

Small Group Guide SIN THAT'S HARD TO SHAKE

The Church at Brook Hills

Dennis Blythe

July 29, 2012

Romans 7:14-25

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

***Welcome**—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.*

***Review**—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.*

***Prayer**—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.*

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

Message Outline

A fundamental reminder – becoming a Christian does not instantly **solve** all of life's **problems**.

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3 Essentials for Battling Sin that's Hard to Shake

1. Recognize that spiritual Christians struggle with sin

- Reasons to have confidence that Paul is speaking as a born-again believer:
 - Paul makes reference to both his relationship to **God** and his relationship to **sin**.
 - Paul speaks only as a **Christian** could.
 - Paul has a **desire** to do God's will.
 - Our **personal** experience resembles Paul's.

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- Key Point of Application: “The more I **grow** in my faith, the more **sensitive** I’m going to be to sin’s attempts to conquer me.”

2. Understand your **spiritual condition**

- The Situation – The “**new** him” is stuck in the “**old** flesh”
 - Our Mistake: We often make **human** attempts to fix the **flesh**.
- The Struggle – “**I don’t want to do some of the things that I am doing.**”
 - Key Point of Application: “One of the keys to spiritual victory in my life is recognizing my utter **hopelessness**.”
- The Source – **Sin**
 - Sin is a **powerful** thing! It’s a law that governs every aspect of the flesh.
 - Before your conversion, you were in opposition with **God**. When you came to faith in Christ, a powerful war with **sin** broke out.

“The Christian life is a life of continual struggle, of victories and defeats, and Christian victory comes only when we totally distrust self, and rely on the provision of God. How frequently we throw works out the front door of justification, and invite them in the back door of sanctification.”
(John Stott)

3. Realize that the **answer is the Spirit of God**

- No one benefits from the cross apart from receiving the **Spirit**, and no one receives the Spirit who is not justified by the **cross**.
- “To walk by the Spirit is to live with moment-by-moment dependency on and sensitivity to the initial promptings of the Holy Spirit.” (Charles Stanley)
- Summary Points of Application:
 - The Christian life is only possible because sin has been **forgiven**, guilt has been **removed**, and God’s Spirit was **provided**.
 - The Christian life can’t be lived in the power of the **flesh**; it only happens by the strength of the **Spirit**.
 - Don’t ride the fence between **walking** in the Spirit and **walking** in the flesh.
 - Cry **deeply** and **daily** for the ongoing ministry of the Spirit of God in your life.

Message Summary

Today’s message offers a fundamental reminder to believers based on Paul’s words in Romans 7:14-25 that becoming a Christian does not instantly solve all of life’s problems, but as we struggle with sin in this life, we have hope and help through the indwelling Spirit of God. Paul wrote very openly and honestly about his struggle with sin. Though a devout follower of Christ Jesus and an apostle, Paul struggled to do what he knew was right, which leads to an important point. All Christians struggle with sin. Recognition of sin is a sign that

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the Spirit of God is at work in a believer's life, and we must have hearts that are sensitive to sin's presence and sin's desire to conquer us.

As we begin to understand our true spiritual condition, we realize, as Paul did, that the new creation we are in Christ on the inside is stuck inside the old, sinful flesh. So we struggle. After we recognize that sin is a powerful thing, we must accept our utterly hopeless state—apart from God.

The answer to our sin problem is the Spirit of God dwelling in believers from the moment of their conversion. We are called in the midst of our struggle with sin to walk not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, who is God Himself living in us equipping us and empowering us to live out God's will and to obey Him. True obedience to God is impossible apart from the Spirit, and He acts as our guide each day to lead us to do God's will and bear His fruit, which shows the gospel to the world. Leading a life led by the Spirit requires complete surrender of self and deep, daily cries for His ministry and guidance in our lives.

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- How have you personally experienced the struggle with sin Paul described in Romans 7:14-25?
- How does the struggle described in this passage actually serve as an indicator of the growth of your faith?
- Dennis noted, "The more I grow in my faith, the more sensitive I'm going to be to sin's attempts to conquer me." When do you feel most desperate to do something about the sin in your life?
- Think about your spiritual condition. Why are all human attempts to fix your flesh bound to fail eventually?
- Our struggle with sin is normal—but not OK. Are you ever tempted to become tolerant toward your struggle with sin, thereby becoming dull to it? Why is this dangerous?
- When we fail to see how wretched we are, how are we failing in our war with sin? Why is Scripture essential to seeing God, and ourselves, rightly?
- What does it mean to live a life led by the Spirit? How would you describe the Spirit's leadership role to someone new in his or her faith?
- It's easy to understand the Spirit's role in convicting us of sin, but how does His role in leading us go beyond conviction?
- How does being led by the Spirit produce a radical life? A radical community?
- Do you value your dependency on the Holy Spirit? Why?
- What is the difference between being directed by someone and actually being led by someone? Why is it significant that the Spirit leads us instead of simply directing us?
- Dennis noted that Satan wants to entice your flesh to keep the Spirit of God from taking control of your life. How does what you value—what you choose to set your mind on—affect the way the Spirit leads you (Romans 8:5)? Do you need to reorient your thoughts and values this week? If so, how?
- How has the Spirit ministered to you recently? How has He specifically ministered to you through God's Word? How has He led you to minister to others recently? How has He led others to minister to you?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?

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- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church.

Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from our worship guide)

- *Church: Though we all understand the struggle with sin, pray we will not become tolerant of sin in our own lives or in the lives of those closest to us. Ask God to use His Word to reveal our sin to us. Pray for the Holy Spirit to convict us when we sin. Repent of any sin in your life. Pray for the Spirit to produce His fruit in our lives through our walk with Him. Praise God for His Son, Jesus Christ, the only One who can deliver us from our sins.*
- *Local: This week we are praying for Ambassadors for Christ Church, Rick Thomas, Pastor. We are also praying for the Foundry, which is a Christ-centered recovery ministry located in Bessemer, Alabama, whose goal is to share God's love and forgiveness with men and women battling drug addiction and substance abuse. Through His hands, these broken individuals can regain basic necessities, restore their hope, and achieve real, lasting change in their lives.*
- *Global: This week we are praying for our Short-Term team serving in Cuba. We are also praying for Brook Hills field partner Ramesh Landge, serving in India. Ramesh is the founder and director of Cooperative Outreach of India (COI). COI serves and empowers the most vulnerable and marginalized sector of Indian society by providing access to education and resources for sustainable human development through the local church. To find out more information about COI, visit coindia.org.*