

Small Group Guide

Based on the Sermon: "Every Mess Is a Candidate for a Miracle from God"

Jeff and Ashley Hickman | Lifespring Church, Greensburg, PA

Overview

In this message, Jeff and Ashley Hickman shared their personal story of brokenness, betrayal, and restoration. Through decades of hidden sin, marital devastation, and a long road of rebuilding, they discovered a foundational truth: no mess is too great for God to redeem. This guide is designed to help your group move from hearing their story to applying its truths to your own life and relationships.

Key Takeaways

- There are three types of people at any given moment: those who have come through hardship, those who are currently in hardship, and those who do not yet know hardship is coming. All three need the same God.
- Hidden sin does not stay contained. It grows, and it costs far more than we anticipate when we first give it room.
- Transparency and accountability are not punishments. They are tools of freedom and protection for ourselves and those we love.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing. Restoration of the individual is possible even when a relationship cannot be fully reconciled.
- God does not waste our messes. He uses them as the raw material for miracles.
- The legacy we leave is shaped not just by what we do, but by how we respond when everything falls apart.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Jeff described three types of people in the room: those on the other side of hardship, those in the middle of it, and those who do not know it is coming yet. Which category do you most identify with right now, and how does that shape the way you are hearing this message?
2. Have you ever experienced a moment when life, as Jeff described it, simply stopped? What was that like, and what did you do in the immediate aftermath?

Digging Deeper

3. Jeff talked about the way sin never stays small. It always grows. Where have you seen that pattern play out, either in your own life or in the lives of people around you? What does that tell us about the importance of addressing sin early?
4. When Ashley was alone at her parents house and began pouring out her anger at God, she described hearing the Lord say, "Are you done?" What does it say about God's character that He can handle our anger and grief without pulling away from us?
5. Jeff described living as what he called a spiritual schizophrenic, pulled between his desire for God and the pull of his lower nature. Romans 7 describes this same tension. How do you personally navigate that war between what you know is right and what your flesh is drawn toward?
6. Ashley said she felt the Holy Spirit speak specifically to her about the legacy of her family resting on what she did next. How does thinking about legacy, what we pass on to children, grandchildren, or those who come after us, change the way you approach hard decisions?
7. Jeff mentioned that his oldest daughter's letter contained the phrase "but God." Can you share a "but God" moment from your own life, a place where things could have gone very differently had God not intervened?

Getting Personal

8. Jeff made a direct statement about passwords and access to devices between spouses. Whether you are married or not, what does healthy transparency and accountability look like in your closest relationships? Are there areas where you have been operating in secrecy, even in small ways?
9. Ashley drew a clear distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. She said, "Restoration and reconciliation are two different things. You can forgive and God can restore your story whether you reconcile or not." How does that distinction bring freedom or challenge to something you are currently carrying?

10. Jeff and Ashley both described the role the local church played in their restoration, providing income, paying their mortgage, refusing to let go of them. What does this story stir in you about the responsibility the church community has toward people in crisis? How is your group or church doing in that area?

Practical Applications

This Week, Consider the Following

For individuals:

- Identify one area of your life where you have been operating in secrecy or partial truth. Take one concrete step toward transparency, whether that is a conversation with a trusted friend, a pastor, or a counselor.
- If you are carrying unresolved anger toward God over something painful in your life, find a quiet moment this week to bring that anger honestly before Him. Give Him permission to speak into it.

For couples:

- Have an honest conversation about access to devices and digital transparency. Agree together on what healthy accountability looks like for your relationship and take a practical step to put it in place.
- Identify one habit, pattern, or unspoken tension in your marriage that has been allowed to stay small but has been slowly growing. Bring it into the open and, if needed, seek help from a pastor or counselor.

For parents:

- Think about the declaration Ashley speaks over her granddaughter each day. Consider writing a declaration of identity and purpose over your own children and begin speaking it over them regularly.
- Ask yourself honestly: what am I modeling for my children about how to respond when life gets hard? What do I want them to see from me?

For the group:

- Pray together specifically for anyone in the group who is currently in the middle of a mess. Do not rush past the hard places. Sit with one another, intercede, and commit to not letting go of each other.

Closing Reflection

Jeff and Ashley closed with a statement they asked the entire room to repeat together. Take a moment as a group to say it aloud one more time, and let it settle as a declaration over whatever each person is facing:

"Every mess is a candidate for a miracle from God."

Close your time together in prayer, asking God to meet each person in your group exactly where they are, and to begin the work of turning whatever is broken into something that bears witness to His power.