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ISBN 978-0-244-72377-4

I would like to thank those who piloted this material as well as Maggie Jones for her help in the proof work and editing process.

THE WALKING WITH GOD SERIES

The **Walking with God series** of studies encourages disciples to dig deeper in building their personal relationship with God whilst, at the same time, challenging them to nurture a missionary mindset which is to see people as Jesus sees them with a heart to demonstrate His love through various means of service.

The studies in this booklet are the second of the series. The aim is to open up our heart for analysis by the Holy Spirit fully believing that He will place His spotlight on any areas that are not yet under His control.

It is hoped that as disciples enjoy gathering and growing together regularly they will want to carry on in their journey of discipleship by completing other Bible studies in the Walking with God series or other studies within New Beginnings Discipleship. The end-goal is that some will become effective disciple-makers themselves.

GROUP LEADER'S PREPARATION

THIS WILL LARGELY BE THE SAME EVERY WEEK.

1. Make sure group members have a copy of the Walking with God in Relationship: Redeeming the Heart Workbook. This is available from the Shop section of the web-site [www.newbeginningsdiscipleship.wordpress.com].
2. It is advisable to share the group leadership with someone else, ideally a person who has been a member of a previous group. This is an opportunity to apprentice a potential new group leader so ensure you delegate some responsibilities.
3. Contact each group member to confirm the venue, location, date and time of your first meeting. Subsequent meetings should also be confirmed if necessary.
4. Make sure you prepare each week's study prior to the meeting.
5. A list of specific items of preparation required for each week's study is given at the top of the relevant teaching notes.
6. You will either need to prepare to lead worship yourself (with an instrument, CDs or I-Pod) or brief someone else to do it for you.
7. People relax, chat and build relationship over the meal table. If you decide to serve a meal of some sort prior to each meeting then think through and plan the logistics of this.

- a. Will it be a breakfast, main meal or pudding?
 - b. Will you do it yourself, ask someone else or will it be bring share?
 - c. Be prepared to sit around the table afterwards to share and teach or move to a more comfortable setting.
8. Do not expect brand new or immature believers to have mature concepts about God. Allow them to talk freely but make a mental note of any misconceptions you pick up and ensure you correct lovingly and gently using scripture wherever possible. Be mindful of **2 Timothy 2:23-25!**
9. Always have a small supply of Bibles on hand for those who will forget theirs.
10. Take your diary to arrange the next meeting.
11. Pray for the group members and your planned time together ideally with your apprentice group leader. Consider the following points when you pray:
- a. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and sit with you as you talk and share together.
 - b. Invite Him to be Lord of all the conversation and ask for His help to cement your small group relationship with genuine loving care, compassion and lasting friendship.
 - c. Make a declaration out loud to bind the enemy, making him ineffective from interfering, causing confusion or stealing what Father God intends to be achieved through the group meeting.

- d. Ask the Holy Spirit to apply the protection of the blood of Jesus over the travel arrangements to and from the meeting, the meeting itself and everyone involved.
- e. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any hidden needs each disciple may have.
- f. Ask God to give you all a deeper hunger for Him and acknowledge your own desire to grow spiritually through exercising this ministry of discipleship.
- g. Think: Are you willing to open up and share your own weaknesses struggles and victories even if that means you become vulnerable?
- h. Acknowledge your willingness to be used by God.

Week 1: CHANGE OF HEART

DISCIPLER'S PREPARATION:

1. Prepare to serve a meal before the meeting.
2. Be prepared to sit around the table afterwards to share and teach or move to a more comfortable setting.
3. This is the first session of a course that contains material that is quite challenging. Therefore during this week and next the content has been shortened to allow plenty of opportunity for discussion concerning the type of change of heart required by each of us to truly allow God to be King of our lives.
4. For section 5 prepare to lead the devotional time around **1 John 1: 5-10**.

DURING THE SESSION:

1. Start timing the meeting once the meal is over and packed away. Allow a full two hours.
2. Welcome: make sure everyone is comfortable. Begin by welcoming the Holy Spirit in prayer [2 minutes].
3. Review where each group member 'is at' on their journey as a disciple of Jesus.
 - a. Ask: Has anyone worked through other courses of *New Beginnings* e.g. Just the Beginning, Simply Jesus or other

courses in the Walking with God series? Did anyone do Walking with God in Relationship - Prayer & the Word of God? Has anyone worked through the Baggage checklist and had an individual prayer appointment?

