



IDENTITY

LIFE FOUNDATIONS



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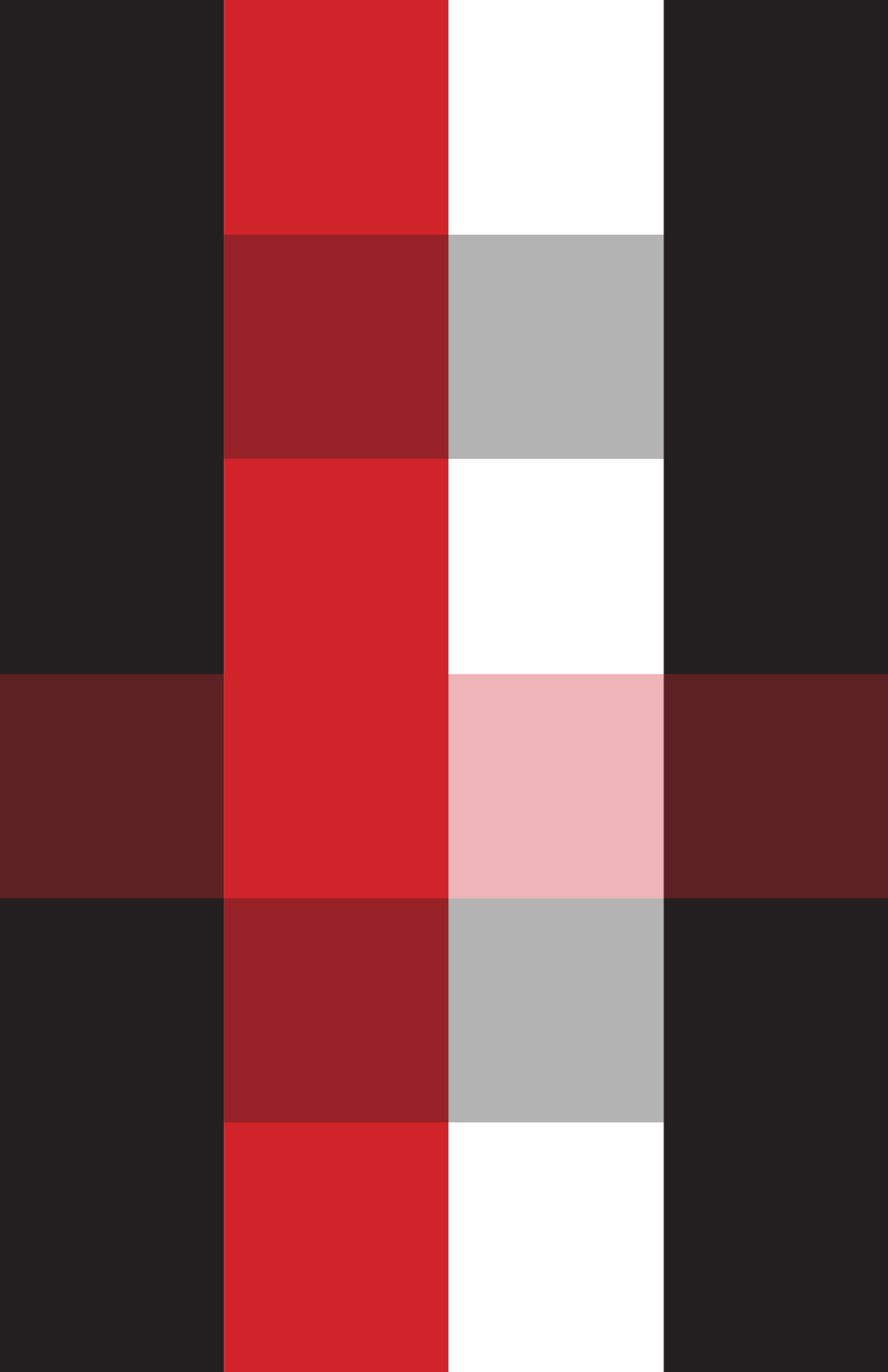
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L.I.F.E. JOURNALING METHOD

The Bible journaling method called LIFE Starter was developed to create an easy, yet effective way for people to study the Bible, remember what they read and allow their hearts to get ignited for Jesus Christ.

L.I.F.E. stands for Listen, Investigate, Focus and Engage.

L=Listen

In your journal, write the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, listen to the Holy Spirit and focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal. Writing helps you remember the verses.

