

How to stop
coping and
find the cure
for your
struggles

THE **HEART** OF THE **PROBLEM**

Leader's Guide
by
Terry Rossello

BRANDT • SKINNER

HEART OF THE PROBLEM

Leader's Guide

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This Leader's Guide is designed for adult Sunday School classes and church home group programs that use the Heart of the Problem Workbook by Dr. Henry Brandt and Dr. Kerry Skinner.

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The Heart of the Problem

Leader's Guide

Welcome Leaders!

You are about to embark on a life changing journey...a journey which will take you through the Heart of the Problem workbook. As you take this journey, you can take a group of people with you, and they too can experience the peace and joy Jesus has promised us. I have written this Leader's Guide to help make your job as a leader easier. As you lead your group through this life-changing material, you can use the tips and outside resources that I've used to help your groups reach their full potential. My prayer is that this Leader's Guide will give you tools that will enhance your teaching, without requiring a lot of extra work for you. My desire is to help you shine as you bring glory to God in your teaching.

For the last 20 years, I have taught the Heart of the Problem workbook to hundreds of people. The size of the groups has ranged from one-on-one all the way up to a large group in the hundreds. The ages of the group members varied from teenagers to people in their eighties. In all of my years of teaching, I have never had one person say that they did not learn something that changed their life. I have watched God use Dr. Brandt's workbook to open up hearts, heal marriages, and repair relationships. I have had the privilege of sitting under Dr. Brandt's teaching and owe my own healed marriage to his wise words. As people have had their lives changed, they have asked me to train them to teach the Heart of the Problem workbook. The result is the Leader's Guide you now have in your hands.

It is extremely important that you take a few minutes to read through the next few sections of this opening material. Not only will you find options on how to plan the time for each session, there are also important instructions on how to maximize the time for each session you have with your group.

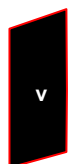
I know God will bless you as you sacrificially give your time to lead your group. Walk fully empowered by His Spirit, and you are in for a great journey!

Sincerely,

Terry Rossello
Heart of the Problem Small Groups Director
Grace Community Church, Tempe, Arizona

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my dear friends Pat Foley, May Hodin, and Diana Schenck, who spent many hours proofreading this material for me. The unselfish gift of their time and love of Dr. Brandt's work is what makes this Leader's Guide a work of love and an act of worship.



How This Material is Organized

This course is divided into 13 sessions, or meetings: 1 Introduction and 1 session for each of the 12 chapters. It will be extremely beneficial to your group if you are able to incorporate the Introduction into your overall plan.

Throughout each chapter session, along the left-hand side of the page, you will find the workbook page numbers referenced. The numbers also include a letter – “T,” “M,” or “B” – signifying “Top,” “Middle,” or “Bottom.” This is for your ease in referring back to the workbook material.

Information is included in two different fonts:

- The regular font is material that you can read verbatim to your group.
- *The italicized font indicates instructions and ideas for you as the leader.*

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

Review of Days 1 – 5

Each day incorporates the following elements (the amount of time you have will determine how much of this material you are able to include – see “Format” below):

Overview: The Overview provides a summary of what was covered in the reading provided in the workbook. You may find it helpful to read it out loud to the class or simply summarize it in your own words. This “review” will help bring back to everyone’s mind what they are about to discuss and will give focus to the discussion.

Points to Emphasize: In addition to the Overview, this section highlights the specific points that need to be reiterated in this section. I have listed one or more for each day and there is space for you to add an additional point, if you find something particularly useful for your group. You can emphasize these points by reading them verbatim or simply bringing the group’s attention to them. For example, you might say, “At the top of page 31, Dr. Brandt makes the point that nursing a grudge hurts no one else but you. You are a slave to the person you hate.”

Share: This is the “facilitation” part of the class! It is important to let members of the group share their reactions and ideas. For each day, one or two people should share their thoughts.

Bonus Material: Throughout each session, there are places where I have included outside information, which is pertinent to the study. These resources include stories, analogies, illustrations, quotes, or object lessons. Use these materials as needed and as time allows.

Format

Here are two different options for getting through the material. Choose the format that best suits your setting.

In the 45-Minute Format, you will have time for the Overview, Points to Emphasize, and Share sections for each day.

The 90-Minute Format will allow you to bring in the Bonus Material and have more time for sharing each day.

√ 45-Minute Format

5 minutes - Opening Remarks / Announcements / Opening Prayer

7 minutes - Day 1

7 minutes - Day 2

7 minutes - Day 3

7 minutes - Day 4

7 minutes - Day 5

5 minutes - Wrap-Up / Closing Prayer

v 90-Minute Group Format

5 minutes – Opening Remarks / Announcements / Opening Prayer

15 minutes - Day 1

15 minutes - Day 2

15 minutes - Day 3

15 minutes - Day 4

15 minutes - Day 5

10 minutes – Wrap-Up / Closing Prayer or Prayer Partners

Use your time wisely and watch your time carefully! In each session you will find a line with the word “START” by each major section. This is provided as a tool for you – before the class begins, you should write in the time you plan to start that section. For example: If you are using the 45-Minute Format and your class begins at 9:00 a.m., by the time you start the “Overview of Day 1,” it should be 9:05 a.m. By the time you start the “Overview of Day 2” your time should be 9:12 a.m., and on Day 3 – 9:19 a.m., etc. This will serve as a check point to help you get through the entire session.

Failure to keep track of your time will be frustrating for members who had something really important to share on Day 5, but were unable to contribute to the discussion because you ran out of class time. It is your job, as the leader, to keep the group moving through the lesson and at the same time be sensitive to a member who is sharing something important. Keep track of the time and flex within days, as necessary, to get all the way to the end.

Tips for Leading Group Discussion

Emphasize from the very beginning that what is shared in the group, stays in the group. Trust is an important component of small group sharing. Nothing will shut your group down quicker than group members feeling as though what they share might be shared with others outside of the group or used against them.

If you have more than 12 members in your group, you should divide into smaller groups of 6-8 members. This will allow for more individual sharing and can help shy individuals, who might be intimidated by the larger number of faces in the group. Assign a leader to facilitate discussion for each small group.

Ask questions with interest and warmth. Listen carefully to individual answers. Keep in mind that no answer is insignificant; affirm each person's participation.

Be sensitive to who is doing the talking in your group. Is one person monopolizing the time? Is another person talking about irrelevant information to the topic at hand? Is someone only listening and never offering a thought or idea? As tactfully as you know how, keep the discussion on track and draw out everyone's ideas. This can be very difficult! Pray for wisdom and courage to keep the group focused and to be sensitive to all members.

Although it would be helpful if Prayer Partners stay the same throughout the course, the configuration of your groups can change each time you meet. Encourage couples to split up in order to achieve better group diversity.

Here are several ideas for getting people into groups each time:

- Have group members pick a slip of paper out of a basket with a color on it – group all colors together OR one of each color in each group
- Pick a slip of paper with a number on it – group all numbers together, or all even/odd numbers, or consecutive numbers (1-6, 7-12, etc.)
- Pick a slip of paper with different fruits of the Spirit as found in Galatians 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, etc.)
- Be creative and come up with a unique idea! The important thing is to help people get into a group!

Introductory Session

Intro

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer

Distribute the Heart of the Problem workbooks to the class members.

START: _____

Explain how the workbook is laid out.

There are 12 chapters to be covered, 1 chapter each time you meet.

Each chapter has five daily sections (Chapter 1 is the exception; there are six days).

Each daily section will take approximately 20-30 minutes for group members to complete, depending on the individual's depth of study.

Each daily section ends with the same four learning activities. This part of the study is very important! Each activity has a specific purpose.

- **Identify your most meaningful thought.** This activity will help you to think about the day's topic in a broader sense. You've answered all of the individual questions – what really stands out to you?
- **Apply what God is pointing out to you.** The only way to make a life change is to apply the truth of what you are learning. Write out things that you will actually do. Try to be specific.

- **Write a short prayer.** Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit who speaks to us as we pray.
- **Did God bring to mind someone who needs to hear this truth?** As you consider the answer to this question, you are preparing to share what God is teaching you! When you actually see this person, you will already have the thoughts planted in your heart and mind as to what you should share with them.

At the end of each chapter is a page called “Your Summary Thoughts” (see page 47) where you are given the opportunity to list all of your answers together for each of the four learning activities in the chapter. This can help you see a repeated thought. Sometimes God is bringing a specific idea to our minds over and over again, but we don’t realize it. One woman commented that when she actually wrote all of her answers together, she saw how often she had the same thought throughout the week. She realized she needed to do something about that particular issue.

Helpful Tips to Share with Group Members

Write the date at the beginning of each day. As you answer the questions and God shows you breakthroughs in your life, the workbook will serve as a journal and can help you to see the progress you’ve made and also the areas in your life that you still need to work on.

As you read, use a highlighter to mark meaningful statements. This will make it easier for you to go back and choose your most meaningful thought.

Do not wait until the end of the week to work through all of the days at once! You will not benefit throughout your week with the truth that you are learning, and you will miss out on the opportunity to apply it each day.

START: _____

The Heart of the Problem Personal Evaluation (page 17)

The Personal Evaluation found at the front of the workbook on page 17 is a helpful tool in evaluating your growth during the study. You are encouraged to complete the evaluation this week as a “pre-test” and then revisit the evaluation at the end of the course as a “post-test.” This is an individual exercise and will not be shared with the group.

It may be helpful for you to make additional copies for group members to use in the “post-test.”

Weekly Memory Verse

At the beginning of each chapter, there is a “Memory Verse for the Week.” You should memorize this verse or another verse from the chapter that is helpful to you.

If your group is using Prayer Partners, they can recite the verses to each other at the beginning or end of each session.

Prayer Partners

A helpful part of the process of growing can be for your members to pair up as “Prayer Partners.” It is often helpful for Prayer Partners to stay the same throughout the entire course. If this is possible, Prayer Partners should agree to pray for each other throughout each week and touch base weekly for updates. Allow group members to choose a Prayer Partner. Encourage them to pray for:

- Insight into God’s Word
- Honesty in answering the questions
- God’s revelation of the needed change in your partner’s life
- Obedience to put into action what God reveals
- Discipline and time to complete the homework daily

START: _____

Introduce Material in Chapter 1 (If Time Allows)

Since Chapter 1 has an extra day of material in it, your group can work through Day 1 (Chapter 1 begins on page 23). Ask a volunteer to read through the Thought Starter and the Memory Verse.

The Thought Starter may seem a little confusing as you begin, but Dr. Brandt will explain this idea in more detail as you proceed through this chapter.

Ask a volunteer to read through the text on pages 23 and 24.

Ask for five volunteers to each look up one of the scriptures on page 24 and then fill in the blanks together.

Ask a volunteer to read the remaining information on pages 24 and 25.

If time allows, have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they might apply it.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up

You now have all of the information you need to get started! We've had the opportunity to work through one day of the material. We will finish discussing Chapter 1 next week. Your assignment is to complete all five days and be ready to discuss it when we return. Don't forget to memorize the verse for this week!

END: _____

Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

The Myth of Complexity

Chapter 1

START: _____

Begin Session

*Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer*

This is the only chapter that includes an extra day. In the Introduction you went through Day 1. Begin today's session with the Overview of Day 2.

