

RE*FORMED



500 YEARS
In the Making

STUDY GUIDE

RE*FORMED



500 Y · E · A · R · S

In the Making

RE*FORMED – 500 YEARS IN THE MAKING

Small Group Study Guide

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SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS

THE FOUR KEYS 🔑

Four key ingredients should be a part of every small group:

🔑 **The Word of God:** Whether we study straight from the Bible or study the Bible through devotional books/guides, we are committed to GROWING from the Word of God in Christ.

🔑 **Growth:** We are here because we want to GROW and see our lives transformed to be more like Christ. As part of this GROWTH we commit to pray for each other. We seek to encourage each other and hold each other accountable in the steps of our discipleship process: CONNECT-GROW-SHARE.

🔑 **Acceptance:** As members of this Life Group we seek to accept each other unconditionally as Christ does each of us, seeking to build strong friendships rooted in Christ.

🔑 **Confidentiality:** Everything shared in this group stays with this group. Gossip and slander are unacceptable. Like Christ, we seek the best for each other.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each session in this booklet corresponds to the video teaching you will be watching with your Life Group. This format is set up for groups that meet for approximately 1 ½ hours. You can make adjustments based on the time limits for your group. Each week the format will be as follows:

Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer, Reading the Four Keys (10-15 Min.)

We encourage you to spend a few minutes getting to know each other and reviewing the Essentials of Life Groups.

Setting the Stage (3-5 Min.)

Read the text for the lesson each week. Members are encouraged to bring their bibles and read from their bibles. This can be read out loud as a group, taking turns, or read by one member.

Watch the Video and Respond (20 Min.)

Watch video, and then discuss what insights were gained, or what caught the attention of the members in the group.

Discussion Questions (40 Min.)

Answering all the study questions is not expected or required. Your group may have robust discussion on just a few, or they may move quickly through many. If possible, answer at least one question from each section: Getting Started, Digging In and Application.

Challenge for the Week (1 Min.)

Take a few minutes to read through the challenge(s). Consider committing as a group to complete the challenge. As a suggestion, consider holding each other accountable during the week by way of reminders through e-mails, text messages, phone calls, etc.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer (10 Min.)

Please take time to note any praise reports and prayer requests. Please keep these in prayer during the week.



CONSCIENCE RE★FORMED

BEFORE YOUR START



Before diving into the study, we encourage you to watch the video entitled “Before you Begin”.



Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer



Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2



Setting the Stage

Read the following verse together: Romans 3:21-26



Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?



Discussion Questions:

GETTING STARTED

1. What was the Reformation? Explain its impact on history, culture, and faith.

2. Prior to the Reformation, how did most people learn the lessons in the Bible? What was the problem with learning about the Bible this way?

DIGGING IN

1. Read 1 Timothy 1:5. Paul instructs Timothy to Love—to love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith. How can we apply Paul’s instructions as we love our present-day world with a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith? What are some of the challenges of loving people in our present-day world?

2. Read Peter’s instructions on how we are to live in 1 Peter 3:8-18. What stands out to you in this passage? Discuss in your group.

3. Peter mentions having a “good conscience.” How do we have a good conscience that is in alignment with God?

APPLICATION

1. Pastor Tim mentioned that movements often fizzle out. Why are the ideals of the Reformation still prevalent today?

2. We live in the information age. At our finger tips we can read the Bible in any version that we choose and we can access unlimited commentaries and hear preaching from some of the best Bible teachers day or night. Share ideas about using tools to help us grow in the Word.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

1. We all invest time in hobbies and passions. We choose to spend time in various ways. Commit to invest time in regular study of the Bible. Excitedly anticipate how God will lead you through His Word. Carve out 15 minutes a day for the next week to read the Bible and meditate on it. Here are some ideas to get started:

Take time to read a verse or passage over and over.

Begin to memorize all or part of it.

Listen to the Holy Spirit speak to you through God's Word.

Consider how the passage fits with the rest of the Bible and life in general.

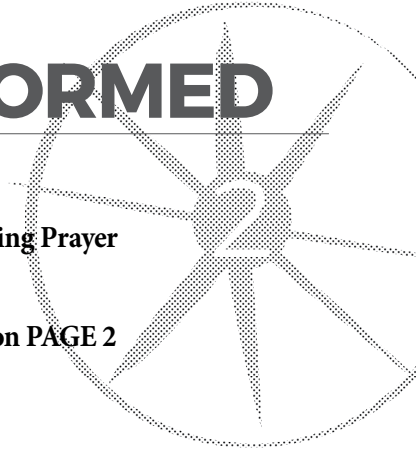
Connect your thoughts to action and think how this passage could affect your behavior.