I=Investigate

Next, you investigate the context around the Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: Bible Study Tools, or Easy English Bible.

F=Focus

The next step is focusing on the text to make it applicable for your own life. What does the text mean today? What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you've read? Write out a couple sentences detailing what God is saying to you through the text.

E=Engage

The final step in the journaling process is engaging God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you've learned?

The great thing about this journaling method is that it can take just a few moments for those days you are short on time, or it can provide for a deep dive.

SESSION 1

Identity in Christ

Session #1 Teaching: Identity in Christ

Who are you and what defines you? What is your identity? That's a question many people struggle to answer. Too often, people base their identities on what they do (from their jobs to their roles in relationships), defining themselves by those pursuits. Unfortunately, by doing so, they significantly limit their lives. The truth is that God intends for all people to find their identity in Christ. If you're a Christian, your identity encompasses all the abundance of being a beloved child of God. Here's how you can start living your life fully in Christ, keeping in mind that your identity is found in Christ. Use this list of things God calls you and how He identifies you to remind yourself who you are in Christ. The world identifies you according to your actions. God identifies you for who He sees you to be. The world says your actions determine your identity. God says your identity should determine your actions.

As a Christian, you've been adopted into God's family. The work of Jesus, on the cross has made it possible for you to become one of the sons or daughters of God the Father. So, make your main goal of life learning how to know, love, and trust God as your Father. While the people who love you can't do so completely unselfishly, continually, or perfectly, God does. As a Christian, nothing can ever separate you from God's great love for you. Jesus has given you the power to ultimately overcome evil, sin, and death. Use the spiritual weapons at your disposal as a Christian (truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, scripture, prayer, and the strength to stand) in spiritual battles, trusting that you can always emerge victorious.

One of the richest passages about identity in the Bible is found in ***Ephesians 1:3-14***. In this passage, Paul addresses the church in Ephesus, explaining the new identity given to a person when they are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, and unconditionally loved and accepted. We are pure, blameless and forgiven. We have received the hope of spending eternity with God. When we are in Christ, these aspects of our identity can never be altered by what we do.

Often, however, a gap exists between intellectually knowing these truths about who God says we are and living them out. This can be affected by how we see ourselves, life experiences and the ways we allow the world to define us. In order to live out of the fullness of our new identity in Christ, we must determine what hinders us from doing so. That varies from person to person. In the coming sections, we will be doing a deep dive into some practical obstacles that hold us back from fully living out our inheritance as children of God. The goal is to live out what Ephesians 1 says and STOP seeing ourselves as:

- **Rejected instead of accepted.**
- **In chains, instead of set free.**
- **Under the law instead of covered by grace.**
- **Orphaned instead of adopted.**

I pray that this study allows you to see yourself as God sees you. If we live out of an identity based on how God sees us, we no longer feel the need to find our worth in our external circumstances. It frees us up to live confidently and stably instead of changing who we are based on the opinions of others, our professional success, how we see ourselves, and all the other ways we define our significance. It gives us the opportunity to experience God's unconditional love in new and fresh ways. And it allows us to confidently and boldly share His love with others. It is certainly a battle as we live in a world that seeks to define us by its own standards.

The battle is worth it because as we fight it, the world around us changes.

Discuss or Ponder and Review Scripture:

- In an average day, what percentage of your energy and time and worry is devoted to non spiritual things?
- What keeps you busy and commands your attention?
- When you consider experiencing more of the spiritual realm, are you eager, excited, optimistic? OR...Are you anxious, confused, overwhelmed, unsettled and skeptical?
- Discuss how skeptical you are right now about the spiritual realm and your ability to come into contact with it. If you're skeptical, what is the source of doubt? Dig deep and spend some time discussing this as a group. Can you identify a particular experience of influence in your life that may hold you back from getting all God wants you to get out of this class?
- Throughout your day, and week, what are some of the things that you do, or things you are involved in that you allow to define you.

•How would believing the truth about your new identity in Christ change the way you live?

•Do you want to change? Are you curious? What is stopping you?

•Read 1 Peter 2:9

Talk about what it really means to have an Identity in Christ...When we accept Christ into our hearts, the person we were before dies, and we are reborn as a “new creation.” We lose our old identity and receive our new one. We no longer identify with the world and all its lies. We identify with Christ, and we become set apart. Our faith in Him distinguishes us from others (or at least it should).

