

11-05-25 Small Group Guide

Small Group Guide: Burying the Past, Living the New

Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

Begin by thanking God for the opportunity to gather and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and reveal areas where each person needs to grow.

Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

****Question:**** Share about a time when you had to leave something behind to move forward in life (a job, a relationship, a place). What made it difficult? What made it worth it?

Key Scripture References

- Romans 6:4 - Buried with Christ through baptism
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 - New creation in Christ
- Proverbs 26:11 - Returning to past folly
- Acts 22:1-21 - Paul's testimony and transformation
- Hebrews 12:1-2 - Running the race with perseverance
- Ephesians 6:10-18 - The armor of God

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Understanding Baptism and New Life (15-20 minutes)

****1. The Shovel Illustration****

- John used a shovel to represent both burying our old life and the temptation to dig it back up. Which resonates more with you right now—the burial or the temptation to dig things up?

****2. True Transformation****

- Read Romans 6:4 together. What does it mean that baptism represents a "final separation" between old and new life? How is this different from just "fixing ourselves"?

****3. Paul's Example****

- After Paul's conversion (Acts 22), he never went back to persecuting Christians. What allowed him to make such a complete break with his past? What can we learn from this?

Part 2: The Struggle with Comfort and the Past (15-20 minutes)

****4. Digging Up the Dead****

- John mentioned wanting to "glorify" his sinful past when with old friends. Why do we sometimes romanticize our old life? What makes us want to "dig up" what should stay buried?

****5. Lot's Wife****

- The Hebrew word for how Lot's wife looked back meant "to gaze longingly with desire." What are some "cities" (old habits, relationships, lifestyles) that Christians today are tempted to gaze back at longingly?

****6. Comfort vs. Growth****

- "Comfort and growth can't coexist." Do you agree? Where in your life are you choosing comfort over spiritual growth?

Part 3: Living Out the New Life (15-20 minutes)

****7. Evangelism and Neighbors****

- John challenged us: "How many people live next to somebody that they've not shared the gospel with?" What holds you back from sharing your faith with people in your everyday life?

****8. The Armor of God****

- Review Ephesians 6:10-18. Which piece of armor do you most need to "put on" more intentionally right now? Why?

****9. Prayer as Offense****

- John said, "Prayer is not a spare tire. Prayer is our first offense." How would your life look different if prayer was truly your first response rather than your last resort?

Part 4: Mat Carriers (15-20 minutes)

****10. Accountability and Support****

- John emphasized the importance of having "mat carriers"—close Christian friends who can speak truth into your life. Do you have these people? If not, what's preventing you from developing these relationships?

****11. Vulnerability****

- True mat carriers require vulnerability and the willingness to receive correction. What makes this difficult? What would make it easier in this group?

****12. Taking Action****

- If you don't have a mat carrier, who in this group or church could you reach out to this week to start building that relationship?

Key Takeaways

1. ****Baptism is burial, not repair**** - We don't fix our old life; we bury it and receive a completely new one in Christ.
2. ****Stop digging up the past**** - Every time we glorify or return to our old sinful patterns, we're carrying around a "stinky corpse" instead of living in freedom.
3. ****Forward focus is essential**** - Like a farmer plowing, we must keep our eyes fixed ahead on Jesus, not constantly looking back.
4. ****Evangelism is urgent**** - People without Christ are in peril. We must

overcome our comfort and pride to share the gospel.

5. ****Daily spiritual preparation matters**** - Put on the full armor of God every morning and make prayer your first offense.

6. ****We need mat carriers**** - Christian life isn't meant to be lived alone. We need close friends who will carry us and speak truth into our lives.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenges (Choose 1-2):

****Challenge 1: The Shovel Reminder****

- Pick up one of the small shovels at the Welcome Center (or find a small object to represent burial). Keep it in your pocket or on your desk. Every time you're tempted to return to old patterns, hold it and pray, "That life is dead. I am new in Christ."

****Challenge 2: Neighbor Evangelism****

- Identify one neighbor, coworker, or regular acquaintance you see who doesn't know Christ. Pray for them daily by name this week. Ask God to give you an opportunity to share your faith, and be ready when He does.

****Challenge 3: Armor of God Routine****

- Create a morning routine where you literally "put on" each piece of armor (Ephesians 6:10-18). Speak each piece aloud as you get ready for the day.

****Challenge 4: Mat Carrier Connection****

- If you have a mat carrier, reach out to them this week—call, text, or meet for coffee. Be intentional about the relationship.
- If you don't have one, identify someone in the church you could ask to be this person for you. Take the vulnerable step of reaching out.

****Challenge 5: Prayer First****

- For one week, make prayer your literal first response to every challenge, worry, or decision. Keep a journal of how this changes your perspective.

Closing Exercise (10 minutes)

Burial Ceremony:

Have each person write down on a piece of paper one thing from their old life they keep "digging up" that needs to stay buried. As a group, tear up or burn these papers (safely!) as a symbolic act of commitment to leave the past behind.

Prayer Partners:

Break into pairs. Share one area where you're struggling to leave the past behind or one area where you need to step out in faith. Pray specifically for each other.

Closing Prayer

Pray together for:

- Strength to leave the past buried
- Courage to share the gospel
- Wisdom to put on God's armor daily
- Deep, authentic Christian friendships
- Those who are lost and need Christ

For Next Week

- Continue your chosen challenge
- Read Philippians 3:12-14 (Paul on forgetting what's behind and pressing forward)
- Come prepared to share one way you saw God work through your obedience this week

Leader Notes

- Be prepared to share your own struggles with leaving the past behind—vulnerability from leadership encourages group openness
- Have tissues available; discussions about past sin and loss can be emotional
- If someone shares they don't have mat carriers, help facilitate connections within the group
- Follow up individually with anyone who seems particularly burdened or stuck