- b. If so, then ask if there is anyone who would like to share something from their experience of working through these things. Do not force this if people are not forthcoming.
- c. Be prepared to share from your own freedom journey in order to encourage, encourage and encourage.
- d. Give lots of opportunity for questions and interaction
- e. Whole section 20 minutes.

4. **Walking with God in Relationship: Redeeming the Heart.** Today's study is **Change of Heart.**

- a. State: Right back as far as the Fall in the Garden of Eden God has never stopped looking for a people who want to fellowship with Him and allow Him to be their King.
- b. Ask: What does it mean when someone is our king? We are their subjects.
 - i. Ask: What does the word 'subject' mean? It means follower, dependent, subordinate.
 - ii. Ask: How do these meanings translate into our relationship with God as King? He means us to be totally His, to meekly follow Him and serve His purposes in the world, to rely on Him as our Source and Strength and to submit our will and desires to His.

- iii. Ask: How were these things demonstrated to us in the life of Jesus? His life was totally Father-centred, He was fully submitted to God's leading and totally filled and directed by the Holy Spirit.
- iv. Ask: What was the result of His living in this way? Wherever He went, the Kingdom of God broke out all around Him with mighty centrifugal-like force as He touched and changed lives. He did it all to the glory of His Father.
- v. Ask: As Jesus' followers what should our life-goal be? Our goal is also to live totally for the glory of Father God in the power of the Holy Spirit, seeing His Kingdom break out through us to touch and change lives that, in turn, become agents for society transformation. We are called to be disciples who make disciples.
- vi. Ask: What needs to happen in us for us to live like this? In order for this to happen in a supernatural manner, not just in our own strength, God's Kingdom must first be formed in us. We must ALLOW Him to be King.
- vii. State: A seed takes many years to grow into a fruit-bearing tree; so it is with God's Kingdom in us. It is a process, so we need to be patient with ourselves. Right from the cradle we have learned by an in-built default to look out for number one so it takes time to put our own desires, wants and ingrained behavioural patterns to the back of the queue, to learn to walk by faith with Father God and attend to what pleases His heart before our own.

- c. **Read Galatians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.** Ask: What do you think this might mean for your life? We are not our own, we have been bought with a price. What was that price? Jesus' death was the price Father God paid to bring us out of slavery to sin and to call us to Himself as His people. He wanted a relationship.
- d. **Read 1 Corinthians 7:22-23 and Romans 6: 18 & 22.** Explain: In Greek there are actually seven different words for 'servant'. Whenever the term carries the sense of being formally bound to another the word used is *doulos* which is commonly translated as bond slave.
- i. Ask: Does anyone know how a bond slave differed from an ordinary slave? A bond slave was a slave who, having been set free, then *chooses of his or her own freewill* to remain living as a servant to his or her master.
 - ii. Ask: In the light of this, what do you think Paul means in the verses above? We have had our debt to sin paid off by Jesus' selfless sacrifice. This costly love demands our costly response.
 - iii. Discuss together what this might mean for each of us. Our aim as disciples is to exist only to carry out God's will for our lives.
- e. **Read Luke 11:28; John 14:15; 21, 23 and 24; 15:10; James 1:22-24; 1 John 2:5-6.** Ask: What is the key to true life in the Kingdom of God? It is obedience to the will of Father God.

- f. **Compare Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18 and Mark 12:30-31.** Ask: What word has Jesus inserted when linking these two Scriptures? It is mind.
- i. Explain: Gentile Greek-thinking places heavy emphasis on the intellectual understanding of arguments and concepts, which is most likely why the word 'mind' or 'understanding' has been inserted. On the contrary, Hebraic thought is always practical. If we say we love God then we must go further than just understanding it in our mind; our lives must show it. It is that simple!!
 - ii. Teach: The rabbis taught that the depth of our love for God is measured by how much love we give to our neighbour. This is most likely why Jesus linked these two verses in His summary of all Torah [the Law].
 - iii. Teach: If we say we love God and His Word but fail to love our neighbour then, in Hebraic terms, our life is a sham; we are not only showing ourselves to be double-minded and liars but we are also misrepresenting Father God to those who 'read' our lives on a daily basis.

