



Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 7th, 2017

Connect

- What are some failed resolutions you have tried in the past? What is the difference between a resolution and renewal?

3 Stories

1. Daniel and his 3 friends, after going into exile, purposed to reject the king's food in order to demonstrate their fidelity to their true King, Yahweh, and to avoid any uncleanness that may have resulted from their eating. At the end of the 10 days, God blessed their efforts with physical, mental, and spiritual renewal, so much so that they were 10 times better than any of the king's men. (From Daniel 1)
2. Later in Daniel's life, wicked men wanting to destroy Daniel, tricked the new king into making a decree that prohibited any man from praying to any god or man except the king, to be punished by death in a lion's den. Daniel, however, keeping with the discipline he had established, continued praying 3 times a day, each day to his God. When the king realized he had been tricked, he was very distressed, but he had to honor his decree and throw Daniel into the den of lions. Daniel, by the protection of God, survived the night! The king rejoiced and praised the living God, and he wrote a new decree to all the nations under his control in their language proclaiming that the God of Daniel is the living God and his Kingdom shall never be destroyed. (From Daniel 6)
3. Towards the end of Daniel's life, he had a vision that troubled him deeply. He mourned, fasted, and prayed for 21 days. At the end of that time, an angel appeared, saying that he had been held up by a demon of Satan's. He then comforted and strengthened Daniel, giving him understanding. (From Daniel 10)

3 End Results

1. Physical, mental and spiritual renewal.
2. The exaltation of God among the nations.
3. Strength, comfort, and understanding.

Vision Statement

At the end of this 40 days, our hope is that you will experience renewal from God in every aspect of your life, providing you with comfort, strength, and understanding that results with our God being exalted in the Gadsden area and around the world.

Our Hope

What hope do you find in these three stories?

Now God granted Daniel a favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials... As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

(Daniel 1:9,17, NASB)

- God is sovereign.
- God graciously provides.

²⁶ *I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”*

(Daniel 6:26-27, ESV)

- God is a living God, enduring forever. He hears us and responds to us.
- His is growing a kingdom that will never be destroyed.
- He is our deliverer and rescuer.
- Since he is sovereign over kings, the heavens and the earth, he can renew your life.

Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words... And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened.

(Daniel 10:12, 19a, ESV)

- God hears us and responds to our prayers.
- God loves us and gives us peace.
- God strengthens us and gives us courage.

Questions for Discussion

- Where is the renewal needed in your life?
- How can we as a Life Group participate in the 40 days of renewal? Will we consider purposing to do the Daniel fast for 10 days?
- How can we keep each other accountable to this? Have you considered joining one of our Daniel Teams?
- How can we use this as a way to connect lost people to Jesus Christ and other believers to a discipleship group?

Prayer

- Pray together as a group, asking God for renewal in the areas mentioned earlier. Pray for wisdom moving forward. What is the Spirit prompting you to do?
- Pray for opportunities to connect with lost people and to lead them to the living God.
- Pray for our church during this time. Pray that God would strengthen us and renew the ministries our church carries out.

Multiply

- Keep a journal of the process of these 40 days and how God used it to renew various aspects of your life. Then plan to share it creatively.

For the Family

- Read and story Daniel 1:1-21 with your family. Explain the purpose behind this season. Explain why it is important to draw closer to God and to make choices that show our devotion to Him. Pray with your family and explain why we are fasting.

Memorize

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10, ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 14th, 2017

Renewing Your Prayer Life

CONNECT

Take some time and go around the room and talk about prayers you have seen God answer, prayers you've seen God not answer, and prayers you are still waiting on an answer for.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Nehemiah 1:1-11

(Additional Passages: Exo. 34:1-8; Deut. 28:15-34, 30:1-3; Lev. 26:39-45; Prov. 1; 1 Jn 5:14-15)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about mankind from this passage?
- How does this affect the way that we pray?
- How can we follow the example of Nehemiah in prayer?
- How did God use what Nehemiah did to bring about renewal?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What hope is found in this passage? How does it encourage us in the midst of the 40 Days of Renewal?

Nehemiah's prayer and fasting was tightly linked with his vision to serve God's people. How are we incorporating prayer into our ministry? Are we seeing ministry opportunities around us? Are we praying to God for an opportunity to engage them?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Break down as a group the model Nehemiah set forth as a prayer to God. Identify needs in your class that move you like they did Nehemiah and pray to God as a Life Group in the way that Nehemiah did.

