

WEEK 7 DAY 3

MAIN POINT:

Eternal life is more than just being saved from hell. Eternal life is about experiencing God's love, now and forever.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

(John 3:16)

ETERNAL LIFE STARTS TODAY

PRAYER: Dear God, thank you for loving me. Open my eyes to what eternal life is really like.

What do you picture when you think about heaven or the afterlife? Floating on clouds and singing hallelujahs? Reuniting with lost family members? Endless pleasure? Nothingness? Does your view of eternity fill you with excitement? Fear? Boredom?

Many people have false ideas about heaven. It is easy to think that eternal life only relates to what happens after death. However, the Bible paints a different picture. John 17:3 says, "This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Eternal life is about knowing a loving God, and this doesn't start when you die; God wants to start restoration with you today. God sent His Son, Jesus, to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. God doesn't just want to restore broken things in some future cloud kingdom, he wants to do it here and now. Understanding eternal life this way changes how you experience God's love today and in the future.

So what does experiencing eternal life today look like?

1. God wants you to know him through a deep, abiding relationship. As you spend time reading the Bible and praying, he reveals the truth about himself. Just like in any other relationship, you get to really know God by spending time with him.
2. God wants to set you free. You don't have to be controlled by addictions, brokenness, or sinful patterns. Walking with God leads to freedom (Galatians 5:16-23).
3. God wants you to live courageously as a son or daughter, knowing that you are an heir with access to his resources and are greatly valued by him (Romans 8:14-17).
4. God wants you to have an abundant life (John 10:10). Abundance in this life isn't without sorrow or pain. It is overwhelming peace, joy, and fulfillment found through a relationship with God regardless of your circumstances.
5. God wants you to experience the absolute fullness of his love (Ephesians 3:17-21).

Eternal life is not just something you receive after death. It is all that you can experience through a relationship with God now—a relationship that overcomes death, and brings you into the life he created you to experience with him.

APPLICATION: Spend time reflecting on and writing down your own thoughts and feelings about eternal life.

In what ways are you experiencing or not experiencing that life today? Pray for a deeper understanding of eternal life.

DRAFT

WEEK 7 DAY 4

THE HARD WORK OF THE GOSPEL: BELIEF

MAIN POINT:

If you go looking for healing or help in the wrong places, you end up hurt. The only place recovery, life, and peace can be found is in actively trusting Jesus.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“Then [the crowds following Jesus] said to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’”

(John 6:28-29)

PRAYER: Jesus, help me to see that you came to bring peace. Help me to believe and trust what is true about you.

“I *have* to do something. Things are out of control. Why can’t I just get it together?” There are so many moments in life that feel out of control. It’s easy to think that if you just had a better handle on your circumstances, that pain would go away, or you could avoid unpleasant experiences. Why doesn’t God just tell you what to do?

People in Jesus time wondered the same things. Crowds saw Jesus healing the sick. They saw him feed thousands with five loaves, two fish, and prayer. They thought, “This is the guy we’ve been waiting for! He is doing the work of God!” And, the crowds asked Jesus, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”

They wanted to know how to take control of their circumstances, how they could heal their sicknesses, and fill their stomachs. Jesus responded, “this is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:29) Believe in Jesus? It is probably not what they wanted to hear; and if you are being honest, there are days you probably don’t want to hear it either.

Some people want something to *do* to get life together: just quit this, just start that, etc. Other people just want God to make problems go away regardless if they ever choose to trust and obey his word: why do this, or what is the point of doing that? Etc. They want control of a trouble-free life rather than trusting Christ and surrendering control of life to God regardless of circumstances.

Life is exhausting and unmanageable until you realize that the love, security, peace, and significance you desperately want is already available to you (not because of anything you do, or because you get it together). Jesus’ life of perfect obedience is enough. Trusting and following him, on the good and bad days, is doing the hard work of the gospel. The peace that comes from trusting God is better than control, because it doesn’t depend on you, others, or a change in circumstances. Eternal peace comes from above.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: Think of one area of your life that you’ve been trying to control. Then, write out a prayer asking God to take control of that issue. Ask God for courage and faith to trust and obey his will as instructed by his word. Then pray that he would bless you with peace that surpasses understanding regardless of the outcome.