True repentance

- g. It might help us at this point if we consider what repentance really is:
 - i. **Read 1 John 1:9.** Ask: How does repentance begin? With confessing our sins to God. This is much more than saying a quick 'sorry', expressing regret, responding to an altar call (even when accompanied by loud crying) or praying a salvation prayer.

Teach: The Greek word for 'confess' (*homologeō*) means *to agree that what we did was really wrong*. Once this has been done, we then need to work out true repentance through a real change somewhere in our life.

- ii. Teach: The Hebrew word *t'shuvah* [turning or re-turning] when used in terms of belief always means turning *from* sin in order to *return to* God.
 - iii. **Read Hebrews 4:12.** Ask: What is it that '*judges the thoughts and attitudes of our heart?*' The Word of God brings conviction of sin that leads us to confession. However, we must then make a commitment to go one step further and turn to God by making some kind of change, e.g. a change of heart, way of thinking, purpose or conduct. This is real repentance and requires Father's grace to follow through.
- h. **Read Luke 9:23-24.** Ask: What do you think Jesus is saying here? If we really love Him, then we will make Him first priority. Being a disciple affects the whole of who we are.
- i. Ask: Why do we find this so hard? Self-denial is an unpopular concept in our self-obsessed, self-pleasing world. The other aspects of Jesus' minimalist life-style such as His widespread rejection, persecution, betrayal and death, do not readily appeal to our twenty-first century self-preservation instincts either!
 - ii. Teach: Father God is looking for our complete allegiance and obedience. Confession of sin is not enough. For God to truly reign and rule as King, our lives need to bring forth the *fruit* of repentance: our

returning to Him with all our heart, soul and strength.
This is a long process.

- iii. **N.B. A NOTE OF CAUTION.** *We must retain balance in our life and avoid extreme reactions. Each of us has very real responsibilities, legitimate daily needs and calls on our time, e.g. spouse, children, parents, work, etc., which means that we need to find a way of living whole-heartedly for God whilst not neglecting these people or responsibilities. Therefore, in the light of the limitations and restrictions we each face, living whole-heartedly for God may simply be to be the best mother, father, son, daughter, worker to His glory and the best of our ability.*
- iv. **Read 1 Chronicles 12:38.** Teach: the fighting men gathered at Hebron ...'determined to make David King'... Ask: What does determined mean? It means to be 'single-minded', 'unwavering' and 'resolute' which means the business of making David king took top priority over everything; personal ambition, family and comfort.
- v. Discuss what this prioritising might mean for each of the group members.
- vi. Summarize: Father God is looking for a people who will determine to make Him King; those who will allow Him to reign in them and over them by making His Kingdom their priority. This means a CHANGE OF HEART!
- i. Whole section 60 minutes.

5. Move seamlessly into the following devotional time. Be flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit. *N.B. This exercise is also repeated in the After the Session exercise in the disciple's workbook pp.8-9.*
 - a. **Read 1 John 1:5-10.**
 - i. Have a time of silence. Encourage everyone to ask the Holy Spirit to show them just one area in their life where they are being 'double-minded'.
 - ii. Lead the group in how to confess that sin to Father God.
 - iii. Remain in prayerful silence and ask the Holy Spirit to help identify what type of action they need to take to truly repent in that area i.e. to not do it again.
 - iv. Ask Father God to help and strengthen each one in their resolve to be free of that sin.
 - v. If time permits then spend some time praying for one another.
 - b. Whole section 20-30 minutes.
6. Confirm the date, time and venue [if likely to change] for next week's meeting.

AFTER THE SESSION:

1. Telephone anyone you have identified as needing particular encouragement.

2. Be aware that until people have dealt with their unresolved spiritual issues there may be a real spiritual battle for them to turn up each week and some may experience difficulty in entering into times of worship. Pray for each one every day this week and visit individuals as necessary. Discuss individual prayer appointments as appropriate.
3. Prepare for next week.