Your identity is in Christ ... Even when you fall back into sin.

Take a look at the **“Who I Am In Christ”** Scriptures below. It lists the truths we NEED to believe to have victory in Christ. Pick ONE Scripture that touches you the most and use the **LIFE Starter Method** to journal about them.

In Christ, I am accepted ...

John 1:12 — I am God’s child.

John 15:15 — As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 — I have been justified.

1 Corinthians 6:17 — I am united with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 — I belong to God.

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you’re studying. After you’ve read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.

I = Investigate the context around today’s Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: [Bible Study Tools](#), or [Easy English Bible](#).

F=Focus to the text to make it applicable for your own life. What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you’ve read?

E = Engage God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you’ve learned?

Take a look at the **“Who I Am In Christ”** Scriptures below. It lists the truths we NEED to believe to have victory in Christ. Pick ONE Scripture that touches you the most and use the **LIFE Starter Method** to journal about them.

In Christ, I am secure ...

Romans 8:1-2 – I am free from condemnation.

Romans 8:28 – God works for my good in all things.

Romans 8:31-39 – I am free from any condemnation.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 – I have been anointed by God.

1 John 5:18 – The evil one cannot touch me.

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In Christ, I am significant ...

John 15:5 — I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine.

John 15:16 — I have been chosen to bear fruit.

1 Corinthians 3:16 — I am God’s temple.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 — I am a minister of reconciliation.

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Take a look at the **“Who I Am In Christ”** Scriptures below. It lists the truths we NEED to believe to have victory in Christ. Pick ONE Scripture that touches you the most and use the **LIFE Starter Method** to journal about them.

In Christ, I am significant ...

Ephesians 2:6 – I am with Christ in the heavenly realm.

Ephesians 2:10 – I am God’s workmanship.

Ephesians 3:12 – I may approach God with confidence.

Philippians 4:13 – I can do all things through Christ.

Take today and spend time in Listening Prayer to reflect on your HEAR Journaling time this week and to receive all that God wants you to receive about identity in Christ. ***Make notes to share with your group!***

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you’re studying. After you’ve read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.

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F=Focus to the text to make it applicable for your own life. What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you’ve read?

E = Engage God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can



SESSION 2

FORGIVENESS

Session #2 Teaching: Steps Toward Forgiveness

Matthew 6:14 tells us *“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”* Forgiveness (or lack of) can be a HUGE block toward you finding your full identity in Jesus Christ. It is NOT easy, as you attempt to forgive those who have hurt you. You can often let the pain and lies of your past define your actions moving forward. Remember, your actions should come from how God identifies you. When you allow your pain and past experiences define you, you live with the identity of victim and live in unforgiveness. Instead, choose to live in who God has said you are. Forgiveness is not a simple process and entails a lot more work. Today, we will cover the continuous 8-step process of forgiving, as we need to allow it to grow in us to have victory in Christ in the long run!

Eight Steps Toward Forgiveness

1. Forgiveness should not be confused with forgetting. Forgiveness is choosing to no longer allow the pain of the past to define you or cripple you. Your past pain can be something to learn from, not part of who you are.
2. Forgiveness is your choice. Sometimes people say that they simply CAN'T forgive, but in reality, they WON'T forgive. God requires you to forgive; it is something you can do, because God wouldn't ask if you couldn't. Forgiveness seems to go against your sense of what is right and fair, so you hold on to your anger, punishing people over and over in your mind for the pain they've caused you, but you are told by God never to take your own revenge!
3. Forgive others so YOU can be FREE.
4. Don't wait for others to ask for forgiveness before forgiving them. They may never do so.
5. Forgiveness must come from your heart. Allow God to bring to the surface the painful emotions you feel toward those who have hurt you. Too often we're afraid of the pain associated with this process so we bury them deep down inside us. The deeper you push them, the more you allow it to define who you are God bring them up so He can heal the hurts.

6. Forgiveness is choosing not to hold sin against the offender. It is common for bitter people to bring up past issues with those who have hurt them. They want the offender to feel bad, but you must free them as you free yourself and let go of the past. Forgiveness is allowing justice to take place, while freeing yourself from having to be the judge, jury, and lawyer.

7. Forgiveness requires you to have mercy on others. Just as God shows YOU mercy and cancels YOUR debts, He commands YOU to do the same.

