

Life in Progress Week 1 Small Group Guide: Life After the Cross



Summary:

In this exploration of life after encountering Christ, we delve into the transformative stories of the Samaritan woman at the well and the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. These accounts remind us that meeting Jesus should fundamentally change us. The Samaritan woman's testimony of 'He told me everything I ever did' speaks to Christ's ability to confront our deepest truths with love, offering living water to quench our spiritual thirst. Meanwhile, the paralyzed man's healing challenges us to examine if we're truly ready for change or if we're comfortable in our excuses. Both stories emphasize that our lives should look markedly different after the cross. We're called to pick up our mats - the very things that once held us down - and walk in newness of life. This message urges us to reflect on what we've left behind since encountering Christ and how we can continue to grow in our faith journey.

Key Takeaways:

1. Encountering Jesus should lead to transformative change in our lives.
2. We must confront our sin and shortcomings, but Jesus offers healing and new life.
3. Our testimony of change is powerful for reaching others.
4. We should hate evil in our own lives while offering Christ's love to others.

Discussion Questions:

1. The sermon mentions several examples of people encountering Jesus (the Samaritan woman, the paralyzed man, the adulterous woman, the demon-possessed man). Which story resonated with you most and why?
2. How does Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman challenge our cultural notions of tolerance? What does "godly intolerance" look like in practice?
3. The paralyzed man was asked, "Do you want to be made well?" What areas of your life might Jesus be asking you this question about?
4. How can we balance not condemning others for their sin while also not tolerating sin in our own lives?
5. The sermon states, "Your life should not look the same after contact with Jesus." How has your life changed since coming to faith? Are there areas where you still need to "go and sin no more"?
6. What does it mean to you that Jesus has fully paid for your sins on the cross? How can this truth help us let go of guilt and shame?
7. The demon-possessed man wanted to go with Jesus, but was told to stay and share his testimony. How can we effectively share what God has done in our lives with others?

Practical Applications:

5. Identify one area of your life where you need to “pick up your mat and walk” – letting go of excuses and embracing change through Christ’s power.
2. Write out your testimony, focusing on how encountering Jesus has changed you. Practice sharing it with the group or a trusted friend.
3. Make a list of ways you can “hate evil” in your own life this week. Choose one specific action to implement.
4. Reflect on Galatians 2:20. How can you more fully live out the reality that you have been crucified with Christ and now live by faith in Him?
5. Look for an opportunity this week to share with someone “what great things God has done for you,” like the formerly demon-possessed man.

Closing Prayer

5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide:



Day 1: Encountering Christ's Love

Reading: John 4:1-26

Devotional:

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well demonstrates His boundless love that transcends social and cultural barriers. Just as Jesus offered living water to this outcast woman, He offers us His transformative love and grace. Reflect on areas in your life where you feel unworthy or excluded. Remember that Christ's love reaches you there, offering healing and renewal. How can you open your heart to receive this living water today? Consider how you might extend this same unconditional love to others who society may overlook or reject.

Day 2: Embracing God's Healing

Reading: John 5:1-15

Devotional:

The story of the man at the pool of Bethesda challenges us to confront our own desire for healing and change. Jesus' question, "Do you want to get well?" resonates deeply with our spiritual journey. Are there areas in your life where you've become comfortable with your spiritual infirmity? Reflect on the excuses or justifications you might be clinging to. Today, hear Christ calling you to "Pick up your mat and walk." What step of faith is He asking you to take? Pray for the courage to leave behind old patterns and embrace the new life He offers.

Day 3: Experiencing God's Grace

Reading: John 8:1-11

Devotional:

The account of the woman caught in adultery powerfully illustrates God's grace and forgiveness. Like this woman, we all stand condemned by our sin, yet Jesus offers us mercy instead of judgment. Meditate on the profound truth that in Christ, there is "no condemnation" (Romans 8:1). How does this grace impact your view of yourself and others? While Jesus doesn't condemn us, He does call us to "go and sin no more." Consider what this means in your life. How can you respond to God's grace by pursuing holiness and extending forgiveness to others?

Day 4: Deliverance and New Identity

Reading: Luke 8:26-39

Devotional:

The deliverance of the demon-possessed man illustrates the radical transformation that comes through an encounter with Jesus. This man went from living among tombs to sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind. Reflect on your own journey of faith. How has Christ delivered you from the "tombs" of your past? Sometimes, like the townspeople, we can be afraid of change - in ourselves or others. Ask God to help you embrace the new identity He gives and to celebrate transformation in others. How can you share your story of deliverance with those around you today?

Day 5: Living in Christ

Reading: Galatians 2:20, Psalm 97:10

Devotional:

Paul's powerful statement in Galatians 2:20 encapsulates the essence of the Christian life - we no longer live for ourselves, but Christ lives in us. This new life calls us to love what God loves and hate what He hates. Meditate on what it means to be "crucified with Christ." How can you more fully surrender your life to Him today? Consider practical ways you can demonstrate your love for God by turning away from evil and pursuing righteousness. Remember, this new life is not lived in your own strength, but through faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you.