WEEK 7 DAY 5

MAIN POINT:

You are always being shaped by something. Allow God to influence you most.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(Romans 12:2)

DRAFT

WHAT IS INFLUENCING YOU MOST?

PRAYER: Dear God, help me to see the ways you want to transform my life. Show me where I conform to what the world tells me.

Do you ever find yourself asking what God’s will (or desire) is for your life? Or do you wonder if your actions are in line with God’s plan for you? Part of how Scripture answers questions like these is by communicating what God’s will is not.

It is not God’s will for you to be controlled by your pain or coping mechanisms. It is not God’s will for you to live in fear or addiction. Romans 8:6 says, “to set the mind on the flesh is death...” This means that living according to your own sinful desires (or being “conformed to this world”) will lead to hurt and separation from God. This is not God’s will for you.

“Influence” has been defined as the capacity of something to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of an individual. So, what is influencing you? Alcohol? Drugs? Relationships? Fear and anxiety? Pleasure or comfort? Others’ opinions of you?

Alcohol, drugs, sex, and all other worldly pleasures are temporary. If you make fleeting pleasures your goal, they will ultimately fail you. Temporary things will never satisfy the eternal needs of your soul. Thankfully, God has something better for you. God, himself, wants to be what influences you. He desires to transform your heart and mind, so that your eternal needs can be satisfied. The second part of Romans 8:6 says, “...but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

God transforms you as you spend time with him. James 4:8 says “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” Transformation begins when you connect with God, meditate on the Bible, and let him become your main influence. When you allow God to influence your thoughts, he renews your mind to delight more in eternal pleasures and to desire less the empty promises of this broken world.

God’s will for you is far less about a particular series of decisions. It’s far less about what job you should pursue, or where you should live; It is about the state of your heart and mind. God’s wants you to know him, to think about and delight in the same things he does—eternal things that lead to life and satisfy your eternal needs.

APPLICATION: Write down one thing that consistently draws you closer to God and one thing that consistently distracts you from God. Tell these things to a friend and pray together that God would continue to transform your heart and mind to know and delight in his will.

WEEK 8 DAY 1

MAIN POINT:

Falling down doesn't make you a failure. Get back up!

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

(Lamentations 3:22-23)

A NEW DAY CAN START RIGHT NOW

PRAYER: God, if I slip, help me set aside my embarrassment, run back to you, and open up to those you have placed in my life to help me recover.

Relapse can be a part of recovery. It is easy to let the cares of the day and temptations of the world grab our attention. We can be lulled into a false sense of security about our addictions or sin patterns. We think, "I've got this." We may even proclaim, "I don't struggle with *that* anymore. I doubt that I ever will again!"

When life's pressure mounts, our familiar coping mechanisms call to us. We can get careless and allow old patterns to overtake us, becoming complacent about the very reason(s) that brought us to *re:generation* in the first place. The slip may start as a drink at the end of a stressful day, losing our temper with loved ones, or looking too long at an online advertisement just a few clicks away from pornography. Then, a slip gives way to relapse. Relapse leaves us covered in shame as our thoughts condemn us:

"Oh no. Not again."

"I was doing so well! I hadn't binged in 45 days. Now I'm back at square one. What's the use in even trying?"

"Everyone will be so disappointed. I don't think I can face going back to group and telling people that I messed up . . . again."

Do these sound familiar? When slipping into sin gives rise to shame, we are tempted to give up on recovery, rather than once again receiving God's forgiveness and power. It can be easy to consider isolating and walking away from the very people who understand us most and who can offer help: those in recovery with us.

In moments of relapse, we must remember that falling down doesn't mean we fail. However, staying down often does. God graciously gives us second chances. And third, fourth, even hundredth chances. His mercies are new every morning. A new day can start right now. We can return to him and the people he has placed around us in recovery.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: List areas of life where you have slipped back into old patterns. Ask God for the courage to be honest with those in recovery alongside you. Pray that God would build a team around you committed to seeing you get well.

WEEK 8 DAY 2

MAIN POINT:

Healing occurs when you are able to confess your sins and pray for each other in your small group.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

(James 5:16)

CONFESSING SIN BRINGS HEALING

PRAYER: Lord, give me the courage to be real with a few people who I can trust, so that we can heal together.