NOTES:

Week 2: BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

DISCIPLER'S PREPARATION:

1. Prepare to serve a meal before the meeting.
2. Be prepared to sit around the table afterwards to share and teach or move to a more comfortable setting.
3. This is the second session of a course that contains material that is quite challenging. Therefore during this week the content has been shortened to allow plenty of opportunity for discussion.
4. For section 5 prepare to lead the devotional time on **Acts 2:38**.

DURING THE SESSION:

1. Start timing the meeting once the meal is over and packed away. Allow a full two hours.
2. Welcome: make sure everyone is comfortable. Begin by welcoming the Holy Spirit in prayer [2 minutes].
3. Review the After the Session exercise from last week's study with the group.
 - a. Ask if there is anyone who would like to share something from their experience of working through the After the Session exercise? Do not force this if people are not forthcoming.

- b. Is anyone struggling? If so, then try to give them some one to one time during the coming week.
 - c. Whole section 10-15 minutes.
4. **Walking with God in Relationship: Redeeming the Heart.** Today's study is **Believer's Baptism**.
- a. **Read Matthew 3:1-17.** Ask: How did Jesus publicly show His heart allegiance to God? He was baptised.
 - i. Teach: Believer's baptism is an ordinance or sacred ritual that has been part of the ministry of the church from the earliest days.
 - ii. Teach: The practice of baptism in water originates in Hebraic religious practice: to worship at the Tabernacle or Temple a person had to be ceremonially clean (**e.g. Exodus 30:20-21**). The grime and chores of everyday life meant ritual purity was easily lost but prior to worship it had to be restored again. This was done through ceremonial washing in a ritual bath or (when in Babylon) a river.
 - b. Ask: What does the water represent? The water is symbolic of the washing away of impurities.
 - i. Teach: The Greek word translated 'baptise' means 'to dip, soak or immerse' into a liquid until what is immersed takes on the qualities of what it has been dipped in. E.g. cloth soaked in dye takes on the colour of the dye.

- ii. Ask: With this in mind, does what the water represent take on a new meaning? **Read Romans 6:3-14.** It represents Messiah's nature. When we are baptised in water we are totally immersed in the water not only as a witness to those that watch that we have become followers of Jesus or even as a prophetic sign that our sins have been washed away but as a complete identification with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

- c. **Read Acts 2:38.** Teach: Most modern Bibles read '*Repent and be baptised... in the name of Jesus*'... In the Greek it reads '*into the name*'...
 - i. Discuss together what this difference might signify then teach: This subtle difference may not seem very much to get bothered about but actually it represents a great deal in terms of truth. When we are baptised INTO the name of Jesus we are being identified with everything that name signifies, i.e. **the fullness of the Godhead** expressed in Jesus.

 - ii. **Read the author's statement of the meaning of believer's baptism in the workbook together:** '*I want to so take on the qualities of Jesus so that nothing of the old me remains. The former me has died and been buried in the same way Jesus was. When something is truly dead it does not usually get up and live again. Therefore I believe my old nature has gone forever. When I rise up out of this water it will be a new me; one who has all the supernatural power of the God-head living in me. This means I have the spiritual potential to day by day live a totally transformed and transforming*

life for God's Kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit just like Jesus did'.

- iii. Ask: What then is believer's baptism? It is an oath of allegiance to the King.
 - iv. Ask: Should we take water baptism lightly? Remember, we need to follow through our verbal commitment to repentance by delivering the 'goods' of a changed and transformed life!
- d. **Read Matthew 3:15; Hebrews 4:15; Romans 3:23-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21.**
- i. Ask: Why was Jesus baptised when He was sinless? Jesus did not need to be ritually purified or ceremonially washed clean. Just as when we are baptised we identify with Him in His death and resurrection so, in His baptism, Jesus identified Himself with us and humanity's need for forgiveness of sins and cleansing.
 - ii. **Read Luke 3:23.** Ask if anyone knows the significance of us being told Jesus' age when He was baptised? It is at age 30 that a Jewish man is deemed to come into his full spiritual vigour. It signified a turning point in His life: from hidden preparation to public ministry and it is the same for us.
- e. **Read Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 3:21-22; Mark 1:9-11 and John 1:32-34.** Ask: What happened when Jesus was baptised? The Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove. God spoke audibly.

