

4 WEEKS

Controlling

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Hypocritical

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THOSE PEOPLE!

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Critical



Those people. We all have them in our lives. You know-the ones that drain us, frustrate us or just all around annoy us. But what if “those people” provide an opportunity to be more conformed to the image of Christ?

In this series, we will be looking at “those people” in our lives and how God may very well use them to grow us up in Him.

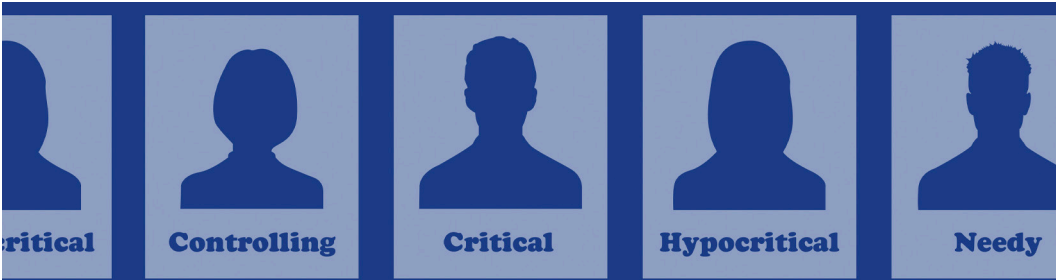
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WEEK 1	
Controlling People	4
WEEK 2	
Critical People	6
WEEK 3	
Hypocritical People	8
WEEK 4	
Needy People	11
Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group.....	14
Group Agreement	15





CONTROLLING PEOPLE

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Who is the biggest control freak you know? (be honest if it's you)

Big Idea:

When you have clarity of call, you can more easily recognize and resist the controllers who would seek to derail you from your calling.

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 16:22-24

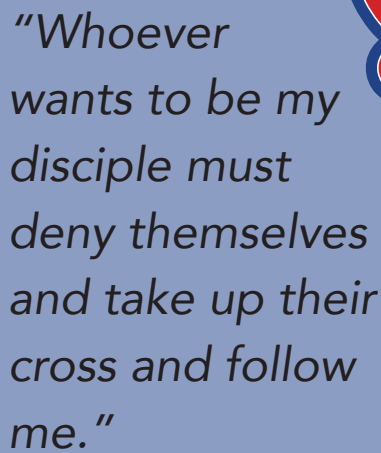
"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Discussion:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how controlling was the home you grew up in? How has this shaped you?
2. Read Matthew 16:22-24. How does Jesus respond to Peter's inadvertent attempt to control Him?

3. Jesus had a very clear vision of what He was called to do, which enabled him to recognize the distraction of the enemy through Peter's words. If calling clarifies, what can you learn from Jesus' actions, and then put into play in your own life?
4. What relationships in your life cause the most worry, anxiety, and temptation for people pleasing? What would you like to do differently?
5. Are there any unhealthy relationships you've allowed to control you? How will you begin to draw boundaries?
6. Are there any ways that you seek to control others?
7. How might you surrender your will to God's will and let go of your own need to control?

Memory Verse:



"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

- Matthew 16:24

Wrapping It Up:

Pray together about the areas where you are either being controlled or trying to control—that God's will comes into view and clarity can be brought in to your life as you take up your cross and follow Him.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for teachers and administrators in our community as school resumes this month.



CRITICAL PEOPLE

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What's the most snarky remark someone has made about or to you?

Big Idea:

A critical spirit is borne out of pride, ignorance, or hurt.

Key Scriptures:

1 Peter 2:23

"When they hurled their insults at him [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

Proverbs 19:11

"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."

Romans 14:10, 12-13 (NLT)

"So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ... Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other..."

Proverbs 12:18 (NLT)

"Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing."

Ephesians 4:29

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Discussion:

1. Which do you struggle with more- being overly critical or being overly sensitive to criticism?
2. How do you think this came about?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:23 and Proverbs 19:11. What do you learn about responding to criticism from these scriptures?
4. If you tend to be sensitive to criticism, understanding that when you're deeply grounded in who you are in Christ, you are less likely to be deeply affected by that criticism. What steps might you take to ground yourself in Him?
5. Read Romans 14:10,12-13 and Proverbs 12:18. In what areas are you most tempted to be critical of another person?
6. In what ways have you hurt others with your criticism?
7. Read Ephesians 4:29. What

will you do to start bringing healing instead?

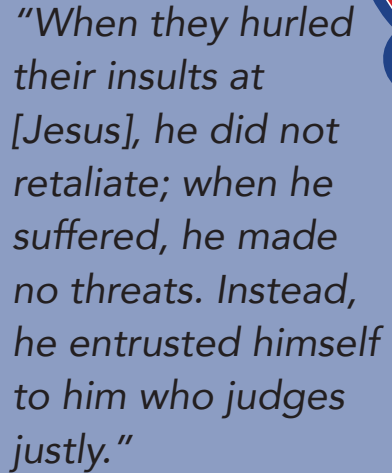
Wrapping It Up:

Pray together to have God's wisdom both in dealing with criticism and with being critical.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our student ministry team as they kick off for Fall.

Memory Verse:



"When they hurled their insults at [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

-1 Peter 2:23



HYPOCRITICAL PEOPLE

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What's the greatest example of hypocrisy you've ever encountered?