Authentic relationships are forged through real life struggles. It is easy to spend so much time trying to be who you think you should be that you lose track of who you really are. Are you trying to project a certain image that no one gets a chance to know the real you? If so, your mask has become your worst enemy. Fear of being known will keep you from the authentic relationships that you were created to experience. True friendship will never be realized until you dare to be known and take off your mask.

James 5:16 instructs you to confess sin to one another and to pray for each other. Your confession to other trusted people isn't a pre-requisite for God's forgiveness—God's forgiveness is granted when you accept Christ's payment for sin as your own—rather, your confession to others brings healing. When you allow others into your struggles you risk rejection, but you also create an opportunity to be known, loved, and reminded of how God sees you. You have a chance to pray for one another and to encourage each other with scripture to take the necessary steps for recovery. In these authentic relationships healing occurs—for everyone.

In summary, confessing sin to others accomplishes three things:

- First, confession allows others to know the real you. This opens the door for intimate relationships and frees others to be authentic with you.
- Second, this confession reveals where forgiveness and amends are needed. It starts the reconciliation process for relationships hurt by sin.
- Third, confession allows others to shine the light of God's mercy and grace on your brokenness. When others pray, encourage, and urge you to follow God's recovery plan, it brings you healing and gives others courage to do the same.

God never wants you to be isolated by sin. You were created for an authentic relationship with him and authentic relationships with others. As you allow yourself to be known and loved by others, others will allow themselves to be known and loved by you. Together, you will remind each other that there is a good God who truly loves you just as you are, and he is ready to heal us all.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: Commitment to an authentic group is an important part of recovery. Share one concern and one hope with your group if you dared to be authentic.

WEEK 8 DAY 3

MAIN POINT:

Our minds lead us astray. Let's seek stability through scripture.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

THE BATTLE FOR YOUR MIND

PRAYER: Dear God, give me the strength to fight the battle to renew my heart and mind, not with armor or swords, but with your power. Give me the faith to trust in your truth, not in my own thinking.

Our minds are the front line in the battle for recovery. What makes us do what we do? How do we decide which actions to take? It is our minds that direct our decisions. Our minds are also affected by our feelings, circumstances, and beliefs. They are constantly under attack from many directions, including doubts, fears, and the desires of our own impure hearts. This is *especially* true when we are in recovery.

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that human nature is sinful and easily deceived. We are hostile toward God and his ways (Romans 8:7-8). Our minds are tempted to entertain impure thoughts, justify sin, and shift blame for our actions.

So how do we combat temptation and ensure that we are ready to recover from hurt, pain, and sin? As always, we can look to the example of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus anticipated temptation and prepared his heart by praying. When Jesus faced temptation, he quoted scripture, reminding himself (and his tempter) of God's truth.

To fight temptation, the Bible tells us to be strengthened through prayer and knowing God's word.

Philippians 4:6-7 says, "*Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.*"

Romans 12:2 says, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*"

By praying continually, we rely upon God's strength to prepare us for battle. By understanding and memorizing God's word, our minds are informed, aligned, and reminded of God's truth so that we are not easily deceived. In doing so, God changes us to become more like Jesus—strong in the Lord to outlast the battle and equipped with God's word to fight the lies of temptation.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: The next time you are faced with temptation, pray. Consult scripture and seek the council of trusted friends who know where to find truth. Pray that your mind would be aligned with God's desire for you.

WEEK 8 DAY 4

MAIN POINT:

God is in the business of transformation; He can change you. Hang in there and work on knowing Him more.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

(2 Peter 3:9)

CAN I REALLY CHANGE?

PRAYER: God, change me.

Do you ever wonder if *re:generation* will work for you? Have you told yourself, “I’m too old to change, too broken, too far gone.” “God hasn’t fixed me yet, why would he now?” These are all common thoughts, but they are not taking into consideration the God whom we serve. God is in the business of transforming people, and he wants to change you too.

There are several examples in the Bible of God changing people who were once enemies of Christ. The apostle Paul is an excellent one. Before encountering Jesus face-to-face on the road to Damascus, Paul was a chief persecutor of Christians, even standing by as one of the first Christian martyrs was stoned. But Paul’s encounter with Jesus transformed him. He became one of the world’s best-known advocates for Christ, spending 30 years evangelizing and suffering persecution himself. Even more surprising, much of the New Testament was written by this former enemy of Christ!

Another example of God changing people is Peter, one of Christ’s own disciples. Though Peter pledged his loyalty to Jesus, when Christ was arrested to be put on trial and killed, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. After rising from the grave, Jesus made it a point to restore Peter and even asked Peter to care for his people. Peter went on to become the head of the first church and eventually died as a martyr for his faith.

Finally, think of the *re:generation* stories you hear every week. These people are your contemporaries, all of whom have struggled and failed too. Yet, their lives have been radically changed by God and he is now using them in your life.

What do all of these people have in common? They all fall short of God’s standard and have struggled to maintain faithfulness to God. But when they failed, a perfectly faithful and powerful God drew them to himself and restored them for a purpose.

God wants to restore you too. He wants all of you, the good and the ugly. When you bring yourself to him and begin to trust him for change, healing can begin in all aspects of your life. A word of caution: Healing might not look how you would like it to or happen on your time, but He can and will transform you, if you are willing.

APPLICATION: Listen to some *re:generation* testimonies this week at www.regenerationrecovery.org. Hear how God has transformed lives just like yours. Commit to keep attending and trust that God can and will change you.

DRAFT

WEEK 8 DAY 5

MAIN POINT:

God doesn't just fix problems, He makes things new.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

(2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

GOD MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

PRAYER: Dear God, help me to let go of my past. Help me to see myself and others as you do, not for the wrongs I have done.

When meeting someone new, often that person will say, "Tell me about yourself." Usually, the person is looking for job titles, a relationship status, or the city where you live. You may answer with things like, "I'm a Nurse," "I live in Dallas," "I'm a married father of two." In our society, you are often identified by what you do or where you live.

Though categorizing people this way is often harmless, sometimes people go a step further and identify individuals by their wrongs. If someone commits adultery, that person is labeled as an "adulterer." When co-workers do poor work, they are called "incompetent." People who talk about others behind their backs are noted as "gossips." It is easy for past failures to become identifiers that are not easily erased. Even when you take steps to make amends for your mistakes, labels can stick with you in the minds of others, and sometimes, in your own mind, too.

However, God sees you differently. He loves you. He fearfully and wonderfully created you in his own image. In fact, you are so valuable to him that even though he knew all the sins you were going to commit, he sent Jesus, his son, to die for you so that you could be reconciled to a right relationship with him. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 says that if you are reconciled to God through Jesus, he doesn't just fix you, he makes you new. He gives you a new identity and purpose.

You may have come to *re:generation* to fix a struggle, but God wants to do much more than just help you modify your behavior. He wants you to be in a right relationship with him, to be healthy, to realize who he created you to be, and to see yourself as he sees you. He wants you to live out the purpose for which you were created, so that you can experience all that he has for you in every area of life. If you are willing to come to him on his terms, he will make everything new. What is stopping you?

DRAFT

APPLICATION: List the characteristics by which you most often identify yourself (to others, and when thinking about yourself). Also, list how you think God sees you. Consider the differences of these two lists. Ask someone you trust to see if your understanding of how God sees you lines up with what the Bible says about how he sees you.

WEEK 9 DAY 1

MAIN POINT:

If you struggle to believe your life can be redeemed, there is hope; God loves you and is powerful to heal you.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

(Psalm 103:2-5)

DO YOU WANT OUT OF THE PIT?

PRAYER: Dear God, you say that you’ve not left me alone in my brokenness and that there is hope for healing. Help me to trust you and give me strength to take the next step of recovery.

It so easy to focus on your troubles, sorrows, regrets, and mistakes. When you are broken and recognize the need for change, change can seem overwhelming, if not impossible. It can feel like you are stuck in a giant pit created by many poor choices—your own choices and the harmful choices of others. With every bad decision the pit became deeper and deeper, and now it feels as if there is no way out. You can’t fill the hole or undo all the wrong.

The apostle Paul in Romans 7:24 cried out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

So, how is there hope? What will save you from your pit of brokenness and despair? Read Psalm 103:2-5 in the margin.

God is the answer. He is the one who can rescue you from your pit of brokenness and despair. Not only can He pull your life from the pit, but He promises redemption! He promises to forgive all your sin, heal you, and crown you with love and mercy—to satisfy you with good and renew your youth! This is an amazing promise of hope.

Trying to think or work your way out of the pit will not save you. Rather, it is a loving and powerful God who will heal you and redeem your life.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: List some ways you’ve dug the hole you are currently in. Also, list some ways you are trying dig your own way out of your pit. Then, ask God to help you put down your shovel and to start relying on his strength and direction for healing.

WEEK 9

DAY 2

MAIN POINT:

Without Christ, you will never fully recover. With Christ, all things are possible.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me; that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”

(Romans 7:18)

FREEDOM IN TOTAL DEPENDENCE

PRAYER: Dear God, help me to more fully understand my need for you. Show me that you love me even in my brokenness and want to help me live in freedom.

One of the biggest lies many of us believe is that, at our core, “we are good people.” A second lie that many of us believe is that we should be strong enough to manage our behavior and move past brokenness on our own. As a result, we have a false sense of security and refuse to admit when we are weak.

Often, it is not until we have lost total control of life or feel broken beyond repair, that we realize how desperate we are. Even when we want to do good, we fail. When God opens our eyes to our sinfulness, we begin to see the painful truth. Romans 7:18 tells us, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me; that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.” We are not good. We cannot do good on our own.

Thankfully, God loves us despite our sin. He sent Jesus, his Son, to help. Jesus demonstrated God’s love for us by dying for our sins while we were still sinners (Romans 5:6-8). Then, he demonstrated his power over sin by rising from the grave and offered us a relationship with him so that we can rely on his strength to do good (Romans 7:4). On our own we will never be free, but when we rely on Christ we will flourish.

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Freedom comes when we fully surrender our lives and wills to Christ. Jesus is enough. When we decide to live in full dependence on him, everything begins to change. We no longer need to control every circumstance. We gain an eternal perspective that gives us hope. We can stop keeping score of our “good” and “bad” deeds, and instead rely upon Jesus. Some of the changes Christ makes in us come quick. Other changes take time. But, Jesus is always there offering us new life through his life.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: Write down one doubt that you have about Jesus or his ability to bring you freedom. Then, write down something about yourself that you would like Christ to change. Finally, ask him to change you (on his time) and to erase your doubt (by his methods).

WEEK 9

DAY 3

MAIN POINT:

There is something broken about all of us. Be willing to take an honest look at your sin and brokenness to discover what God may be doing in your life.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(1 John 1:8-9)

HUMBLY ADMIT YOUR BROKENNESS

PRAYER: Dear God, give me the courage to bravely face my sin and confess it to you. Help me to take this necessary step towards freedom and wholeness.

Let's face it. Everyone comes to recovery because something in life is not working. You may be struggling with addiction, a broken relationship, or a hurt caused by another's actions. Maybe you came because you have been too focused on pleasure, comfort, or reputation. There are all kinds of reasons why you came to fix something at *re:generation*, but ultimately, there is one reason you need recovery: you are affected by sin.

It may be difficult to admit that sin is what led you to recovery. You may not even consider your struggle to be sin. Or maybe your hang-ups have been such a part of life for so long that they feel normal to you. But make no mistake; sin is present in the lives of every man, woman, and child. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Sin begins in your heart and results in self-serving, self-protecting, harmful behaviors. These behaviors can hurt your mental, emotional, and spiritual health, along with your relationships.

It is easy for pride to keep you from admitting your brokenness, or acknowledging that there is something in your life that you are powerless to fix. Beware, your pride is a deceitful enemy of your recovery! 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." However, humbly acknowledging sin and its effects helps you live authentically, draws you closer to God, and begins to move you along the path of healing.

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Honestly acknowledging where you are at today is a crucial first step in recovery.

In spite of all your sin, regardless of your brokenness, God loves you. He desires an authentic relationship with you and invites you into a life of recovery with him. He is able to heal you from the things by which you are most hurt and ashamed.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: Resist the urge to deny or hide from your sin or brokenness. In prayer, ask God to help you honestly address your sin. Write down one way that your pride has affected you this week. If you are willing, practice transparency by being open about your sin and struggles with your Groundwork group.