Day 2: God is Able

START: _____

Overview:

Day 2 presented the two different perspectives on where the dark side of human nature comes from. All people believe one perspective or the other. The choices people make are determined by what they believe. Your belief about God influences how you resolve the difficulties in your life.

Points To Emphasize:

page 26-B

> God is the Creator of all things.

page 26-B

> The Bible is our guidebook.

page 27-T

> We are born with sinful hearts.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Illustration – “The Baseball Team”

Use the following illustration to support the principle presented on page 28: “God does not bring scripture to mind that has never been studied or memorized.”

page 28-M

When preparing for games, a baseball team practices every day all the skills that they will need. They pitch, catch, run, and bat over and over so that when the pressure of the game is on they don't have to think about what is required, they just do it. So it is with scripture memorization and knowledge of God's Word. We read and memorize so that when we are in the pressure of the moment, we are able to pull from a well-practiced reservoir of truth to apply wisdom and make a decision.

Bonus Material: Activity – Memorization Cards

To help your group members memorize scripture, you may want to provide them with index card sets. Go to an office supply store and purchase spiral bound index card sets (one for each group member). The sets are available in 3x5 or 4x6 and come bound in cards of 50. The spiral bound format is helpful in keeping the cards together and protected so that they can be reviewed over and over each week. They are also easy to carry in the car or backpack and can be easily propped up anywhere for quick study. The cards can be used long after this study ends.

START: _____

Day 3: The Spirit's Life Is the Best Life!

Overview:

On Day 3, we read the story of a young couple who had lost two children and a business relationship within the same year. They had come to Dr. Brandt for some help at a conference. We are to forgive others whether they ask for forgiveness or not. If we do not, we are nursing a grudge and do not really understand the grace that was shown to us by God when He forgave us. This forgiveness is possible when the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives. The young couple applied these truths and found peace and joy.

Points To Emphasize:

page 31-T

> Nursing a grudge hurts no one but you. You are a slave to the person you hate.

page 31-B

> To be filled by the Spirit means to be controlled by the Spirit.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Illustration – “Who Is In Control?”

Use the following illustration to help explain the idea of being filled, or controlled, by the Spirit. Put an empty chair in front of the group before you begin.

page 31-B

Imagine that your life is represented by a chair that we will call the “throne” of your life. Who is sitting on the throne and in control? There are really only two options to choose from; either your sinful nature is in control or the Holy Spirit is in control.

The differences between each nature are described in Galatians 5:19-23: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” (NIV)

The influence of the sinful nature or the Holy Spirit is easily seen by those around us.

START: _____

Day 4: God’s Cleansing Power

Overview:

Here we read the story of Joe and Martha and their rebellious son, Mike. This story is a common example of what is going on in many homes today. Unfortunately, many parents are being trained by their children and their children’s attitudes. If a child gets what he wants, he rewards the parents with a good attitude. If he does not get what he wants, he punishes them with a bad attitude. Joe and Martha’s story is a great example of how to get parents back in the leadership position in the home.

Points To Emphasize:

page 34-B

> In Joe and Martha’s situation, the home has been a training center, but the son has been the trainer, training his parents in the way he wants them to go.

page 36-M

> Do not underestimate the cleansing power available when anyone approaches God as a repentant sinner.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 5: A Listener with an Open Heart

Overview:

Here is another story of a rebellious child. Duke's parents are a good example of people who learned to trust the Lord, stay unified as a couple, and did whatever was necessary to save their son and enforce righteousness.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 39-T > Whatever parents decide to do about a rebellious child, they need to be like-minded.
- page 39-T > Trust the Lord with your rebellious children, and do not be afraid of losing them. When they are in rebellion, they are already lost; this is your opportunity to win them back.
- page 42-M > Depend on God to direct your paths as parents, and do whatever is necessary to enforce righteousness.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 6: Give Simplicity a Chance

Overview:

In today's section we were reminded that it doesn't matter how many years a problem between two people has existed. If you accept the responsibility for your part in the conflict by confessing to God, and do your part to repair the relationship, you can have a changed heart and experience God's peace.

Points to Emphasize:

- page 44-T > A person will not have peace until they repent to God and apologize to the other person for their bad attitude.
- page 46-T > Many people are just a repentant prayer away from a changed heart.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up

Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

Peace and Satisfaction in This World?

Chapter 2

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

Day 1: Peace and Places

START: _____

Overview:

On page 49 we have our memory verse for the week. John 16:33 gives us two promises: The first promise is “You will have tribulation in the world,” and the second promise is “I have overcome the world.” We also see in this verse one command: “Be of good cheer.” This verse tells us, “In Me you may have peace.” In Day 1, we see that one of the ways we miss out on experiencing peace is because we choose to try to find our peace in a particular place in the world rather than in Christ.

Points to Emphasize:

page 49-T
Thought Starter

> Why are Christians not in the least bit embarrassed over the absence of peace and rest in their lives?

page 51-B

> Peace inside an individual is not determined by being in a place.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 2: Peace and Activities

Overview:

Many people look for peace in their activities thinking that if they just do enough, they will find serenity in the final accomplishment. On this day, we met a lawyer who had gone all the way up the ladder of success and found himself sadly disappointed that there was no peace in the successes he had experienced along the way. He found his true peace in the resources that only God can give.

Points to Emphasize:

page 52-B

> Many activities can give satisfaction to the participants without their giving God a thought.

page 53-B

> Activities and events eventually come to an end and leave you empty.

page 54-M
Thought for
the Day

> A personal relationship with the Author of Peace never ends.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 3: Peace and Things

Overview:

We live in a very materialistic society. We are surrounded by advertisements in many mediums that offer happiness in a car, a diamond, a beverage, or an article of clothing. Day 3 introduced us to a man who had everything that money could buy, but his family was falling apart. What he couldn't buy was what God offered for free: the Spirit of love, joy, and peace.

Points to Emphasize:

page 55-B

> There are some things money cannot buy: love, joy, peace, and kindness.

page 56-M
Thoughts for
the Day

> Things can be bought with money and bring counterfeit peace. Lasting peace can only come from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Story

A man and wife brought a prayer request to their church. "God, help us sell our house." The wife had pushed the husband into buying beyond their financial means and the husband felt so much pressure from the financial burden that it had caused a strain on their relationship. Realizing that she had been wrong, the wife surrendered the dream house she had wanted, to God. She realized her marriage was more important, and the house she had thought would bring her happiness had caused a lot of problems. After the prayer requests were taken, an older couple approached the young couple asking if they were selling their house because of financial reasons. They confessed that they were and the older couple then asked if they would be willing to meet with them to look over the younger couple's budget. The older couple did financial planning for a living and would be happy to offer their services. The two couples met and found enough money being spent on eating out to allow the younger couple to stay in their house comfortably and stay out of debt. By releasing control of her dream house, the young wife found that God allowed her to keep it, and her husband was no longer burdened and stressed. By giving up what she thought would give her peace, she found a real peace.

Bonus Material: Question

If money can make a person happy, why are there so many unhappy people in Hollywood, where money is in abundance?

START: _____

Day 4: Peace and People

Overview:

We all have people in our lives that we go to for comfort and support. The list of support groups on page 57 all provide opportunities for people to regularly get support and help to keep them going when they become weary. Anyone can join a group like this and find some relief without ever giving God a thought.

Point to Emphasize:

> Friendship is unstable and unpredictable. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

page 58-M
Thought for
the Day

Bonus Material: Reflection

Think of the people in your life who have moved away, passed away, failed to be there for you, betrayed you, or disappointed you. If we put our peace in a human being, it can easily be taken away from us.

START: _____

Day 5: Peace and Jesus

Overview:

The humanist believes, "This world contains ample resources, that coupled with the best efforts of caring people, should result in a world full of satisfied, happy people." In today's text, we find the flaw that is in that kind of thinking. On page 60, John 16:33 presents a problem with that perspective. Jesus says we will have tribulation in the world. The true source of our peace is in that same verse. "In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Points to Emphasize:

page 60-T

> Relief from tension is not the same as peace.

page 60-M

> Human effort is not enough to quiet the human heart in times of trouble and stress.

page 60-M

> Jesus tells us to turn to Him for peace if we want a peace that is deeply satisfying and lasting.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Activity – "Peace Mini-Retreat"

At the end of this Session you'll find a Bible Study on peace. It's called a "Mini-Retreat" because it requires individual study and reflection. Make enough copies for your group and either give it out to those who want to dig deeper on this subject or incorporate the reflection time into your session.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up

END: _____

Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

Peace Mini-Retreat

Instructions

1. Open with prayer, asking God to prepare your heart for what He wants to show you in this time.
2. Read through the following verses slowly.
3. Look for promises, (He answers prayer) attributes, (He is our rock) and commands (do not be anxious about anything). Write them out on a separate piece of paper.
4. In prayer, thank God for His promises and praise Him for who He is.
5. In prayer, ask God to show you areas of your life that you are anxious and lacking peace in. List them on a separate piece of paper.
6. Find verses below or in your Bible that will help you release these to God. (Look up verses on faithfulness, trustworthiness, etc.) MEMORIZE ONE OF THE VERSES!!
7. In prayer, give each one of the above back to God for His handling. (Feel better?)
8. In faith, RELAX and trust God to handle them. Ask Him to help remind you every time you start to get anxious so you can give them back to Him.

God is always with me. God has a plan for my life, written before I was even born

Psalm 139:7-16

⁷Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, ¹⁶your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

God will take care of me and all my needs.

Philippians 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

I need not worry, because God is my shield and the guardian of my heart

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

God makes sure I have what I need at the right time

2Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Four different gifts of Peace from God.

The first is from the Son

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second is from the Father

Isaiah 26:3-4 ³You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. ⁴Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord Himself, is the Rock eternal.

The third is from the Word

Psalms 119:165 Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

The fourth is from the Holy Spirit, our Counselor, and Teacher

John 14:26-27 ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (That means even scripture memory.) ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

I can sleep at night because I have prayed and the Lord answers prayer

Psalms 3:4-5 ⁴To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. ⁵I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.

I must choose peace, so as it rules my life my decisions are sound

Colossians 3:14-15 ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

God wants us to be proactive in pursuing peace and not be passive

1 Peter 3:10-12 ¹⁰For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Most of Us Had a Poor Start in Life!

Chapter 3

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: Real Life

Overview:

This week we took a look at the troubled marriage of Malcom and Dorothy. On Day 1, we were introduced to them and got a glimpse of their struggles. Today we heard both sides of their stories. Where they turn to for help will definitely affect the outcome of their counseling. On page 64, Dr. Brandt included Webster's definition of humanism: "A doctrine, set of attitudes, a way of life centered upon human interests or values, a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism, regards man as a natural object, and asserts the essential dignity and worth of man and his capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason and scientific method."

Points To Emphasize:

page 63-M

> Colossians 2:8-10 warns us to beware of the very philosophy we find in the definition of humanism.

page 64-B

> Humanism is nothing new. Rejecting God and centering a way of life and a way of thinking on man's interests and values has been around since the beginning of time.

page 65-B
Thought for
the Day

> Real life always needs a supernatural perspective if we are to gain real help.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 2: Blame Your Background

Overview:

In today's text, the humanist viewpoint, "growing up in a bad environment will cause people to grow into hostile adults," was well explained. We also saw on page 66 how we can sometimes find relief in this world without giving God a thought.