8. Focus on forgiving people for what they did and resist judging their character. Remember, how you forgive others is how God will forgive you.

Discuss or Ponder and Review Scripture:

•Do you hold on to the anger, bitterness & resentment from YOUR past? Discuss in your group.

•How do your offenses keep you from deeper relationships with Christ and others? Discuss in your group.

•Are YOU willing to forgive YOU? What does that even look like? Discuss in your group.

Prayer time:

Pray on your own, or with your group about forgiveness. Let God bring people and any frustrations, bitterness or offenses to your mind that you need to get beyond. Write them down in your journal. We also often we hold things against ourselves, punishing ourselves for wrong choices we've made in the past. Write "myself" at the bottom of your list so you can forgive yourself.

For each thing on your list above, pray the following prayer:

Lord, I choose to forgive (name of person) for (say what they did to hurt you) even though it made me feel (share the painful feelings).

When you are finished forgiving that person for all the offenses that come to your mind, and after you have honestly expressed how you felt, conclude with the following:

Lord, I choose not to hold any of these things against (name) any longer. I choose to cancel all debts owed me. I thank You for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness toward (name). I now ask You to bless (name), in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

In The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, who do YOU relate to in the passage? What passage jumps out at you and why?

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E = Engage God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you've learned?

Read Isaiah 43:14-28

God has big plans for you, as you get past the hurts that have held you back. Look at verses 19 and then 25 and journal about the “new thing” God is revealing in your heart and how blessed you are that He forgave YOU and allows you to forgive others.

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Read Psalm 147

Forgiveness must come from your heart. Too often we're afraid of the pain associated with this process so we bury them deep down inside us. Let God bring them up so He can heal the hurts.

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Read Romans 12:9-21

Review the 8-steps of forgiveness in the next session. Take today and spend time in Listening Prayer to reflect on your LIFE Starter time this week and to receive all that God wants you to receive about forgiveness. **Make notes to share with your group!**

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SESSION 3

REPENTANCE

Session #3 Teaching: Time to Repent

We have covered a lot of information in this study so far concerning making a conscious decision to walk away from things that may hold you back, not allowing negative thoughts to control you and learning to forgive. All of those topics will help you to find freedom in Christ as you accept your position as a member of the royal family. Today, we will cover the Biblical term for practically turning from ALL of these behaviors... **REPENTANCE!**

From Wikipedia: Repentance is the activity of reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs, which is accompanied by commitment to and actual actions that show and prove a change for the better. In Christianity, it is often defined as an action, **turning away** from self-serving activities and **turning to God**, to walk in His ways.

You may be surprised to learn the word repent in the Greek New Testament simply means to turn around. It was a military term that described a soldier marching in one direction and then doing an about-face. And when it's used in a spiritual sense, it means to change your mind.

So really, repent is a perfect description of what happens when you come to Christ, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of the God; You do a spiritual about-face, which in turn changes everything. Not only should you change your mind about Christ, but you should change your mind about sin as well as you discover what it really means to honor God. **You realize that it's no longer about performance.** It's about a **heart attitude** that seeks to honor Christ in every aspect of life, so don't be afraid of the word repent, instead, embrace the idea of doing a spiritual about-face, turning to Christ and away from sin in your life!

Acts 3:19-21 challenges us to "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, **that times of refreshing may come from the Lord**, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

In today's group, you will review what it means to Repent...So many people today are scared of the word REPENT and avoid using it altogether! In reality, very few actually understand what the word means.

Discuss or Ponder and Review Scripture:

Re-read out loud: Acts 3:19-21 Think about what you've learned so far in this class. Express what a **"time of refreshing"** might look like for you as you make the spiritual about-face. God wants you to picture a healthy future with Him and sometimes, we need to define what that looks like to have the motivation to stick with the repentance process and keep moving in God's direction.

- What areas in your life do you need to make **spiritual about-face**?
- Talk about how you view **"repentance"** after this conversation verses before.
- Make some **commitments** to the group on what you need to repent of and how you will do it.

Prayer Time:

Wrap up by praying for the courage to step out in faith and repent. As you think about repentance and what you learned in this week's session, THIS COMING WEEK, use the LIFE Starter Method to make a personal decision on what YOU need to repent of!

Read Acts 3:19–21 again

Journal about repentance and a “time of refreshing” because of your willingness to repent.

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you’re studying. After you’ve read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.

