

[RE]FOCUS

Moving Forward Together in Faith, Hope, and Love

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



Session 1 - Refocus

“Hot or Cold?”

1. The 8 session study that you are beginning today is focused on the person of Jesus and life that He calls us into. As we begin to refocus on Jesus consider this question and answer it, if someone were to ask you why you follow Jesus what would 3 things come to mind?
2. Today in our video lesson we are going to studying Revelation 3:14-21. In this section of the book of Revelation Jesus is speaking directly to the church in Ephesus at the end of the 1st century, but He is certainly still speaking directly to us. As we get ready to study this section of scripture, what changes have you made in your life because of Jesus?

Video Lesson

3. Go ahead and read through Revelation 3:14-21. Over the next 8 weeks what thing will you and Jesus work on together so that you are more focused on him, instead of being lukewarm?
4. What prayer request do you have?
5. As a group, family, or individual spend time in prayer not only lifting up your needs and the needs of others, but also as God to identify one thing in your life that He would like to change and for the strength to do the changes God is calling you to as you Refocus.

Session 2 – Reflecting

“Before Jesus”

1. As we begin this session let’s start by reflecting on the beginning of our relationship with Jesus. How did Jesus initiate a relationship with you? Who and what did He use?
2. Today in our video lesson we are going to be sharing the story of the Old Testament that led to Jesus. What scripture from the Old Testament has encouraged you the most or inspired you?

Video Lesson

3. Now we have been told and reminded of the Old Testament story go ahead and read Luke 24:13-32. Is there a story or scripture from the Old Testament that enables you to refocus in on Jesus?
4. What prayer request do you have?
5. As a group, family, or individual spend time in prayer thanking God for HisStory and leading you to Jesus. Also today, please begin to pray for an individual in your life that is not focused on Jesus. May God use you to refocus them on Him.

[RE]FOCUS WEEK 3: Restoring – *The Author Has Authority*

Stuff breaks. Some things we can put back together, or at least make it appear as though nothing is broken. Some things we replace, make it look, even feel as good as new. Some things we cannot fix. Some broken things we cannot remove. They just sit there...reminders of what used to be.

- Share with the group a time when you broke something at what you did about it.
- Would you handle it differently now?

Watch [RE]FOCUS video for week 3

Read Romans 15:14-19

Paul sees the family of God in Rome doing what God has given them to do. They are not defined by to-do lists but by grace. So what encouragement does Paul give them? Right there in verse 14. "You yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another."

What you are doing right now, as a group, is being filled by the Holy Spirit in that same goodness, so that you can teach others.

How is the Holy Spirit filling you? Paul lists 5 things at the end of v. 18 and in v. 19

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This is our to-do list! ...except it's not. What does Paul write in v.14? Who's doing the work? (Hint: the same one at work in v. 19).

Listen to what Paul says about the Spirit in Colossians 3:16. What is the source of our energy for worship, learning, serving, and life?

Now read through Matthew 9:6-8.

Jesus is the Author of all things. He is present at the beginning of all things (John 1:1-3), and through him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). In Matthew 9, Jesus *claims* he has authority to forgive. "Experts" told him only God could do that.

So what did Jesus show them He, God, could do? (v.6)

The One who designs and holds all things together is filling you with His Spirit.

What does that mean for your broken things?

Pray:

Jesus, Thank you for using your power to make dead things filled with life, hurt things filled with your healing, broken things restored. As we wait for you to return and restore *all* things better than they ever were, we live through pain and situations where life seems emptied of your power. Through the faith you give and grow, help us to trust your promises and your power: your Spirit at work in us. You forgive, you heal, you hear our prayers. Help us believe. Amen.

[RE]FOCUS WEEK 4: (Re)newing – Jesus love and our love

Every day on the news there are more reports of regional and global tragedy. Let's face it: it's a hard, cruel world. We all go through hard times and encounter hurtful, hateful people. When it becomes personal, it is easy for anger to grow into something worse.

- Share with the group a time when you were hurt and it seemed impossible to forgive.

- Discuss a time when you did something hurtful to someone important to you and that person forgave you.

Watch [RE]FOCUS video for week 4

Read 1 John 4:7-16

The Apostle John in this letter affirms the first and second greatest commandments, namely to love God above all else, and to love our neighbor (cf. Matt 22:37–40; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27). In verse 23 of chapter 3, he wrote, “And this is [God’s] command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another.” How are these two necessarily connected?

In our text, how does John define love? (esp. 7, 8, 10)

In fact, if one does not love, what does John say is true of that person? (8)

What evidence do you see in your life that you know God? (7, 11, 13)

How do you know that God loves you? (10, 14-16)

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents feeling unloved by God and 5 represents intimate connection with God, where do you think you are right now?

Read Matthew 24:9-14. Hatred and love are opposites. How do they play into the end of time?

In John 15:5, Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Paul says love is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). What does this tell you about your source of loving God and others?

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." (Matthew 5:43-44, ESV) How is love connected to forgiveness?

Closing Thought & Prayer:

"The Scripture, in many places, calls Christ our priest, bridegroom, love's delight, etc., and us who believe in him, his bride, virgin, daughter, etc.; this is a fair, sweet, loving picture, which we always should have before our eyes." - Luther, Dr. Martin. "The Table Talks of Martin Luther.

