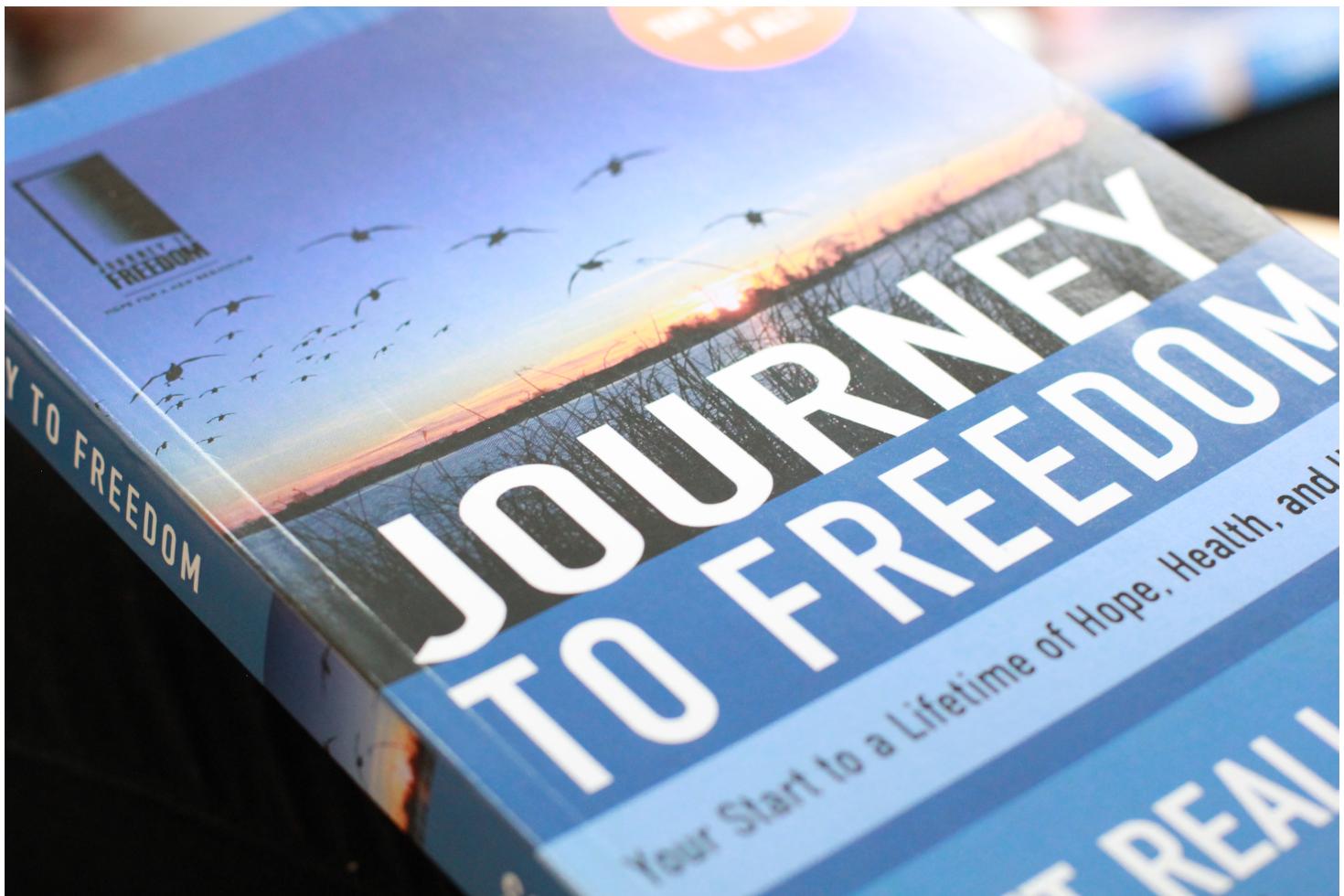




# YOUR GUIDE TO FACILITATING JOURNEY TO FREEDOM



"JOURNEY TO FREEDOM" IS DESIGNED TO BE LED BY CERTIFIED FACILITATORS WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN ACCORDANCE WITH BEST PRACTICES BY RESTORE SMALL GROUPS.

[www.restoresmallgroups.org](http://www.restoresmallgroups.org)

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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- **Group Set-Up and Logistics:** Reminders of how to create an ideal group space
- **The Facilitator Mindset:** A helpful synopsis of the JTF content for the week that you can read before group to remind yourself of the overall goal for discussion.
- **Objective:** Your discussion should circle back to achieve the objective for the week.
- **Supporting Quotes:** Helpful quotes from some of the authors that helped inspire JTF. These are meant to provide a deeper insight into the Objective.
- **A Note from Scott Reall:** A tip for the week in Scott's own words about the importance and focus of the discussion.
- **"Moment of Hope Video Content":** A brief overview of the weekly content in each MOH video resource which can be found on our Vimeo page or ordered as a DVD.
- **Introduction:** Instructions for how to begin the group each week.
- **Key Content:** Topics for discussion each week.  
**Journey to Freedom Says:** A direct reference from JTF that explains the topic.  
**Questions:** Key questions for discussion. "GAQ" refers to a "Go-Around Question". This is a question that we believe to be very important for group members to process. We recommend giving all the group members a chance to answer these.
- **Closing:** Instructions for how to close the group each week.
- **Recommended Reading:** A list of books that have greatly informed our work and writings at Restore. As a staff, we recommend these books as a way to grow in a deeper understanding yourself and the work of small group.

After completing the Journey to Freedom Curriculum Intensive training, you will receive a copy of our complete guide to facilitation process and skills called, Building Healing Communities: A guide to facilitating the life-transforming process of Restore Small Groups.

We hope this proves to be a helpful reference to concepts, techniques and recommendations that we have made throughout this training process.

**Disclaimer: All training materials provided by Restore Small Groups are for certified facilitators, not to be duplicated or handed down without the permission of Restore.**

# GROUP SET-UP AND LOGISTICS

- Confidential and quiet space
- Place chairs in a circle. The chairs should not be around any large table.
- Greet participants with warmth and sensitivity to any skepticism or nervousness
- Make sure everyone has a name tag and book
- Communicate well with your group coordinator in between Week 1 and Week 2 to make sure anyone who decides to drop out of the group or anyone who joins by Week 2 are contacted.
- Remember group closes in Week 2 and no new participants should join after that.
- Use “Moment of Hope” videos at the start of each week if you would like. These are not required. They are supplemental. Each video features Scott Reall giving a general overview for the week. These can be found on our website at **vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups** or can be ordered on DVD from our online store at **restoresmallgroups.org**. If you use the Vimeo page to access the videos, remember that you will need some type of monitor display (TV, large computer monitor, etc) and access to Wifi to be able to show them to the group.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 1

### The Facilitator Mindset

**Topic:** Starting the Journey

**Objective:** To introduce the purpose of Journey to Freedom and outline what the participants can expect in the next 8 weeks. To give hope and encouragement to the participants while bringing clarity to the process of change.

In the first session of a Journey to Freedom group, your job as the facilitator is to welcome, encourage, and explain. Participants will be coming into this group from all different perspectives and experiences in life. Some will be excited, some scared, some skeptical. It is important to welcome them into the process and into the hope of a healing community.

Your first job in this session is to make participants feel welcomed and safe. This is actually quite simple. It means that you exude warmth, reassurance, and confidence to participants as they arrive, get settled in, and enter group participation. Greet people personally as they arrive. Explain in detail the check-in process. Make yourself available for questions. Chat with participants while they are waiting for the group to begin. While the group is a serious process, it is important to also offer laughter and light-heartedness when introducing people to the experience.

In the first session, participants may be running late. They may have underestimated travel time or be trying to find the location. However, try to begin as close to the start time as possible. This helps establish healthy boundaries for the group. If you are waiting on participants, begin group with the lead facilitator and have the co-facilitator wait in the registration area.

Below is an outline of the steps for the first session. Depending on the level and depth of sharing, these activities may take the full group meeting time. However, it is possible the first session will end a bit earlier. Do not try to fill the time if the group naturally comes to its conclusion or push the group if you sense they are emotionally spent. If you feel that everyone has shared, and you discern that the group feels adequately acclimated to the group process, it is fine to dismiss.

#### **Supporting Quote:**

"Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines."  
-Henri J. Nouwen, Reaching Out: The Three Movements of Spiritual Life, p. 71

# Discussion Guide - Week 1

**A Note from Scott Reall** - "Week 1 is the most important meeting of the entire 8 weeks. This is your one chance to create an atmosphere of safety, confidence, and credibility as a facilitator. We know that most participants who drop-out will do so between Weeks 1 and 2. Be prepared spiritually, physically and emotionally."

## "Moment of Hope" Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)

- Creating a solid foundation for change
- Dr. James Prochaska's Stages of Change
- Expectations for the next 8 weeks

Let participants know that you talk more in this first session than in the others because there is much to explain about the process .

Avoid getting into any deep discussion at this stage until you introduce Group Guidelines.

The primary responsibility of a facilitator is to enforce the guidelines when needed to protect the safety of the space. Take time to explain these and their importance.

These handouts may be double-sided in your binder with the Group Guidelines on one side and the Feelings Chart on the other. Participants frequently lose these handouts so be sure to have extra copies on hand in the following weeks.

It is helpful to spend some time explaining the difference between healthy shame and healthy guilt. These tend to be the most confusing.

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome everyone to group.
- Introduce yourself and your fellow facilitator.
- Explain in one or two minutes why you enjoy facilitating.
- Explain that this first session is designed to set the foundation for the group process and introduce group participants to each other.
- Ask participants to introduce themselves and if they choose, share one interesting fact about themselves.

### **PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION**

- Hand out copies of the Process of Transformation from the group binder.
- Explain the Process to the participants. Remember this explains the entire purpose of this 8-week process and is important to setting expectations.
- Take questions and bring clarity where you are able.

### **GROUP GUIDELINES**

- Hand out copies of the Group Guidelines and the Feelings Chart from the group binder.
- Explain that the Group Guidelines are meant to create safe space for all participants. Read the Group Guidelines aloud by going around the circle. Pause to explain each guideline.
- Take questions and provide clarity if needed.

### **FEELINGS CHART**

- Explain the Feelings Chart as a tool to help participants identify their feelings and a way for the group to use a universal language when talking about feelings.
- Explain a few of the feelings as examples of how the chart works.
- Take questions and provide clarity if needed.

### **FEELINGS CHECK-IN**

- Explain the process of a feelings check-in. Each participant has an opportunity to name their feelings at the start of group. The first go-around is simply participants saying their name and feelings. Then participants will be given a chance to elaborate on those feelings.

Participants will not be used to affirming the sharing of others with the response "thank you". As the facilitator, you will need to model this behavior and the group will follow.

These questions allow participants to "wade into the water" of vulnerability. They allow for deeper discussion but are also less intense.

Encourage participants to invest in the weekly reading and reflection. Remind them that they will get out of this process what they put in.

**In this first session, you will need to check-in first to help model this exercise to the participants.**

**"Hi, I'm [name], and I am feeling [hurt, sadness, fear, etc]."**

- Encourage participants who have all 8 feelings to name all 8.
- If a participant has trouble identifying their feelings, ask them to work backward on the chart. Perhaps they can name the impairment of their feeling which will help them identify the true feeling.
- When everyone has checked in, ask if anyone would like to ELABORATE on their feelings. Avoid asking "why" they have those feelings. A "why" question indicates that a participant needs to defend their sharing. The purpose of this exercise is to let participants observe their feelings without judgment.