Nehemiah had a unique position as the cupbearer of the king to be used by God. Each of us has a unique position for the gospel of God to go out and have an impact in the lives of others. Pray that God would open your eyes to your unique position of influence and that God would give you his favor as you seek to utilize your position for his glory and kingdom expansion.

Pray again over the areas your Life Group is looking for renewal from God.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Nehemiah highlights the steadfast love of the Lord in his prayer. Seek to share with someone in your circle the steadfast love of the Lord and its effects in your life.

For the Family: Read this story with your family. Talk about how God desires for us to pray when we are troubled with the injustice in this world. Walk them through how to pray to God as Nehemiah did. Pray with them about some area of your life where you are hoping to see God come in and bring his renewal.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. (1 John 5:14)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 14th, 2017

Renewing Your Prayer Life

Nehemiah was one of the remaining exiles from Judah who was not able to return when the exiles left after Cyrus' decree. He was serving as a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes when he heard word from his countrymen who had news as to how the ones who escaped exile were doing, and it was not good. The news deeply troubled Nehemiah so that he wept, mourned and fasted for days calling out to God. Many can sympathize with Nehemiah here. They have a vision of how life should be and what actually does not measure up. Maybe one sees the injustice in this world and is deeply moved. Maybe one's marriage isn't what they thought it was. Maybe one has climbed the career ladder and is wondering what it was all for. Maybe one has a child who has departed from the faith and they don't know what to do. There will be times for all of us in this life when we are in the position Nehemiah is in. We can respond in rebellion toward God and in self-pity or we can respond in biblical mourning, with prayer and fasting. And the response cannot be a quick and easy response. This is actually only the first of 12 prayers Nehemiah recorded in his book – prayer was a part of who he was. He recognized that he had no hope attacking this on his own strength, so he sought out the one who did have the strength to restore his people.¹ Nehemiah saw that his people needed renewal so he fasted and prayed to God for many days before he started to see any movement of God in the direction Nehemiah was hoping for. Are you trying to grab hold of renewal on your own strength, hurrying forward without seeking out God? Or are you seeking the strength and renewal that only God can achieve? Are you praying to that end?

Nehemiah's Prayer Model

Whenever the Spirit inspires an author of Scripture to include a specific prayer they prayed in their writing, I believe it to be a good practice to examine the prayer and learn a way that we could pray to God. Nehemiah's example is a good example of a prayer for someone who is struggling with the world that is around them.

- His prayer was coupled with fasting. Over and over again in Scripture we see these two being paired together as one is pleading with the Lord.
- His prayer continued for many days. He did not just offer up a 4-minute prayer one time. He prayed over and over again for many days.
- He "deliberately postpones the cry for help" and goes straight to praising God, whose glory and "majesty... puts man, whether friend or foe in his place."²
- He recalls Scripture in his prayer. Nehemiah is specifically bringing to mind the Covenant God made with His people.
- "Nehemiah knew that God would hear; he was asking God to take action."³ Action as we will see that is not based on Nehemiah's character but God's Character.
- He confesses his sin and his people's. He does not shift blame but he owns up to the sin in his life – even though he almost certainly was not a

major player in the sins that got his people in this situation.

- He then recalls the promise God made. God promised in his curse section in Deut. 28 that he would scatter his people among the nations, but he also promised in Lev. 26 that he would "regather the Jews when they returned to him in repentance."⁴ It is a good practice to know and pray the promises God has promised to us. (make sure they are actually promises for us – context, context, context)
- After days of praying, he finally comes to the immediate request he is making of God. In his case he is the cupbearer and he is praying for God to be gracious and give an opportunity and favor with the King. (btw when he gets his opportunity in 2:4, he prays again)

From Spiritual Disciplines

"'Whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter,' wrote John Calvin, 'it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer.' There's something about fasting that sharpens the edge of our intercessions and gives passion to our supplications... Fasting does not change God's hearing so much as it changes our praying." – Donald Whitney⁵

How can we as a Life Group seek the Lord in the way that Nehemiah did, together?

¹ Loken, Israel. *Ezra & Nehemiah*. Edited by H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011.

² Kidner, Derek. *Ezra and Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 12. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

³ Breneman, Mervin. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Electronic ed. Vol. 10. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993.

⁴ Loken.

