, co-operative, competitive, close, distant, fun and serious).

Overview: (To be read aloud in the group). “Emotionally healthy spirituality involves embracing God’s choice to birth us into a particular family, in a particular place, at a particular moment in history.

That choice to embrace our past grants us certain opportunities and gifts. It also hands us a certain amount of “emotional baggage” for our journey through life. For some of us this load is minimal; for others, it is a heavy burden to carry.

True spirituality frees us to live joyfully in the present. Living joyfully, however, requires going back in order to go forward. This process takes us to the very heart of spirituality and discipleship in the family of God - breaking free from the destructive sinful patterns of our past in order to live the life of love that God intends.”

Watch Vimeo: Session 3. <https://vimeo.com/254671106/647e95ec5b> Note one phrase from the video that impacted you the most. Share that with the group.

Bible Study: Genesis 50:15-21.

Group Discussion:

1. Our need to go back in order to go forward can be summed up in two essential Biblical truths:
 - The blessings and sins of our families going back two or three generations profoundly impact who we are today.
 - Discipleship requires putting off the sinful patterns of our family of origin and relearning how to do life God’s way in God’s family.

What’s your greatest fear in looking back at your family of origin to discern unhealthy patterns

and themes? Explain.

2. Imagine yourself in Joseph's shoes sitting in a prison cell without any hope of freedom. What thoughts, feelings, or doubts might you have about your family? About yourself? About God?
3. What assumptions are the brothers making about Joseph?
4. Why do you think Joseph weeps (v. 17)?
5. Joseph chooses to break the "normal" way his family deals with hurt feelings and conflict by forgiving his brothers. How might you have responded if you were in Joseph's position? (Be sure to honestly put yourself in Joseph's shoes.)
6. Slowly, reread verses 19-21. Here we see Joseph's response to the enormous losses he experienced in his life. Carefully consider the different aspects of this response below. As you think about your own life story, which one speaks the most to you?
 - "Don't be afraid."
 - "Am I in the place of God?"
 - "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."
7. Prayerfully journal the following:
 - 7.1. The life messages you received from each of your parents or those who parented you. (like-don't be weak; education is everything; you must achieve to be loved; don't be sad, things could be worse; don't trust people, they will hurt you.)
 - 7.2. List any "earthquake" events that sent "aftershocks" into your extended family (like abuse; sudden deaths; divorces; shameful secrets revealed; alcoholism; drug addiction; bullying at school). Make a note of the years when these events occurred.
 - 7.3. Review the above lists and summarize in your journal what messages about life you have internalised.

Share with the group the messages that you have received.
8. How do these messages compare with what God says in the Bible about who you are in Him?

Check-out: What is one specific message from your family that God has revealed to you today that you want to change as part of your hard work of discipleship - that you don't want to pass on to your children and others?

Application:

Continue journaling by identifying your feelings on a daily basis and then reading a Psalm to see the connection between that feeling and the Psalmist's response.

Use the attached list of feelings to help you to identify your feelings on a daily basis. Choose one from each list.

Others:

Share with others what you are learning about yourself and your family history.

Pray:

Pray for one another in pairs - asking God to transform each other's lives that our lives may be a blessing to others.

Taken from Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter L. and Geri Scazzero

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