Points To Emphasize:

page 66-B

> Relief is not the same as healing.

page 68-T
Thought for
the Day

> Changes in your environment will not bring healing to your heart.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 3: Understand Relief Versus Healing

Overview:

In today's lesson, Dr. Brandt presented the difference between relief and healing. The dental analogy explained the difference between the relief we get from a pain pill for a dry socket versus the healing we get over time. On page 69, this difference was applied to Malcom and Dorothy's marriage.

Points To Emphasize:

page 68-B

> Pain can be so intense we will do anything for some relief.

page 69-M

> The humanist says that your negative behavior is caused by the way you have been treated. The biblical counselor says that these characteristics are caused by sin.

page 69-B

> If you fail to deal with sin you will not get healing.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 4: Blame Your Sin

Overview:

On this day, we continued to examine the difference between relief and healing. Dr. Brandt included another good analogy to help us understand how we need the right diagnosis to get the proper treatment. Just like Dr. Brandt's wife, with her misdiagnosed malaria, each one of us can miss the diagnosis and apply the wrong treatment. However, there is a real cure for sin.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 70-B > If it is sin, that's good news. Jesus died to cleanse us from sin.
- page 71-M > The cure is swift and sure if you use the proper diagnosis and proper treatment.
- page 71-M > You can suffer greatly from the ravages of sin, while you are sincerely and carefully trying to correct the suffering by following the wrong diagnosis and the wrong treatment.
- page 72-B > If it is sin, you must turn to the Creator and Savior for cleansing and changing. If it is sin, society didn't put it into you; society only stirs up what is already in you.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Quote

- page 71-B "The circumstances of life do not make you who you are...they reveal who you are!" - Dr. Sam Peeples

Bonus Material: "Check-Point"

Ask the group members if they answered the questions in the bold print on page 71. This is an important opportunity for them to deal with their hearts concerning unconfessed sin. This question is not an opportunity to discuss or reveal individual sin. It is to draw attention to the material and encourage group members to work through the exercise.

START: _____

Day 5: The Miracle of a Cleansed Life

Overview:

We close this chapter with the end of the story of Malcom and Dorothy. They had tried three other counselors before they finally came to “last-resort Brandt.” They had come away from other counselors with the conclusion that they had irreconcilable differences and divorce was the only solution. Dr. Brandt pointed out that they each had sin issues. When they turned to God for their solution, they started behaving like honeymooners.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 74-M > When you allow the Lord to give you peaceful, loving, and joyful hearts, you can approach your problems without hostility and quarreling.
- page 74-B > You must rid yourself of anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language before you can clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
- page 75-B > A cleansed life allows you to look at life from the proper perspective.

Thought for
the Day

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Object Lesson – “Put Off and Put On”

page 74-B

Use this illustration with props to drive home the point of Colossians 3:8 and 3:12. Colossians 3:8 is the “put off” verse. It is a picture of all the sin that we want to get rid of. Use a black sweater or coat with the words in the verse attached to it (anger, rage, malice, etc.). Colossians 3:12 is the “put on” verse. It is a picture of the character qualities God wants us to clothe ourselves with. Use a white sweater or coat with the words in the verse attached to it (compassion, kindness, humility, etc.).

First put on the black sweater and let everyone see the words of sin. Would you want to approach anyone who exhibited these qualities?

Then try to put the white sweater on top of the black one.

Does this really work? Is it possible to just cover up these sins? There is a struggle between the two natures when you have them both on. We are only able to exhibit godly character qualities when we allow ourselves to be controlled by God’s Spirit.

Take both sweaters off and put on the white one.

When you put off your sins by confessing them to God, then God can give you godly qualities to clothe yourself with.

Think about it: Which person would you want to approach? Which person do you want to be remembered as?

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up

Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

God's Sharpest Tools; My Biggest Problems

Chapter 4

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: Born Again

Overview:

In this session, Dr. Brandt introduced us to the person he was before he accepted Jesus Christ. He grew up in a church environment, but didn't want a bunch of rules to keep him from having fun. He felt like it was his "mission" to entice young people away from church. Three of his drinking buddies died in a car accident, one friend committed suicide, and then Dr. Brandt lost his job for showing up to work drunk.

One day, his best drinking buddy became a Christian and changed overnight. Dr. Brandt had to accept him and his new way of life if he was going to keep his friend.

Sometime later, a stove salesman shared the plan of salvation with Dr. Brandt as he was lying drunk on the sofa. In his drunken stupor, Dr. Brandt asked the Lord to come into his heart...and then rolled over and went back to sleep. When he woke up, he didn't remember what he had done, but found that nothing in his old life gave him joy any more. He longed for his Christian buddy's way of life, and he started living differently.

Point To Emphasize:

page 80-T

> "What I am telling you so earnestly is this: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Men can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven; so don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again! Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or

where it will go next, so it is with the Spirit. We do not know on whom He will next bestow this life from heaven.” John 3:5-8.

Share:

Have several people share (two to three minutes each) their story of how they became a Christian.

Bonus Material: Activity – “Writing Your Testimony”

Some of your group members may have never shared their testimony with anyone. Some may not even know how to begin. At the end of this session is a worksheet that will be helpful for those who don’t know what to share. They don’t need to fill in the entire worksheet, and may use it as a guideline. Make as many copies as necessary.

START: _____

Day 2: Sin’s Grasp

Overview:

Certain behaviors in Dr. Brandt’s life fell away, like swearing and drinking. But he found over time that there were other problems that he needed to deal with, like his anger, hostility, and pride. His boss often made him angry and he found that same anger creeping into his other relationships. He tried to justify his actions by blaming others for his negative reactions. Finally, after reading his Bible, he concluded that he needed to stop being hateful and angry. However, he quickly found out that he couldn’t stop.

Points To Emphasize:

page 81-B

> Reading the Bible is not easy. You can’t read some parts and ignore others.

page 82-M

> “When I want to do good, I don’t; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I am doing what I don’t want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp.” Romans 7:19-20

page 82-B

> “Not that we are in any way confident of doing anything by our own resources – our ability comes from God. It is He who makes us competent administrators of the new agreement, concerned not with the letter but in the Spirit. The letter of the Law leads to the death of the soul; the Spirit alone can give it life.” 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

On page 81, Dr. Brandt has included another “put off and put on” passage. In Ephesians 4:31-32 we are told to stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Instead we are to be kind to each other. Why should we do this? The answer is in the last five words of verse 32: “because you belong to Christ.”

The top paragraph on page 82 presents a perfect example of how someone can use the phrase, “Yes, but...” to justify their sin. Dr. Brandt felt as though he had every reason to be angry. Whenever we agree that we are wrong and then use the words “Yes, but...” we will always give an excuse as to why we sinned. This only means that we are still blaming the other person for our sin.

START: _____

Day 3: Your Resources Are Not Enough

Overview:

Dr. Brandt set his mind on living a good Christian life, only to find out that he was not able to do it very long. He could certainly act kind and forgiving, but inside he was still raging. The Christian life was not about developing his acting skills. The Christian life was about God’s Spirit living in him. He found that his sin made God seem distant. His boss and family didn’t cause him to sin; they only revealed sin in him. The turning point came when he admitted to God that he was helpless and asked God to give him love for his boss. The very next day Dr. Brandt experienced God’s answer to that prayer when his boss yelled at him and he didn’t get angry.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 83-B > The Christian life is not the development of your acting ability. The Christian life is God’s Spirit living His life in you.
- page 84-M > “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” Isaiah 59:2
- page 85-M > You cannot change what you are deep down inside, only God can.
- page 85-B > Only Jesus lived the Christian life perfectly. Only Jesus, in control of our hearts, will enable us to live the Christian life today.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Object Lesson – “The Glove Analogy”

To help illustrate the idea of Christ being the power source inside of us, use a glove as you share this information.

Gal 2:20 - “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”

I may say to a glove, “Glove, pick up this Bible,” and yet, somehow, the glove cannot do it. It has a thumb and finger, the shape and form of a hand, and yet it is unable to do the thing I command it to do.

You may say, “Well, of course not. You didn’t tell the glove how to pick up the Bible.” However, I can instruct, and teach, and coach that glove until my patience is exhausted, but the glove, try as it will, still will not pick up that Bible.

Yet, I have a glove at home that has picked up my Bible dozens of times...but never once before I put my hand into it! As soon as my hand comes into that glove, the glove becomes as strong as my hand. Everything possible to my hand becomes possible to that glove, but only to the measure in which the glove is prepared to clothe the activity of my hand.

That is what it is to have Christ, by His Spirit, dwelling within you. You are the glove, Christ is the Hand! Everything that is possible to Him becomes possible to you, and with Paul you may say, “I have strength for all things in Christ who strengthens me.” Phil 4:13

(Illustration from The Saving Life of Christ by Maj. Ian Thomas)

Bonus Material: Object Lesson – “The Airplane Analogy”

To help illustrate the idea of what it means to be “in Christ,” use a paper airplane to keep your listener’s attention.

I am currently in (name your city), but wish to fly to Europe. Ever since I was born, I have been bound to this earth by a law that I have never been able to break; the law of gravity. No matter how hard I try, I

cannot break away from the law of gravity. I am told, however, that there is another law, a higher law than the law of gravity, and that is the law of aerodynamics. If only I will be willing to commit myself in total trust to this new law, then the new law will set me free from the old law. By faith I step into the plane. By faith I sit back in my seat, and as those mighty engines roar into life, I discover that the law of aerodynamics sets me free from the law of gravity.

So long as I maintain by faith that position of total dependence, I do not have to **try to be free** from the law of gravity—I am **set free** by the operation of a new and a higher law. Of course, if I am stupid enough, way out across the Atlantic I can decide that the cabin of the plane is too stuffy and can step out through the emergency window. But the moment I discard my position of faith in the new and higher law that is setting me free, I discover that the old law is still fully in operation, and I am caught again by the pull of gravity and plunged into the water. I must maintain my attitude of dependence if I am to remain airborne!

So it is for you and me. We must walk by faith in the Spirit. We know that sin is not dead. Our flesh is very much alive. That is the old law. But a new law is in place; the law of our life in Christ and His Spirit. As long as I maintain my position of total dependence on Christ, I am being set free from the old law of sin. Sin is not dead, but I have a new power that is stronger than the old power. I need to **trust** in Christ, not try harder.

(Illustration from The Saving Life of Christ by Maj. Ian Thomas)

START: _____

Day 4: The Work of the Spirit

Overview:

When God changes a heart, it is a miracle and people begin to notice a change. That is what happened to Dr. Brandt. One of his coworkers noticed that he was a lot happier and asked if Dr. Brandt could help he and his wife. They met together and Dr. Brandt explained what God had done in his life. Dr. Brandt and his wife, Eva, had the sweet privilege of watching Al and Goldie accept Jesus into their lives. These were the first of many that Dr. Brandt would lead to the Lord. This experience showed Dr. Brandt that he needed to fill in the gaps in his biblical knowledge, particularly in his understanding of sin.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 86-B > “For the wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23
- page 86-B > “He will save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21
- page 89-M
Thought for
the Day > If you don’t know what sin is, you will inevitably suffer from its effects and probably wonder why!