### **GENTLE DISCLOSURE**

**Q: Tell us about a moment when you felt truly loved.**

**Q: Share one happy memory.**

**Q: Share why you decided to join this group?**

**Q: What do you hope you will get out of this time?**

### **CLOSING**

- Tell your group that being honest and vulnerable might produce some nervousness and anxiety. Explain that is a normal response to sharing. Encourage them to trust the process and know that the next few weeks will start to feel different.
- Assign the homework: Read Journey to Freedom Days 1-6 and answer the questions after each day's reading.
- Assign the Brief Personal Assessment on Page 221 of the book. Have them hold onto this until Week 8 to read with their Plan of Change.
- End by reading together the Serenity Prayer.

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

# PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION: FACILITATOR VERSION

**1.** This is the universal condition of every human being. We are born into the world with the **desire** to be loved but our **experiences (story)** can plant the seed of doubt and toxic shame in our lives. Thus, we begin to see the world through the **lens** that has been shaped by these experiences. Our response to the world comes out of our own needs and often, we engage in thoughts and behaviors that are not healthy (**dysfunctional response**).

**2.** Our dysfunctional responses may be simple, occasional escapes or they may become more habitual and harmful. We must always be honestly evaluating where we are in the **Spectrum of Dysfunctional Response**. This group will give us a chance to evaluate that in a safe space.

**3.** Often, when we become aware of our dysfunctional responses, we will try to either **repress** them (out of sight, out of mind) or **reform** them (willpower alone). These might work for a time, but they do not create lasting change.

**4.** In group, we are going to move toward the **Process of Transformation**. We are going to intentionally interrupt our typical responses and give ourselves time in group to contemplate how to move toward a healthier life.

**5.** In the **sacred space of small group**, we will experience many helpful tools for change. We will model a functional family dynamic, identify our feelings, practice vulnerability, establish a process for change, treat our root issues, move toward intrinsic motivation, rewire our brain's thinking, build awareness, develop hope and define our needs.

## THE HUMAN CONDITION

Desire → Story → Lens of Perception

Our need to be loved, valued, and belong  
Our life experience so far

Lens of Perception

What we have come to believe about God, ourselves, and the world

Dysfunctional Response

Our attempts to manage our human condition.  
Ex. avoidance, isolation, pride, perfectionism, food issues, codependency, etc.

 Repression  
We bury our feelings

 Reformation  
We transfer obsessions, leading to insanity

### Spectrum of Dysfunctional Responses

ESCAPE  
Temporarily distracts us from our true desire

OBSSESSION  
When our thoughts of escape are dominating

HABIT  
When our obsession happens regularly

COMPULSION  
The ability to stop is out of our control

## PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

Desire → Story → Lens of Perception →  INTERRUPTION

Our need to be loved, valued, and belong  
Our life experience so far

Lens of Perception

What we have come to believe about God, ourselves, and the world

Interrupt dysfunctional response

**Healthy Response**

Our thoughts and actions that move us to community and authenticity. Ex. boundaries, loving relationships, vulnerability, self-care, etc.

Create new response



## STEPS OF CHANGE

- Precontemplation:** "I don't need a house." We are in denial, which is the ultimate enabler, blaming others for our problems.
- Contemplation:** "I need a house." We are aware of the issues, but not committed to change.
- Preparation:** "I'm drawing the blueprints." We are aware of our need for change and will take action within 30 days.
- Action:** "Let's build a house!" We are fully committed through intrinsic motivation to take action.
- Maintenance:** "I'm going to care for it." We make change the new normal, and our life is transformed.



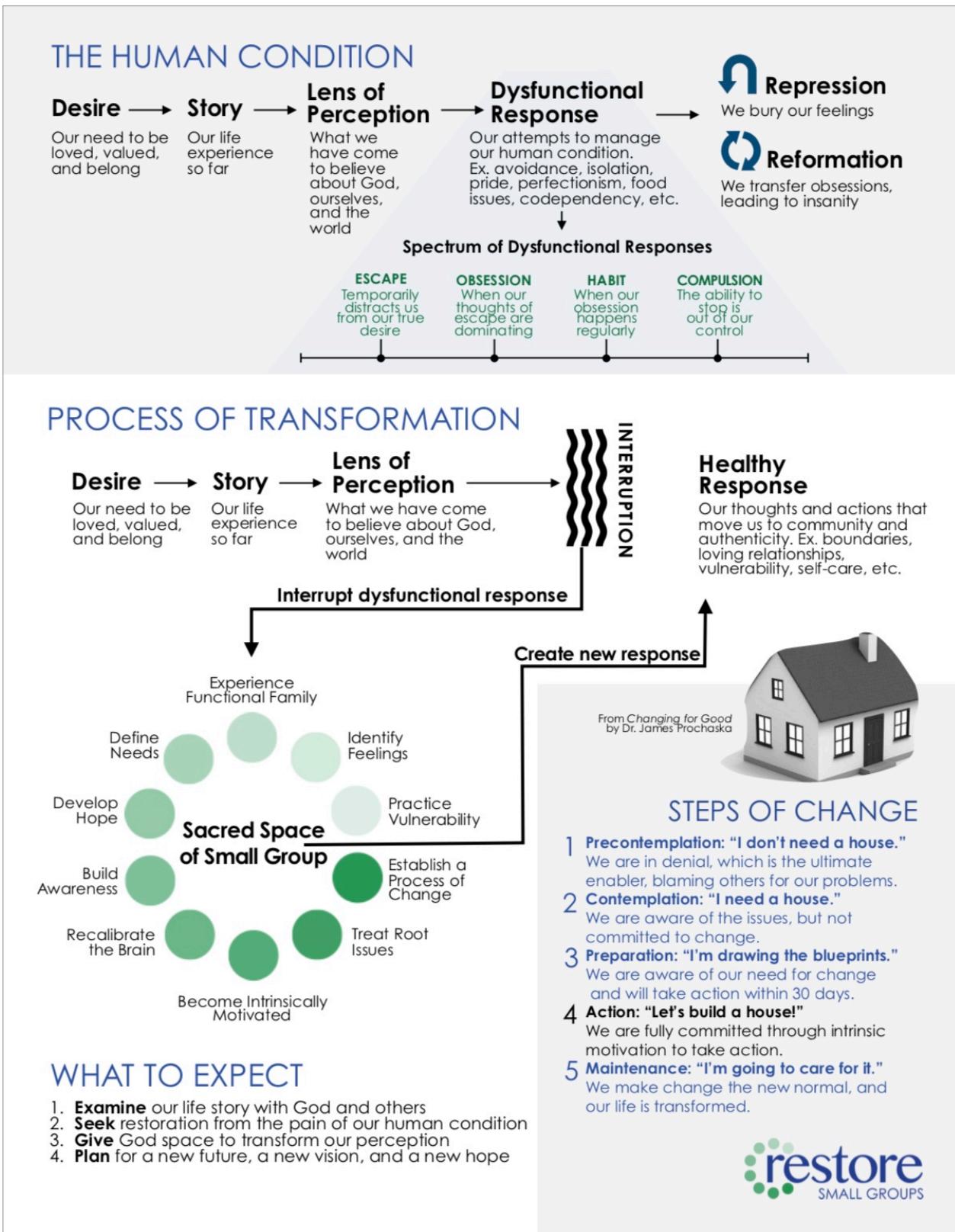
## WHAT TO EXPECT

- Examine** our life story with God and others
- Seek** restoration from the pain of our human condition
- Give** God space to transform our perception
- Plan** for a new future, a new vision, and a new hope

**7.** For the next 8 weeks, what can we expect on this journey? We will examine, seek, give and plan with each other's support and in a safe, confidential place.

**6.** Anyone seeking sustainable change needs to walk through all the stages. In our attempts to change, we may have skipped a step. We enter groups at different stages, but the most common one is contemplation. We move from one stage to another when the pros of

## PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION: PARTICIPANT VERSION



### WHAT TO EXPECT

1. **Examine** our life story with God and others
2. **Seek** restoration from the pain of our human condition
3. **Give** God space to transform our perception
4. **Plan** for a new future, a new vision, and a new hope

## **GROUP GUIDELINES: FACILITATOR VERSION**

Use your discernment with these guidelines. Participants will make mistakes all times, but be extremely mindful of stepping in when the safety of group is being compromised.

Please keep what is said in the group—in the group.

Confidentiality is key. We want you to feel safe in here knowing that what you say will go no further than us.

Please use "I" statements when giving feedback about your experience of another group member. Keep your sharing focused on your own thoughts and feelings.

This is to make sure that we stay focused on our own thoughts, feelings, and behavior, not the problems of others in our lives. Using "you" statements is a way to detach from the sharing on a personal level. Using "I" will directly link our emotions and feelings not the general "you" of everyone in group.

Group members are not required to talk, but are encouraged to do so.

If you do not wish to answer a question, simply "pass".

Please limit sharing time to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share.

A good amount of time for each share is about 2 minutes. We should all be aware of how long we are talking so that everyone can participate.

Please respect each other and do not judge or correct other group members.

Group is not the place for us to insert our opinions into each other's lives. Group is judgment-free.

Please do not give advice, fix, or rescue other group members.

Group is a place where we can share our thoughts, feelings and experiences as a unique part of our stories. We must all recognize that my experience is not your experience. We must not be afraid to lean into the pain of our stories or allow uncertainty. We want everyone to have their own personal space in group. Touching or hugging is not permitted during group.

Please do not cross-talk, for example: talking while others are talking or talking to one other person and not sharing with the whole group.

What we have to share is important, and we need to respect the sharing times of others.

Please respect the group by arriving on time.

Life happens, but we need to make every effort to arrive on time so that group does not get interrupted.

Please turn off cell phones.

We need to avoid distractions to be fully present in group.

Please commit to coming to group unaltered by illegal drugs, alcohol or abuse of prescription medications.

When we are in an altered state, we are not our authentic selves. This does not allow for genuine group participation.

## **GROUP GUIDELINES: PARTICIPANT VERSION**

Please keep what is said in the group—in the group.

Please use "I" statements when giving feedback about your experience of another group member. Keep your sharing focused on your own thoughts and feelings.

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## FEELINGS CHART: FACILITATOR VERSION

# Impairment      Feeling      Benefit

FACILITATOR VERSION

Resentment	If I do not admit hurt, I ruminate, becoming bitter or resentful. My relationships remain unhealed.	<b>Hurt</b>	Names woundedness and begins healing.	"I feel hurt, but I value my relationships and want to seek healing."
Self-Pity	If I do not admit sadness, I turn it inward and feel victimized or helpless.	<b>Sadness</b>	Values and honors what is present or missed. Moves us to acceptance.	"I feel sad. Something is changing that will never be the same."
Apathy	If I do not admit loneliness, I convince myself that relationships are unimportant and unneeded.	<b>Loneliness</b>	Allows us to seek the help of healthy relationships.	"I feel lonely. I need to spend time with others who enrich my life."
Anxiety or Rage	If I do not admit fear, I become anxious or enraged in order to control or release the true feeling.	<b>Fear</b>	Alerts us to danger. Helps us to practice and prepare. Grows faith and wisdom.	"I feel fear. I need to practice awareness and discernment."
Depression or Perfectionism	If I do not admit anger, I turn it inward, denying opportunity for change, or I seek to control.	<b>Anger</b>	Drives us toward hope, passion, truth and justice.	"I feel angry. I care greatly. I desire change. I want to help others."
Toxic Shame, Self-Rejection, Pride or Rage	If I do not admit shame, I act like I am perfect (pride) or like I am worthless (toxic shame and self-rejection).	<b>Shame</b>	Awakens us to humility. Allows us to recognize our limitations and ask for the help of God and others.	"I feel shame. I am limited, make mistakes and need the help of God and others."
Pride or Toxic Shame	If I do not admit guilt, I blame others, discount others' feelings or withdraw from relationship.	<b>Guilt</b>	Allows us to seek forgiveness.	"I feel guilt. I hurt others and need to make amends."
Happiness or Escaping the pain of feeling	If I do not allow myself to feel fully, I engage in circumstantial happiness or situational pleasure.	<b>Gladness</b>	Allows us to experience the fullness and richness of life and have joy in abundance.	"I allow myself to feel. I experience joy and peace."