⁵ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 165-166.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 21st, 2017

Renewing Your Heart

CONNECT

How has this season been for you? Fasting has a way of revealing selfishness, sin, and fleshly desires. What have been some of the shocking idols that have been revealed?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 Sam. 7:3-6; Col. 3:1-17

(Additional Passages: Jonah 3:1-10; Lk. 11:32; Joel 2:12-17; Rom. 8:5-17)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about mankind from this passage?
- How does this affect the way that we confess sins and seek repentance?
- How can we follow the example of the Israelites in fasting?
- How did God use what the Israelites did to bring about renewal?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What hope is found in these passages? How does it encourage us in the midst of the 40 Days of Renewal?

The Israelite's fast was tightly linked with their repentance from their idolatry and the putting to death the things of the flesh. How are we incorporating fasting into our attempts to put to death the flesh and choose what is holy? Are we feeling conviction over our sins?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Break down as a group the foreign gods that are prevalent in our local culture today. Identify idols your class specifically identifies as problem areas and as a class pray and move in repentance.

Paul urges the Colossians to above all put on love, which binds everything together. Who in your circles is God pressing on your heart to show God's love to? Who do you need to forgive? Pray for these and pray for opportunities to show them love and forgiveness. If you have not forgiven them, forgive them today.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Paul calls the Colossians to do things in the name of Jesus. As you walk through this week seek to love and serve others intentionally in the name of Jesus. Let them know that it is his kindness and love you are sharing.

For the Family: Read this 1 Sam. 7:3-6 and Col. 3:12-17 with your family. Talk about how God desires for us to worship him and to turn from our sinful ways. Walk them through how to repent, and give them an appropriate example from your life. Pray with them about some area of your life where you are hoping to see God come in and bring his renewal

Memorize: Meditate on the Text

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1-2, ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 21st, 2017

Renewing Your Heart

You know the scene from Raiders of the Lost Ark when the historians are talking with Indiana about the dangers of the Ark falling into the hands of Hitler because an army who marched with the Ark was invincible? Well that is simply not true. Because in 1 Samuel 4, the Israelites lost in an embarrassing fashion to the Philistines and lost the Ark. The Philistines did not want it long because God began to strike them with plagues so they returned the Ark which is where our story picks up. The Ark had returned to Israel but had Israel returned to the Lord? Samuel recognized that there was still a great deal of idols among the people, so he called the people to repent of their sins and put away the idols, and this time of repentance he marked with a nationwide fast. Fast forward to when Paul is writing the Colossians, he is writing to a group who has been made new by the power of the cross. The Colossians, however, still struggled with remaining in their earthly ways, as many of us today struggle with. He called them to put to death the old ways and not to even set their minds on them. More than that, he called for God's chosen to put on the things of Christ – compassion, humility, kindness, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and above all love. The Christian life is one of consistently giving attention to where our hearts gravitate towards and putting to death the earthly desires, repenting, and renewing our hearts in Christ. God's people have often done this in movements of faith that were accompanied by prayer and fasting, because fasting has a way of revealing to us the earthly idols that still try to take hold of our hearts. Once identified, we can put those idols away and find in Christ the renewal our hearts have not been able to find in idols. What are the idols your Life Group needs to put away? How has this time of fasting helped in identifying those idols?

Idols

Idolatry may be something hard for people to wrap their heads around today because it looks so different than it did in the Bible. No one is worshipping statues of animals or the sun in our culture today, at least not the vast majority of the population. But that does not mean that we do not struggle with idolatry. Kyle Idleman claims that "if you start scratching at whatever struggle you're dealing with, eventually you'll find that underneath it is a false god."⁶ Once that is recognized we can renew our hearts by putting away and putting to death the idol and repent, renewing our hearts in the worship of the one true God. SO what are the idols people struggle with today? Eric Geiger identifies four root idols that are beneath the surface lead to many idols that are easily seen.

1. *Power*: a longing for influence or recognition
2. *Control*: a longing to have everything go according to my plan
3. *Comfort*: a longing for pleasure
4. *Approval*: a longing to be accepted or desired⁷

Idleman lists out in his book and addresses these surface idols: food, sex, entertainment, success, money, achievement, romance, family and self.⁸ Idols are all around us calling for our attention, and fasting draws our attention to the ones we have given our hearts

toward and helps us express our repentance. There are more out there than we listed so we must be diligent about putting to death the earthly ways we tend to cling to and put on what is of Christ.