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 5: The Nature of Sin

Overview:

Dr. Brandt set out to understand sin. As he studied sin in the Bible, he found he could put the various sins committed against God into four different categories: sins of the mind, sinful emotions, sins of the mouth, and sins of behavior. When you look at the list on page 90, you will probably think of others, and even yourself, who have displayed these sins recently. It is important to keep in mind that we want to use these lists as a mirror to see what is reflected in us. If we see something from the list that is in us, we need to remember that Jesus died so that we no longer have to be in bondage to that sin. We can confess it and be free from it. If we call sin by another name and get a wrong diagnosis, we will not get a real cure.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 90-T > The blood of Christ can wash away our sin. We are just one prayer away from help!
- page 92-T > “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13
- page 92-M > If you don’t call the behaviors listed in this chapter “sin,” then you will look to the world around you for the cause of your problems and for the solution to your difficulties.
- page 92-M > “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1John 1:9

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: "Check-Point"

On the top of page 91, there is a very good "heart check" question. Ask group members if they took the time to reflect upon this question. Do not ask them to share unless someone volunteers. There are several of these kinds of questions throughout the book. The purpose of going through this workbook is to achieve a changed life, not just gain knowledge.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up

Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

Salvation Story Worksheet

BEFORE:

Hi, my name is _____, and this is my story of how I came to know Jesus Christ.

Before I met Jesus I felt that I _____

(Share what was missing in your life. What deep need did you have that you tried to fill before you knew Jesus? Lack of peace, fear of death, loneliness, no purpose in life, no real friends, desire to be in control, desire to be center of attention, lots of unanswered questions?)

The important things in life for me were _____

(Share what your life revolved around and how those became your security and seemed to give you happiness. Drugs/alcohol, sports, school, friends, sex, relationships, money, work, other?)

When people asked me about Christians, God, and the Bible I _____

(Share what your thoughts were about Christians, God and the Bible and why you felt that way. Were there certain questions you had about God?)

As a result, my view of life after death and the future was _____

(Tell how you felt about the future and if you had any fears.)

HOW:

Then I met/heard/got invited to _____

(Who told you about Jesus? Under what conditions?)

I heard _____

(What Bible verse/story etc. first opened your heart to Christ? What helped you begin to see that God was real?)

I then realized that I _____

(Describe how you got to the place where you knew that you needed Jesus. What fears did you have? What questions? What did you do?)

In order to become a Christian, I _____

(Detail what you did or said in order to accept Christ—this is important as many people have misconceptions.)

AFTER:

Now that I've become a Christian, I _____

(Share what this means to you. What questions have been answered? What fears have been removed?)

Now I can look forward to the future because _____

(How do you feel about the future? What plans do you have? Who do you want to tell about Jesus?)

Why Don't You Just Concentrate on the Positive?

Chapter 5

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: The Positive of the Negative

Overview:

The memory verse for this week tells us to walk in the Spirit and we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. In reality, we really try to do the opposite - we try not to fulfill the lust of the flesh so we can walk in the Spirit. This entire chapter is about getting this principle in the right order.

On Day 1, Dr. Brandt used the illustrations of going to the dentist and the doctor to demonstrate how it is positive to deal with the negative. No one likes to go to either one for a checkup, because we are always afraid of what they may find. Several additional examples were given on page 96. Without poking around, the doctor and dentist would never find what is wrong with you. So it is in our spiritual lives, we need to poke around to find the negatives and that is a positive thing.

As Dr. Brandt and his wife studied the various lists of sins found in the Bible, they also found lists that described the fruit of the Spirit. The table on page 99 is the result of their search.

Points To Emphasize:

page 96-B

> In your spiritual life you need to deal with the negative.

page 97-T

> The power to walk in the Spirit comes from God. No human being or circumstance can interrupt your relationship with Him.

page 98-T

> There are many verses in the Bible that tell us about God's empowering and our choice to use that power.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Reflection

page 98-T

James 3:17-18 (included in the list of verses on page 98) is a good measuring stick when evaluating whether or not your wisdom is from God. What is the result of the wisdom that you are applying to your situations? Are you achieving the positive characteristics listed in these verses?

page 99

Bonus Material: Amplification

The chart on page 99 is a great tool in discipling or counseling. If someone comes to you and they can't figure out what their problem is, simply refer to the chart and have them circle every word that describes what is going on in their heart, in regard to a particular person or circumstance. If they identify characteristics on the sin side, they need to confess their sin to God, repent, and ask forgiveness of the person they have sinned against. They need the counseling because they are not walking in the Spirit.

START _____

Day 2: Look! Do You Want to Drive This Car, or Do You Want Me to Do It?

Overview:

In this section of the book, Dr. Brandt shared the story of driving to Detroit for a speaking engagement with his wife, Eva. Dr. Brandt took a wrong turn and didn't like it when Eva corrected him. I'm sure we all know people who act like this...including ourselves! Did you notice the rationalization and pride that caused him to continue going the wrong way even after he realized he was going the wrong way?

Points To Emphasize:

page 100-B

> We tend to resist facing up to our sinful behavior when we are in the middle of it.

- page 102-M > Even as Christians we tend to underestimate sin's power over our behavior.
- page 102-B > Human emotions can totally disengage our brain, preventing rational behavior and acceptance of the fact that we sin.
- page 102-B > Sin's power gives us the opportunity to be like we want, whether it is right or not.
- page 103-M > Repentance is a five-step process. We need to repent to get turned around when we are going the wrong way.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

It is interesting to note that nowhere in the story do we find Eva continuing to nag Dr. Brandt about making a wrong turn. She simply rode along, remained quiet, and allowed God to show her husband what was obvious. We don't get the sense that she was trying to prove she was right and he was wrong. What a wise woman! There is a lesson for us, from her, in this situation.

START _____

Day 3: Why Is It Difficult to Say, "I am Wrong; I Have Sinned?"

Overview:

On Day 3, Dr. Brandt finished his story about heading in the wrong direction down the freeway. The bottom line was that he really needed to confess that he was wrong and recognize that he had sinned. We often avoid saying we are wrong by using other words to cover up our sin. A good look at these "cover up" excuses is on page 105. We cannot move forward and walk in the Spirit if we don't take responsibility for our sin without blaming others. The first step in curing any problem is to admit our sin and take responsibility for our part of the problem.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 105-M > We freely blame others as being the cause of our problems and find it hard to simply say, "I am wrong. I have sinned," which is Step 1.

page 106-B > There is no human remedy for sin. The cure to the problem involves a miracle and what must happen goes against our human nature. We must start the process with Step 1. Each one of us must say individually, "I am wrong, I have sinned."

page 107-B > In a crisis, I need to stop focusing on the other person's sin and talk to God about my own sin.

page 108
Thoughts for
the Day > Ignoring your sin and recognizing another's sin only delays the cure to your problem.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 4: I Must Confess

Overview:

Today's text started with the words, "Yes, but...." Why is it that we always want to rationalize our sin? On page 109, Luke 16:15 reminds us that we can justify ourselves before men, but God knows our hearts. On Day 2, we started learning the 5-Step process to curing our problems. Day 3 covered Steps 2 and 3.

Points To Emphasize:

page 109-T > When you sin, you want to blame someone else, a circumstance, or your background.

page 109-M > Step 2: I need to say to God, "I am sorry. I have sinned."

page 110-T > Step 3: I need to pray, "God, forgive me of my sins."

page 110-B > Jesus shed His blood for our sins to make the free gift of forgiveness available to us. We just need to receive it.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

Many people say they know God has forgiven them but they can't forgive themselves. Here are several responses to that idea:

- > They really are not accepting the full work of Jesus Christ's death on the cross.
- > In essence, they are saying they know more than God ("You shouldn't have forgiven me, God.").
- > The truth is they never will be able to forgive themselves. They don't have the power to forgive sin, only God does.

START _____

Day 5: Repentance Is a Cure

Overview:

We wrapped up this chapter with the last two steps needed in finding a cure for our sin. Dr. Brandt also shared what he finally did to get turned around on the freeway.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 112-T > Step 4: I need to ask, "God, cleanse me of my sins."
- page 112-B > Step 5: I need to ask "God, empower me."
- page 112-B > For Christians to try to live the Christian life without total dependence on the Holy Spirit is a contradiction in terms.
- page 113-T > You will have a counterfeit victory if you don't surrender your control.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Story – "The Flowerbed"

This is a true story supporting the idea that receiving God's forgiveness allows us to freely come back into His presence and look at Him face to face.

Mary and five of her friends had been playing in the yard when Mary's mother noticed that her flowerbed had all the flowers torn apart. When Mary's mother asked the girls about it, they confessed that they had destroyed the flowers while they were playing. Mary's mother told the girls that Mary was going to have to pay for her part of the flowers and that she was going to talk to each one of their parents.

An interesting thing happened. Three of the girls' parents had their daughters pay for the destroyed flowers, while the other two parents chose not to have their daughters do anything to repay the damages. The five girls continued to come to Mary's house to play.

The three girls that had repaid the damages always came to the door smiling and looked Mary's mother right in the eye. The other two could not make eye contact with Mary's mother and would hang their heads when they came into the house.

We are a lot like the girls who did not have a restoration opportunity when we do not come to God and accept the free gift of his forgiveness, with no excuses and no covering up of our sin. God wants to restore us to the intimate relationship we had without any sin separating us.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

Why is it Difficult to Walk by a Mirror Without Looking at Yourself?

Chapter 6

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: Soul Check

Overview:

Today's lesson compares the time we spend with our outside appearance versus the time we spend on the appearance of our heart. We would never leave home without having showered, brushed our teeth, combed our hair, and even used some makeup. Did we look as closely at our heart this morning for imperfections as we did when we looked in the mirror?

Points To Emphasize:

page 120-T

> "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
1Samuel 16:7

page 120-T

> Since the Lord looks at the heart, a checkup of your heart is more critical than an examination of your physical appearance.

page 120

> On page 120, we read of how David and Moses saw the importance of a soul check.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Challenge – “Keeping a Journal”

On page 120, Deuteronomy 4:9 says to “Diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen.” Now that we’re a few sessions into the material, it is a good time to talk to your group about keeping a journal.

A journal involves keeping track of answered prayers and lessons learned. A journal is a good reminder of how God has worked in our lives and will help us not to “forget the things (y)our eyes have seen.” Suggest to your group members that they keep a journal for 30 days. Instruct them to keep their notations short enough so that they will want to continue doing it. After a month they will have a good idea of how little time it takes, and how beneficial it can be.

START: _____

Day 2: A Root of Bitterness Unchecked

Overview:

What a great warning today’s lesson is for all of us in the area of hanging on to a root of bitterness. We read the story of a couple whose marriage ended in divorce over an adulteress affair. What both people in the affair had in common was a root of bitterness. Let’s try to understand what twisted their thinking.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 123-T > No person is above temptation, so do not put yourself in a situation to be tempted.
- page 123-B > The greater the gap between outward behavior and the condition underneath your skin (hypocrisy), the greater the possibility of deceiving yourself.
- page 123-B > James 1:22 tells us to put our belief into action.
- page 124-M Thought for the Day > A root of bitterness can twist your thinking and make something wrong seem beautiful.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Quote

“Bitterness is a poison you drink, hoping the other person will die.” (Author unknown)

START: _____

Day 3: A Checkup for the Soul

Overview:

From the story on Day 2, we can see how important it is to have a regular soul checkup. We get regular checkups for our health, on our cars, with our finances; but we often neglect to get one for our soul. It is not easy to hear that something is wrong and needs to be fixed. However, we can experience many blessings when we use the Bible to check up on our soul.

Points To Emphasize:

page 124-B

> “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” John 3:19

page 125-T

> On page 125, James 1:23-25 tells us: “If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

page 126-M
Thought for
the Day

> The Bible is the mirror for checking up on your soul.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

Have you ever said the words, “I am so convicted...” and then did nothing regarding what you are convicted about? Have there been times when you have read back over an old study and come across an action you meant to take and then just never got around to actually doing it? That’s what it means to be a “hearer of the word and not a doer.” Take care to act on the conviction that comes from the Holy Spirit. It can be very helpful to find an accountability partner who will hold you to your own words. “Procrastination” is just a nice word for “disobedience.”

START: _____

Day 4: A Look in the Mirror (Part 1)

Overview:

When we have a blemish on our face we do something to get rid of it, as quickly as possible. However, we often ignore the blemishes of our character. To harbor bitterness toward anyone is much more serious than

a blemish on our face, and it needs our complete attention. We need to recognize the roots of bitterness lurking in our hearts and then move to reconciliation.

Points To Emphasize:

page 127-M

> Many married couples are estranged because one or both spouses neglected their souls and they have no goodwill left in their hearts for one another.

page 127 & 128

> On page 127, the three scripture passages listed give us three commands for action: “Take heed to yourself,” “put off,” and “put on.”

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 5: A Look in the Mirror (Part 2)

Overview:

In the same way that we use a mirror to help us decide which clothes to take off and which ones to put on, we can use the Bible as a mirror to help us decide what behaviors we need to put off and put on. God is very specific about what He wants us to “put off” and what He wants us to “put on.” The dilemma is really whether or not we are willing to do something about what we see in the mirror. Many times we hang on to a grudge because we want to, and we don’t see how it is hurting us. Today we read about a woman who finally saw, after six miserable years, how she was ruining her life with her unforgiveness.

Points To Emphasize:

page 129-T

> The Bible is a mirror that will let you know what to put off or put on.

page 129-B

> Nursing an angry spirit can sometimes feel pleasurable.

page 130-T

> It is amazing what a low standard of Christian life many of us will tolerate.

page 130-M

> God takes away our sin so we can actually feel under our skin just as we behave on the outside.

Bonus Material: Amplification

Holding on to a grudge for years takes a lot of energy. That is why people often say they are exhausted right before they are ready to forgive. The pain of a grudge can be as fresh as it was the day it happened. Why? Because when you go back to the moment of the pain, you revisit it exactly as you saw it happen. You actually “fan the flames” of the emotion you felt at the time, giving it fresh fuel to burn even longer. Every time you go back and revisit the memory, you refuel your fire of anger and unforgiveness. For you, it is as fresh and alive as when it happened, even though it occurred long ago. Each time you go back, you waste more energy fueling the fire. Stop! Put out the flames and free yourself from what is burning you up.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

At What Age is it Acceptable to Sulk When You Can't Have What You Want?

Chapter 7

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: Childish Manipulation

Overview:

Children are brilliant when it comes to manipulating adults to get what they want. The two stories shared in today's lesson are examples of behavior that we may see repeated in our own homes. This lesson helps us to identify the difference between charm, deception, and lying.

Points To Emphasize:

page 135-T

> What is the difference between charm, deception, and lying?

page 135-B

> Why do adults behave so childishly? This behavior works so well as a child that it is often continued into adult life.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Illustration

Here is an example of manipulating someone, or being deceitful, rather than just coming out and asking for what you really want.

John and Sue were sitting on the sofa watching television when Sue had a craving for a bowl of ice cream. She didn't really want to get up so she asked, "Doesn't a bowl of ice cream sound good?"

Sue was hoping that by creating a desire in John for a bowl of ice cream, he would offer to get up and get them both a bowl. If Sue was being fully honest she would have said, "I would like a bowl of ice cream, but I don't really want to get up. Would you get me a bowl of ice cream?"

START: _____

Day 2: Childish Behavior Isn't Just for Children

Overview:

At what age is it no longer acceptable to throw a tantrum when you can't have what you want? All of us have seen childish behavior in adults. And personally, we have all probably slammed a door, yelled, pouted, or given the silent treatment to someone at various times in our adult life. Dr. Brandt shared several examples in today's lesson. It's easy to spot childish behavior in someone else, but hard to see it in ourselves.

Points To Emphasize:

page 138-B

> You need to allow the Holy Spirit to give you love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

page 139-M
Thought for
the Day

> Adults continue unacceptable behavior, because it has worked in the past and is part of our sinful nature.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Day 3: Carnality

START: _____

Overview:

On Day 3, we looked at our ugly side, or our "flesh." We either deal with life from our flesh nature or our spiritual nature. If we are going to grow and mature, we need to grow up in Christ. We need to move off of the milk of immaturity and move on to the solid food of mature knowledge. The results of our actions will tell us whether we are in the flesh or the spirit. The flesh produces envy, strife, and divisions. The Spirit produces peace.

Points to Emphasize:

page 139-B

> “Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” 1 Corinthians 3:3

page 140-B

> In order to develop spiritually, we must recognize any carnality or childish, sinful behavior that is a part of our life. We need to let God deal with our hearts so we can move on to the meat of the Christian life.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

Lie versus Truth:

Lie: “But I’ve been this way my whole life, and so has my mother. I come from a long line of people who act like this. I can’t change.”

page 141-T

Truth: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3: “For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal?” Carnality keeps you from letting God change you. Every person can make the choice to mature and stop acting childish. It’s a matter of getting off the milk and moving on to solid food.

START: _____

Day 4: A Victim of Your Own Behavior

Overview:

Webster defines “forgive” as “to grant free pardon, cease to feel resentment against.” How are we supposed to do that when someone repeats the same undesirable behavior over and over again? Dr. Brandt gave us a great example in his adventure with the bush pilot who continued to whack him on the head with the wing of the plane.

Points To Emphasize:

page 143-B

> If you are going to forgive someone who sins against you and like it, then something special is going to have to happen to you.

page 143-B

> “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him. And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’” Luke 17:3-5

page 145-M > Galatians 6:1 tells us that if anyone mistreats us, we need to first examine our own hearts. We need to be filled with the Spirit before we approach the other person.

page 145-M > The other person's response should not affect my spirit, because my spirit is between God and me.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

page 145 Let's look more closely at the Galatians 6:1 verse on page 145. The Greek word for "restore" means "to repair, mend, or make perfect." The same word is used in Mark 1:19 when speaking about mending nets, and again in 1 Corinthians 1:10 when discussing how to bring divided groups together. We are to have a certain character quality about us when bringing about restoration; the quality of gentleness or humility. Our motive in going to the other person should be to restore them to a right relationship with the Lord, not to prove that we are right and they are wrong.

START: _____

Day 5: Rebuke and Forgive

Overview:

What should our response be to someone who is repentant and continues their undesirable behavior? Dr. Brandt gave us several examples from his own life and included four steps to help us in the "rebuke and forgive" process.

Points To Emphasize:

page 148-B > First, you need to walk in the Spirit.

page 148-B > Second, there needs to be a change of behavior.

page 148-B > Third, you need to deal with the person's response.

page 149-T > Fourth, depending on the relationship, you need to reward, praise, punish, remind, train, or even fire someone.

page 149-B Thought for the Day > Rebuking and forgiving should only be done when controlled by the Spirit.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Conclude Session

*Wrap-Up
Prayer / Prayer Partners*

END: _____

Forgiveness and Pain

Chapter 8

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

Day 1: Potential Power

START: _____

Overview:

Have you ever been in a situation where you did not know what to say to the person you were trying to encourage? Dr. Brandt was in that scenario when he found himself in the middle of the Ugandan civil war. He met a Ugandan businessman who had a story that few of us could even identify with. He was consumed with hatred after the military took everything he owned. A persistent missionary told him that Jesus could come into his life and change his heart. The miserable businessman knew he needed something, so he asked Jesus to come into his life.

Points To Emphasize

page 151-M

> “Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Colossians 3:13

page 153-T

> The businessman lost everything he owned to the soldiers.

page 153-T

> Even though he felt justified in his hatred, the businessman was the one who was miserable living with his hatred.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Research Findings

When researchers at Duke University Medical Center studied 58 women and men with chronic lower-back pain, they found that those who practiced forgiveness experienced less anger, resentment, depression, and aches.

“Our emotions, muscle tension, and thoughts can directly influence the strength of our pain signals,” says researcher, James W. Carson, PhD, a psychologist at the university.

Forgiveness isn’t a once-and-done act; it involves choosing, again and again, to replace anger and resentment with understanding toward someone who has done you wrong.

(Taken from Prevention Magazine, June 2004)

START: _____

Day 2: Love and Forgiveness

Overview:

The story of the Ugandan businessman was continued in this lesson. After he asked Jesus into his life, this man still faced seeing his home, business, and car in the soldiers’ possession. His heart was filled with hatred toward those soldiers. He then read Matthew 6:14-15. When he opened his heart and forgave the soldiers, God filled him with the fruit of the Spirit and he found he wanted to love the soldiers. After hearing the man’s story, Dr. Brandt was reminded of a grudge he had been holding against a man who owed him some money. Dr. Brandt realized he needed to forgive the man if he wanted to experience the fruit of the Spirit in his own life.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 155-T > We can have all of the fruit of the Spirit we want for free. But we must meet God on His terms to receive it.
- page 155-M > How foolish it is to add the pain resulting from hate and anger to a problem when we can exchange them for peace and joy.
- page 155-M > The circumstances that come into our lives will show us what is in our hearts.
- page 156-T > “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Matthew 5:44

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

There are those who have misunderstood Matthew 6:14-15 to mean that if we don't forgive someone we will lose our salvation. However, this verse is actually describing the quality of our relationship with God when we fail to forgive. The Believer's Bible Commentary gives this explanation:

"This does not refer to judicial forgiveness from the penalty of sin (that forgiveness is obtained by faith in the Son of God). Rather, this refers to the parental forgiveness that is necessary if fellowship with our Father is to be maintained. If believers are unwilling to forgive those who wrong them, how can they expect to be in fellowship with their Father who has freely forgiven them for their wrongdoings?"

Bonus Material: Reflection

Someone once defined a grudge as recalling to the mind a negative incident from the past. How much time has to pass for it to be considered "the past"?

START: _____

Day 3: How Can I Forgive?

Overview:

In Day 3, Dr. Brandt shared the story of another couple he met who had been affected by the civil war in Uganda. After hearing about the story of the Ugandan businessman, they came forward to tell Dr. Brandt their story. During the civil war, their 26-year-old son was captured, tortured, and killed. When the father tried to locate his son's body, he was beaten and whipped. Though they still had their home and business, this couple could not enjoy anything because they were both filled with sorrow and thoughts of revenge toward those who had killed their son. They were disturbed to hear that they should forgive the soldiers, because they felt it would be disloyal to the memory of their son. To continue to feel resentment seemed proper, yet they were so tired that, at Dr. Brandt's urging, they released their hostility to God.

Points To Emphasize:

page 159-B

> If we have anger and hatred in our hearts, we must first deal with our own hearts before we can deal with the offenses against us.

page 159-B

> If you are preoccupied with the offense, you will be unable to recognize your own need.

page 159-B

> “Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?...Hypocrite! First, remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Matthew 7:3, 5

page 160-T

> Why should we forgive? Forgiveness frees us from the destructive emotions that enslave us to the object of our anger.

page 160-T

> “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Object Lesson – “Shackled in Chains”

This is a good illustration of how we are enslaved to the object of our anger. *Take a chain and attach one end to your ankle and the other end to a large stuffed animal or doll.* When we do not forgive, we actually drag our grudge, like a big anchor, along with us in everything we do. *Walk around the room dragging the animal.* Imagine how tired someone would be after dragging that around for years! Imagine how heavy it can become if you have many grudges that you are dragging around. When we forgive, we actually unlock the shackles from ourselves and walk free. *Release the chain from your ankle and walk free.*

Bonus Material: Activity – “Plank Removal”

This can be an assignment for your group members to do on their own. Tell them to take a piece of paper and make two columns. On the left side, they should make a list of all the things that others have done against them. On the right side of the page they need to make a list of their own wrong responses to things others have done against them. For instance: anger, nagging, bitterness, revenge, etc.

Once the list is completed, they need to ask God to forgive them for each wrong response on the list. After that, they need to go back to the list on the left side of the page and, in prayer, forgive each person for what they did to hurt them. Using this tool regularly will help an individual to keep their heart cleaned up and ready to be used by God.

START: _____

Day 4: I Hate Pain!

Overview:

During this lesson we considered the question, is it possible to have peace in the middle of physical pain? We followed Dr. Brandt through his appendectomy when he discovered the answer to that question.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 162-T > For two days I had not given a thought toward the Lord. I had not even considered that peace and joy were possible with the presence of this pain.
- page 162-M > The details of a crisis can short-circuit our dependence on God and take up all our attention.
- page 163-T > A body at peace can take a lot of pain.
- page 163-M > "God is willing to provide for us when we come to Him with our burdens." Matthew 11:28

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 5: The Fundamentals of Faith

Overview:

Eva had cancer. As Dr. Brandt and Eva prepared for her surgery, they decided to gather their thoughts on the fundamentals of their faith and write out some verses to give them strength. Eva seemed to float through her surgery much differently than Dr. Brandt did with his; because this time they came with their minds and hearts prepared.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 166-B > Start a scripture memory program before you are in a crisis!
- page 167-M > "We were not two desperate people thumbing through an unfamiliar book to learn about a strange God. Rather, we were two people reviewing Bible verses and reaching out to a familiar Friend."
- page 168-T > Our natural tendency is to look for peace after the end of the difficult circumstance, rather than obtain peace from God in the middle of the circumstance.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Story

Jacinta Diaz was known as a great woman of faith in her church in Puerto Rico. People usually turned to Jacinta for prayer in times of trouble. One night her son got into a nasty argument with someone. Minutes later her son was dead.

Words of the tragedy reached Jacinta's neighborhood. Friends rushed to her side and grieved with her. In the meantime, the assailant was overcome with remorse. He couldn't believe what he had done. He begged someone to get Jacinta to pray for him. He didn't know he had killed her son.

When Jacinta heard of his request, she walked a half mile to meet him. There she laid her hands on her son's killer and prayed with him.

(Taken from Lifewalk, Walk Thru the Bible Ministries)

Bonus Material: Story

One Sunday, a group of missionaries and believers in New Guinea were gathered together to observe the Lord's Supper. A young man came in and sat down. One of the missionaries noticed that a sudden tremor passed through the young man sitting next to him. He sensed it was because the man was under a great nervous strain. In a moment all was quiet again.

The missionary whispered to the man sitting next to him, "What was it that troubled you?"

"Ah," the man said. "The man who just came in killed and ate the body of my father. And now he has come in to remember the Lord with us. At first I didn't know whether I could endure it. But it is all right now. He is washed in the same precious blood."

And so together they had Communion.

It is a marvelous thing, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Does the world know anything of this?

(As told by H.A. Ironside in The Closer Walk New Testament, Walk Thru the Bible Ministries)

The Spirit-Mind-Body Connection

People are spiritual beings. Our spirituality is what the Bible calls the “image of God.” The spiritual dimension is what separates us from the animals.

How can spiritual unrest lead to strokes, heart attacks, bleeding ulcers, neck spasms, and even cancer?

Spirit

- Your soul is born with a need to know and experience God. Without this intimate connection, your spirit is in chaos and longs for peace.
- Then comes stress, such as loss of a loved one, loss of a job, or the pain of rejection. This external stress may disrupt your illusion of internal peace and make you aware of your soul’s inner chaos.

Mind

- Your brain interprets this unrest as fear, anxiety, worry, anger, or other emotions.
- Through its nerve network, the brain sends alarm signals throughout your body.

Body

- Without asking your permission, your glands release adrenaline, cortisone, insulin, and other stress hormones.
- Every organ becomes overexcited. Blood vessels constrict, the heart speeds up, muscles twitch, and toxins build up in the blood.

Spiritual unrest produces emotional upset, affecting the body in three ways:

1. Changing Blood Flow

- For example, when you are embarrassed, the blood vessels in your cheeks dilate and you blush.
- Anger can lead to the spasm of brain arteries and a migraine headache.

2. Changing Secretions

- Remember your fear when you first spoke to a large group of people? Alarm messages shot from your brain to your salivary glands, and they stopped secreting saliva. Your mouth felt like it was painted with rubber cement.
- Long-term fear (anxiety) may stimulate stomach acid, allow bacteria to invade the stomach lining, and lead to an ulcer.

3. Muscle Spasms

- When you worry, your muscles tend to spasm and hurt. That is why worriers suffer so much from back and neck spasms.
- Depression often causes multiple irritable trigger points in the muscles. When these trigger points go into spasm, a person suffers the chronic pains of fibromyalgia.

Taken from None of These Diseases by S.I. McMillen, M.D.

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up

Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

Anger is One Letter Away From Danger

Chapter 9

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: Facing Anger Honestly

Overview:

In the first day of this Chapter, Dr. Brandt introduced us to an angry young Christian, Jay Carty. Jay thought he was coming to Dr. Brandt for help in making a career decision. Instead, Dr. Brandt went straight to the heart of the problem and pointed out Jay's sin so that he could find a real cure to his problem.

Points To Emphasize:

page 173-M

> Dr. Brandt did not take Jay's verbal attack personally and was able to deflate Jay's anger with a gentle concerned question.

page 173-M

> It is hard to fight with someone who won't fight.

page 174-T

> If you are not exhibiting the qualities of the Spirit, you are not currently filled with, or controlled by, the Spirit.

page 176-T

> You are only a prayer away from peace and freedom from anger.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Activity – “Spiritual Breathing”

One of the ways we can experience God’s power in our lives is through “Spiritual Breathing.” Spiritual Breathing involves “breathing out” your sin and “breathing in” God’s power. As you breathe out, you confess your sin to God. In this particular lesson, we’ve been talking about anger. When you recognize anger growing in you, you breathe out and confess it to God. This is designed to help you get rid of what is keeping you from experiencing the peace and joy God wants to give you. As you breathe in, you take in the cleansing of God and the power of the Spirit. You are allowing God to fill you with His Spirit to fully empower you. It is the breathing in that fills you up. You can do this at any time of the day: Simply breathe out your sin and breathe in the power of the Spirit and you will be ready to be used by God.

START: _____

Day 2: The Consuming Nature of Anger

Overview:

On Day 2, we took a look at some basic facts about anger. The Latin root of the word “anger” means “to strangle.” Anger is a universal emotion because everyone experiences it at some time in their life. It can come on quickly or simmer slowly over time. Anger hinders intelligent straight thinking and constructive rational behavior. Dr. Brandt even went so far as to say, “I have never observed anger to be a positive factor in problem solving. I have never found anger to be righteous.”

Points To Emphasize:

page 179-T

> Unrestrained anger can destroy us. It cannot be ignored. It must be tamed.

page 179-T

> If there is anger in your heart, someone may do or not do something, say or not say something to trigger the anger inside of you.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Question

“Has anyone ever been mad at a person for something they did in a dream, but not in reality? When you woke up, were you angry at that person for a while?”

We can even get angry about something that hasn’t really happened! The person didn’t actually do anything to us, but emotionally we have a hard time letting go of our anger.

START: _____

Day 3: The Physical Aspects of Anger

Overview:

Anger can create a whole host of negative physical changes in our bodies. Dr. Brandt included a list on page 180. The people that trigger our anger can be in any part of our life and in any age group. Dr. Brandt made the point that because we live in a fallen sinful world, there are going to be many opportunities for our anger to be triggered. Can God help us or are we on our own? The answer is definitely, "Yes, God can help!"

Points To Emphasize:

page 180-T

> Anger can ruin your health.

page 180-B

> Circumstances and people can trigger your anger.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Research

A six-year study at the University of North Carolina characterized the anger traits of 12,986 men and women. The results, published in the May 6, 2000 issue of "The Lancet," found that subjects with the most anger traits were two to seven times more likely to develop coronary heart disease. (psych-net.org)

A study of 774 men published in Health Psychology in 2002 found that hostility and deep pessimism were worse on our hearts than smoking, drinking, or being fat. (cortisolconnection.com)

Stress, as commonly explained, is the unnatural result of the fight-flight response of our ancient ancestors. In Australia, scientists forced a group of deer to live in proximity to a tiger with no chance for escape. The fight-flight hormone cortisol produced by these constantly stressed creatures broke down muscle tissues. The deer withered and died. (cortisolconnection.com)

Charles D. Spielberger, president-elect of the American Psychological Association states, "Intense anger contributes to ulcers, heart attacks, strokes, a depressed immune system, and other problems. There is growing evidence that anger and hostility may be as important as cholesterol and smoking in heart disease." (policestress.org)

START: _____

Day 4: The Biblical View of Anger

Overview:

Day 4 leads us through a study of what God has to say about anger. As always, we have a choice about whether or not we truly want help. We can either try to manage our anger on our own or turn to God for help.

Points To Emphasize:

page 182-B

> The Bible does not instruct you to vent your anger against evil causes or evil people.

page 183-M

> Anger is a part of our “old sin nature.”

page 184-T

> The Bible tells us to put away anger and cease from anger, it only causes harm.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Note: The Bonus Material included with Day 5 will provide an opportunity to discuss Ephesians 4:26 in greater depth. If someone wants to discuss this verse as part of this lesson, ask them to hold their thoughts until you get to Day 5.

START: _____

Day 5: Dealing with Anger Biblically

Overview:

If we are to deal with our anger biblically, we need to call anger what the bible calls it...“sin.” That’s really good news! We don’t need to live our entire life as an angry person, when God has given us a cure for our anger. In today’s text, Dr. Brandt presented a two-step process to help us deal with our anger. First, we must recognize our anger as sin and confess it. Second, we need to ask God for the power of the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our life. We don’t want to learn to be better managers of our anger; we need to get rid of our anger by surrendering it to God so that we can be free from it.

Points To Emphasize:

page 186-B

> Recognize destructive anger as sin.

page 187-M

> 1John 1:9 describes how we can get “cleaned up.”

page 187-B

> Replace anger with the fruit of the Spirit.

page 188-T

> If we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

page 190-B
Thought for
the Week

> Anger puts my brain on the shelf; God's supernatural miracle puts my anger on the shelf.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Activity – Is Anger Sin?

The article on the following pages is a summation of the scriptures and ideas on the question, "Is Anger Sin?" Make copies and read through it together with your group. It is effective to have someone read the scriptures out loud and you, the leader, read the summary statements.

Bonus Material: Resource

Additional helpful resource on this subject: Dr. Brandt's book entitled Breaking Free From the Bondage Of Sin, particularly pages 134-142.

Is Anger Sin?

Group member

"What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" Mark 7:20-23

Leader

The things that come out of the heart are what make a person unclean. We see in this passage that greed and envy are listed as vices that make a person unclean. These two characteristics are emotions. Emotions, or feelings, are defined as something from within that prepares the body for immediate vigorous action. We need to remember that emotions can change from moment to moment, and they can often deceive us. God's Word is unchanging and always true.

Group member

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like." Galatians 5:19-21

- Leader **In this passage, Paul calls anger “fits of rage” and includes it in his list of “acts of the sinful nature.”**
- Group member “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”
Romans 8:5-8
- Leader **This passage gives us two options: We are either on the sinful nature side, or on the Spirit side. The sin side is hostile to God; the Spirit side is submissive to God and His law. If I am on the sinful nature side, I cannot please God. There is no middle ground.**
- Group member “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.” Galatians 5:16-17
- Leader **Our flesh and the Spirit are in a battle against each other. However, if we walk in the Spirit, we do not have to do what our flesh wants. We can be free from its power by a higher power that is in control of us.**
- What about Jesus? Didn’t He get angry?**
- Group member “And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, stretch out your hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.” Mark 3:5
- Leader **If all anger is sin, then Jesus sinned. But we know that it is impossible for Jesus to sin or He would not be holy. How, then, was Jesus angry without sinning? Mark 3:5 is the only passage in the New Testament that uses the word “anger” with the person of Christ. However, the word “grief” is also in that same verse. Jesus was angry at their sin and grieved at the condition of their hearts. Seldom does someone get angry at people and become grieved over their condition at the same time. Jesus had that ability. God’s anger is never occasional, it is eternal. Jesus is eternally angry with sin and eternally forgiving toward sinners.**
- What about Ephesians 4:26? “Be angry, and do not sin.” (This is actually a quote from Psalm 4:4.)**

As we consider this verse, it is important to look at it within the context of the entire passage. Notice first there are a number of clear scriptures that say to get rid of anger completely, one of them only five verses after this one in Ephesians 4:31. The Greek verb tense for “be angry” is a present middle imperative (considered a permissive imperative, rendering it literally “you may be angry.”) Present means that it is happening right now. Middle means that you take no action. Imperative is not a command to “get angry,” but rather an acknowledgement that there are going to be times when you feel someone or something working on you to make you angry. Recognize that, and as you become angry, do not deny the anger; do not derive satisfaction from the anger, recognize that it is present, and do not act upon it. Be angered, but don’t sin by acting on your anger.

How do we experience anger and not sin? The same way Jesus did by not allowing the sun to go down on the anger, nor allowing the devil a foothold. If we are walking in union with Him and in the Holy Spirit, we will not allow the anger to become a motivating factor in our lives.

Group Member

“For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:20

Leader

Guidelines for “Christ-like” Anger

1. It does not contain intent to wish harm or bring harm upon the person associated with our anger.
2. It is related to a violation or corruption of God’s moral will, rather than some “self-determined right.”
3. It is briefly experienced, but sufficient to motivate behavior on our part, that is consistent with God’s moral will (e.g., acknowledging the anger: “I am feeling angry about the lie you told me. I care about you and our relationship. Will you please tell me the truth from now on?”).
4. It is not carried over to the next day and held as a grudge against the person associated with our anger; i.e., we are willing to forgive (live with the consequences of the other person’s actions).

Leader

Homer Dowdy (Dr. Brandt’s co-author of Breaking Free from the Bondage of Sin) wrote this about God’s anger:

“God’s perfect holiness, His utter righteousness, are so far removed from us in our sinful condition that when we speak of God’s anger and our anger, even our ‘righteous indignation,’ we cannot use the same language for both. Even though the word ‘anger’ may be the same in both texts, the meaning of

each is as different as light is from darkness, good is from evil, the Creator is from His creation. ('My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.' Isaiah 55:8 KJV) Until we are in God's presence, we cannot fully understand His ways, His expressions. Extend God's anger to the ultimate and you get what Jonathan Edwards called zeal. Extend any anger employed by fallible man and you get something tainted, which is what you could expect from one, who in this life, can see only through a glass, darkly."

In conclusion, we can see that anger is a part of the sin nature and is at war against God. It is something that comes from "within" us, so that means that it does not come from an outside source. That is good news! If our anger is only sin, it is one prayer away from a supernatural cure because Jesus came to die for our sins.

In Summary:

- > God states that anger is a part of our sinful nature.
- > Anger is not listed as a fruit of the Spirit.
- > If you get "righteously angry" at the injustices of the world, you will walk around angry all the time – we live in an unjust world.

We cannot be angry and at the same time "rejoice always, and in everything give thanks" which we are commanded to do in 1Thessalonians 5:16-18. It is God's will for us.

"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

START: _____

Conclude Session

Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners

END: _____

Your Wife Has Inoperable Cancer

Chapter 10

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: God's Peace Is Beyond Our Human Understanding

Overview:

In the first day's reading of this session, we found out that Eva's cancer had returned. It was inoperable and she was given only six months to live. Dr. Brandt and Eva had been teaching about God's peace for years and now they were facing their own crisis. They wondered, "Can you have peace during a painful death?" Once again these two faithful servants turned to God's Word for answers.

Points To Emphasize:

page 192-T

> "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

page 192-T

> "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

page 192-M

> Peace originates with God and is available to us under any conditions, including our present circumstances.

page 193-B

> When we present our requests to God, we need to be neutral about the way things turn out.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

page 192-T

Philippians 4:6-7 is a good example of “cause and effect.” In other words, when we do something we cause an effect. If we are not anxious and present everything in prayer with thanksgiving (cause), then the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds through the power of Christ Jesus (effect).

Bonus Material: “Check-Point”

page 192-M

In the middle of page 192 is a paragraph that starts with the words, “Picture a peaceful person with relaxed muscles...” This sentence describes a person who is at peace. Are your muscles relaxed? Is your blood pressure normal? Do you have a quiet mind? Is your heart calm and contented? Then you are at peace! If you are tense, anxious, stressful, or uneasy, you are not at peace.

START: _____

Day 2: The Anxiety of a Crisis

Overview:

Eva and Dr. Brandt decided that they would not go the route of chemotherapy and radiation. It was not going to cure her, and to prolong her life meant prolonged suffering. They chose to go with a special diet and food supplement program. When they shared their decision with others, they experienced a lot of opposition from well-meaning friends. After more prayer, they still felt the same and stayed with their decision.

Points To Emphasize:

page 195-T

> “The Bible said to relax and trust God. We experienced a miracle. God did calm us down, and we were able to trust Him.”

page 195-B

> “We found ourselves drifting away again and again from peaceful trust in God.”

page 196-T

> “We realized that peace was not dependent on God doing what we wanted Him to do, but peace was dependent on knowing that He was God, and He knew what was best in every situation.”

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

When going through a crisis like Dr. Brandt describes in today’s text, we can see how important it is to have the support and prayer of friends.

A verse from the Old Testament that explains the importance of friends is Ecclesiastes 4:9-10: “Two are better than one...If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”

START: _____

Day 3: Trusting God in All Circumstances

Overview:

Even the strongest of believers have their moments of weakness. On Day 3, we read about Dr. Brandt’s anger with God because he realized that Eva really was going to die. In the hallway of his condominium, Dr. Brandt had a special moment with God. God spoke to his heart and said, “Trust me. I am God. Let Me comfort you and give you peace. I will not change Eva’s condition. You want to be angry and rebellious about it. I want you to let Me change your heart.” Once again, Dr. Brandt found he needed to trust God, repent, and commit Eva into God’s loving care. Together Eva and Dr. Brandt used a series of relaxation exercises and scriptures to give Eva peace during her worst times of pain.

Points To Emphasize:

page 198-B

> Let the Lord give you peace. Let Him give you joy.

page 199-T

> “We all witnessed something supernatural happening to Eva in those last several weeks of her life.”

page 200-T
Thought for
the Day

> We need to give our request to God, but trust the decision to Him.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 4: Living and Dying

Overview:

In Day 4, we had a very intimate view into Dr. Brandt and Eva’s lives as they lived out what they had been teaching for years. Eva asked Dr. Brandt if she was going to die and then admitted she was scared because she had made a mess of her life. Instead of reassuring her that she had not, he did what he would have done with any counselee; he gave her a cure instead of relief. Eva was asking for some help to get her heart cleaned up before she went to heaven to meet Jesus. Together these two weary pilgrims confessed their sins and got cleaned up by the living God. Dr. Brandt states that it was the most inspiring, renewing moments of their forty-two years of marriage. The next day when they spoke, Eva was no longer scared. Later, that same day, Eva took her final breath and was gone.

Points To Emphasize:

page 200-B

> The only way to really help someone is not to offer human sympathy, but to call sin by its right name.

page 201-M

> To meet Jesus is the ultimate, supreme event of life.

page 203-B
Thought for
the Day

> A prepared heart has no fear of death and what lies beyond.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Day 5: Prepared for This World

START: _____

Overview:

We have been talking about “being prepared.” In Day 4, the discussion was about preparing for death. Today’s lesson talked about being prepared to live in this world, and being prepared to release our loved ones when God calls them to come to Him. As we prepare ourselves, we are to grow in grace. That means we should be getting more gracious as we get older, not crankier.

We are also to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, we are to glorify God with our thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 204-T > Matthew 22:37: You can measure your love of the Lord by looking at your obedience to His commandments.
- page 205-T > Matthew 22:39: You are to love everyone and be as concerned about their souls as your own.
- page 205-T > Psalm 24:1: You don't own anything. You are a steward of someone else's property.
- page 205-M > Hebrews 9:27: If you know Christ as your Savior and have kept His commandments, you will look forward to this meeting.
- page 206-T > Psalm 116:15: If you love someone as you love the Lord, and that person knows the Lord as Savior, then you will be pleased with God's decision when He calls them to come to Him.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: "Check-Point"

This is a good time to stop and evaluate how you are doing as you go through this workbook. We have read over 190 scriptures! Are you different? In what ways have you changed?

You have been given enough truth to change your life dramatically. The scriptures in this particular chapter are good ones to spend some time in. They are excellent tools for evaluating your walk with God. Use them for a soul check.

START: _____

Conclude Session

*Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners*

END: _____

I Prayed, But I Still Don't Feel Right

Chapter 11

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks
Announcements
Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: The Need for Prayer

Overview:

In Day 1, Dr. Brandt reflects on prayer after being asked to speak on the subject. He uses the Philippians 4:6-7 verse where we are told to be anxious for nothing and to give our requests to God in prayer. He makes the statement that everyone seeks peace, but few of us want to meet the conditions. To receive peace, you need to accept the truth that you must relinquish control over the events of your life to God. Even Jesus had to do that when He was about to be crucified.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 210-T > Peace that surpasses understanding is a by-product of prayer.
- page 210-M > Personal attainment, competence, and intelligence are not the keys to finding the peace of God.
- page 210-B > Peace that surpasses understanding comes when we turn control of our lives over to God.
- page 211-T > It seems that everyone takes their turn enduring something they would rather not face.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Story – “The Rope”

The story is told of a mountain climber who wanted to climb the highest mountain. He began his adventure after many years of preparation. However, since he wanted the glory just for himself, he decided to climb the mountain alone. The night felt heavy in the heights of the mountain, and the man could not see anything. All was black; zero visibility with the moon and the stars covered by the clouds.

As he was climbing, only a few feet away from the top of the mountain, he slipped and fell into the air, falling at a great speed. The climber could only see black spots as he went down, and feel the terrible sensation of being sucked by gravity. He kept falling...and in those moments of great fear, all the good and bad episodes of his life came to his mind.

All he could think about was that death was upon him. All of a sudden he felt the rope tied to his waist pull him very hard. His body was hanging in the air...only the rope was holding him. And in that moment of stillness, he had no other choice but to scream, “HELP ME GOD!!”

Immediately a deep voice coming from the sky answered: “What do you want me to do?”

“Save me, God!” the man cried out.

“Do you really think I can save you?” the voice asked.

“Of course I believe you can.” the man replied.

“Then cut the rope tied to your waist...”

There was a moment of silence; and the man decided to hold onto the rope with all his strength.

A rescue team found the climber the next day, dead and frozen...his body hanging from a rope, his hands holding tight to it...ONLY 10 FEET AWAY FROM THE GROUND.

(Source Unknown)

Why should you turn the control of your life and your situations over to God? Because sooner or later, God is going to put you in a place where peace will completely elude your heart. He is going to put you in this hard place for a reason. He is going to test your faith and teach you to learn to let go and trust Him.

START: _____

Day 2: The Method of Prayer

Overview:

In this lesson, we took a closer look at praying versus giving the appearance of praying. We all can recall a time when we bowed our heads but don't remember what was prayed at all. Jesus gave a warning to us all in Matthew 15:8 when he rebuked the Pharisees, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." We need to approach God in faith with a heart that is familiar with His Word.

Points To Emphasize:

page 212-B

> Prayer is making our requests known to God.

page 212-B

> The decision regarding our requests is His.

page 212-B

> The evidence of our faith is peace.

page 214-B
Thought for
the Day

> The peace that passes all understanding comes from prayer that is based on the Word of God.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 3: The Evidence of Prayer in Our Lives

Overview:

In today's lesson, Dr. Brandt gave us a very helpful diagram in the middle of page 215 that helps us evaluate our prayer life. The scripture verse on that same page is a great way for us to start out our discussion. Isaiah 55:9 reminds us that our ways are not God's ways and our thoughts are not His thoughts.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 215-B > Area A in the diagram represents prayers we pray that are not answered, possibly because we ask selfishly.
- page 215-B > Area B represents the blessings or things God would do for us if we just asked.
- page 216-T > The intersection of Areas A and B combines to form Area C, which shows answered prayer in line with God's will.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 4: Rejoice Always

Overview:

Dr. Brandt decided to meditate and memorize scripture and picked a two-word verse: "Rejoice always." He realized that memorizing words is a lot easier than living those words out. He soon discovered that apart from God doing it in him, it was impossible.

He closed this lesson with the story of his friend, Sue, who was given a chance to choose joy or bitterness when she found herself waiting in a Dallas airport. Either way, she was still stuck in Dallas. We need to realize that God chooses what we go through, but we choose how we go through it.

Points To Emphasize:

- page 217-B > We need God's law in our subconscious to help us make the right decision.
- page 21149-B > Rejoicing always only works when you let God do the work.

Thought for the Day

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Story – “Cleaning the Church”

Sue was a part of a church that was so small they could not afford a janitor. The families of the congregation took turns cleaning the church on Saturday. The task would usually only take several hours.

Because her husband traveled, Sue often had to do the cleaning by herself while her young children played in the other rooms. One day while talking to her friend, Jean, Sue lamented, “Oh no, I have to clean the church this weekend, how awful!”

“You don’t like cleaning the church?” Jean asked.

“No, I barely have enough time to clean my own house. I dread it the entire week before I clean,” Sue said.

“Oh, I love to clean the church,” Jean said.

“Why in the world do you like it?” Sue asked.

“Well, you know how everyone seems to sit in the same seats in the worship center? When I vacuum or dust their chair, I pray for that person. You always sit in the second row and the second seat in, so I picture your face as I pray for you. By the time I am finished, I have prayed for everyone in our church and feel very close to all of them. Cleaning the church is one long prayer time for me.”

Both women cleaned the church, but one was blessed by her work and the other one complained and was worn out by the task.

START: _____

Day 5: Pray Without Ceasing

Overview:

Dr. Brandt added two more verses to his scripture memorization: “Pray without ceasing,” and “In everything give thanks.” In the limo story, we can see how God provided in an amazing way for Dr. Brandt while he was praying for others who were involved. The story about his speaking engagement in Kenya shows us that you can give thanks in even the worst of circumstances.

Points To Emphasize:

page 222-T

> Commit your day into God’s hand. Whatever happens, you can depend on a living God to look after you and give you a day’s supply of joy.

page 223-B

> No circumstance can keep people from turning their hearts toward God or opening their ears to hear from Him.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Conclude Session

*Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners*

END: _____

If You Don't Want to, You Aren't Going to

Chapter 12

START: _____

Begin Session

Opening Remarks

Announcements

Opening Prayer

START: _____

Day 1: Standards of Performance

Overview:

On the first day of this chapter, Dr. Brandt shared what his early years as a Christian were like as he tried to grow and walk with the Lord. He used the analogy of an athlete in training to show how a person needs to work on building the right muscles to achieve success in the physical arena. In the same way, Dr. Brandt and Eva realized their faith was shaky and they needed some exercise to improve their faith as they tried to understand God's will for their lives. They were about to experience a major change in their lifestyle as they went from pleasing themselves to pleasing God.

Points To Emphasize:

page 229-T

> We need to study the Bible.

page 229-T

> We should test the Bible against life.

page 229-T

> We should enlist some teachers and coaches to help along the way.

page 229-T

> We need to provide the will to study, and desire to improve ourselves.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Object Lesson

This illustration demonstrates that when we put God first in our lives, He will provide all the time we need for Bible study, prayer, and worship and we will still have time left to accomplish what He thinks should be done that day.

You will need:

Two containers of equal size with lids

3 tennis balls - label one "Bible study", one "prayer", and one "worship"

Rice

Practice this before the session several times so that you can do it smoothly!

Fill one container with enough rice so that when the three tennis balls are placed on top, the lid will not close. Start the illustration with one container filled with rice and the three balls in your hand.

I would like to show you an illustration of how, when we rearrange our priorities, God will help us fit into our day all that He wants done.

The bowl represents our day. The rice in this bowl represents all of the things that we try to fit into our day. Things like going to work, exercise, shopping, cleaning, cooking, yard work, etc.

At the end of the day, after we have finished everything else, we try to add our Bible study, prayer, and worship time with the Lord.

Place the three balls on top of the rice and try to put the lid on. They will not fit.

As you can see here, using this approach, trying to fit it in at the end of the day, doesn't work. There is just not enough room in the day.

However, if we change our priorities and put God first...

Place the three balls in the bottom of the empty bowl.

God will rearrange the day and provide the time for everything to get done.

Pour the rice on top of the balls, shake it down, and put the lid on top.

START: _____

Day 2: Training Requires Diligence

Overview:

Thanks to a “pesky” pastor who kept asking Dr. Brandt about how he spent his time, money, and Sundays, the Brandt’s lifestyle began to change. It changed so much that Dr. Brandt and Eva decided to go to Bible College. This took a real step of faith because they already had two children and he was just getting started in the field of engineering. Together they looked to the Bible and prayer for their answers. God continued to give them a desire to study the Bible.

Points To Emphasize:

page 232-B

> Romans 15:13 - We can hope, or expect, to handle the circumstances that come our way with an inner calm, free from agitation and untroubled by conflict.

page 233
Thought for
the Day

> Diligent application of God’s Word will keep you on the right track when you are learning about faith.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 3: Running the Race

Overview:

On Day 3, Dr. Brandt continued to share the details of their early walk of faith. They sold their house, their boat, and went off to Houghton College. Their finances were severely tested when Dr. Brandt decided to go on to get his Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology. After paying for his tuition, he had one dime left in his pocket. God used an atheist to provide a job, a car, and the tuition needed for Dr. Brandt to finish school.

Points To Emphasize:

page 234-M

> Practicing faith is like an exercise. It builds confidence in God, just as physical exercise builds muscle.

page 234-B

> Faith in God must be built up before a crisis, just like muscles must be built up before an event.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

START: _____

Day 4: God Is Faithful

Overview:

Dr. Brandt began to see how God was building his faith as he was waiting for answers to prayer and experiencing financial struggles. He saw that he didn't really trust God in the beginning and that God knew exactly what He was doing by letting his bank account dwindle. He realized that great things were happening during God's silence.

Points To Emphasize:

page 237-B

> Although God is sometimes silent, that never means He is not there.

page 238-B

> Questioning God is like a warning light on a dashboard of a car. Stop as quickly as possible and find out what went wrong.

page 239-T

> Tough times will not produce perseverance and character unless we put our faith in God.

page 240-B
Thought for
the Day

> God is faithful, loving, and forgiving of the past; we can trust Him to train us for life.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Amplification

Dr. Sam Peeples once gave the definition for "hopeless" as "saying you will have peace and joy when someone or something that you have no control over will change."

START: _____

Day 5: Getting Started in Biblical Foundations

Overview:

As we conclude this study, we have the opportunity to look at a couple of different ways that we can study the Bible. Remember that Bible study is a lifelong journey, not a destination. We continue to learn every day.

Points to Emphasize:

page 241-T

> What we have covered in this book are lessons that focus on the beautiful and simple truth that God loves us and has provided a simple way to live an abundant and peaceful life. This is done by confessing our sins quickly and asking the Holy Spirit to control our lives. If you miss the simplicity of this truth, reading this book has been a waste of your time.

page 244
Thought for
the Day

> Lasting change comes from a foundation built on Biblical faith.

Share:

Have one or two people share their most meaningful thought and how they applied it.

Bonus Material: Conclusion

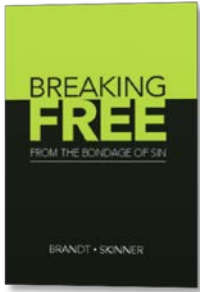
Give your group members the opportunity to share what God taught them in this study and what changes they have made as a result of it. This will not only be an encouragement to you as the leader, but will also have a positive effect on those in the group who are still thinking on the material but may not have made a change in their life. God moves in peoples' lives in many different ways. This just may be the time when all of this finally "clicks" for someone!

START: _____

Conclude Session

*Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer / Prayer Partners*

END: _____



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