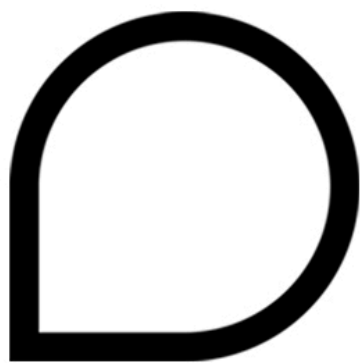




SUMMER Life group



SUMMER **Life**group

holycross
church 

“The goal of authentic spirituality is a life which escapes from the closed circle of spiritual self-indulgence, or even self-improvement, to become absorbed in the love of God and other persons.”

-Richard Lovelace (Renewal As a Way of Life, p.18)

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each session is designed to complement and coordinate with Richard Lovelace's book *"Renewal As a Way of Life: A Guidebook For Spiritual Growth"*. Assigned reading should be completed prior to discussion to get the most out of the Summer Life Group.

Each session will include five main elements: *Assignments, Practice, Personal Reflection, Group Discussion, and Bible Conversation.*

ASSIGNMENTS

At the start of each Session you will see a brief list of assignments to complete prior to the Summer Life Group meeting.

PRACTICE

The *Practice* elements are simple, yet intentional ways to get us thinking about how we might apply particular aspects learned throughout the reading each week. These short assignments vary in nature and are meant to be completed prior to meeting. Participants will be invited to share their experience in group discussion with the weekly *Practice*.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A few questions are provided each week to help participants engage with the reading in ways that might impact them personally. These questions are for the benefit of the individual and should be done prior to gathering.

GROUP DISCUSSION

The group discussion questions will guide our weekly group meetings. These questions will be facilitated by a discussion leader in small groups. We encourage you to attempt to answer these questions prior to gathering so that you can participate more fully in the conversation, but it is not required.

BIBLE CONVERSATION

Each session will end with a time of Bible conversation. This is intended to get us to engage not only with the book but with God's Word in a way that informs our thinking and helps to anchor our learning ultimately in the truth of Scripture.

Session	Meeting Day	Chapters Covered	Page in This Guide
1	June 15	1-2	10
2	June 29	3-5	16
3	July 13	6-7	22
4	July 27	8	28

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Session 01

ASSIGNMENTS

This is what you need to complete prior to Life Group

- o Read: *Renewal As a Way of Life* Chapters 1 & 2
- o Practice: Express Generosity (see below)
- o Complete Personal Reflection Questions

PRACTICE: EXPRESS GENEROSITY

The substance of genuine faith is love. Love for God and love for others. Even the Apostle Paul tells us that love is a far greater measure of our faith than the use of our gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-3). At some point before our Session 1 meeting, be intentional to express generosity of love to another person. Reflect on this moment, write it down, and come ready to share your experience with the group.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

These questions are meant to be completed prior to Life Group, and are for your own reflection

1. In what areas of life do you acknowledge falling victim to the phenomenon of the “*me generation*”? (p18)
2. When have you been most aware of loving God?
3. Our author writes that a strong love for God is kindled by “*an inner vision of the heart*” on pages 27-28. What kind of experience is this referring to? Have you ever had such an encounter like this with God?

GROUP DISCUSSION

These questions are meant to be discussed during our Life Group.

1. The goal of authentic spirituality, according to the author, is “...*a life which escapes from the closed circle of spiritual self-indulgence, or even self-improvement, to become absorbed in the love of God and other persons*” (p18).

What symptoms of self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness can you identify in religious life today?

2. The figure on page 21 is helpful in thinking about the gospel and how we grow spiritually. If we desire to grow in our spiritual life we must grow in our awareness of God’s holiness and sinfulness. As the author says, “*Awareness of God’s holiness and depth of our sin is the precondition of personal renewal*” (p20).

What are some ways a person might reflect a small view of God’s holiness? A small view of their own sinfulness?

3. What does a genuine encounter with God’s holiness and their own sinfulness produce in one’s life.
4. The final paragraph on page 47 says “...*for believers, every normal activity is a part of kingdom warfare. For the kingdom of God is no other than the proper ordering of all our activities within the framework of obedient love of God and compassionate love of neighbors. The most crucial battle for the kingdom is won every time a human being repents, believes and submits to the lordship of the Messiah, becoming a new center for the reordering of life on earth as it is in heaven. Repentance (metanoia, having a new mind about God, ourselves and others) is the most dynamic inrush of the kingdom within ordinary history*” (p47).

In your own words, what does it mean to live a *Kingdom-centered* life? If your life became more kingdom-centered, what difference might this make in your life?