From Spiritual Disciplines

"Fasting can represent more than just grief over sin. It can also signal a commitment to obedience and a new direction... [Fasting] can also be in vain without repentance. As with all spiritual disciplines, fasting can be little more than a dead work if we have persistently hardened our hearts to God's call to specific sin in our lives. We must never try to immerse ourselves in a spiritual discipline as an attempt to drown out God's voice about forsaking a sin. It is a perversion of fasting to try and use it to balance self-punishment for a sinful part of life we want to continue feeding."⁹

What is the difference between fasting for renewal and fasting legalistically?

A leader living in idolatry cannot possibly lead people out of idolatry. What are the idols in your heart that need to be put to death? What are the false gods at the roots of the sin struggles you deal with?

How are you praying for your Life Group today?

⁶ Kyle Idleman, *Gods at War: Defeating the Idols that Battle for Your Heart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 22.

⁷ <https://ericgeiger.com/2013/10/four-root-idols/>

⁸ Idleman, 8.

⁹ Whitney, 171.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 28th, 2017

Renewing Your Mind

CONNECT

The mind is an interesting thing. Some people's mind can remember anything it has ever been exposed to. Some can't remember what they had for breakfast. Share some funny stories of forgetting something you should have remembered.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Psalm 1

(Additional Passages: Ps. 19; 119; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Deut. 6:1-9; Jn. 1:1-18; 20:30-31; Rom. 9:30-32; 12:1-2)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about mankind from this passage?
- How does this affect the way that we engage God with our minds?
- How can we follow the example of the righteous man in Bible intake?
- How did God use what the man did to bring about renewal?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What hope is found in these passages? How does it encourage us in the midst of the 40 Days of Renewal?

In Psalm 1 there is a clear connection between God's word and the peace, satisfaction, and ministry of his people. How does Bible intake affect the way we serve others?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Praying through Scripture is an amazing way to reinvigorate your prayer life. Take some time and as a Life Group pray through Psalm 1 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Paul reminds Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:17 that the word of God equips us for every good work and the Psalmist refers to how the Word of God produces fruit. Pray for the areas in your life where you are desiring to do a good work. Ask God to equip you with His word. And ask God to use that same word to bear the fruit of salvation in the lives of others.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Psalm 1 makes it very clear that satisfaction is found in the Word of God. John 1 refers to Jesus himself as the Word. Seek to share the message of Christ with someone this week.

For the Family: Read Psalm 1 as a family. Talk about the example set by the righteous man and how it led to his happiness. Talk about the importance of Bible intake for the Christian. Explain what the Bible is and how Jesus uses it in our lives when we daily read and meditate on his word, and how God uses his word to convict the non-Christian. This is a good time to teach them how to read the Bible as this lesson is set up.

Memorize: Meditate on the Text

¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3, ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – January 28th, 2017

Renewing Your Mind

Psalm 1 is one of the most popular and encouraging Psalms in the Bible. It paints a vivid picture of two men – one who is given to the word of the Lord and one who does not give himself to the word of the Lord. The Bible is one of the most gracious gifts God has given us. Everything we need to know about God and how to pursue him in this life is contained within this one Book. Yet so often our Bibles go unread, un-studied, and not meditated on. God clearly says in his word that blessed is the man whose delight is in his word. He likens that man to a sturdy, healthy, living tree that bears fruit and prospers in this life. God's word is his gift to us. However, we must not pursue the word of God as the Israelites mistakenly did. They pursued God's word as a means to earn righteousness. We must pursue his word by faith from a position of grace. If it becomes a simple list of do's and don'ts to earn God's favor we have missed the point of God's word. Looking at the passage and the image of the tree, these things stand out about a man who is properly using God's word: He delights in it and fills his mind with it constantly. He is planted in it, drawing the water he needs for this life from it. He bears fruit in his ministry for the glory of God. He does not grow weary in this life of doing what God has called him to. In all that he does, he prospers the way God intended. He is full of joy because he is constantly putting aside the temporary and laying hold of what is eternal. God desires for his people to prosper with eternal blessings that He provides through Christ, the Word. He does not want us to seek the false prosperity the world tempts us with. Psalm 1 refers to the wicked people who forsake God to chaff, that is blown by the wind and burned up in judgment. Which man does your life look like the most? How can God's word be better used to renew your mind and thus the rest of your life?