- i. **Read Acts 2:38-39.** Ask: What is promised to those who are baptised? The gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Ask: Why is this gift necessary for us if we are truly going to bring our lives under the King's rule? The Christian life is a supernatural one; to live in the power of God's Kingdom we need the empowering of God's Holy Spirit.
 - iii. Ask: Is believer's baptism important? It is a key stage on our spiritual journey.
 - iv. **Read Acts 2:38-39 and 10:48.** Ask: What sort of instruction is this? It is a command!
- f. Encourage the group into a discussion on believer's baptism. Some may have already received believer's baptism but not had the sort of understanding they now have. Others may have been 'baptised' as an infant. Re-emphasise the meaning of baptism as summarised in the workbook.
- i. Ask: How much of this can be true for a baby or young child? Infants simply cannot comply with these conditions.
 - ii. Be sensitive to those who were baptised as adults but without really understanding what it meant.
 - iii. *N.B. As group leader you need to have prayerfully considered what answer you will give should they ask for re-baptism in the light of a new fuller understanding. Personally I would not re-baptise someone who has already been baptised as an adult believer regardless of their former or current*

understanding. Why? Because this could lead to continued requests for re-baptism every time someone rededicates themselves to God. Emphasise they are being given a fresh opportunity to begin to work out their baptismal vows in their life.

- g. Share from the following as seems appropriate to your group:
- i. Amongst the early believers and even beyond the church's institutionalisation by Constantine in the fourth century, 'baptism' was something restricted to believing adults.
 - ii. The tradition of presenting a baby or child to God developed from the Jewish practice of presenting the male child before God on the eighth day **(see Luke 2:21)**. At this point, they were circumcised by the priest, named and included in the wider community of faith.
 - iii. The rite of infant baptism as practised by the traditional church developed from a pastoral desire to include unbaptised innocents in the family of God in a context of high infant mortality. At its best, it is a sincere act of consecration on behalf of the Christian parents and looks to subsequent instruction and personal conversion as a condition for full membership of the church; hence confirmation was instituted as a supplement to infant baptism.
 - iv. State: believer's baptism and infant baptism are clearly not the same and cannot share the same meaning.

- h. Discuss the difference between total immersion and effusion (sprinkling). Try to get the group to think through the issue themselves until the conclusion is reached that *biblical* believer's baptism really does mean total immersion.
 - i. Try to appraise who in the group is being challenged about being baptised.
 - ii. Remind the group that part of the point of baptism is that it provides a public platform for believers to share their new or renewed faith with family and friends, some of whom may not yet be believers.
 - iii. Give some time to discussing this.
 - i. Whole section 60-70 minutes.
5. Move seamlessly into the following devotional time. Be flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- a. **Read Acts 2:38.**
 - i. Identify together the three clear steps into a deeper relationship with God. These are: 1) repentance, 2) believer's baptism and 3) receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Talk together about the stated link here between repentance, believer's baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. Explain that God is not religious which means that He can work outside of these steps; sometimes people receive the Holy Spirit before being baptised. BUT if our faith is not to remain private then why would we *NOT* be baptised? Encourage answers to this statement.

- iv. Have a time of silence where people talk quietly to Father God about this whole subject.
 - v. If time permits then finish by praying for those who are being challenged to be baptised.
- b. Whole section 30 minutes.
6. Confirm the date, time and venue (if likely to change) for next week's meeting.

AFTER THE SESSION:

1. Telephone anyone you have identified as needing particular encouragement.
2. Be aware that until people have dealt with their unresolved spiritual issues there may be a real spiritual battle for them to turn up each week and some may experience difficulty in entering into times of worship. Pray for each one every day this week and visit individuals as necessary. Discuss individual prayer appointments as appropriate.
3. Visit anyone who has expressed a desire to be baptised by immersion. What steps will you take next?
4. Prepare for next week.

NOTES:
