

# BRIDGING THE GAP

## 4 WEEK BIBLE STUDY

### WEEK 1: Origin of Sin

#### Opening Prayer

15 minute opening – Speaker or speakers qualify themselves and share on their religious experiences and perception of God during childhood.

I was born the youngest of 5 children in Wilmington Delaware. My brothers and sister all went to Catholic school. I heard unkind stories about the nuns. By the time it was time to go to kindergarten at St. Mary Magdalen, I threw a fit in front of the school and my mother enrolled me in Lombardy, a public school. I remained in CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) at St. Mary Magdalen one evening a week for the next three years. I enjoyed CCD. The people volunteered and were very nice and warm to me. Around the age of seven, I ran out on a major road and was struck by a car. The driver of the car was my CCD teacher. We rarely attended church at that time as a family. I understood God to be real, but I definitely thought I had to earn my forgiveness and His love. Even after my parents divorced at the age of eight, and I spent 9+ months in the burn unit of the hospital, I still believed that God was real. I just didn't think I qualified for the relationship!

15 minute – open meeting for others to share (3 minutes each) on religious experience and understanding of God.

15 minute – scripture reading, discussion, and homework questions.

**Genesis 3:13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

**Genesis 4:6-7** "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, the watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

**Matthew 15:19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts-murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

#### Questions for homework:

- Where do you think sin comes from?
- How were you taught good and evil?
- What does the serpent represent?

Close in Prayer

## **Week 2: Living in Sin**

### Opening Prayer

15 minute opening – Speaker or speakers qualify themselves and share on their belief system while living in sin.

I came from an abusive home and received mixed messages creating a fear-based identity that left me seeking attention and love. I was a brat as a pre-teen. Often acting out and rebelling, I went to outside sources to feel better. First alcohol, then to selling drugs to buy clothes, things, and false friendships for acceptance. I continued to believe that I was not good enough to have a relationship with God. I gravitated to others that hurt themselves with drugs and took pride in being the worst of the worst and thought it was fun. I continued to use drugs until they could not mask the pain of the lack of love and acceptance of my childhood. I spent 2-3 years dodging death. At the age of 30, while in the infirmary of Gander Hill Prison, I made my first decision in a very long time to value myself and God was there.

15 minute group share (3 minutes each) on belief system while living in sin.

15 minute – scripture reading, discussion, and homework questions.

**Lamentations 3:19-20** I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

**Matthew 7:13-14** “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

**Romans 7:17** As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

### **Questions for homework:**

-Who taught you the beliefs that led you to live in sin?

-Why do we continue to live in sin?

-What forces us to challenge our own belief system?

Close in prayer

### **Week 3: New in Christ**

15 minute opening – speaker or speakers qualify themselves and share on their relationship with Christ.

At 30 I started the recovery process with 4 ½ months in prison. I then was blessed with 4 ½ months in Gateway Foundation. I was walked through a healing process, unpacking my past. Starting the process of basing my beliefs off of the truth, and tangible facts. I completed treatment. I spent 6 months in an Oxford House. I spent close to 6 years in active recovery not in real relationship with Christ. God got me back to church almost 3 years ago. I began attending church and a Christian 12 Step group. I was convicted to start to sponsor men and finally be of service after 6 ½ years in recovery. I went public with my faith in Jesus Christ by getting baptized. My son decided to get baptized with me. The internal change after accepting Christ in my heart and following his example can be described in one word – serenity.

15 minute group share (3 minutes each) on their current relationship with Christ.

15 minute – scripture reading, discussion, and homework questions.

**James 4:7-10** Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

**Ezekial 36:26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

**John 3:16-17** For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

#### **Questions for homework:**

-What did Jesus do by going to the cross?

-What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit living in you?

-Describe the battle between the Spirit and our sinful nature?

Closing prayer

## Week 4: Living as Christ Instructs

### Opening Prayer

15 minute opening – Speaker or speakers qualify themselves and share on personal sanctification.

I never understood the power of honesty. God already knows my heart and he wants me to be dependent on him. He is well aware of my sinful condition and wants me to continue to participate in a growing relationship. I began to get honest in group. I leaned into helping people when I would usually point to their shortcomings as a reason to remain selfish. I began to pray regularly and attend church regularly. I believed God's promises that I was built for a purpose. I began to see the pain of my past as a blessing. I became willing to be transparent to continue to heal and help others heal by sharing all God had done for me. God never wanted perfection, He only wanted my heart. The truth of the word and Jesus' example are the direction I am pointing. No matter the season of life I am in, I'm instructed to love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength and to love my neighbor as myself. He continues to make me less of me and more of Him.

15 minute group share on the understanding of sanctification (3 minutes each)

15 minute – scripture reading, discussion, and homework questions.

**1John 1:8-9** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness

**Romans 12:5-8** so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

**Matthew 7:24-27** "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

### Homework Questions:

- What does sanctification mean to you?
- How do you continue to strengthen your relationship with Christ?
- Describe your spiritual gifts

Closing prayer