Uses of God's Word from 2 Tim. 3:16-17

God's word has a lot to say about God's word. In fact the longest chapter in the longest book of the Bible is about God's word (Psalm 119). Another great passage is 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We see here that God's word is profitable and helpful for a great many things like...

- Teaching us to understand who God is and how we are to live in this world.
- Reproving and convicting us of areas where we are straying.
- Correcting us and restoring us graciously back on the path of pursuing God faithfully.
- Training us for the practice of putting on Christ and living out our new identity in Him.¹⁰

All of this God's word does for us that we may be complete and equipped by His word to carry out the works he has prepared for us to walk in.

3 Steps for Establishing Effective Bible Reading

1. Set a specific and consistent time.
2. Have a predetermined plan.
3. Pick one word or phrase or verse to meditate on after you read throughout the day.¹¹

Then once your practice of reading is established, move on to a practice of deeply studying and memorizing God's word.

Biblical vs. Wordly Meditation

Worldly meditation is built on the practice of emptying the mind in order that after some time and much practice you may begin to hear the "voice of God" in your inner being.¹² Biblical meditation is focused on God's word. You don't need to find God's voice, he clearly speaks to us through his Word. Therefore rather than emptying the mind, you fill the mind by thinking and pondering over the scriptures that you have memorized.

From Spiritual Disciplines

"We think about what we delight in. A couple who have found romantic delight in each other think about each other all day. And when we delight in God's Word we think about it, that is, we meditate on it at times all throughout the day and night. The result of such meditation is stability, fruitfulness, perseverance, and prosperity... Meditation opens the soil of the soul and lets the water of God's Word percolate in deeply. The result is an extraordinary fruitfulness and spiritual prosperity."¹³

Are you delighting in the Word of God? How is that delight being revealed in your life and ministry?

¹⁰ Michael Rydelnik and Michael G. Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1909.

¹¹ Whitney, 33-34.

¹² <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-meditation.html>

¹³ Whitney, 49-50.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – February 4th, 2017

Connect

- Why do you think the body often neglected in discussions on Christian living? It is right that it takes a back seat to the spiritual because the spirit is eternal, but it is not something that we can disregard, either.

3 Passages

4. ¹² "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³ "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"--and God will destroy both one and the other... ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:12-13a, 19-20, ESV)
5. *for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 Timothy 4:8, ESV)*
6. ¹ Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. (Psalm 127:1-2, ESV)

3 Areas Highlighted about the Body

4. How we guard what goes into our body.
5. How we train our body.
6. How we give rest to our body.

Why are each of these areas important? How are they connected to how we pursue the Lord?

What does it mean that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? Why is that significant?

How does each of these affect our relationships with others when we are not dealing with them properly?

In which area do you need to find renewal in the power of Christ?

Quotes to Discuss

"I govern my eating sleeping and eating to maximize my life and soul for the kingdom."

–John Piper

How does viewing each of these three areas through the lens of the kingdom of God affect our motivation in doing them well?

“As Christians, our final aim in bodily exertion is not weight-loss or maximal long-term health — and definitely not mere physical appearance. Rather, we aim at greater joy in God, and greater love for neighbor. What makes exercise holy, and loving, is the prayer that our expenditures of energy will lead to our increased readiness to expend ourselves in sacrifice for others.” – David Mathis, Executive Editor of desiringGod.org

“Every time we go to bed, we humbly admit again that the world will be fine without us for a while.” – Jonathan Parnell

Our Hope

⁴⁰ *There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.* ⁴¹ *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.* ⁴² *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.* ⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* ⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.* (1 Corinthians 15:40-44, ESV)

How does the promise of an eternal resurrected and glorified body give us hope today?

Prayer

- Pray together as a group, asking God for renewal in the areas mentioned earlier. Pray for wisdom moving forward. What is the Spirit prompting you to do?
- Pray for opportunities to connect with lost people and to lead them to the living God.
- Pray for our church during this time. Pray that God would strengthen us and renew the ministries our church carries out.

Multiply

- Utilize the biblical principles discussed here regarding the body as a way to build relationships with non-believers that could lead to gospel conversations.

For the Family

- Read the 1 Corinthians 6 verses with your family. Explain the fact that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit for those who are in Christ. You might even explain the great detail God gave the Israelites when he instructed them how to build the temple. Identify the areas that as a family you are going to press into God’s grace and power for renewal and then pray with your family.