Sign up for daily scripture passages at www.biblegateway.com or Bible reading plans at www.youversion.com.


Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer



IDENTITY RE★FORMED



 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together: Romans 5:6-9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Matthew 7:13-14, John 14:6

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions:

GETTING STARTED

1. Think about the last time you were introduced to someone. Perhaps she said, “Tell me a little about yourself.” What was your response? Think of some responses which you have heard from others when you first met them. What questions did you ask in order to become, at least slightly, acquainted with a new person?

2. Look at your face in a mirror. Share with the group some adjectives which come to mind. What changes would you desire? Put this idea into spiritual terms. What changes do you seek within your heart and soul? In which ways, if any, can you identify with Luther? How do you see yourself as you stand before God?

3. Luther faced a major crisis when a thunderstorm overtook him. How do people react to trials in their lives today? In what do they place their confidence?

DIGGING IN

1. Read Romans 5:6-9. What was our condition before Christ died for us? What type of qualifications did we need before our justification was declared by God? How does this give you confidence in your relationship with God? Finish this sentence: *I trust in Jesus alone for my salvation because...*

2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 2:19-20. How does Paul describe his new identity in Jesus? You also are a new creation. List some of the characteristics of your new persona. How does your newness relate to your prayer life, your confidence in God's goodness, your fear of punishment or doubts of measuring up?

3. On Memorial Day we honor brave men and women who died for our country. We are truly thankful for their sacrifice. Yet God's love is even greater than this. How does Romans 5:6-8 describe Christ's ultimate sacrifice?

APPLICATION

1. Jesus states in John 14:6 that He is the only way to heaven. How does that truth compare with a culture that makes comments like "I'm spiritual, but not religious" or "It is the same God, just by another name"? Share other false ideas you may have heard which deny the uniqueness and power of Jesus, grace, faith, or Scripture. How can you respond to these comments? Read Ephesians 4:14-16.

2. Your re-formed identity from a worried and unworthy person to a cleansed and confident Jesus-follower now allows you to cast off the cares of the world and spend time serving Him, in gratitude for all He has done for us. God calls us to share Christ with our words, service, and resources. What are some ways you can demonstrate your gratitude?

3. The end of the video uses an object lesson of a labyrinth to depict Solus Christus – Christ Alone. Is there a different image or example that speaks to you regarding Jesus and the Gospel?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

1. Follow Martin Luther's suggestion: In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Then follow with Chris Tomlin's words; "My chains are gone I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me!" Then go about your day with confident joy and peace.
2. Identify a person who would welcome your message of re-formation. Present it in an engaging and winsome manner.
3. Before you start your week, examine your calendar. Take a look at all the tasks you need to do and all the places you need to go. Imagine your path in the coming week not as a maze but as a labyrinth! Start with your identity in Christ as a baptized child of God. Cling to God's promises of His mercy and grace to guide you. Pray over each task and destination, that God would direct your path. Celebrate that no matter how the week ends, your final destination is secure.


Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

SESSION THREE

AUTHORITY RE★FORMED



 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together: Psalm 1:1, Deuteronomy 8:3, Isaiah 40:8, Psalm 119:105, Psalm 19, Matthew 24:35, Colossians 3:16

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions:

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever needed Scripture verses to witness, comfort or cheer you in a difficult situation? Were you able to retrieve them from memory? What about a song or a hymn? Can you share the results with your group?

2. Read Colossians 3:16. If you have ever had trouble remembering Scripture or a “spiritual song”, this verse could be for you. Why do you think God put the word “richly” in this verse? Is it possible for the Word of God to dwell in you “poorly”? Why would you want to have the Word of Christ dwelling in you richly?

DIGGING IN

1. Read Psalm 1:1-3. How does Psalm 1:1 describe the person who is blessed? What three verbs show the actions of one who is hindered or moves away from God? In what way do you see these as progressive?

2. Read Jeremiah 17:5-8 and Psalm 1:2-3. There are several words or phrases from the passages that describe the results of finding delight in the Lord and His Law (Scripture). What are they?

3. Read Psalm 19. We read that the whole world sees the glory of God every day in verses 1-6. What does God's Word teach us that the beauty and wonder of creation cannot? David gives us a hint in verse 1 when he uses the word "God", and then changes "God" to the "Lord", in verses 7-9. What reason do you think that David had for making this change? How does this clarify the differences in the revelation of God in Scripture and in His creation?

4. David uses poetic words and phrases to describe the Law. Which of David's descriptions in verses 7-10 matches your experience with Scripture?