I = Investigate the context around today’s Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: [Bible Study Tools](#), or [Easy English Bible](#).

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Read Acts 3:17-26

What does repentance mean to you? What sin do you need to turn from? Without naming it, you can't have victory over it!

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Read Acts 2:14-40

Review verse 38 and journal about what it means to you

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Read Luke 13:1-5

Reflect on **confession, repentance and obedience** and spend time in **Listening Prayer** and reviewing your LIFE Starter time for the week. **Make notes to share with your group!**

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SESSION 4

NEGATIVE THINKING

Session #4 Teaching: Overcoming Negative Thoughts

Do YOU struggle with negative thinking? We ALL do at times! Chronic negative thinking, depression, anxiety, and similar disorders are on the rise all over the world and keep us from living out our identity in Christ. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 40 million adults in the U.S. are affected, which is nearly 20 percent of the population. Of that number, many are professing Christians.

Fear is a root cause of many of these problems. It's no wonder people are fearful in a world where it appears nothing is reliable. It can be quite disturbing for a person to realize almost everything in life is ultimately out of his control—from the weather to his bank account balance. All the things people rely on for their security will sooner or later fail them. But the Christian who confesses the sovereignty of our Father God who works all things for his good (**Romans 8:28**) has the antidote to negative thinking.

When a Christian's thinking is primarily negative, anxious, or doubtful, faith in God will be depleted. According to **Proverbs 29:25**, fear is a trap but trust in the Lord keeps a man safe. Those who struggle with negative thinking should do the same thing they would do with any other sin—**confess it** (agree with God that negative thinking is wrong because it reveals a lack of trust) and make every effort to replace your thinking with God's Truth and how He sees you as HIS precious child!

How do we do this? Prayer is a key part of overcoming negativity. As we pray "with thanksgiving" (**Philippians 4:6**), we focus on the blessings we have received and leave no room for negative thoughts. The Holy Spirit will be faithful to help the repentant believer overcome negative thinking (see **Matthew 7:7-11**). Your LIFE Starter Bible reading is also a great help in overcoming negative thinking. It's helpful to remember that, no matter how dismal the present circumstances, Christians have been promised God's love and victory in Christ (**Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 2:14**).

Discuss or Ponder and Review Scripture:

The struggle against negative thinking is a battle for the mind. In Philippians 4:8, the apostle Paul tells believers what to think about: ***things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy!*** Christians must think about what they're thinking about and not allow their minds to have free rein.

•Do you allow negative thinking and speaking to control you? Discuss taking control of who and what you listen to.

As long as Christians live in a fearful, stressful world, negative thoughts will come. We have the option of either stamping out those thoughts or nurturing them. The good news is, negative thoughts can be replaced with positive ones, and the more that Godly substitution takes place, the more peace and joy we can experience. ***2 Corinthians 10:5*** tells us, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

•Discuss any lies that may have been spoken over you in the past, including lies you tell about yourself. Where did you receive negative input about your identity? What can YOU choose to do to think differently?

Pray with your group about arresting your negative thoughts, to make sure what comes out of your mouth will be positive in the future. Also ask for God to reveal to you who else in your life you need to discuss this with. Now commit to the group about having discussions over the next week with those people.

Read Romans 12

Are you willing to be transformed by the renewing of your mind? Will you allow God to search your heart over the course of this class to invade your thought life and make you aware of any negative thinking? The same way that what we eat will affect how we feel, what we consume spiritually affects how we see ourselves and our world. To renew something involves refilling what's empty or restarting what's stopped. We don't just check out and stop consuming information.

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S.4

DEVO DAY 2

OVERCOMING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Read James 3

Journal about any curses others have spoken over you. Keep adding to the list as you go through this week to discuss with your group at the next class. It's time to TAME your TONGUE!t!

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.

I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: [Bible Study Tools](#), or [Easy English Bible](#).

F=Focus to the text to make it applicable for your own life. What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you've read?

E = Engage God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you've learned?

Read Ephesians 1; Romans 8:31-34

God believes in you and nothing can stand against you. Do you believe that. Journal about that and if there is anything standing in the way, be ready to discuss in your next group.

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Read Ephesians 4:31-32; Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21-22

Over the next two sessions, we will be discussing forgiveness. Pray about the people in your life that you need to forgive, starting with YOU!

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.

I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: [Bible Study Tools](#), or [Easy English Bible](#).

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