Memorize

¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,* ²⁰ *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – February 11th, 2017

Living Renewed Together

CONNECT

Have you ever taken two 200 page or so books and flipped them together and seen if you could pull them apart? What happened?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Ephesians 4:1-16

(Additional Passages: Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:19-24; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; 1 Cor. 12-13; Ecc. 4:9-12)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about mankind from this passage?
- How does this affect the way that we engage at MeadowBrook?
- How can we follow the example that Paul set forth in Ephesians for living renewed together?
- How does God use what Paul described to bring about renewal?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What hope is found in these passages? How does it encourage us in the midst of the 40 Days of Renewal? Will you consider joining or leading a Discipleship Group?

In Ephesians 4 there is a clear connection between God's Spirit and the unity and love of his church. How does this unity and love produced by the Spirit affect the way we serve others?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Ecclesiastes talks about the strength found in numbers. Take some time as a Life group to bear the burdens of one another and bring them to the Lord in prayer. Psalm 23 is a good psalm to use to guide this prayer.

Paul reminds the Ephesians that the ministers of God have been given by God to equip us for the work of the ministry. Pray that God would reveal how you are being equipped for ministry and how you can use that to serve the church and expand the Kingdom. Ask God to continually equip you with His word. And ask God to use that same word to bear the fruit of salvation in the lives of others.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

We have received a great calling and great grace in Christ Jesus. Seek to share that grace with someone this week, calling them to surrender to Christ.

For the Family: Read Ephesian 4:1-3 as a family. Talk about how that applies to the relationships within the household and within the church. Talk about the importance of having others who are pursuing God around you to help you in this walk that we are urged to walk.

Memorize: Meditate on the Text

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3, ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – February 11th, 2017

Living Renewed Together

Paul issues one of the most challenging exhortations he could utter in verse 1: “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” He moves quickly to how that is expressed in the context of biblical community, because it is impossible to walk in a manner worthy of our calling alone. God has designed us to live in community with other believers as we pursue together the things of God. We are stronger together (Ecc. 4:9-12; 1 Pet. 2:4-5). It is not only how we are designed, but it is something we are commanded to do by God’s Word (see Heb. 10:19-24). God receives glory when a group of believers purpose together in the context of the local church to live lives that glorify him. There are many things that mark this kind of community that is submitted to Jesus, the head of the church – humility, gentleness, patience, love, eager to maintain unity, grace, devotion to God’s word, discipleship in the truths of God’s word and the building up of others in the love of Christ. At MeadowBrook this takes place in 3 areas:

1. The corporate worship gathering. This is where we are most diverse. There are people who are from all types of backgrounds of various races and ages. In this diversity, we as a unified body, worship God together and sit under the preaching of God’s word from the pastor whom God has set in place to lead our church as he follows Christ. We are equipped and built up as a result.
2. Life Groups. This is our least diverse gathering. Most people are in similar age ranges with similar life stages, and though there are different backgrounds, it is not as varied as the worship hour. **THIS IS NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR THE CORPORATE WORSHIP.** This hour builds off of that hour. (If there are people in your group who consistently neglect the corporate worship hour, lovingly correct them). These groups are led by teachers who also equip and build up his or her group. This should be the unit that carries out the various ministries of MeadowBrook. These remain the same from year to year, still multiplying but less often as Discipleship Groups.
3. Discipleship Groups. This is a newer addition to MeadowBrook. It is meant to be more diverse than our Life Groups though considerably smaller in size. This is where the intergenerational discipleship has the greatest potential to occur. These groups go in more depth than our Life Groups as they follow a Scripture reading and memory plan that covers many major doctrines of Scripture. There is accountability and it takes place ideally within the home which leads to depth of conversation and depth of relationship. These are short term groups that begin with multiplication in mind after going through it. (Most valuable groups are gender segregated; but couple groups are good too)

In which areas do you and your group need to start walking in a manner worthy of our calling?

How can your Life Group carry out the ministry and build up the people of MeadowBrook

Example in Acts 2:42-47

Devoted to the Gospel	Generous
Fellowshipped together	Served in the community
Took Lord’s Supper	Committed to each other
Prayed together	Met needs of others
Joyful	Evangelistic
Worshipful	Unified

Helpful Outside Resources

<http://adam4d.com/to-church/> (Web Comic ~3 minute)

“The local church was founded by God for the purposes of God and the glory of God. Our task is not to define it according to our own desires or anyone else’s, but to learn how God defines it, then to follow him in obedience. Ultimately, the church exists to bring glory to his name

through worship, discipleship, and evangelism. In this way and so many others, the local church is God’s plan. It is the hope of the world.”