Adapted from the book *The Voice of the Heart* by Chip Dodd, Sage Hill Resources



## FEELINGS CHART: PARTICIPANT VERSION

# Impairment      Feeling      Benefit

Resentment	<b>Hurt</b>	Names woundedness and begins healing.
Self-pity	<b>Sadness</b>	Values and honors what is present or missed. Moves us to acceptance.
Apathy	<b>Loneliness</b>	Allows us to seek the help of healthy relationships.
Anxiety or Rage	<b>Fear</b>	Alerts us to danger. Helps us to practice and prepare. Grows faith and wisdom.
Depression or Perfectionism	<b>Anger</b>	Drives us towards hope, passion, truth, and justice.
Toxic Shame, Self-Rejection, Pride or Rage	<b>Shame</b>	Awakens us to humility. Allows us to recognize our limitations and ask for the help of God and others.
Pride or Toxic Shame	<b>Guilt</b>	Allows us to seek forgiveness.
Happiness or Escaping the pain of feeling	<b>Gladness</b>	Allows us to experience the fullness and richness of life and have joy in abundance.

Adapted from the book *Voice of the Heart* by Chip Dodd, Sage Hill Resources™



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q: What is the Feelings Chart?**

A: The Feelings Chart is from Dr. Chip Dodd's book, The Voice of the Heart. He believes that while we may experience hundreds of emotional "states" or "conditions" on a daily basis: frustrated, tired, disappointed, excited, relaxed, stressed, entertained, annoyed, etc., these all stem from one of eight core feelings within the human experience. This chart gives us a universal feelings language to reference in group and help us to better connect to one another.

### **Q: Why do we use the Feelings Chart?**

A: It provides an opportunity to learn how to recognize and voice our true feelings, as we may not have been given permission to do in the past. By naming our feelings in group, we learn how to make voicing our feelings an everyday practice.

### **Q: Why do seven of the feelings seem negative while only one is positive?**

A: Though we may have come to associate certain feelings with bad outcomes, the eight feelings themselves are neither good nor bad. They simply are. This means that we are allowed to feel them to their fullest. God built into us a full emotional life to alert us to what is going on inside—like an indicator light on the dashboard of your car. The oil light means your car is out of oil, and you need to make a change before any damage occurs. The oil light itself is not bad; it serves a vital purpose. It's what we decide to do after we see the light that is important. Our actions in response to our emotions can either be positive or negative, destructive or productive, helpful or harmful.

### **Q: What's the difference in Shame and Guilt?**

A: Shame is the understanding that I am human; I make mistakes, and I need the help of others. Guilt is acknowledging that I have hurt someone else and am in need of reconciliation.

### **Q: Why is Gladness on the list?**

A: Dr. Dodd writes that Gladness is when we feel all 7 other feelings fully and in abundance. Other terms for gladness might be contentment, joy, or peace.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 2

### The Facilitator Mindset

**Topic:** Defining Hope

**Objective:** To introduce the concept of true hope, to build self-awareness around the need for change, and discover the gift of feelings on the journey.

This week, we introduce participants to the concept of true hope. True hope is described as open-ended and as belief existing outside of circumstances (p. 11). We introduce true hope by first allowing group members to evaluate how they currently view hope in their lives. It is the human condition to desire certain outcomes for our lives; to wish that some things could happen and to wish that other things might not happen. True hope exists above circumstance. True hope is trust that God is always faithful to our needs.

Romans 5: 2b-4 says, “We boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

In Days 1 and 2, we are told the stories of Luther Gulick and James Naismith (p. 3-4) inventing basketball at the YMCA, and Michelangelo carving an angel out of stone (p. 5). Both of these stories speak to what it means to have hope rooted in God’s vision and possibility for our lives; to find newness in the ordinary; to be open to guidance by a force outside our own will. We want to start orienting participants towards the possibility of life change rooted in this hope. They will need help from God and from others on the journey. A supportive community will help make change concrete rather than theory.

The key concept for this week comes from the story of Jesus talking to the paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda (p. 7). In this story, Jesus asks the man, “Do you want to be made well?” It is a question with deep roots. The paralyzed man has spent thirty-eight years in his current state. In being made well, the man’s whole life will change. Yes, he will be able to walk, but he will also have to be responsible for himself in a new way. Jesus is asking, “Is this really what you want?” This is the same question Jesus is asking us all. He will make us well, but do we really want Him to?

If we can embrace true hope and the desire to be made well, then that leads us to vision. In Days 3 and 4, we are planting the seeds of vision for participants. In Day 3, we emphasize striving to end normality and to make life better, not perfect. The story of Charles Steinmetz (p. 14-15) pinpointing the place on the machine that is broken is a wonderful analogy for our own journey. We must place the “X” on our broken parts. If we cannot name our brokenness, we cannot redeem it.

There are some important concepts participants must learn to move toward a new vision. The first is that willpower does not sustain change. Instead, we must learn to “train” rather than

simply “try”. Change takes time and discipline. We will fail and learn from those failures. We must not disqualify the positive strides we make in learning to change. We must move away from living our lives to please others toward a more intrinsic motivation.

In Day 5 and 6, we move participants toward finding their emotional voice. It will be absolutely crucial on their journey. We must exemplify the value of feeling rather than numbing and embracing all the emotions as healthy, normal, and acceptable. As group members continue each week to express their feelings, remarkable change can occur. As facilitator, you may begin to see true joy (gladness) emerge just through the simple exercise of the Feelings Check-In. In valuing their feelings, group members will begin to value themselves more. Feelings are the gateway to honesty, integrity, and abandoning our false selves.

### **Supporting Quotes:**

“We live in a world where people don’t know much about hope. We know about wishes. The whole Christmas period is full of wishes. I wish this, or I want that. It’s very concrete: I want a toy or a car or a new job. These are all very specific requests. But hope is precisely to say, ‘I don’t know how God is going to fulfill His promises, but I know that He will, and therefore I can live in the present with the knowledge that He is with me.’ I can then know and trust that the deepest desires of my being will be fulfilled. This way keeps the future very open... Hope is to open yourself up to let God do his work in you in ways that transcend your own imagination. As Jesus said, ‘When you were young you put your belt on and went where you wanted to go. But when you grow spiritually old, then you stretch out your hands and let others and God lead you where you rather wouldn’t go.’ That’s hope, to let yourself be led to new places.”

-- Henri Nouwen, Henri Nouwen (edited by Robert A. Jonas), p. 35-36

“Statistics dictate that there are very few people who haven’t been affected by addiction. I believe we all numb our feelings. We may not do it compulsively and chronically, which is addiction, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t numb our sense of vulnerability. And numbing vulnerability is especially debilitating because it doesn’t just deaden the pain of our difficult experiences, numbing vulnerability also dulls our experiences of love, joy, belonging, creativity, and empathy. We can’t selectively numb emotion. Numb the dark and you numb the light.”

~Brené Brown, Daring Greatly, p. 137

## **Discussion Guide - Week 2: Days 1-6 (Pages 3-50)**

**A Note from Scott Reall** - "How we define hope will have a huge impact on our lives. Most people have a dysfunctional definition of hope because it is tied to circumstances, instead of in the goodness of God."

### **"Moment of Hope" Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)**

- Defining Hope
- Answering the question, "Do you want to be made well?"

You will not have time to revisit the longer explanations of the Process of Attachment, Group Guidelines or Feelings Chart from Week 1. Make sure to give a brief explanation of Guidelines and the Feelings Chart to anyone who has joined in Week 2. Offer to answer any questions .

Circumstantial hope example: I am hoping that I get accepted to medical school because my dream is to be a doctor. And if I don't, I will be devastated . I have no other plans.

True hope example: I am hoping to get accepted to medical school, but if I don't, I will need to find the right place for my interest and gifts, with God's help.

We recommend asking the most profound questions in group in "go-around" (**GAQ**)format. This means intentionally giving all the group members a chance to answer.

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome everyone back to group
- Have participants re-introduce themselves for anyone who might be new
- Have the group re-read the group guidelines
- Give quick reminder of how to do a feelings check, and allow everyone to check in with their name and feeling(s)
- Allow time for elaboration on feelings to anyone willing to share

### **KEY CONTENT:**

**Q: In the reading, what spoke to you this week?**



### **TOPIC 1: HOPE AND CHANGE (Days 1-2 Pages 3-16)**

#### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"Hope is a fundamental part of change. Henri Nouwen writes, 'Hope is trusting that something will be fulfilled, but fulfilled according to the promises and not just according to our wishes. Therefore hope is always open-ended.' Hope believes in spite of circumstances. Hope is open to change. It is not dedicated to doing the same things over and over again with the same old results. Hope thinks new thoughts." (11)

**Q: What does hope mean to you?**

**Q: Can anyone share an example of circumstantial hope?**

**GAQ: What is something you've been hoping for? Is this a true hope or a wish?**

**Q: If your hope is actually a wish, what would it look like to change that wish into hope? How would that look different in your life?**

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"One day Pope Julius II watched Michelangelo hammering away at a slab of marble. 'Why are you working so hard?' he asked. Michelangelo replied, 'Can't you see there's an angel imprisoned in this block of stone? I'm working as hard as I can to set him free.' Inside us is the person we were meant to be. We only need to chip away the parts that keep us in bondage to fear, to addictions, to low self-esteem, to feeling unworthy to be loved by God and others. Change is what happens when we break free from these hindrances." (5)

**Q: What does this story (angel in the stone) imply about the process of change? (change takes vision and might be painful)**

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"We must consider whether we want to take concrete steps toward change. Christ asked the same question of the paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda. He asked 'Do you want to be made well?' (John 5:6) He did not doubt the man's sincerity. He'd been lying by the pool for thirty-eight years. The paralytic man thought that he wanted to be made well, but Christ was asking something different. In essence, he was saying, 'A healing will change your life. You will have to get a job to support yourself. You will have to learn a new way of life.' Christ was not questioning the theory of healing, but the concrete steps that he's have to take to enjoy his freedom. At some point, healing and growth require concrete steps." (7)

**Q: Why did Jesus, who had the ability to heal, ask the man at the pool if he "wants to get well"? What will change about this man's life if he says 'yes'?**

**GAQ: How would you respond if Christ asked you personally, "Do you want to be made well?" If you said yes, what would be different about your life?**

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

Charles Steinmetz was an electrical engineer genius who worked for General Electric in the early part of the twentieth century. After his retirement, they called him in because the other engineers were baffled about the breakdown of a complex of machines. They asked Steinmetz to pinpoint the problem. He walked around the machines for a while, then took a piece of chalk out of his pocket and made a big cross mark on one particular machine. When the engineers disassembled that part of the machine, it turned out to be the precise location of the breakdown. A few days later, the engineers received a bill from Steinmetz for \$10,000—a staggering sum in those days. They asked him to itemize it, and he returned the bill with a note that read: Making one cross mark: \$1.00. Knowing where to put it: \$9,999.00. Changing our lives always starts with putting the cross mark on the right spot. (14)

**CONNECTING CONCEPTS:** Without hope, there is no vision for the future. They are intertwined. We will need to go through a process to discover that vision by evaluating our current thoughts and feelings, challenging what we have come to accept as normal, and learning to reframe failure as a way to learn more about ourselves.

**GAQ: If someone instructed you to mark an X on each part of your life that needs improvement, where would you put the X(s)?**  
**Q: How long have you been thinking about changing these areas of your life?**

**Q: Have you lost hope that these areas can change? Why?**



## TOPIC 2: VISION (Day 3 Pages 17-24)

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"A recent television program showed a method for trapping monkeys. The natives made a hole in a log and put bait inside. The hole was just big enough to allow the monkey room to get his opened hand inside the log. The monkey reached his hand in to get the bait, but when his fingers closed on it he couldn't get his fist back through the hole. The monkey was determined to hang on to what he had, and soon he was captured, trapped by his own greed. We are much like this monkey when we hold onto a life of normality. We fail to do the one thing that would free us, which is to let go and try a new way of life." (19)

**Q: Why do we have a hard time letting go of some things, even when we know they are bad for our lives?**

**Q: What are some things in your life that you feel trapped by?**

**Q: What has been your "normal" up to now?**



## TOPIC 3: TRAINING NOT TRYING (Day 4 Pages 25-32)

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"Willpower is an element of change, but it is not the deciding factor. The way we overcome the self-defeating behavior of giving up is to *train*, not to *try*. Training versus trying is the key to success. John Ortberg writes, "Spiritual transformation is not a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely...There is an immense difference between training to do something and trying to do something." When we try to change and do not succeed, we tend to give up after a few attempts. But when we train to do something, we set our minds on learning. No matter how many times we fail, we see ourselves as being one step closer to succeeding. An Olympic athlete doesn't just show up and try really hard on the day of an event. She trains her spirit, mind and body long before the Olympics even begin. Trying is the raw use of willpower, nothing more. Training is learning the life skills needed for long-term change." (26)

**Q: What might be a first step for you to grow in spirit, body or mind?**

**Q: What do you see as the difference between trying to change and training for change? In what areas do you try and in what areas do you train?**

#### CONNECTING CONCEPTS:

Part of ending normality and moving toward hope and vision is learning to observe our feelings and to understand them. We must also learn to lean into our pain rather than away from it. The more we try to avoid our pain, the more stuck we become in unhealthy behaviors. There are many real and valid reasons we may want to avoid our pain.

In group, we have a chance to process it safely and with compassion.



#### TOPIC 4: THE GIFT OF FEELINGS (Day 5 Pages 33-43)

##### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"We all struggle with our feelings on a daily basis. Most of us are afraid to feel our feelings because of what we think it means or what might happen. We also have been taught that some feelings are bad, and we shouldn't feel them. Feelings are not bad; it is the actions that sometimes result when we experience a feeling that can push us to anxiety, depression, isolation, confusion and self-destructive outlets. Our journey to freedom must take us through our feelings. Our feelings must be embraced and be processed if we are to find freedom and fullness of life. When we avoid our feelings, we are going to stay stuck." (34-35)

**Q: What feelings have you been avoiding or suppressing because of the pain that comes with them?**

**Q: Which feelings do you have the hardest time seeing as beneficial?**

**Q: How could understanding your feelings help your relationships?**



#### TOPIC 5: THE IMPORTANCE OF PAIN (Day 6 Pages 44-49)

##### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"In the book, Voyage of the Dawn Treader, C.S. Lewis introduces a character named Eustace—a disagreeable boy who seems to delight in being a nuisance. He travels to Narnia, a fantasy world, and finds himself in a dragon's cave filled with treasure. Eustace falls asleep on the dragon's hoard and wakes up to find he has turned into a dragon. Eustace wants to be himself again. However, he is at a loss as to how he can get rid of the dragon shell. Eustace attempts three times to peel off his scaly skin, but each time he is just as rough and wrinkled as before. He realizes that he must let Aslan, the lion, take his skin off, but he is afraid that the lion's claws will hurt. However, Eustace's desire to change outweighs the fear of the pain. Eustace describes the way that Aslan tore off the dragon skin: 'The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right to my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off...And there I was as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me—I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I'd no skin on—and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that, it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found all the pain had gone.'" (47-48)

**Q: What are the “tender” parts of yourself that you have covered with a “thick skin” so they do not get hurt?**

**Q: In what ways and in what places do you present your covered or false self to the world? Why?**

**Q: What fears do you have around revealing your true self?**

### **FINAL QUESTION:**

**Based on what you have shared here today, name one thing that you need for yourself in this moment and going forward into the week.**

### **CLOSING**

- Assign homework for next week: Read Journey to Freedom Days 7-12 and answer the reflection questions.
- Let participants know that Week 3 is a very important week in this process and to make every effort to attend.
- Say the Serenity Prayer together.

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 3

### The Facilitator Mindset

**Topic:** Hidden Prisons: Life-Controlling Issues

**Objective:** To introduce the participants to the process of transformation, and it begins with the acknowledgement of our powerlessness.

Days 1-6 of Journey to Freedom focus on true hope and vision. Days 7-12 ask us to take a definitive step toward that true hope by admitting powerlessness.

Much has been written on the cycle of addiction and the spectrum of attachment. As a facilitator there are some important concepts to know. First, every human person lives in a state of attachment to something other than God. Some of them are healthy attachments, many are not. This is the human condition.

Life presents us every day with new challenges: our modern life moves quickly and has many demands; we are starved for quiet and contemplation. Social media acts as constant noise in our lives, not true connection to others. We are so busy that our connection to God can feel uncertain and distant. The world sells us a value system that says, "Be more, do more." We learn early in life to judge ourselves by what we can do, rather than who we are. As children we begin to see ourselves in the context of grades, activities, abilities, getting along and fitting in. All along the way, we encounter a complex emotional world that we may or may not have received guidance to navigate well. We begin to look around for something to make us feel better, less anxious, less insecure, less lonely, less hurt. We avoid sadness and deny our anger. Shopping, eating, drinking, sex, smoking, TV, the internet, social media, video games, money, our jobs, promotions, our children, our spouses, exercise (etc)...they all offer us the potential to escape. They all allow us to turn away from the uncertainty of life and feel better, but they also allow us to turn away from reliance on God for comfort and strength.

All of us have things we intermittently use to feel better that are not ruining our lives, though they may be masking the fullness of our feelings. These are what we call attachments. A life-controlling addiction is an attachment that has become a compulsion. We are not intermittently using it; it has become a constant means of coping with the world, an obsession.

In group, people will be on every part of this attachment spectrum. Some will have mild attachments; some have attachments bordering on life-controlling issues and some have full compulsive behaviors. All of these behaviors will follow a predictable pattern. All of these grow in isolation. We hide our struggles and the attachments we have to cope with those struggles. We believe, "If you don't know this about me, you can't reject me." We project a false self to the world. Yet, what we all need is a safe place to honestly evaluate these behaviors.

In Days 7-10, we are addressing the typical thought processes we use to avoid the truth about our lives. First, we let toxic shame and negative thoughts keep us isolated.

We believe terrible things about ourselves: We are not good enough. We are not lovable. We are helpless. We are weak. We cannot be trusted.

We believe that at our core, we are unfixable. Second, we are anxious about change, about being vulnerable, about letting go of control. We may be miserable in our current life, but it is the life we recognize. Imagining a new life can be scary, so we talk ourselves back into our normal patterns. Third, we stay in denial and procrastination, not wanting to try because we don't want to fail. We fear that our toxic shame thoughts will ultimately prove true.

As facilitators, we want to gently encourage participants to listen to God's voice rather than their own inner critic. This is a much harder struggle for some depending on their backgrounds. So our role is very important. Sometimes God's strongest voice is the affirming voice of a supportive community.

In Days 11 and 12, the key concept is powerlessness leads to peace. The idea of powerlessness comes from Step One of the Twelve Steps: "We admitted we were powerless over our human condition and that our lives had become unmanageable." Step One comes from the first Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Powerlessness admits humility and healthy shame: we need help to change. It is a spiritual solution for a spiritual problem. We must encourage our participants to name very specifically what they are powerless over. Power is in the specifics. Powerlessness must be admitted for true hope to enter. True hope is the only way to transformation.

### **Supporting Quotes:**

"You cannot heal what you do not first acknowledge."  
-Richard Rohr, Breathing Under Water, p. 13

"The drivenness in any addiction is about the ruptured self, the belief that one is flawed as a person. The content of the addiction, whether it be an ingestive addiction or an activity addiction (like work, buying or gambling) is an attempt at an intimate relationship. The workaholic with his work, or the alcoholic with his booze, are having a love affair. Each one mood alters to avoid the feeling of loneliness and hurt in the underbelly of shame. Each addictive acting out creates life-damaging consequences which create more shame. The new shame fuels the cycle of addiction."  
- John Bradshaw, Healing the Shame That Binds You, p. 35-36

"To be alive is to be addicted, and to be alive and addicted is to stand in need of God's grace."  
-Gerald May, Addiction and Grace, p. 11

## Discussion Guide - Week 3: Days 7-12 (Pages 51-86)

**A Note from Scott Reall - “The paradigm shift that must happen is admittance that there are areas of our life that we can’t change alone. The myth of ‘self-sufficiency’ keeps us stuck in denial, but the power of grace allows God to do for us what we can’t do for ourself. It ALL begins with the admission of powerlessness.”**

### **"Moment of Hope" Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)**

- Transformation v. Reformation
- The first Beatitude “Blessed are the poor in spirit” is the biblical call to powerlessness
- Step 1 of the 12 Steps process is powerlessness directly from the beatitudes

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome everyone back to group.
- Review Guidelines only if the group is struggling to keep them.
- Observe a few minutes of silence while participants reflect on their feelings. Begin feelings check-in and elaboration.

### **KEY CONTENT**

**Q: In the reading, what spoke to you this week?**



### **TOPIC 1: NEGATIVE THINKING, THE INNER CRITIC (Days 7 & 10 Pages 53-57; 69-75)**

#### **CONNECTING CONCEPTS:**

Negative thinking is anxiety-based. Negative thinking will try to keep us rigid and unchanging. We must first acknowledge that we engage in negative thinking and become aware of it. Then we must get to the roots from which those messages grow. Remember that though we are using the word “fear” here, we are actually referring to worry and anxiety, the impairments of acknowledging true fear.

Use this exercise as a silent moment of reflection in group. Give participants time to write these down if they have not already, then discuss.

#### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

“Inside each of us, there is an inner critic who reminds us of our frailty and faults. Some of the inner criticism stems from something in our past. We devalue ourselves and place ourselves in the discount bin. We personify the inner critic, making it the spokeswoman for the way the world sees us. It nags and deceives. It uses comparison to devalue us. No matter how we perform, it likes to tell us what we “should” have done, not allowing us to enjoy any success. It makes us feel deeply inadequate. Eventually, we begin to believe these negative messages. Change takes place when we learn not to listen to the inner critic but instead listen to God. It is also essential to have people in our lives who can affirm and love us.” (69-73)

**Q: When you think about making personal changes, what thoughts pop up in your mind?**

**Q: How do those thoughts affect your decisions or behavior?**

**Q: Write down three common negative thoughts that occur in your mind. When did those negative thoughts first appear in your life?**

**Now write down three truths about yourself that counter those negative thoughts.**

#### CONNECTING CONCEPTS:

Chronic fear can lead us down two unhealthy paths: isolation and blame.

If we listen to our inner critic, we stop living into our full potential.

Sometimes, we believe ourselves to be victims in life and place blame on others. Or we may isolate ourselves so that the inner critic becomes quieter.

Living in isolation minimizes our risk taking, but it also severely limits our perspective.



#### TOPIC 2: OVERCOMING FEAR (Day 8 Pages 58-62)

##### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"There is a central struggle at the core of our being, and that is fear. A fear-based life is one that I am well familiar with. I believe that the most important journey for all of us is the journey from a fear-based life, living in the grips of the debilitating symptoms of chronic fear, to a faith-based life, a life founded in the courage and freedom that only God can offer." (60)

**Q: What role does fear play in your attempts to change?**

**GAQ: What areas of your life are you afraid to admit to yourself or reveal to others. Why?**

**Q: How would you live differently if you let go of chronic fear, anxiety, worry?**



#### TOPIC 3: ISOLATION, BLAME, PROCRASTINATION (Day 9 Pages 63-68)

##### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"With denial comes blame. Most people in denial want other people to change, and so they blame others. Not only do we blame others, but we also hide from them. Dr. [James] Prochaska (creator of the Transtheoretical Model of Change) believes that many people struggle to stay in their isolation because it feels safe there. You can't fail in isolation. It leads to the false belief that you can change later, which leads to the next enabler. Procrastination is another form of denial. It causes us to overlook our problems. Denial is a rejection of the truth, whereas procrastination accepts the truth but delays the action required to correct the problem, creating a habitual pattern." (64-65)

**Q: Name one thing that you have put off doing in the past six months. What is holding you back from making change a priority? What insights have you gained so far about why these have not been addressed?**

#### CONNECTING CONCEPTS:

When we are able to move away from denial, blame, isolation, and procrastination, we move toward the humble admittance that we do have areas of our lives that need help . We cannot change alone.



#### TOPIC 4: POWERLESSNESS (Day 11 Pages 76-81)

##### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"One day I was talking to a friend who was going through a tough bout of depression. His life was in turmoil. He was sitting there, talking and gazing around the room, when his eyes stopped. He had fixated on the list of Beatitudes that I have hanging on my office wall, and he remarked, "I guess 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' means you're blessed when all you have to hope in is God." I think that is one of

The concept of powerlessness comes from Step One of the 12 Step Program. Step One says, "We admitted we were powerless over our human condition and that our lives had become unmanageable."

Powerlessness is not helplessness. Helplessness is believing we are victims and cannot change our lives. Powerlessness is admitting that only God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

We are human; we are limited; we make mistakes; we can be wounded; we need the help of God and others. Powerlessness is letting go of those things which we cannot control, of the illusion of control.

Examples of external versus internal powerlessness:

"I am powerless over my mother's behavior." This is an external perspective.

"I am powerless over my need to control my mother's behavior and my need to feel loved by her." This is a deeper, internal self-examination.

It gets to the heart of what we truly need to relinquish control over.

the greatest definitions of what Jesus meant in that beatitude. When we have come to the end of ourselves and our self-sufficiency has failed, we arrive at a place of defeat. When all I can do is throw up my hands and say, "I surrender. God, I need you," this is the beginning of real hope and the beginning of God's transformation in my life." (78)

#### **Explain what powerlessness means.**

**Q: What are you trying to control that may actually be out of your control?**

**GAQ: Extending grace to yourself, speak out loud what patterns, habits, attachments, ideas/ideals, relationships, outcomes, goals, etc. that you are powerless over. Be as specific as possible. Address your deeper, internal motivations rather than only external forces.**

**Q: How does admitting powerlessness help you change?**



## **TOPIC 5: PEACE AND FORGIVENESS** **(Day 12 Pages 82-86)**

#### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"Before we can change, we must be at peace with our limited human strength. We must give up trying to conquer life and learn to contemplate the inner life, where strength comes from God. Taking the focus off my circumstances and putting it on my inward relationship with God is the beginning of peace. It makes room for gratitude. It allows hope and faith to enter the equation. This is what it means to live in a state of faith." (83)

**Q: If you made a list of your needs in life, what would they be?**

**Q: What would it look like to trust God to meet these needs?**

**Q: What hurts in your life are keeping you from a life of peace?**

#### **FINAL QUESTION:**

**Based on what you have shared here today, name one thing that you need for yourself in this moment and going forward into the week.**

#### **CLOSING**

- Assign homework: Read Journey to Freedom Days 13-18 and answer the reflection questions.

- Say the Serenity Prayer together

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Journey to Freedom- Week 4

### The Facilitator Mindset

**Topic:** Creating Change

**Objective:** To confirm the role of community in the process of change.

There is no way that we can change in isolation. Without others, we lack accountability, universality, counsel, grace and mercy. Days 13 - 15 ask us to evaluate our relational life and learn to embrace vulnerability. Vulnerable sharing around our greatest struggles allows us to open and receive mercy both from God and from others. Mercy builds compassion. Compassion allows us to forgive ourselves and others. Supportive community draws us out of isolation and toward each other.

We must help participants understand that not all relationships are benefiting them. One of the key concepts of this week is to have participants think about their current community and whether it is supportive or destructive. They need to think about their long-term plans for supportive relationships, and how they will intentionally move toward them.

The author, Patrick Carnes' description of healthy, intimate relationships includes initiative, presence, completion, vulnerability, nurturing and honesty. Many have never experienced these and so do not realize they are absent from their relationships. But by modeling these attributes in small group, we hope to bring a greater awareness and desire to participants for them. Healthy relationships are safe relationships—and allow space for healing and change.

Days 16 -18 encourage participants to feel urgency around the need for change. Life is short. The best time to start changing is now. Day 17 makes it clear that getting rid of old hurt or habits will not happen immediately. It is a lifelong journey, but there is no better time to start on that journey than today.

### Supporting Quotes:

"Transformation requires a collaborative interaction, with one person empathically listening and responding to the other so that the speaker has the experience, perhaps for the first time, of feeling felt by another."

-Curt Thompson, Anatomy of the Soul, p. 137

"Advice without investment is just criticism."

-David Nowlin

## **Discussion Guide - Week 4: Days 13-18 (Pages 87-124)**

**A Note from Scott Reall - “The power of community where we risk vulnerability and achieve true intimacy pulls us out of the patterns of isolation and loneliness. We experience profound grace that transforms our life. There is no greater need for all human beings than the power to be known.”**

### **“Moment of Hope” Video Content -[www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)**

- Relationships on the journey
- Embracing universality
- Evaluating our relationships in life
- Hitting our problems head on

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome everyone back to group.
- Observe a few minutes of silence while participants reflect on their feelings. Begin feelings check-in and elaboration.

#### **KEY CONTENT**

**Q: In the reading, what spoke to you this week?**



#### **TOPIC 1: UNIVERSALITY, SMALL GROUP COMMUNITY (Days 13 & 15 Pages 89-94; 102-105)**

##### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

“Universality is always better. It creates one of the greatest dynamics in healing—a place of safety and compassion. When I come out of isolation and connect with a community of people who have struggled that same way that I have, who have felt the same things that I have felt, and who want the same things that I want, this is the journey to freedom. This is grace. Mercy is what we find in universality. We can't make it alone. We need relationships. Universality is also the beginning of forgiving ourselves. Healing takes place as we extend to ourselves the compassion of forgiveness, which can be difficult. Sometimes we want to keep punishing ourselves. We beat ourselves up. But this can make us hopeless, bitter, and even more isolated. We need to deal with our problems first by becoming aware of them, and then by moving to a level of self-forgiveness. We all need a place of safety where we can discover healing. Don't stop until you find universality. You're not alone.” (91-93)

**GAQ: In what places and ways do you experience loneliness in your life?**

**Q: Is it hard to share your struggles with others? Why?**

**Q: Has sharing in this small group helped? In what ways?**

**Q: Have you found it difficult to change on our own?**



## TOPIC 2: RELATIONSHIPS (Day 14 Pages 95-101)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"We need to realize that we may need to change some of our current relationships. We may need to change any relationships that lead back to our destructive habits. Relationships are challenging—and they may be one of the most decisive factors in our process of change. Our recovery, our healing, our future may very well come down to whom we associate with and how we relate to our loved ones. There are those who will lead us upward toward our new life, toward the changes that we are trying to bring about in our lives. Find new companions who are on a path to a lifetime of hope, health and happiness. We need their support. We need their encouragement. We need their accountability." (96-98)

- Q: Are the people in your life affecting your ability to change? How?**
- Q: What relationships in your life are the most challenging? Why?**
- Q: Which relationships are nourishing and life-giving for you?**
- Q: What is a step you can take this week to move a relationship to a healthier place?**
- Q: To whom do you offer relational support? In what way?**



## TOPIC 3: HITTING OUR PROBLEMS HEAD-ON (Day 16 Pages 107-112)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"Think of the iceberg that sank the Titanic. If you look at an iceberg, you only see the small portion of ice that is above the surface of the water—the vast majority of the iceberg is underneath. In an effort to avoid a head-on collision, the Titanic turned, sideswiping the iceberg beneath the surface and ripping open the hull. Some believe that if the Titanic had hit the iceberg head-on, there would have been tremendous damage, but the ship might not have sunk. We have to deal with our problems head-on. Every problem has the possibility to sink us if we try to sidestep it rather than hit it head-on. If we don't deal with our underlying, deep rooted issues, more trouble will be ahead of us. Avoiding problems will not do you any good. Tackle them. Expose them. Dealing with deep underlying issues is a necessary step in the process of change." (108)

"Long ago, mapmakers sketched dragons on maps as a sign to sailors that they would be entering unknown territory at their own risk. Some sailors would not sail into these unknown waters, while others saw the dragons as a sign of opportunity, a possibility to discover new territory. Each of us has mental and emotional maps with dragons designating certain areas of our lives. We are not sure what is there. We are afraid to venture out, afraid to look beneath the surface of the dragon. But dragons need to be slain. Icebergs need to be hit head-on." (110)

**GAQ:** Do you have a problem that you are trying to sideswipe rather than take head-on? If so, what is it? What lies below this problem (like the larger part of the iceberg below the surface)?  
**GAQ:** What is one, small thing you might do to start approaching this issue?  
**Q:** How might your problems or challenges be an opportunity for growth in your life?



## **TOPIC 4: LEAVING THE PAST AND LIVING THE PRESENT** **(Days 17 & 18 Pages 113-118; 119-124)**

### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"If you look at a tombstone, you will see the year that the deceased was born and the year that he died. In between those dates is a dash, representing all the years between birth and death. It is possible to lose the urgency of the dash. We have to believe that the dash is worth living. However, the dash requires effort. Most accomplishments come through tremendous perseverance. The Bible says that life is like running a race. None of us know when the dash will end. There is no better time for change than now. We need to maintain our vision. It's never too early to start, and it's never too late to change. When we stop growing, we stop living. Start living your dash today! Now is the right time and this is the right place." (120-122)

- Q:** What is an area of your life where you need to give yourself permission to dream again?  
**Q:** Do you believe your dreams are not possible? What can you do to "live the dash" today?  
**Q:** What do you need to do to persevere?

### **FINAL QUESTION:**

**Based on what you have shared here today, name one thing that you need for yourself in this moment and going forward into the week.**

### **CLOSING**

- Assign homework: Read Journey to Freedom Days 19 - 24 and answer the reflection questions.
- Say the Serenity Prayer together

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 5

### The Facilitator Mindset

#### Topic: Hope Restored

**Objective:** To evaluate how toxic shame has caused us to stay in isolation, the fertile soil for addictive behaviors, while learning that mistakes, recycling, and training are all part of healthy change.

Toxic shame is the most destructive force in a human life. While healthy shame tells us that we have human limitations and need God and one another, toxic shame tells us that we are hopelessly defective with unreasonable emotional, spiritual and physical needs. Toxic shame encourages us to hide our true selves; we become convinced that our true selves are not worthy or acceptable. We create a false self, hoping that will be acceptable to those around us. Our false self is a rejection of our true self, and this rejection is painful and exhausting. To keep up the charade, we use our attachments and addictions to push down our emotional needs. Often, these attachments cause us to make decisions that create additional toxic shame and so, the cycle continues.

What do we need to break this exhausting cycle? Grace. We need to hear from God, from others, and from ourselves that we are not hopeless. We need to know we are not alone. We need to know there is a way out of feeling hopeless to feeling hopeful. Our lovability is not tied to our behavior.

There may be a long road of self-evaluation to move past toxic shame. We may need to recognize and seek help for childhood trauma, adult trauma, addictive behaviors, misguided spiritual teachings, relationship struggles, etc. We may have unresolved grief and past regrets. Day 22 emphasizes the need for courage on this road. Courage to face ourselves with honesty produces character, and character produces hope.

The key concept for this week comes in Day 24: reformation versus transformation. This ties back to the first group meeting, when we explain the Process of Transformation. Reformation is trying to change through our own willpower which often leads to substituting one attachment for another. Transformation is allowing God's grace to craft a new vision for our lives. Transformation is the path to freedom.

#### Supporting Quotes:

"When we are whole and fully self-accepting, we have the freedom to see and hear what we see and hear, rather than what we should or should not see and hear; the freedom to think and express what we think, rather than what we should or should not express; the freedom to feel what we feel, rather than what we should or should not feel; the freedom to love (choose and want) what we want, rather than what we should or should not love; the freedom to imagine what we imagine, rather than what we should or should not imagine. When we are loved unconditionally, i.e., accepted just as we are, we can then accept ourselves just as we are."

-John Bradshaw, Healing the Shame That Binds You, p. 154

"Impaired shame comes from our pasts. We have learned for survival's sake to hide, reject, or minimize our hearts. If significant people whom we love insist or need for us to deny our heart's content, they poison us with toxic shame."

- Chip Dodd, The Voice of the Heart, p. 101-102

"It is in the very nature of addiction to feed on our attempts to master it."

- Gerald May, Addiction and Grace, p. 4

## Discussion Guide - Week 5: Days 19–24 (Pages 125-162)

**A Note from Scott Reall - “We need to look at how shame moves us towards our addictions, and how it becomes the vicious cycle that we cannot get out of because at our core we are shame-based.”**

### “Moment of Hope” Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)

- Goal is progress, not perfection. We need to learn how to accept grace.
- Know the difference between “I’ve made a mistake”, and “I am a mistake”.

### INTRODUCTION

- Welcome everyone back to group.
- Observe a few minutes of silence while participants reflect on their feelings. Begin feelings check-in and elaboration.
- Hand out the Toxic Shame Cycle handout and explain.

### KEY CONTENT

#### **Q: In the reading, what spoke to you this week?**

Toxic shame is a feeling of worthlessness, humiliation, self-loathing that separates us from our true self. Toxic shame becomes an identity for us when we are given and internalize the message that we are fundamentally flawed as a person. Toxic shame is passed from generation to generation through words, beliefs and behaviors.

Toxic shame is linked to the negative inner voice discussed in Week 3.

A false self is an external persona that we put on to hide our true feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Often we develop a false self to protect ourselves from being hurt or to get our needs met in some way.

Example of a false self: To avoid the criticism of my parents, I try very hard to be a good student, be responsible and never make a mistake. When I do make mistakes, I hide them and try to deal with it alone.



#### **TOPIC 1: GETTING FREE FROM A SHAMEFUL LIFE (Day 19 Pages 127-132)**

##### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

“It is impossible to have intimacy without being vulnerable. I can’t be honest with God or with someone else if I don’t risk vulnerability . I will continue to hide behind the false self—never risking and never knowing intimacy. We can isolate ourselves from God even in church. We can be at a Bible study, but be very distant from God. But authenticity and vulnerability matter to God.” (136)

##### **Q: What is toxic shame?**

##### **Q: Where and with whom have you experienced toxic shame in your life?**

##### **Q: What does it mean to have a false self?**

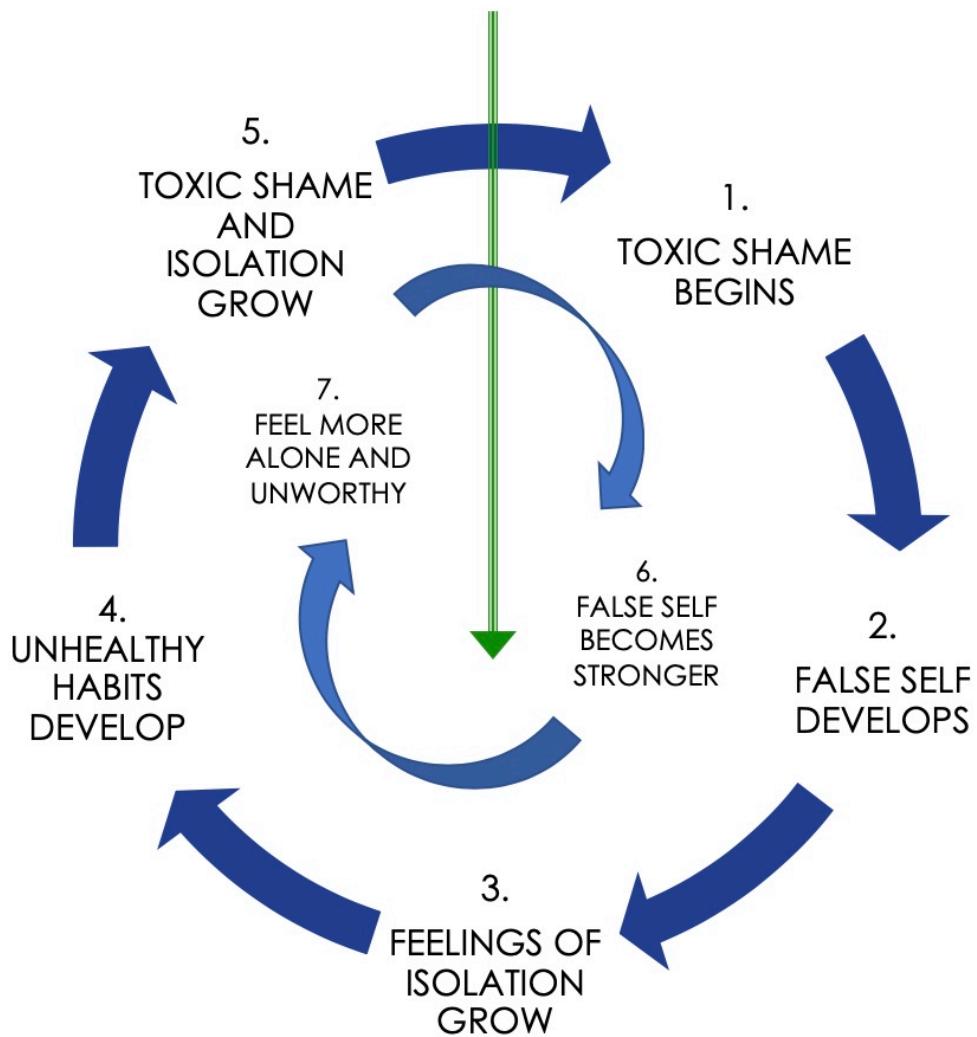
**GAQ: How have you built a false self to protect yourself from pain?**

**What would you need to begin to drop that false identity?**

**Q: At this moment in your life, do you feel free to express your feelings, perspectives, ideas, love and creativity in the way that is most authentic to you? Why or why not?**

# THE TOXIC SHAME CYCLE

*GRACE  
INTERRUPTS THE CYCLE WHEN WE ADMIT  
POWERLESSNESS AND ASK FOR HELP*



### CONNECTING CONCEPTS:

Our view of God and his role in our lives is formed by many things. It is important to move past our ideas/images of God, whether they are our own or they were told to us, into a relationship that truly connects us to Him. This connection allows God to tell us, firsthand, what He is like and how He sees us. Connecting with God, experiencing his love, opens us up to a whole new perspective. Is our view of God rooted in toxic shame or is it rooted in who we have experienced God to be?

Guard against giving advice or having anyone in group give advice in the discussion about God. Go ahead and say this openly to your group. This discussion may challenge group members beliefs but we must make room for everyone to be honest. As a facilitator, use discernment around how many of these questions to ask, depending on the receptiveness in the room.



## TOPIC 2: THE PURSUIT OF GOD (Day 20 Pages 133-138)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"Discovering God can be a confusing subject because our ideas about God can keep us from trusting Him. A faulty view will keep us from having a relationship with God. It will keep us from becoming who we were meant to be—children of God. We can discover our true self by having a relationship with God. And as we get to know him more, his life bleeds into ours, the way it does when we fall in love with another human being. There's more to it than just believing in a higher power. It's a relationship. We accept his love, and he becomes not just an idea. I let him teach me and guide me. This is intimacy with God, and all of us crave it. But it is impossible to have intimacy without being vulnerable and honest. We can discover that we are valued and loved by God, even when we may feel unlovable." (133-135)

**Q: What beliefs do you hold about God, if any? How do you imagine God to be? Where do those ideas/images come from?**

**Q: Do you feel valued or loved by God? Why or why not?**

**Q: What do you believe God expects from you?**

**Q: In what ways have you experienced God on a deeper level?**

**Q: In what way do you need to hear from God right now?**



## TOPIC 3: FINDING OUR TRUE IDENTITIES (Day 21 Pages 139-144)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"Identity is at the heart of changing our life. Identifying the future, identifying true friends, identifying our weaknesses, and identifying our true selves are all important factors. Who am I? Most of us define ourselves by the world's standards. But our true identity is stamped on our souls from within. We have to do the work of discovering our true selves—the person that God created us to be." (140)

**Q: Think about yourself as a child. What were you like? What were some of your favorite things to do? What were your dreams?**

**Q: How have you changed since childhood? Are there parts of you that you would like to reclaim?**



## TOPIC 4: COURAGE AND HOPE (Days 22 &23 Pages 145-150; 151-157)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"Perseverance in spite of everything is the face of courage." (148)

"Meaning is decisive to human existence. We all need a purpose. We need to know that our lives matter. This is why God says, 'I know what I am planning for you...I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.' (Jeremiah 29:11) Hope is important to our future, and the great thing about hope is that God gives it freely. He has a purpose for our lives. Hope is an outgrowth of faith, for faith is believing in what we cannot see. We can't touch hope. We can't hear it or feel it. It's like the wind." (152)

**Q: What gives your life meaning? What is important to you?**

**Q: Looking at your life right now, do you feel God leading in any certain direction? Does that bring you hope?**



## TOPIC 6: REFORMATION VERSUS TRANSFORMATION (Day 24 Pages 158-162)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"Transformation makes all things new. It's a break from a habit without replacing it with a substitute. We dispose of a destructive habit and replace it with the Spirit of Christ. We build a relationship with Him and allow Him to fill the empty spot by asking Him into this void. Don't settle for a mere swapping of one habit for another. Fill the emptiness left by the removal of that habit with God. We can leave the past behind." (158/161)

**Q: Have you ever replaced one habit for another? What did that look like for you? What support would you need to transform that habit rather than reform it?**

**Q: Reflecting back on the idea of powerlessness in Week 3, remind yourself of what you need to let go of at this moment in time.**

### **FINAL QUESTION**

**Based on what you have shared here today, name one thing that you need for yourself in this moment and going forward into the week.**

### **CLOSING**

- Assign homework: Read Journey to Freedom Days 25 - 30 and answer the reflection questions.
- Say the Serenity Prayer together.

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 6

### The Facilitator Mindset

**Topic:** Overcoming Obstacles

**Objective:** To create urgency around the need for change whether physical, mental or spiritual through forming a new vision and value-system supported by a more compassionate understanding of our place in the process of change.

This week focuses on change as a balance of mind, body and spirit. Changes in one area can create positive change in other areas. If we become more physically active, our mental health improves and vice versa. Research shows that there are important links between our mental and physical health. Making physical changes enhances our ability to make other changes—even 20-30 minutes of activity a day can help create a feeling of well-being.

Six weeks into this process of group, we hope several things are starting to happen. The first is that vulnerability and sharing are healing some of the power of toxic shame. We are beginning to be more self-aware about our emotional life, our triggers, our habits, our relationships. We are beginning to recognize what needs to change, even if it scares us.

Days 27 - 29 start moving us toward an essential part of moving from contemplation to preparation in the process of change: focusing on the solution rather than the problem. (Dr. James Prochaska, Changing for Good) We need to define who we want to become and set a course for progress knowing it will not be a perfect linear path to change. We need to prepare for the hard work of change. We will get tired at times on the journey.

One of the key concepts for this week comes in Day 28: intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation to change means we are being propelled by outside pressures: to mend a relationship, make someone else happy, fulfill an obligation, or get something we want. Extrinsic motivation does not last because as soon as the pressure to change is removed, we lose sight of our vision. Intrinsic motivation to change means at our core, we want to be different. It is rooted in true hope that no matter what our circumstances, change is still needed and valuable. It is necessary to a more meaningful life.

### Supporting Quotes:

"We need to recognize that the incompleteness within us, our personal insufficiency, does not make us unacceptable in God's eyes. Far from it; our incompleteness is the empty side of our longing for God and for love. It is what draws us toward God and one another. If we do not fill our minds with guilt and self-recriminations, we will recognize our incompleteness as a kind of spaciousness into which we can welcome the flow of grace."

-Gerald May, Addiction and Grace, p. 31

## **Discussion Guide -Week 6: Days 25-30 (Pages 165-198)**

**A Note from Scott Reall - “Vision is always the catalyst for intrinsic motivation. We must see before we believe, and when we begin to see the person God is transforming us into, we will find internal motivation to sustain our change.”**

### **‘Moment of Hope’ Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)**

- Create a clear vision for our lives
- Allow vision to sustain the effort of change
- Difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome everyone back to group.
- Observe a few minutes of silence while participants reflect on their feelings. Begin feelings check-in and elaboration.

### **KEY CONTENT**

**Q: In the reading, what spoke to you this week?**



#### **TOPIC 1: OUR WELL-BEING (Day 25 Pages 165-169)**

##### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

“When I go for an hour-long hike on the trails at Radnor Lake State Park near my home, my mind is free to listen to the sounds of the breeze through the leaves—the birds singing, the feeling of my feet on the earth, the sensation of the wind against my skin. Sometimes as I hike near the end of the day, the sky changes into beautiful reds and shades of purple. As I come to the peak of a hill, I occasionally see a turtle, a chipmunk, or a deer or I hear the sound of an owl. I am young again. The changes in nature awaken a sense of change in me. Peace replaces the frantic feelings of being overwhelmed by the responsibilities of work and life. I need this refuge. I need this restoration. Exercise creates relaxation of the mind and body. We awaken to the profound sense of wonder of the miracle of life, of our bodies, our minds, our spirits.” (166-167)

**Q: Where are you with your overall well-being?**

**Q: Are you struggling with certain parts of your well-being? For example, eating well, sleeping, physical activity.**

**Q: Are you struggling with your overall self-image? In what way?**

**Q: If you could create your ideal routine for taking care of yourself, what would it look like?**

**Q: What physical activities do you like to do?**

**Q: What is a realistic, balanced physical activity plan that would help you be healthier?**



## TOPIC 2: BREAKING FREE FROM BONDAGE, LIVING BY VISION (Day 26 &27 Pages 170-175; 176-181)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"When we live by vision, we are not stuck in the past. We learn from our mistakes and move on. Our focus is on what we are going to become instead of what we have been. No longer can we use the old as a reference point for the future. It is gone! How can my old life tell my new life what it should be? Thinking about changing, we often say, "I'm not going to be like that anymore," but that is faulty thinking. When we make that statement, we're not defining what we should become. Wherever there is great vision, there is great passion. When I start living my life out of vision, the vision ignites my purpose for living and drives my change. Now I experience the power of the Spirit moving me along toward the future that God desires for me." (178-179)

**Q: If you could let go of your past and nothing was holding you back, what would your life look like? (Think about such areas like family, career, spirituality, etc)**

**Q: What is the clutter in your life? What is wasting your time?**

**Q: If you could clear away the clutter, what new vision/passion for your life would emerge?**

**Q: Have you seen any small transformation within yourself as part of this process?**



## TOPIC 3: MOTIVATION AND PROGRESS (Day 28 & 29 Pages 182-187; 188-193)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"Some of us get extrinsically motivated to change. Outward negative consequences will motivate us, but they fail to sustain change over time. Motivation has to be sustained, and we do this by being intrinsically motivated. When someone is intrinsically motivated, it's not about making anyone happy or trying to avoid a consequence. It's an internal desire to work together with God from a perspective of "I want to be different." It's about respecting ourselves enough to do the hard work of change. Having self-respect begins when we accept ourselves as God sees us. When we accept ourselves, we understand that we may have to work on our faults. Having self-respect means being ourselves in every situation. We stand in our own shoes. We speak from our own heart. When we slip up, we get back up and continue our courageous battle to become true to ourselves. Having self-respect means living a life of humility. We understand and accept our limitations. We become something different and something better." (185/188-192)

Example of extrinsic motivation: I alter my diet because my doctor says if I don't, I will soon develop diabetes and that scares me.

Example of intrinsic motivation: I alter my diet because it is important for me to take care of myself.

I want to make the most of my life and to enjoy my family.

**Q: What does it mean to be motivated?**

**Q: Give an example of a time when you were motivated extrinsically? Intrinsically?**

**Q: What is your reaction when you make a mistake or miss a goal?**

**Q: What might you say to yourself in those instances to extend self-compassion?**

**Q: What does having self-respect mean to you?**

**Q: What is one goal that you have set for yourself that you have yet to achieve? What is one step that you can take today toward achieving that goal?**



## **TOPIC 4: DESIRE TO BE SET FREE**

### **(Day 30 Pages 194-197)**

#### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"It's impossible to embrace and fully live in the present as long as we are trying to derive happiness from something outside of a relationship with God." (195)

**Q: What are you holding on to from the past or the future that is keeping you from fully embracing the present?**

**Q: When we feel stuck, it's hard to believe that we always have a choice. What is a situation that it is hard for you to believe you have a choice?**

#### **FINAL QUESTION**

**Based on what you have shared here today, name one thing that you need for yourself in this moment and going forward into the week.**

#### **CLOSING**

- Assign homework: Read Journey to Freedom Days 31 - 36 and answer the reflection questions.
- Say the Serenity Prayer together.

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 7

### The Facilitator Mindset

**Topic:** Finish Strong

**Objective:** To understand the role of grief in our lives and how unresolved losses are contributing to the dysfunctional behaviors that we are struggling with.

The definition of unresolved grief is whatever we wish were different, better or more (James & Friedman, The Grief Recovery Handbook, p. 3). Grief enters our lives at every turn. We experience loss when transitioning through different seasons of life, in unexpected life events, in the loss of a job or relationship, in letting go of hopes and dreams. We grieve the pain that the world around us causes and the pain that we cause others. Grief in life is inescapable.

What holds many of us back is unspoken and unresolved grief. We begin experiencing loss at an early age and often do not know how to process it. We begin to cope in various ways, finding methods to “put away” the pain, diminish it, block it, “get over” it. Still, it stays with us as part of our life story.

One of the key concepts for this week is naming our grief in Day 31. It is important to give ourselves the opportunity to speak out loud the losses we are still grieving. This can get us back on the path to healing.

Another key concept for this week is in Day 32: taking a risk to move away from our old lives, reach out for God’s help, and move toward Him. We need to ask God what we should learn from our losses and our pain.

In Day 35, we introduce participants to the Plan of Change, the way that they will make tangible their desire to change. We want participants to take the time to write the plan, thinking it through and making realistic goals. Encourage participants that even the smallest change is progress. It is very important that the Plan of Change be explained and participants be given time for questions before the end of this session.

# THE STAGES OF GRIEF

Loss is defined as a situation or relationship no longer being the way that it once was.

The effect of loss in our lives builds on itself if we do not process it completely.

What follows any loss is grief. Grief is a process that our minds and bodies go through to deal with loss. There are six stages of grief. These stages do not always happen in a linear order. We can experience them several times throughout the process.

**Denial** is a state of shock. Denial helps make survival in the beginning possible because it protects your mind and body from having to experience the full impact of the loss all at once.

**Anger** can extend to your friends, doctors, family, yourself, and God. Underneath anger is pain and a longing for understanding. Anger is strength during this time to give you temporary structure to nothingness of loss.

**Bargaining** focuses on “if only...” or “what if...” statements. You want to go back and fix it. Bargaining helps you admit any guilt that you have and leads to forgiveness.

**Depression** feels empty. You are in full surrender to the loss as your mind and body absorb it. This is completely natural, not something to “snap out of.”

**Sadness** does not feel the same as depression. It is a more active state of feeling the full force of the loss. It hurts tremendously, but you are present and healing.

**Acceptance** is NOT about feeling ‘ok’ or doing ‘all right’. Your heart is broken open to new beginnings. You accept the reality that you cannot change the past, or change your sadness. You begin to redefine who you are after the loss.

“Unresolved grief is almost always about things we wish we’d said or done differently, better, or more.” (James & Friedman, The Grief Recovery Handbook, p. 3)

We can add that it is also that which we wish were better, different or more. It is so important for us to search our past and present for this unresolved grief, no matter how “unimportant” we think it is.