APPLICATION

1. Pastor Michael explained that, “The Word of the Lord re-forms our lives, and meditating on it day and night allows our roots to grow so deep and so wide that no matter how scorching hot life may get or how much of a drought we’re in, with God’s Word we will always thrive and live and bear fruit.” How does this imagery apply to your life? Of what real benefit is the study of God’s Word? Why do you think that the Bible is necessary for us as Christians? How do Christians benefit from studying God’s Word together? Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 10:17, John 20:31, and John 17:17.

2. Why should we meditate on God’s law as it says to do in Psalm 1: 1-3 and Psalm 119:27? What is the difference between loving the Word and meditating on the Word? What does meditation on the Word of God look like in real life? Read together and respond to the wonderful closing verse of Psalm 19:14.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

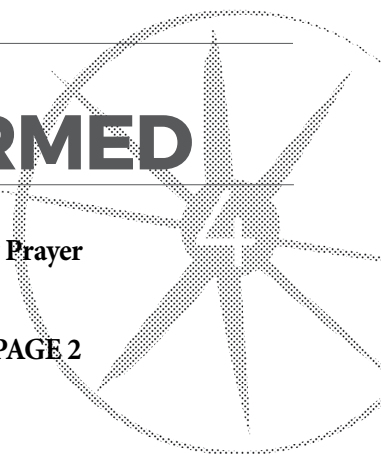
The writer of Psalm 1 sees that the Law of God is good because it is His teaching, instruction, and direction for the road of life. Psalm 119 is all about how wonderful the Law of the Lord is. Psalm 119 has 176 verses. Every verse except four of them mentions the Word of God under one of these names: Law, testimony, judgments, statutes, commandments, precepts, word, ordinances, and ways. Your challenge is to read and meditate on Psalm 119 this week.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer



SESSION FOUR

JUSTICE RE★FORMED



 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together: Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:1-10

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions:

GETTING STARTED

1. "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found. Was blind but now I see." Pastor Tim told the story about how the beloved song "Amazing Grace" moved the audience at Wembley Stadium. Did this song ever speak to your heart during a difficult time? What encouragement does it give you? Scripture teaches that a sinful person is not only weak and sick, but also finished and entirely dead. Read Matthew 8:22, John 5:24-25, and Romans 6:23. Knowing this, how important is God's grace to you? What does grace mean to you?

2. Our American culture embraces self-help. Think of one "media-message" that you have heard recently about "self-help". How does this fit into, or contrast with, the reality of God's grace? While we are "saved by grace," could there be a place in our lives for making an effort to do good works? What might our motivation be?

DIGGING IN

1. Read Romans 6:23a. What is the "work" we are doing in this verse? What do we earn from this? What does our "paycheck" consist of? Read the rest of verse 23. In the second part of the verse, what do we learn that God gives us? What does this gift cost us? What did it cost God? See 2 Corinthians 5:21.

2. Ephesians 2:1-10 is full of contrasts. Try to complete these: We once walked in _____, but now we walk in _____? (v. 1, 10) We once followed _____ and _____, but now we are alive in _____ (v. 2, 5). We were once _____ in our trespasses, but now we are _____ together with Christ (v. 1, 5). Can you look back in your own life and see any patterns of contrast where God has worked? Share if you are comfortable.

3. Read Ephesians 2:4-6. List the actions God has taken on our behalf. What was it about our condition that made it necessary for God to do all the acting/saving? Continue on to verse 7. What do we discover is God's continuing plan for our future? Is there an area in your life that is difficult right now, an area in which you are praying God will do this? How can this verse provide comfort? Share if you are comfortable.

4. Discuss Pastor Tim's definition of "cheap grace". Read Romans 10:9 and John 3:16. There is no disputing that salvation and eternal life are free gifts of God's grace. How do we avoid cheap grace? What is discipleship? By contrast, what is "costly grace"? Read Matthew 13:44-46 and Mark 1:16-20. Are we left to our own power with regard to costly grace?

5. Read Romans 5:20-6:1. What do you think about these words from Paul, knowing that we are forgiven?

APPLICATION

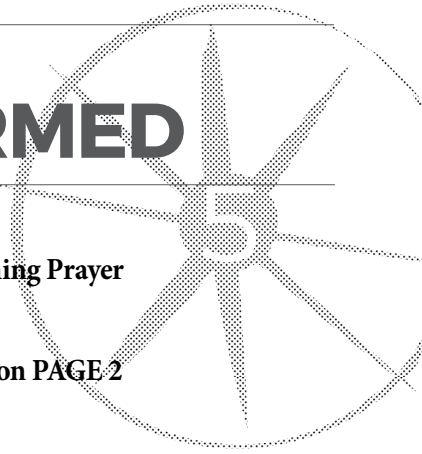
1. Pastor Tim mentioned a "gap of completion", the idea some have that God started the process of salvation, but we have to complete it. Have you ever had doubts about whether you had done enough and whether you were really saved? Where do these doubts come from? What defense has God given us? What Bible verses can help you in times of doubt?