WEEK 9 DAY 4

MAIN POINT:

Humbly owning your part in a conflict brings peace.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

(Romans 12:17-18)

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

PRAYER: Dear God, help me to see conflict as something that can draw me closer to you. Show me where I lack humility when engaging with others.

If you are in relationship with others, you will experience conflict. Wherever there are two people gathered together, there will be differences in opinion and practice. Differences can lead to conflict, but they can also lead to opportunities for growth. In *re:generation*, you will learn new ways to address conflict that can draw you closer to others and to God.

Past conflict in your life will often affect present day relationships. Maybe as a child you weren't taught how to disagree without erupting into anger. Perhaps, you weren't given permission to express your feelings, and now are fearful of voicing your concerns. If you learned to view conflict as a bad thing, you may try to avoid it all together, abandoning relationships along the way. These types of responses lead to relationships that are inauthentic and shallow.

Thankfully, the Bible says a lot about handling conflict in a way that both honors God and brings about restored relationships. It reminds you that your baggage influences the way you conflict with others. It commands you to address conflict directly rather than avoiding it. It guides you to speak gently, so as to not stir up anger. None of these things can be done without God's help. (James 4:1-2, Matthew 18:15, Proverbs 15:1, John 15:5)

How can you use these truths to help you during times of conflict?

- When conflict arises, evaluate yourself before engaging. What instances in your past may be informing your feelings in this conflict? Are you seeking understanding, or are you just wanting to be “right?” Are you only pointing out what the other person has done, yet refusing to own your part in the conflict?
- When you are hurt or offended, go directly to the person responsible. Don't fall into gossip or slander another's reputation; seek to resolve the issue. If he or she refuses to listen, bring someone else you trust who can help with resolution.
- When entering into conversations that may cause conflict, pray! Ask God to give you kind and gentle words. Remember entering conflict with a calm attitude is always better than immediately accusing or blaming others.

God calls you to be a peacemaker. Words and actions have the power to build others up or tear them down. So, during conflict, ask God to help you to be humble and, as far as it depends on you, remain peaceful.

APPLICATION: Think of an unresolved conflict in your past. Pray for God to reveal what your part is in the conflict and give you peace. Write down two ways you might better love this person in the future.

DRAFT

WEEK 9 DAY 5

MAIN POINT:

Recovery starts by receiving a free gift from God.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

(Ephesians 2:4-5)

GOD’S MERCY AND GRACE

PRAYER: Dear God, give me a better understanding of your mercy and grace. Help me to respond in thankfulness and walk forward in recovery.

“If people really knew me, there is no way they’d stick around.” “If people really knew the things I’ve done, they would surely run away.” Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever thought the same things about God?

A common belief is that God only wants a relationship with people who are good enough—that he only accepts those who have it all together. Worldly relationships often reinforce this belief. For instance, if you hurt a friend’s feelings, that person may avoid or reject you until you make up for the harm you caused. If you don’t perform at work, you may get fired. Since many human relationships are based on performance, God must work this way too, right? Thankfully, the answer is no. God doesn’t operate like most earthly relationships. He tells us so in the Bible. Isaiah 55:8 says, “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord.”

It is true that as in human relationships, sin harms your relationship with God and can even separate you from him. However, from the very beginning, God had a plan to pursue a relationship with you through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus took on himself the punishment for all of your failures—past, present, and future sin—when he died on the cross. He made up for your sins on your behalf (something you could never do yourself), so that a healthy relationship with God could be fully established. Instead of rejection for your failures, God offers mercy and grace. Mercy is withholding punishment that is deserved. Grace is the gift of a relationship that is not deserved.

When you accept Christ’s payment for sin as your own, your failures are no longer a barrier to a relationship with God. In fact, when you receive God’s grace, he adopts you as his child, accepting you as his own son or daughter. Your status as child of God will never change, no matter what you have done or will do. You are free to fully experience a loving relationship with him through grace.

Through Christ, God mercifully does not punish you for your sins and graciously offers you a relationship that is not earned by performance. He loves you and pursues a relationship with you as his beloved child!

DRAFT

APPLICATION: Have you ever been offered a gift you felt you didn’t deserve? What was your response? Reflect on the gift God offers you.

WEEK 10 DAY 1

MAIN POINT:

Honest self-reflection can help you realize the truth of God's love for you.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart."

(Psalm 51:6)

EMBRACE THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU

PRAYER: Dear God, help me to more fully understand your love for me. Show me the value of seeking wisdom and self-reflection.

Since first attending *re:generation*, it's likely that you've heard, "I have a new life in Christ." These six words are the perfect summary statement for anyone comparing the life they once lived apart from Christ to the life they are currently living by faith in Christ. Past choices, words, and behaviors reveal ugly truths about yourself when you live apart from God. You are not alone; We all desperately need God's grace and mercy to make us new.

Examining your past failures may seem counterproductive, because it often produces deep feelings of regret, shame, and guilt. These feelings can lead you to believe lies about yourself. It is tempting to believe that your past failures make you unworthy of love—that if all your mistakes were brought to the light, no one would accept you. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking change is impossible. However, because of what Jesus has done, these lies do not have to have power over you.

The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This changes everything. God thinks that you are worthy of sacrificial love even in your worst moments of sin and shame. Your sin does not make you unworthy of God's love (the love that matters most)! Your value is not determined by what you've done, but by what God has done for you. Regret, shame, and guilt don't have to define who you are. Instead, God's love can define you. Doesn't this inspire you to learn more about the one who made it possible?

Accepting that you are loved by God in spite of your sin, allows you to engage in honest self-reflection. Without denying your sin, try to understand who you really are and the incredible amount of grace offered to you by a loving God. God longs for more than a surface relationship with you. Share with him the good, the bad, and the ugly. Share with him all the experiences and choices that cause regret, shame, and guilt. Honest self-reflection helps you better appreciate God's love. You are fully known and still fully loved.

DRAFT

APPLICATION: What are some ugly truths you avoid facing about yourself? What emotions do these reminders stir in you (shame, guilt, remorse, self-hatred, self-pity, etc.)? Write a brief note to God sharing these things with him. Ask him for courage to be transparent in your relationship with him and for him to reveal more of his love for you.

WEEK 10

DAY 3

MAIN POINT:

Recovery is not the end of God's plan for you. God wants to take your mess and make it a message.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

FULFILLING YOUR GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE

PRAYER: Dear God, thank you for saving me from my destructive ways, and giving me a future where I can share your good news. Show me how my mess can be a message that glorifies you and comforts others.

In coming to *re:generation*, we are all admitting that we have, in one or more ways, made a mess of things. Our addictions, brokenness, and struggles with sin bring us to the point where we must acknowledge we are incapable of fixing things on our own. If we are not careful, we may be tempted to believe the lie that we are too far gone to ever be useful to God. Thankfully, this is not true!

In fact, the Bible tells us that God still has plans for us. If we repent from sin and turn to God, he will use our stories for his glory and to help others. As we move through recovery, this reality can bring tremendous hope. To help us believe this truth, God gives us many examples. The Bible is filled with people that God used in spite of their brokenness.

King David was a great, God-appointed, ruler of Israel who was described as a man after God's own heart. But, David committed adultery. He used his power to sleep with another man's wife. He then tried to cover it up by killing her husband (2 Samuel 11-12). It would be easy to assume God was done with David. However, when he repented, God chose to use his story. David went on to write many of the most vulnerable and repentant Psalms in the Bible. His mess became a message that now gives God's people comfort and direction.

In the New Testament, a man named Paul so hated the message of Jesus, that he hunted down, imprisoned, and persecuted Christians. Paul then encountered the risen Jesus, and everything changed. He finally saw Jesus for who he really is, the Son of God who died for the sins of the world. Once violent and angry, Paul then spent the rest of his life helping others see the truth about Jesus.

Here is a comforting truth: God has a plan to use those who turn from their sin to follow him. Christ came to free us from slavery to sin, and to give us a new purpose and mission. Though we might feel broken beyond repair, Christ can make us new. We still have opportunities to share God's truth with others. No matter where we are at, God can take our messes and make them his message.

APPLICATION: Do you know someone who needs hope? Share with that person what God is doing in your life today. Invite him or her to come with you to *re:generation* to see what you are learning about forgiveness, restoration, and peace.

DRAFT