BIBLE CONVERSATION

Read: Luke 18:9-14

1. How would you describe each man's view of God?
2. How would you describe each man's view of self?
3. Why is the Pharisee the "bad guy" in this parable? The stuff he is doing isn't bad?
4. This passage reveals our tendency to think more highly of ourselves than we should, and to think less of God than we should. What, then, is the spiritual goal of this passage? How does this correlate to our reading from *Renewal as A Way of Life*?
5. Think of a person (or kind of person) whom you are often judgmental towards.

How would a bigger view of God's holiness affect that relationship?

How would a bigger view of your own sin affect that relationship?

PRACTICE: EXPRESS GENEROSITY

Have others in the group share their experience with this week's *Practice*.

JOURNAL & NOTES

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DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

Session
02

ASSIGNMENTS

This is what you need to complete prior to Life Group

- o Read: *Renewal As a Way of Life* (Chapters 3, 4, & 5)
- o Practice: Noticing Obstacles (see below)
- o Complete Personal Reflection Questions

PRACTICE: NOTICING OBSTACLES

There are three major obstacles to spiritual renewal—the flesh, the world, and the Devil. For this week, reflect on the obstacles that get in your way this week. Write down a list of all the things that got in your way—this could be someone cutting you off in traffic or nervousness or anxiety that sets in your heart that keeps you from doing something you enjoy. Now, to the best of your ability, connect your reflection on this list to what has resulted from our rebellion against God and the separation that results.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

These questions are meant to be completed prior to Life Group, and are for your own reflection

1. What was your view of sin before reading these chapters? What influence did these chapters have on your view of sin?
2. How important is it for you to maintain a positive self-image? What are the dangers of thinking too much or too highly of yourself?
3. How did the reading suggest we can maintain a positive self-image while still having a realistic view of sin?

GROUP DISCUSSION

These questions are meant to be discussed during our Life Group.

1. Of the three obstacles to spiritual renewal discussed—the flesh, the world, and the Devil—which was most helpful to read about? Most eye-opening?
2. Consider the quote, *“If we cannot face the bad news about the depth of sin and the height of holiness, we cannot fully grasp the good news of salvation and the transformed life in Christ”* (p70).

How does an honest view of personal sin help us to better grasp the good news of grace?

3. What is often wrong with our flesh is not that we have desires, but that we try to satisfy these desires apart from any awareness of God. Consider the quote: *“The characteristic movement of the flesh is to pursue real goods (power, wisdom, sensual gratification) according to legitimate, God-implanted drives, but to do so apart from God, refusing to restrain and direct our drives according to his will”* (p73).

How does this concept of “disordered desires” help us better detect and become aware of the idols, or motivations, behind our sin?

4. What kinds of *“conforming to the world”* are most problematic for Christians today? For you personally?
5. The Devil’s work is to *“...constantly draw us into the atmosphere of deception...He seeks to block the broadcast of truth, and to insert and energize whatever is morally degrading and conducive to unbelief”* (p108).

Why is it helpful to understand how real the Devil is and how he works?

BIBLE CONVERSATION

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

1. Everything in this world resists the rulership of God. Ephesians 2 shows us this reality. Our passage highlights the three obstacles to spiritual renewal—the flesh, the world, and the Devil. How, and where, does our passage highlight each?
2. Many people are shocked by such an extreme description of sin. Apart from Christ, we are “children of disobedience” and driven by a constant urge to disobey. Why is it often so difficult to come to terms with how the Bible describes sin?
3. How does our passage use the word, “*world*”? How does the course of the world make it difficult for us to live faithful Christian lives?
4. How much better is the good news of verses 4-10, against the backdrop of verses 1-3?

PRACTICE: NOTICING OBSTACLES

Have others in the group share their experience with this week's *Practice*.





DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Session
03

PART 1 OF 2

ASSIGNMENTS

This is what you need to complete prior to Life Group

- o Read: *Renewal As a Way of Life* (Chapters 6 & 7)
- o Practice: God Comes to Us (see below)
- o Complete Personal Reflection Questions

PRACTICE: GOD COMES TO US

Sometimes we think that we have to go to God, but according to the Bible, God has come to us. This week, begin to list ways in which God has come to you and made himself known to you. See how many instances you can think of. Each time you write one way that He has come to you, take a moment to express your gratitude toward God for his pursuit of a rebellious sinner.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

These questions are meant to be completed prior to Life Group, and are for your own reflection

1. Why is it so vital that we understand that all our spiritual benefits are rooted in faith, and not works? In what areas are you prone to root your acceptance with God in your behavior?
2. What areas of sanctification in your own life are easiest to neglect? Why do you think this is?
3. What are some ways that you might better resist the Devil and his temptation in your life?

GROUP DISCUSSION

These questions are meant to be discussed during our Life Group.

1. Last Session we spoke a lot about what we have going against us—our flesh, the world, and the Devil. This week we learn a lot about what we have going *for us*—how Jesus conquers the forces of sin and death.

How did these chapters help you look outside your own *doing* towards assurance in what God *has done* for you?

2. How did Jesus occupy the offices of prophet, priest, and king? How does he still occupy these offices today? (pg116-125)
3. Why is Christ's role as second Adam so crucially important for us to understand?
4. Regarding repentance, the author writes "*...self is evicted from the center of life, and the Messiah is enthroned instead. Sorrow for sin and gratitude for the amazing mercy of God replace self-assertion, evasion of God and the soul's fallen motives*" (pg134).

Describe what repentance would look like as a pattern of Christian living in your own life?

5. Spend time discussing anything that stood out to you as interesting, challenging, or thought-provoking regarding the various elements of renewal—Justification, Sanctification, The Holy Spirit within, Authority in conflict (pgs139-155). Did you learn anything new? Were you challenged at all, etc?

BIBLE CONVERSATION

Read: Romans 4:4-8

1. What happens to the person, according to Romans 4:4-8, who embraces the work of Jesus on his or her behalf?
2. There are false sources of righteousness that often deceive us. These false sources convince us to keep striving in our doing and behaving so that God might approve of us. What might be some false sources of righteousness? What, or who, is the truer source of righteousness?
3. What might it look like to no longer be defined by our sins but by Jesus' righteousness?

PRACTICE: GOD COMES TO US

Have others in the group share their experience with this week's *Practice*.

DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Session
04

PART 2 OF 2

ASSIGNMENTS

This is what you need to complete prior to Life Group

- Read: *Renewal As a Way of Life* (Chapter 8)
- Practice: Serve in Unseen Ways (see below)
- Complete Personal Reflection Questions

PRACTICE: SERVE IN UNSEEN WAYS

When the gospel is deeply embraced it will naturally overflow into the lives around us. It is easy to enjoy the benefits of the gospel in private and personal ways only. As you read this week, keep your eyes open for people you encounter who are likely to be overlooked. This can be the postal worker, the restaurant server, the person cleaning up garbage at the outlet mall. Consider the way you treat the often overlooked people around you. Do something intentional this week to bless this person in your life and reflect on this experience. As you do, let it remind you of the way that God has actively sought you out.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

These questions are meant to be completed prior to Life Group, and are for your own reflection

1. Have you personally struggled to keep the Bible fresh? What have been some helpful ways to keep it vital in your life?
2. How can you personally avoid being so general in your prayers that they become irrelevant—or so formal in your prayers that they become too much like work?
3. How important is it to you to use your gifts to build up the body of Christ? Where is there room for growth in this area?

GROUP DISCUSSION

These questions are meant to be discussed during our Life Group.

1. Consider the quote: *"Our union with the Messiah and his desire to continue his earthly ministry by living his life through us are so strong that we may be said to share his three offices of leadership. We are priests as we pray for those near us and draw them into the sphere of God's mercy and blessing. We are prophets as we hold a biblical straightedge against whatever is crooked around us. And we are kings as we use whatever powers we have to straighten what is crooked, reshaping whatever falls within the scope of our responsibility until it reflects the order of heaven"* (p168).

What implications does our union with Jesus have on how we interact in the world, and with people, around us?

2. Considering mission, what does it look like to best resolve the differences between Christians who emphasize only evangelism and those who stress changing society?
3. Considering the corporate dimension of prayer, what did you learn about how vital both corporate prayer and private prayer are to spiritual growth?
4. Why do you think so many Christians fail to prioritize regular and meaningful engagement with the body of Christ in Christian community?
5. What does the author mean by the concept of "Theological Integration"? Why is this so vital for Christians?

BIBLE CONVERSATION

Read: Galatians 5:13-15

1. When we truly understand the depth and richness of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we will naturally feel joy, delight, and freedom. However, as this passage shows us, it is possible to use our freedom “as an opportunity for the flesh”. Our sinful hearts can take the good benefits of the gospel and use them for selfish purposes.

What does it look like in the life of a person who uses the benefits of the gospel only for private or personal gain?

What does it look like, from our passage, in the life of the person who uses the benefits of the gospel *beyond* personal gain?

2. The gospel is not only the answer to our internal and personal sins but also the answer to our failure to love others as we are commanded to. What might the outward movement of the gospel look like in practice?
3. How does the gospel free us from guilt over how we have failed to love others well, and from performance-driven social action?

PRACTICE: SERVE IN UNSEEN WAYS

Have others in the group share their experience with this week's *Practice*.

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