2. Read Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Titus 2:11-15. Do you think regular worship attendance, Bible study, and these things can be a sign of good works? How do we live as disciples of Christ? What Bible verses can help you in times of doubt?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

1. God's undeserved grace and kindness has come—and continues to come—to you. Who is there in your life that could use some undeserved grace and kindness right now? Ask God to put someone on your heart, and then ask Him to give you an opportunity to show grace and kindness in action. Be confident He will give you the grace to share His grace!
2. While we definitely don't "work" to earn our salvation, there certainly is a place for "good works" in the life of a Christian. Now that we are "alive" in Christ, we can share Christ with our words, service, and resources! What good works is God calling you to right now? Let's encourage each other to pray that God would give us "His eyes" to see how we have been blessed with both individual and church-wide talents, time, and treasures to use for Him.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer



 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together: Matthew 6:24-30, John 14:27, Romans 5:1, Philippians 4:6-7, Luke 8:48

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions:

GETTING STARTED

1. Talk about a time when you were stressed or worried. Have you ever worried or stressed about something that you really didn't need to worry about? In the midst of your stress, did you discover any things that brought you peace? What helps you stop worrying?

2. What are we most prone to worry about? Why?

DIGGING IN

1. Read Matthew 6:26-27. Jesus compares us to sparrows and says that we should not worry because if God takes care of the sparrows, He will take care of us, for we are "much more valuable" than sparrows. The Greek word the Bible uses for "valuable" is *diaphero*, which carries with it not just a quantitative, but a qualitative meaning. In other words, we are not just worth more than sparrows; we are fundamentally different from them. In fact, the word *diaphero* is sometimes translated in the New Testament as "different" (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:41). How does the truth that you are utterly unique out of all of creation bring you peace when you are tempted to worry?

2. The secret to having peace with God and the peace of God is faith! Read Luke 8:42b-48. When Jesus begins looking for who has touched the hem of His garment, what does the woman who has touched Him do? Read Luke 8:22-25 and Romans 5:1-2. Does fear tend to help or hurt faith? What is the relationship between peace and faith? Even if our faith is being attacked by fear, does this mean that our faith cannot bring us peace? How does this bring you comfort?

3. We know that both grace and faith are free gifts from God. What are the fruits of faith? Read Romans 5:1, Galatians 6:8-9, 2 Peter 1:3-11, and James 2:19-20.

APPLICATION

1. In the video, Pastor Zach talked about two types of fear: alarm and worry. Alarm, though it is intense, dissipates quickly. Fear, however, lingers. Read Matthew 6:25. What things does Jesus identify that cause us worry? How do these things relate to the things we often worry about today like our future, our family, our finances, and our fitness?

2. Pastor Zach talked about two different types of peace: peace with God and the peace of God. What is the difference between the two kinds of peace? Do you struggle with either of these types of peace? What is it that causes you to struggle? What needs to be “reformed” in your life to further develop faith and peace?

3. Do you think it is a sin to worry?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

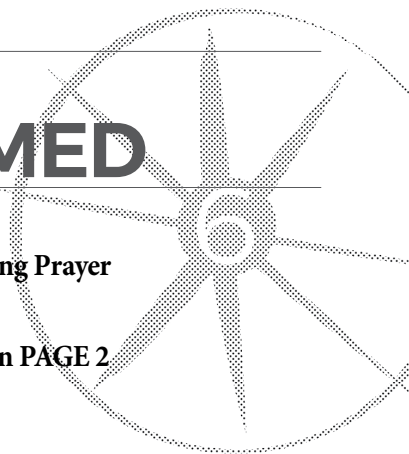
The first time an anxiety or worry strangles you this week, stop and turn to God in faith, remember your salvation and give the worry to Him.




Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer



A LIFE RE★FORMED



 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together: Ephesians 1:3-14

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions:

GETTING STARTED

1. How many times have you said or heard the phrase, “Do what I say, not what I do.” What usually happens right before we utter these words and why does that phrase resonate with us so deeply? Is it fair to say that this is a phrase we are most likely to use when our actions have fallen short of our own expectations?

2. In looking at the verbs that demonstrate the actions of God throughout these verses, the one thing we can see is the consistency of His love for us shown through His son Jesus Christ. Read Hebrews 6:13-20 and Hebrews 13:8. Why do we find great comfort in the unchanging nature of God and His Promise through Christ?