Big Idea:

We are called to confront hypocrisy with a heart to restore.

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 23:28 (NLT)

"Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Ephesians 4:15-16

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Galatians 6:1

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently or you also may be tempted."

James 5:19-20

"My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins."

Matthew 18:15-17

"If your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

1 Corinthians 10:12

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

Discussion:

1. Read Matthew 23:28. This week we are taking about hypocrites. That is, one who wears a mask. A hypocrite is a person who on the outside, portrays one thing, but inwardly they're not living the life that they're portraying outwardly. How do you tend to deal with those you perceive to be hypocritical?
2. In this week's message you were encouraged to ask yourself, when encountering someone who seems hypocritical, "why are they acting that way?". How might applying that principle help you to extend love to those who are displaying this type of behavior?
3. Read Ephesians 4:15-16. Share together about a time you were able to practice speaking the truth in love. What happened as a result?
4. Share about a time someone confronted you with truth in love. What happened as a result?
5. Read Galatians 5:1. What caution does Paul give in providing godly correction?
6. Read James 5:19-20. What benefit may be a result when you

7. speak the truth in love?

7. Read Matthew 18:15-17.
How does Jesus' way help protect you and others from hypocrisy?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 10:12.
Share about an area of hypocrisy you've discovered in your own life. What did you or will you do about it?

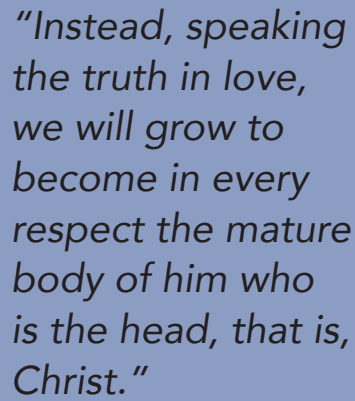
Wrapping It Up:

Pray together for courage to both speak and hear the truth in love.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our college ministry and the many new students that will be participating this Fall, that many will come to Christ and grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus.

Memory Verse:



"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

-Ephesians 4:15



NEEDY PEOPLE

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

How do you tend to respond to panhandlers (even those you might know well)?

Big Idea:

Helping people strategically is better than responding emotionally to those who are needy.

Key Scriptures:

Acts 3:3-7

"When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong."

Psalms 70:5

"But as for me, I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay."

Discussion:

1. Who are a few of the most life-giving people you know? What makes them different?
2. Read Acts 3:3-7. Discuss Peter and John's response to the one who was asking them for money.
3. Often, when we see someone in need, we do what's easy and makes us feel good. But what God is calling us to do may take more wisdom, discernment, time, and sacrifice than just relieving an immediate need. How might you be strategic to see through to the deeper need when faced with someone who is needy?
4. What do you need to change to better love people who have needs, not just give a handout, but a hand up?
5. Are there people in your life who are continuously emotionally needy? Do you feel burdened to meet their emotional needs?
6. How might you draw healthy boundaries with those people and encourage them to depend on God for every need.
7. Read Psalm 70:5. Discuss ways or areas where you tend to turn to others to meet your needs before

turning to God.

8. What actions will you take to turn to and trust God with your needs?

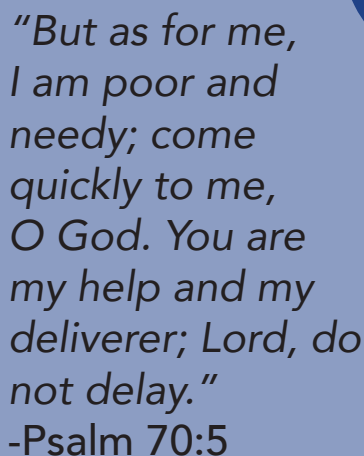
Wrapping It Up:

As a group, talk about ways you can be ready to share about available resources to help people become more sustainable in their lives, including our Sunnybrook Hope Center Food Pantry and Walk with Me program.

Prayer Focus:

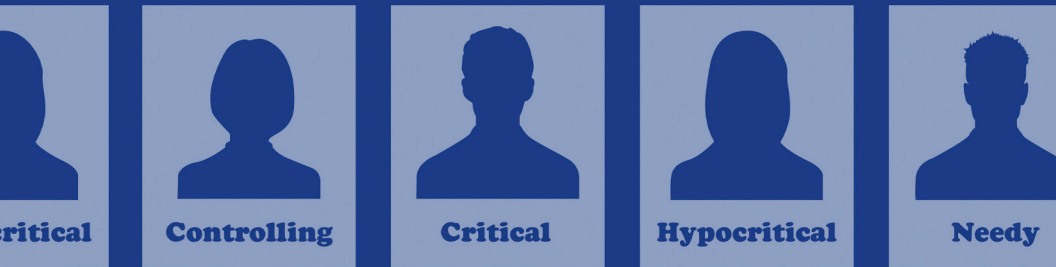
Pray for our Hope Center Food Pantry and Walk with Me Program that seeks to help people encounter God and become more sustainable in their lives.

Memory Verse:



*"But as for me,
I am poor and
needy; come
quickly to me,
O God. You are
my help and my
deliverer; Lord, do
not delay."
-Psalm 70:5*

NOTES:



Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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