Our minds often put grief aside in order to keep moving. It’s normal, but it doesn’t mean the grief isn’t important. We grieve for many things: changes in seasons of life, including becoming a parent, death, divorce, finances, job loss/changes, death of a pet, moving, retirement, illness, empty-nest, loss of dreams/ideals/expectations, etc.

If we do not acknowledge the grief and work through it, we will stay stuck with the pain and not reach the stage of acceptance.

## **Discussion Guide - Week 7: Days 31-36 (Pages 199-229)**

**A Note from Scott Reall - "We need to discuss the stages of grief, understanding how loss is accumulative, and the broad range of losses that we grieve is far beyond just death. We introduce that for loss to be grieved we must complete all communication."**

### **"Moment of Hope" Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)**

- Strong on this journey
- Opening ourselves to the most intimate and vulnerable group meeting of the 8 weeks
- Leaving behind our 'normality' and stepping out of the boat, away from what is comfortable

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome everyone back to group.
- Observe a few minutes of silence while participants reflect on their feelings. Begin feelings check-in and elaboration.
- Give the participants the Stages of Grief handout and explain.

### **KEY CONTENT**

#### **Q: In the reading, what spoke to you this week?**



#### **TOPIC 1: GRIEVING THE PAST** **(Day 31 Pages 201-205)**

The grief discussion can be heavy as participants allow themselves to acknowledge unspoken pain. As a facilitator, be sure to affirm and thank your participants for sharing their deepest hurts. Remind participants that all grief is valid and to not compare their grief experiences. Everyone's losses hold a different meaning in the context of their story. Model well for your group members how to hold this space of sharing without fixing or rescuing someone else's pain. There may be quite a few times of silence or times a participant needs to cry. Let these moments happen.

#### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"We need to rescue our hearts from the past. We do this by expressing grief. We work through our grief by feeling the pain. We usually think of experiencing a loss as when someone dies, but the loss of dreams can also trigger a time of mourning. But at the end of lost hopes and dreams is God. That's the good news. He gives us a new beginning. We may not be able to relive the past, but we can begin again as we grieve the past and let it go. A friend once told me that early in our lives we only know how to get things—but we don't learn how to let go. As we move through our journey to freedom, many of us need to look into our lives and move through the process of grief as we let go. Then we will be able to dream new dreams and begin to embrace the wonderful promise, "With God all things are possible." The best part of life can start now. The new beginning will grow from the fertile ashes of past destruction. In this soil, God's power is made possible because we realize that our strength is ashes and only God has the ability to take our past destruction and use it for good." (202-204)

#### **Q: How do you define loss?**

#### **Q: What are some of the different types of loss that you can experience in your lifetime (outside of loss caused by death)?**

#### **Q: What are healthy ways to cope with loss?**

**GAQ: What loss have you had in your life that you have been unable to grieve fully? What stage are you in with this grief? How has that grief affected your life?**

**Q: What do you still need to communicate about your loss?**

**Q: What specific step do you need to take to grieve the loss that you shared? What are some healthy ways to cope?**



## **TOPIC 2: RISK AND PERSEVERANCE** **(Days 32 & 33 Pages 206-210; 211-215)**

### **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:**

"It was sometime after midnight when Jesus sent his disciples across the lake. Jesus needed time alone with the Father. Reluctant to leave him, the disciples pushed their boats into the water. Later a storm began to brew in the far corner of the lake; then a light storm became a squall. The wind flapped the sails; the choppy water smacked the hull. And then, a strange thing happened: it seemed as if there was a ghost approaching them, walking on the water. As Jesus approached the boat, He could see they were frightened. But he said, "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Most of us would have been relieved and invited him into the boat. But Peter wanted to walk on the water too. He called to Jesus, "Lord, if it is really you, then command me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come". So, Peter stepped out. The first step is always the hardest. It's the bravest too. Notice that Peter stepped toward Jesus. Peter needed his power and strength. Courage empowers us as we trust the One toward whom we are stepping." (206-207)

**GAQ: What "Boat" do you need to get out of in order to change?**

**What are the fears and risk keeping you from making that step?**

**What good can come from that risk?**

**Q: What can you do on a daily basis to put your focus on God and reach out to Him in order to get out of this boat?**

"Patience is the main ingredient for perseverance. Anything worth achieving, any struggle or challenge, requires patience. We don't plant a garden, and then expect a crop overnight. We give the invisible time to become visible. We can plant healthy habits, but we must not expect instant results. Persevere with patience, knowing that in due time your new healthy habits will produce a crop of rewards." (213)

**Q: How can perseverance develop strong character?**

**Q: In what situation have you experienced the joy that comes through trial and perseverance?**

**Q: In what ways can you be more patient with yourself?**



## TOPIC 3: THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM (Day 34 Pages 216-220)

### JOURNEY TO FREEDOM SAYS:

"When I hit bottom, I wanted God to take away the pain. Then I understood God's invitation and slowly I began to turn homeward toward him. I realized that my journey was no longer about stopping the pain or having a better life, even though it ended up being a new life. I discovered that an incredibly loving God had captured my heart." (217)

**Q: What could be the role of pain and struggle in your life?**

**Q: Have you felt God on this journey? In what way?**

### **FINAL QUESTION:**

**What has been the most significant part of this journey for you?**

### **CLOSING**

The last group meeting is a great time to encourage participants to pursue a next step in their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health. If possible, provide some suggestions for growth opportunities in your community: other small groups, counseling, retreats, coaching, fitness classes, etc. Ask your group coordinator if s/he has any materials of this kind. If not, feel free to prepare a handout or email your group with any suggestions.

- Assign homework: Prepare your Plan of Change! Days 35-36 give all the instructions for the plan.
- Explain Affirmations: Take time to thoughtfully write an affirmation for each of your fellow group members. You can write a word that describes them or a few sentences about their character or what they have meant to you in group. Avoid giving advice and focus only on affirming. Write these on an index card or notecard that you can give to your other group members.
- Let participants know that the last meeting will take 2 hours.
- Encourage the group to treat Week 8 as a celebration of their commitment and courage. Discuss if you want to bring snacks, a meal or to meet somewhere off-site. If the meeting is off-site, remember to consider confidentiality and the noise level of the location. Make it clear that if the group meets in a restaurant, group members need to refrain from any alcoholic beverages until the end of group.
- Say the Serenity Prayer together.

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Journey to Freedom - Week 8

### The Facilitator Mindset

#### Topic: Personal Plan of Change

**Objective:** To affect cognitive change by writing our Plans of Change AND reading them out loud to our small group. To extend grace through bearing witness to other people's plans and through affirmations.

The last week of group serves as a ceremonial ending to a significant group commitment. Group members have dedicated 8 weeks of time to evaluate their lives and to support one another. Our hope is that the experience has been life-changing and life-giving. This time should be celebrated. The group should end with intentionality and purpose.

There are two crucial parts of the final group meeting. First is the presentation of the Plans of Change by each participant. Second is the giving of affirmations to each group member.

The Plans of Change are important for several key reasons. The writing of the plan allows the participant to slow down and focus intentionally on what they want to change and specifically how they will get to that change. Writing gives a special kind of clarity. Speaking the plan to the group creates a cognitive change in a participant's thinking, and increases their level of personal accountability for that plan. The plans are the culmination of all the vision-casting that has occurred throughout the reading and discussions.

Affirmations are a final and powerful example of the mercy and grace that group provides. Each group member will experience other group members reading aloud affirmations to them. This is a special time of compassion, and participants will learn new things about their character: how others perceive them and their unique inner self. Very often, participants cannot see the positive things about themselves that others see. Hearing these affirmations can be life-changing for them. Expect to see themes emerge in these affirmations. Often, several group members will see the same attributes in another group member and these similarities will emerge during the sharing time. Remind participants that repeated observations about their character point to who they truly are. Encourage them to take the affirmations to heart and return to them after the group is over for encouragement.

Everyone experiences sadness over the end of group. It is important to acknowledge the sadness of the time coming to an end. But also take the time to encourage participants in their next steps, especially in regards to staying in community. Offer them new opportunities to engage with others through groups, counseling, or community activities.

## **Discussion Guide - Final Group Meeting**

**A Note from Scott Reall - Reading the action plans, sharing affirmations, and having closure completes the entire Journey to Freedom process."**

**"Moment of Hope" Video Content - [www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups](http://www.vimeo.com/restoresmallgroups)**

- Leaving behind our normality and preparing to take action
- Walking confidently in the direction of transformation

### **Steps for Week 8**

1. If you have any paperwork for the participants to complete (evaluations, surveys, registrations for next-steps, etc.) make sure to complete those prior to group starting.
2. We recommend asking the group to do their feelings check-in, and then skip elaborations. You will need all of your time for the Plans of Change and Affirmations.
3. Ask for a volunteer to share their entire Plan of Change from start to finish. If there are no volunteers, one of the facilitators will go first. Encourage everyone to share all of their plan, and stick to what they have written. (If you have someone who came to group without writing theirs, ask them to go last, and while others are sharing they can jot down a few notes if that is helpful.)
4. After someone shares their Plan of Change, the rest of the group can affirm them briefly. Then move on to the next participant.
5. After everyone has shared their Plan of Change, begin Affirmations. Pick one group member at a time and have the other group members all read aloud their affirmations to them. Then have everyone give that group member the index card or notecard with the affirmation to take home. That way, each member can leave with the gift of written affirmations that they can have for encouragement in the days ahead.
6. When Affirmations are done, acknowledge that the group ending is a loss. If you have time, ask, "What will you miss most from group?" or "Does anyone have anything to share before we end?"
7. Close group by saying the Serenity Prayer together.

**Serenity Prayer:** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference.



## Suggested Reading List

Scott Reall and the Restore team have selected these books as resources for facilitators' skills development and personal growth.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	Maya Angelou
Codependent No More	Melody Beattie
Healing the Shame that Binds You	John Bradshaw
Daring Greatly	Brené Brown, Ph.D., L.M.S.W
The Gifts of Imperfection	Brené Brown, Ph.D., L.M.S.W
The Pilgrim's Progress	John Bunyan
Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking	Susan Cain
Don't Call It Love	Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.
Boundaries	Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend
The Alchemist	Paulo Coelho
When Helping Hurts	Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	Stephen R. Covey
The Voice of the Heart	Chip Dodd
Seeds of Hope: A Henri Nouwen Reader	Edited by Robert Durback
Man's Search for Meaning	Viktor E. Frankl
Love is a Choice	Hemfelt, Minirth, & Meier
The Grief Recovery Handbook	James & Friedman
Counterfeit Gods	Timothy Keller
The Great Divorce	C.S. Lewis
The Biology of Desire	Marc Lewis, Ph.D.
Addiction and Grace	Gerald G. May, M.D.
"Friends Wanted," Monitor on Psychology, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2014. <a href="https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/01/cover-friends.aspx">https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/01/cover-friends.aspx</a>	Anna Miller
A Simple Path	Mother Teresa
Let Your Life Speak	Parker J. Palmer
Changing for Good	Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClimente
Breathing Under Water	Richard Rohr
When the Past Is Always Present	Ronald A. Ruden
Anatomy of the Soul	Curt Thompson, M.D.
The Soul of Shame	Curt Thompson, M.D.
The Broken Way	Ann Voskamp