<https://www.challies.com/articles/whats-the-purpose-of-the-church/> (Article: ~10 minute read)

<https://www.tvcresearch.net/resource-library/talks/church-membership> (Video - the first 15 minutes; Last 3 only apply to their church)

From Spiritual Disciplines within the Church

“The church is not a department store where you can come and get the spiritual commodity you want, then go your way. To speak of loving Christ while neglecting His body, the church, is hypocritical.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines Within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 17.

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – February 18th, 2017

Renew your Ministry

CONNECT

Today marks the end of the 40 Days of Renewal. In what ways has God used this season to bring about renewal in your life?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Luke 4:1-21

(Additional Passages: Deut. 6,8; John 21; Acts 1:8, 4, 13:1-4; Isa. 40:28-31, 61:1-2; John 20:21)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about mankind from this passage?
- How does this affect the way that we engage in ministry?
- How can we follow the example that Jesus set for renewing our ministry?
- How does God use what Jesus did to bring about renewal?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What hope is found in these passages? How does it encourage us in the midst of the 40 Days of Renewal? Will you consider joining or leading a Discipleship Group?

In Luke 4 there is a clear connection between God's Spirit and the ministry of God. How does the Spirit empower the way we serve others?

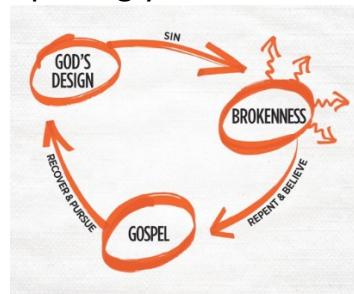
PRAY: Respond to the Text

Jesus took a great deal of time to pray and fast, pressing into the Holy Spirit before he began his ministry. Take some time and as a Life Group press into the grace of God and ask how your group's ministry can be renewed in 2018.

Jesus' ministry that he now performs through us, his church, was to proclaim good news to the poor and liberty to the captives, so that they might see and be set free. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to do just that this year – locally and globally. Pray for those you know who are still in bondage to sin.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about having lost friends, and opening your mouth about the gospel.



<http://bit.ly/mb3circles>

For the Family: Read Luke 4:16-19 with your family. Walk through the gospel with them. Show them the 3 circles video above or walk them through it yourselves. Practice sharing it with each other.

Memorize: Meditate on the Text

¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* (Luke 4:18-19, ESV)

Life Group – 40 Days of Renewal – February 18th, 2017

Renew your Ministry

The greatest example of someone pressing into God through the power of the Holy Spirit by means of spiritual disciplines is found in no other than Jesus himself. Luke 4 describes two key events in Jesus' life – his temptation in the wilderness and the announcement of his ministry in his hometown synagogue. Jesus relied on the power of the Holy Spirit through his practice of prayer and fasting, daily pressing into the Spirit of God. He had God's word committed to heart so that when temptation arose he was able to fight off Satan's lies with truth. He understood what it meant to truly worship God with his life. And at the end of the 40 Days, Jesus returned in the power of the Holy Spirit and began his gospel ministry. Jesus' life from here on was about him proclaiming the good news of God to the poor and the news of liberty to those held captive by their sin. In John 20, Jesus tells his disciples that he is sending them just as the Father has sent him, and in Acts 1, he describes the power they will receive when they receive the Holy Spirit. This whole season of 40 days of renewal has been so much more than doing a Daniel fast or following a reading plan. It has been about our church pressing into the power of the Holy Spirit to bring about renewal in our bodies and our spirits in a way that only God could do. Because if Jesus, relied on the Holy Spirit, then we for sure need to be daily pressing into His Spirit through prayer and God's word, having seasons of fasting and silence and pulling away. Apart from Christ we can do nothing, and he has graciously given us his Helper, the Holy Spirit to guide us as we seek to continue the ministry that Christ began in Luke 4.

How do you need to continue pressing into the Holy Spirit daily?

In which ways do you need to continue seeking renewal in?

What have you learned about both God and yourself during this season?

