

Small Group Guide: Fanning the Flame

Opening Prayer:

Begin by asking God to help your group understand what it means to be led by His Spirit and to grow in spiritual maturity together.

Discussion Questions:

1. **READ Proverbs 24:16** *How do patience & perseverance factor into spiritual growth? (Which do you tend toward? Which do you need to develop more in your spiritual life?)*
2. **Some people are naturally "anemic" in their spiritual life—just not giving it much thought.** How has God's Spirit helped you be more intentional about spiritual growth?
3. **READ Romans 8:1-17** What conversations are important to have with someone who has just been forgiven of a massive debt? How does this apply to new Christians? To mature Christians?
4. **How does understanding "no condemnation" help a divided church unite?** What divisions in our church or group could be healed by remembering this truth?
5. **What does it mean practically that we have an "obligation" not to live according to the flesh?** How is this different from legalism?
6. **The Spirit helps us understand God as our adopting Father who is both comforter and corrector.** How have you witnessed both of these godly qualities? Can both show we have God's approval? How?
7. When have you gone to God not for answers but just to be with Him as a Father? What keeps you from doing this more often?
8. **READ Romans 8:18-30 Paul uses childbirth as an analogy for spiritual growth and suffering.** What makes this such a powerful image? What does it teach us about the relationship between pain and purpose?
9. **"The presence of the child wipes away the pains of labor."** Can you share a time when looking back specifically on a spiritual difficulty, you realized it was worth it? How does this encourage you in current struggles?

Key Scripture Readings

Primary Passages:

- **Proverbs 24:16** - "For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again. But the wicked are brought down by calamity."
- **Romans 8:1-17** - No condemnation and our adoption as God's children
- **Romans 8:18-27** - Creation's groaning and the Spirit's help

Key Takeaways

1. We Don't Deserve Grace, But We Receive It

- Forgiveness isn't something we've earned
- God doesn't owe us a second chance—He gives it freely
- This should humble us and prevent judgmental attitudes toward others

2. Spiritual Growth Requires Both Patience AND Perseverance

- **Patience** = giving something the time it needs (can be passive)
- **Perseverance** = doing the work while you wait (active engagement)
- The righteous person falls seven times but gets up—this requires both qualities

3. No Condemnation Means Real Freedom

- We're no longer chasing God's approval—we have it in Christ
- This frees us from constantly seeking human approval
- We can focus on growth rather than guilt

4. Adoption Gives Us a Support System

- We have "Abba, Father"—an intimate, familial relationship
- God is both comforter AND corrector
- We need the Spirit to help us think rightly about God

5. Spiritual Maturity Is Like Childbirth

- Labor is difficult, but the result is worth it
- Growth involves pain, but looking back we're always glad we persevered
- "Hope that is seen is no hope at all"—we're still waiting for complete redemption

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: Choose ONE

Option 1: The Get-Up Practice

- Identify one area where you keep "falling" spiritually
- Instead of beating yourself up, practice the Proverbs 24:16 principle
- Each time you stumble, immediately get back up with prayer: "Father, I fell again, but I'm getting up. Help me."

Option 2: The Abba Exercise

- Set aside 10 minutes three times this week
- Don't only bring a list of requests— spend time thinking about who God is & what's He's done
- Journal what this experience is like for you

Option 3: The Patience & Perseverance Audit

- Identify one spiritual discipline you've been neglecting (prayer, Bible reading, worship, service, etc.)
- Create a realistic plan that shows both patience (giving it time) and perseverance (doing the work)
- Share your plan with one person in the group for accountability

Option 4: The "No Condemnation" Conversation

- Think of someone you've been judging or holding at arm's length
- Reflect on Romans 8:1—if God doesn't condemn them, why are you?
- Take a step toward reconciliation or acceptance this week