DIGGING IN

1. Briefly discuss a time when you were or were not chosen for something. Why were you chosen or not chosen? Many times you were chosen because you were good at something or not chosen because you may have been outside your area of strength. This is our usual context for the word “chosen.” Read Ephesians 1:4. Why is our usual context useless in according to this verse?
2. Re-read Ephesians 1:4. What is your reaction when reading “should be holy and blameless before Him”? Now read verse 7. What is redemption? How can we stand before God holy and blameless?
3. What actions has God taken to claim you as His own? Since God alone takes every action in claiming you to be His own, why do we continue to try and earn His grace, His forgiveness and His favor?

APPLICATION

1. We respond in worship to God because of his love, grace, goodness, forgiveness and salvation. What forms of worship can remind us regularly of the things God has done and the promise He has given us in Christ?
2. If our only action is a response to what He has done, how can we respond “to the praise of His glory” each day as we live our lives?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

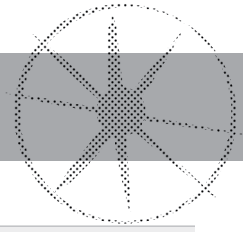
1. What will be your reminder this week of God's great love for you? In order to respond, we need to be reminded. Some options may include: reading God's Word, a daily devotion, regular church attendance, praying God's Word, etc. There are many choices. Commit to the challenge of forming this habit over the next few weeks. It usually takes at least 30 days to form a habit, but a habit is formed one day at a time.

2. Make an effort to recognize and acknowledge God's work in and through you each day. Praising Him for His glory reminds you that you are being used by the Creator of the universe to share His promise with those around you through the things you do and say. You will not do this perfectly and may not even do it well. Be assured, living in response to what God has already done to claim you to be His own demonstrates to others His great love, mercy and grace. You do not have to be good. He is good. You do not have to be perfect. He is perfect. Flaws are met with forgiveness and grace is an unusual and powerful story. God has given you the Holy Spirit to carry out His work through you to those who do not yet know that they have been chosen, redeemed and live under God's grace through Christ. Amen!



Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

LEADER'S GUIDE



SESSION 1: CONSCIENCE REFORMED

GETTING STARTED

1. The Reformation had widespread and far-reaching cultural and historical impact. Most concisely and significantly, the Reformation put the focus on the authority of Scripture and salvation through faith, by grace, because of Christ's death and resurrection, for the glory of God. The Reformation paved the way for the common person to have access to the Bible for direct reading, study, and interpretation. See Lutheranreformation.org as a resource for more information.
2. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek, not the common languages of most people. People were frequently manipulated because they had to rely on scholars and clergy to interpret the Bible to them. Far too often the interpretations were slanted to be self-serving. One of the most important aspects of the Reformation was translating the Bible so that it was accessible to all people.

DIGGING IN

1. Spending time in the Word and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us should produce in us love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and sincere faith. We should be on guard to keep legalism from twisting God's Word so that we do not become judgmental or harsh. Those who are not followers of Christ often sin due to ignorance. Disciples should demonstrate love, rather than judgement. Love should motivate us to a life of service humbly giving our time, talent, and treasure to others.
2. Answers will vary. Looking at a study guide or commentary may be helpful. Our minds should be of one mind, the mind of Jesus. We celebrate both unity and diversity among believers. We should handle our differences with love, without retaliation when we are wronged. Doing good will be rewarded by God. Sometimes God's rewards are delayed. The temptation of evil is sometimes an immediate reward. However, in the end, the rewards of God are better and far more secure than the rewards of doing evil. Peter was often put on the spot and asked about his faith. Likewise, we should grow in the Word daily and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us

give a defense. No matter how much we may suffer for righteousness, it pales in comparison to Jesus' suffering. Jesus was perfect in every way and He suffered in order to unite us to God.

3. To protect our conscience and keep it in working order we must be mindful of the Gospel daily. We must call on the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, lead us to righteousness, and remind us of the judgement we are spared because of our union with Jesus. Only then, can our conscience serve its intended purpose of helping us conform to the values of our Creator.

APPLICATION

1. Jesus and His followers have been some of the most persecuted people world-wide for the last 2000 years. Thousands have been killed for their faith. Yet in spite of discrimination, and other attempts to eliminate the teachings of Jesus in the Bible, there are more Bibles in circulation than any other book. No other book is even a close second. This speaks to God's supernatural intervention to advance the message of the Gospel. The Reformation movement is harmonious with the Gospel movement. What excited Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, and many other eyewitnesses was that they saw their friend Jesus killed, and He came back to life. He conquered death. This was truly a game changer. They reformed their lives around this fact and boldly spread the good news all over. Despite the many efforts of Satan to thwart the message, followers of Jesus, for generations, have continued to spread the Gospel. The Reformation movement is an example of God using the right people, at the right time to advance the Gospel.