The Renewal of Peter

Go back and listen to Pastor Randy's two sermons on Peter being renewed in his ministry and remind your group of the truths that impacted you.

<http://archive.meadowbrookbaptist.com/archive/the-power-of-one-restored-for-greatness/>

<http://archive.meadowbrookbaptist.com/archive/the-power-of-one-holy-spirit-empowered/>

A look back at Idols

In this temptation scene, Satan tempts Jesus with the root idols we discussed earlier in this season. Here they are again:

5. *Power*: a longing for influence or recognition
6. *Control*: a longing to have everything go according to my plan
7. *Comfort*: a longing for pleasure
8. *Approval*: a longing to be accepted or desired¹⁵

And here are the surface idols we discussed as well: food, sex, entertainment, success, money, achievement, romance, family and self.¹⁶ This lesson serves as a great opportunity to revisit this conversation and see if people are seeing renewal and the breaking of idols in their own lives. It will be impossible to renew your ministry if idols still own the throne of your heart.

What scripture do you need to fight your idols?

Jesus' Ministry

Jesus' ministry was simple. He proclaimed the good news of the kingdom to those who needed to hear it, while humbly serving them, all in the power of the Holy Spirit. I fear that too often we overcomplicate something that is so simple. Or we do not serve humbly, if at all. Or we try and do it in our own strength. How is your Life Group doing at carrying out the ministry of Christ? Ask them what they think and to be praying about ways they could do that and come ready to discuss during next week's vision lesson.

From Spiritual Disciplines

"Evangelism is a natural overflow of the Christian life. We should all be able to talk about what the Lord has done for us and what he means to us. But evangelism is also a discipline in that we must discipline ourselves to get into the context of evangelism, that is, we must not just wait for witnessing opportunities to happen."¹⁷

Is it an overflow for you?

Are you being intentional in seeking out the lost?

Where are the areas in your life where you can begin this?

<http://babylonbee.com/news/7-easy-ways-share-gospel-friends/> (Satirical Article – 5 minutes)

¹⁵ <https://ericgeiger.com/2013/10/four-root-idols/>

¹⁶ Idleman, 8.

¹⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 106.

Life Group – LG Vision Casting 2018 – February 25th, 2017

Connect – Grow – Serve – Glorify

Opening:

- Listen to this quote and verse and answer this question...What is the ultimate goal of our lives? (Scribe answers on the board)
 - o “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” – John Piper
 - o *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV)
- We are going to take the rest of our time this morning to look at the mission statement of our church and dream together how we can effectively accomplish this.

*For each of the mission statements below, have someone read the passages and then ask the questions. A suggestion is to write out the answers to the final question of each section on the board so that your LG can have a visual of ideas for you to engage in and hold each other accountable to these. Maybe you have a lot of ideas on the board, too many to start with, take one or two from each of the areas (Connecting, Growing, and Serving) and focus on those as a LG.

Be as specific as possible in answering these questions. The less specific your plans to be more effective, the less likely it will happen.

Statement #1: Life Groups exist to **CONNECT** people to Jesus Christ and His Church through consistent evangelism, follow-up and fellowship.

- John 13:34-35, Acts 16:11-15, 25-40
- What is going on in these verses?
- How did the early Church connect people to Jesus?
- How can we as a Life Group be more effective in connecting people to Jesus and His Church?

Statement #2: Life Groups exist to **GROW** together as disciples of Jesus Christ and engage in making disciples who are well-equipped to love God and love others.

- Matthew 22:37-40, Acts 2:42-47
- What is going on in these verses?
- How did the early Church grow as disciples and disciple makers?
- How can we as a Life Group be more effective in growing together as disciples and disciple makers?

Statement #3: Life Groups exist to **SERVE** together in MeadowBrook’s global and local mission effort and in the ministries of the church.

- Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 13:1-4
- How did the early Church engage in the mission of the Church locally and globally?
- How can we as a Life Group effectively engage in the mission of the Church locally and globally?

Statement #4: Life Groups exist to **GLORIFY GOD**.

- Go back to the opening quote and verse. Reiterate that everything we do in this life as individuals, as families and as Life Groups can be done to the glory of God. We can CONNECT, GROW, AND SERVE to the glory of God!

Close in prayer asking the Lord to use your LG to do all these things to the glory of God and be used to reach many for His name’s sake. Pray through Psalm 23 as a class.