2. Examples include: Rightnowmedia.org, listen/watch Christian messages on YouTube, countless study Bible sites and apps, Christian TV and radio, and many other tools/resources.

SESSION 2: IDENTITY REFORMED

GETTING STARTED

1. Your answer likely had much to do with how you see yourself—your identity. You probably spoke of your family, your job, your background. These are likely the kinds of questions you ask when you meet a new person as well.

2. Answers will vary. Individuals are likely to express negative adjectives, like graying hair or wrinkles. Try to dig deeper into both physical and spiritual attributes.

3. Answers will vary. People respond to crisis in a variety of ways. Some turn to friends and family for support, while others retreat. Many people depend on their own strength and abilities to work through a crisis. During crisis situations, some find peace through their relationship with God, while others may even become angry toward God.

DIGGING IN

1. When Christ died for us we were dead in our sin and without power or strength to help ourselves. We were not able to contribute to our own salvation by our own merit or deeds. God didn't wait for us to straighten ourselves out. (This is one of the texts which inspired Luther to change how he saw himself before God.)

2. Our identity change has happened. No longer are we weak and ungodly. Answers will vary, but our new persona can be loving, faithful, generous, joyful, patient, disciplined, obedient, etc. We are declared righteous in God's sight because of Jesus. Through Christ's death in our place, God's plan for our salvation was accomplished. His triumphant resurrection sealed the deal in proclaiming victory over the power of Satan. We no longer have to keep a running account of our good deeds. We are new people. Temptations will arrive but they cannot overtake us.

3. Jesus died for us sinners. Even though we were powerless, ungodly, and undeserving, Jesus made the sacrifice for us.

APPLICATION

1. Answers will vary. In the media and in our day-to-day interactions, we commonly encounter beliefs that oppose the Christian belief in one true God. For example, Jesus may be viewed as merely a historical man, or Scripture may be viewed as merely a book written by men. Depending on the situation or relationship, your response could be different, but God calls us to speak the truth in love so that the body of Christ can mature and so that God's Word will not be distorted.

2. Answers will vary. God has given each of His children different gifts, to be used to honor and glorify Him, so that others might see and believe. This is a good time to pray for God to reveal ways that we can use our God-given gifts to demonstrate His love to others.

3. Answers will vary. The goal of this question is to think of personalized imagery that helps individuals remember and express their understanding of Jesus and the Gospel.

SESSION 3: AUTHORITY REFORMED

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary. The focus here is to see that a Christian should memorize Scripture and spiritual songs so that God's words, hidden in our hearts, will continually speak to us.

2. The Word needs to be in our hearts richly, not poorly, so we have an abundance of the Word to use for sharing, comforting, and spiritual growth. We need to be able to retrieve the Word and the hymns as we need them. Other translations of the word "richly" are: largely, plentifully and in an abundant manner. The Word of God can dwell in you poorly if you are familiar with Scripture and never use it. Answers will vary on why this is an important distinction.

The difference between the three types of spiritual songs can be found in the titles, authors and intended purposes of the Psalms. David is connected to 73 of them, and many others wrote psalms as well. The psalm, a poetic verse accompanied by a harp, became background music for worship of God's people as well as songs sung by the priests and by the people. Some psalms were intended for solitary singing and meditation, others for group singing or even marching to battle. King David appointed 4,000 Levites for choir and musical service elevating the role of music and song as very important in worship. The three categories of songs in Colossians are similar in that they teach us about God and are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Singing should be done with thankfulness and praise because glorifying God is the end goal.

DIGGING IN

1. To be blessed is more than being happy. It is also more than a feeling. It is a joy and a peace that results from a total commitment to God. This blessed man prospers because he is in the Word day and night. Walk, stand, and sit could be interpreted as thinking, behaving, and belonging, thereby increasing one's exposure to the world's ways. The righteous man should avoid wickedness in any form. Verse 2 states the positive actions of the righteous man. These verses speak progressively of associating with wicked people and then thinking and behaving accordingly.

2. From Jeremiah: Blessed by God, like a tree by a stream, nothing to fear, no need to be concerned, always bears fruit. From Psalm 1: Blessed, bears fruit, does not wither, and prospers. The last words of Psalm 1:3 are not a guarantee of prosperity, but a promise that a person rooted in the Word will be fruitful.

3. God reveals Himself through His creation as well as through His Word. The Creation is so beautiful and wonderful that it tells mankind that there must be a creator who is wise, powerful and good. This is called natural revelation. However, all men may not attribute the wonders directly to God. Scripture is far more valuable because it reveals the character of God and reveals what Jesus has done for us. David uses the Hebrew word “El” as the word for God in verse 1. El is the generic name for God. However, God is referred to as the Lord, or Yahweh, in verses 7-9. Yahweh is God’s name. El is a mighty God, but Yahweh is a personal God who has a name. We can constantly learn more about Him through His Word. He loves us, cares for us, and saves us. The change in name is necessary so that we will differentiate between the revelations in nature and Scripture.

4. When David says the Law of the Lord, he is referring to all of Scripture. The law shapes us to live according to God’s pattern. When we allow God’s Word to have its effect on us, we are invigorated by His strength and refreshed by His wisdom. Studying God’s law leads us to greater love and respect for God, increasing our desire to serve Him. The law is described as perfect, reviving the soul, trustworthy, making wise the simple, right, giving joy to the heart, radiant, giving light to the eyes, pure, enduring forever, sure and altogether righteous, more precious than gold, sweeter than honey. Personal experiences will vary.

APPLICATION

1. Answers will vary on the benefit and importance of the Bible. Some possible answers from the Scriptures are: Deuteronomy 8:3: It nourishes us; Isaiah 40:8: It is always reliable; Psalm 119:105: It gives sufficient light for each step. Ancient lamps gave just enough light to see a short distance ahead. Luther says that the Word is for our feet and path, not our eyes and our seeing, so the Word works by faith (The Lutheran Study Bible p 967). Matt 24:35: It is more certain than even heaven and earth; 2 Timothy 3:16: It was inspired by God; Romans 10:17: It is the way to faith in Jesus Christ; John 20:31: It leads to life in Jesus; John 17:17: It is true.

2. We should meditate because God commands us to. To know how to meditate on the Bible is the way to a deep relationship with God. Meditation leads us to more meaningful prayers. When we think deeply with our hearts and minds about God’s Word, we can find spiritual stability and divine blessings, like a tree that is planted by the water.

Pastor Michael quoted Martin Luther’s Large Catechism. “You must constantly keep God’s Word in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. For where the heart stands idle and the Word is not heard, the devil breaks in and does his damage before we realize it. On the other hand, when we seri-

ously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, pleasure and devotion, and it constantly creates clean hearts and minds. For this Word is not idle or dead, but effective and living.”

SESSION 4: JUSTICE REFORMED

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary. Scripture tells us that we were dead in sin, but now we live in Christ, because of His free gift of undeserved love and salvation.
2. Our works don't earn our salvation; they result from salvation as a response of gratitude.

DIGGING IN

1. The "work" in this verse is sin and we earn—our "paycheck" is—death. God's gift is eternal life. This gift is free to us, but cost God the death of His Son on our behalf.
2. a. We once walked in sin, but now we walk in good works. b. We once followed the course of the world and Satan, but now we are alive in God. c. We were once dead in our trespasses, but now we are alive together with Christ.
3. God has made us alive together with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. Christ had to do this work on our behalf because we were dead in sin and unable to save ourselves. This shows the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.
4. Pastor Tim defines “cheap grace” as forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Cheap grace seeks to hide the cost of discipleship from people. It seeks to claim that as long as we make a profession of faith, we are saved. Discipleship is the antidote to “cheap grace”. Discipleship requires frequent worship, studying God's word, and service to others out of gratitude and for God's glory. God's Holy Spirit, working through the Word and Sacraments, moves us to faithful discipleship and so also to eternal life.
5. Paul forcefully rejects the notion that we should ignore God's will and deliberately sin, knowing that He will forgive. That is an abuse of grace.

APPLICATION

1. Answers will vary. Possible responses include that these doubts come from our own insecurity, from some church cultures, or from the devil. As a defense, we can find the assurance of His Holy Spirit working through His word, His guarantee in our baptism, and remembrance of our baptism. Comforting Scripture will vary, but Ephesians 2:8-9 is valuable for help in times of doubt.
2. Worship and Bible study are parts of living as Christ's disciples, along with performing good works, according to the gifts and blessings that God has given us, so that others may come to know the love and salvation of Jesus.

SESSION 5: PEACE REFORMED

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary. Although we do sometimes face stressful crisis situations, we often worry about things unnecessarily, or we worry about things that are outside of our control. Discussion should include healthy ways that people find comfort in stressful situations. If someone reveals a pattern of unhealthy ways to cope with stress (e.g., addiction), remember that acceptance and confidentiality are essential for Life Groups.
2. Answers will vary. Common stressors are work, finances, relationships, and health. We may worry about these things because they are such a significant part of our day-to-day lives.

DIGGING IN

1. Answers will vary. The focus of this question is for individuals to see that God has lovingly designed them with great value that is different from and higher than, all other creation. We can find peace knowing that God values each individual, knows our needs, and loves us immensely.
2. When Jesus begins looking for who has touched the hem of His garment, the woman trembles and is scared! Fear tends to hurt faith, but our faith can still bring us peace. This woman was scared of Jesus when He called her out and yet, in light of her little faith in Him, He invited her to go in peace. Your faith does not have to be perfect for it to bring you peace!
3. The fruits of faith are good works, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and love.

APPLICATION

1. Jesus identifies that we worry about life, food and drink, and body. These things relate to the things we often worry about today like our future, our family, our finances, and our fitness. Our future and family are integral to our lives. Our finances help us put food and drink on the table. Our fitness relates to our body. The things we worry about haven't changed!
2. The peace we receive with God comes when we believe in what Jesus has done for us on the cross. The peace of God is an inner peace that we enjoy even when life gets stressful. Peace with God is an objective fact; it came about with your justification. The peace of God is a subjective feeling that Christians may experience as they follow Matthew 6:24-30. It is the rightful heritage of all believers, but may be felt intermittently during your life. Personal responses will vary.
3. Answers will vary. The Scripture reading for this week (Matthew 6:24-30) urges us not to worry, because our Father cares for us all. Some would say that "all worry is a lack of trust in God." Others would point to the fact that Christ Himself worried (Matthew 26:37). Worry can create an obstacle between us and God. Unchecked, worry can become a sin, in addition to being very unhealthy and unhelpful, but it would not seem that worry, in and of itself, is a sin.

SESSION 6: A LIFE REFORMED

GETTING STARTED

1. Answers will vary. "Do as I say, not as I do" expresses the desire that another person meets an expectation that the speaker falls short of.
2. It is comforting for the Christian to know that God's love never changes. His standards, expectations, grace, and power are the same yesterday, today, and forever. We can be confident that all He says is true and unchanging.

DIGGING IN

1. Him choosing you had and has nothing to do with what you have or haven't done. It is and was based solely on His love for you. You have been and are chosen.

2. Our first reaction to that statement is usually a response to knowing that we have not done or could ever do enough to be considered holy and blameless. Redemption has the following definition: a releasing effected by payment of ransom, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom. We stand before God holy and blameless because of what He has done for us through Christ. He paid for our sin with the blood of His Son and declares us righteous not based on what we have done or can do, but because He has not only chosen us, but has redeemed us.
3. The actions outlined in these verses are the actions of God alone. He blessed us through Christ. He chose us in Christ. He destined us for adoption to be His children through Christ. He bestowed on us grace through Christ. He lavished that grace upon us. He made known His will to us through His Word. He will gather up all things in Christ. Our nature drives us to seek glory, when the only thing left for us to do is respond to all that He has done for us. To God alone is the glory. Those words are easy to say, but so hard for us to put into practice!

APPLICATION

1. We can be reminded of this through worship in church, reading and studying God's Word, personal devotions, prayer, and more. Ask your group to be creative in their thoughts on ways they worship God.
2. Answers will vary, but will include ways that we respond to God's love through worship, study the Bible, and serving others so that they might believe In Jesus Christ.

ICE BREAKERS

TO DO WITH YOUR GROUP IF TIME ALLOWS

Take something from your wallet/purse and tell how it relates to you.

Tell about the most positive conversation that you had today.

Tell about the most interesting thing that happened to you today.

Tell about the most humorous incident that you experienced in the last year.

My favorite fun activity when I was a child was...

The thing that drives me crazy is...

We celebrated Easter when I was a child by...

My favorite movie of all times is...

My idea of a great vacation is...

My favorite food is...

If I could visit any era of history, I would visit...

My favorite childhood memory is...

My favorite leisure activity is...

Tell about the best birthday present you ever received.

Share one of the happiest days of your life.

Describe what your day was like today.

If you had to move and could only take three things with you, what would you take?

While growing up I saw God as...

What would you do if someone willed you a million dollars?

If you could do anything you want this time next year, what would it be?

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RE*FORMED 500 YEARS *In the Making*

2017 marks the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and provides an opportunity to explore the simple and timeless truths of God's Word that were highlighted at that time. Sin abounds in our world. We have all fallen short of God's will. Reformation continues to be a need both on a personal and global scale. We can't accomplish this alone - and we weren't meant to! This six-week study encourages us to re-form our ideas about how we can find purpose, security, value, peace, justice, and forgiveness for ourselves and for the world. Discover the difference it makes when we allow our own inclinations about life to be RE*FORMED by God's perfect will and power.

For it is by grace you have been saved,
through faith—and this is not from yourselves,
it is the gift of God - not by works, so that
no one can boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

This Book Belongs To:

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