Lord, You delight in a clean heart, so we come to you confessing our sins, especially how we have not loved You first and how we have not loved our neighbors. Forgive us for Jesus' sake. Renew us by Your Word and Spirit. Create in us pure hearts. Remove from our minds all evil desires, greed, envy, hatred, pride, vanity and lusts. Help us to [RE]FOCUS on Your great love for us in Jesus so that we overflow with love for You and our neighbors. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[RE]FOCUS WEEK 5: (Re)vealing - I AM/Identity of Jesus

As we seek to apply the Bible to life, it is important that we don't view the Scripture as an "instruction manual." The Bible does contain instructions, of course—lots of them to be obeyed without qualification or hesitation. But we will find our pursuit of obedience frustrating and exhausting if we don't put first things first.

The Bible is not as concerned with what we're to *do* as it is with who we *are*. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew 5 through 7, Jesus equates lust with committing adultery and hatred as being equal with murder. Why? Because God's plan is not just for better people but *new* people. He wants to change us from the inside out. It's not our behavior He's after first but our identity. That starts with knowing the identity of the One who changes our "innermost parts."

- Share with the group a time when you said or did something that was not "in character" with how you identify.

- Thinking back on your life, what are the times you feel the best about? How a time when you did something hurtful to someone important to you and that person forgave you.

Watch [RE]FOCUS video for week 5

Read Colossians 1:15-23

The Apostle Paul exalts Jesus Christ as the "very image of God" What truths about Jesus does he focus on after saying this? (vs. 15-19)?

What was the main purpose of Jesus becoming fully human as well as being fully God? (v. 20)

Where are you in verse 20?

What does the word "reconcile" mean in this verse?

How has being reconciled to God through Jesus' blood changes us? (vs. 21-23)

What aspect of our ongoing relationship with God is presented in verse 23?

It has been said that "sin will take you farther than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you wanted to pay!" Such was the case for Adam and Eve when they didn't follow the identity God created them to have; so it is with us. Why do we daily have to be on guard against sin and daily confess it?

In Galatians 5:4, the Apostle Paul wrote, "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." (Galatians 5:4, NIV) What does this verse teach us about the importance of focusing on who we *are* versus what we *do*?

What is the difference between piety and piousness?

Closing Thought & Prayer:

"It is the best and truest friend who honestly tells us the truth about ourselves even when he knows we shall not like it. False friends are the ones who hide such truth from us and do so in order to remain in our favour." —R. C. H. LENSKI

Lord, Jesus, as we spend this week with you, help us to [RE]FOCUS on how You revealed Yourself to us so that we might have a new identity in You. Keep us from false and vain self-righteousness. Protect us also from temptation and sin. If we stumble, pick us up again and wash us clean with Your blood. We ask this in Your precious name. Amen.

Week 6 – Reforming

“The Master Teacher”

1. We have all had teachers in your opinion what makes someone a good teacher?
2. As we get ready to refocus in on Jesus as a teacher take a moment and think about the teachings that you know Jesus taught. What teaching stands out the most to you?

Video Lesson

3. Take a moment and skim through the headings of the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount recorded for us by Matthew in chapters 5, 6, and 7. In week one you were asked to consider what one thing in your life needed to be refocused by Jesus. What teaching of Jesus is helping you or could help you?
4. What prayer request do you have?
5. As a group, family, or individual spend time in prayer thanking Jesus for His teaching and asking Him to help you apply His word.

[RE]FOCUS WEEK 7: Redeeming - *Jesus' passion*

At Trinity Lutheran School, our substitutes are amazing. They stand in the gap; they fill a need. Growing up, I loved it when there was a substitute teacher. Typically it meant that our class could get away with a little bit more. One time, the principal was our substitute. We couldn't get away with much, but the focus he brought made the day fruitful.

What are other things we substitute? One tired athlete for a rested one, Stevia for sugar, plastic for paper or glass. Substitutes are just that: stand-ins for the real thing.

- Share with the group your experience with one kind of substitute.
- Discuss a time when you were able to stand in the gap for someone else.
- Why do you think substitutes step up to fill in?

Watch [RE]FOCUS video for week 5

Read Romans 3:21-25a.

Jesus doesn't let us get away with anything. He calls our sin and our broken nature exactly what they are. He shows us humanity as it was supposed to be. He shows us that we have gaps, that we are still missing the real thing.

Then Jesus substitutes Himself for us. Being the fullness of human, he gives his humanity to us. He substitutes Himself for us in death, so that as He is raised from the dead, we will be, too. Everything that God's people couldn't do in the first part of the Bible called the Old Testament, Jesus does.

Everything that God's people couldn't do in second part of the Bible called the New Testament, Jesus does. Everything humanity misses, Jesus fulfills. This is why Paul wrote those words you read in Romans. That's why John wrote the words in John 3:16. This is the passion of Jesus.

How does it feel to know that no one is righteous?

How does it feel to know everyone's sin is paid for?

How does it feel to know that God gives this to you freely?

If you know a substitute, thank them for stepping up and in to fill in something that was missing. As you think about how Christ substitutes for you, consider people in your life or circles of friends. Is there someone out there whose needs you can help fill? Pray for clarity and an opportunity to show them the love of Jesus.

Pray: God thank you for standing in the gap for me. Thank you for not merely supplying what I lack, but supplying the depth of what my soul needs: You. Guide me to trust you, to follow, to love and serve with passion. Amen.

Week 8 – Re establishing

“Heaven”

1. As we get ready for our lesson for today about Jesus let's start by asking and answering what are you looking forward to the most about heaven?
2. How do you think you will react when you see Jesus face to face?

Video Lesson

3. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. As we refocus on the fact that one day we will all see Jesus face to face who is it today that God is calling you to share Christ's story with? And what is your plan to either start or continue to share Christ's story with them?
4. As we wait for Jesus who is Jesus calling us to invite to the eternal party of Heaven?
5. As a group, family, or individual spend time praying “thy kingdom come,” and for the opportunity to share Christ's story with love not just with actions, but with words.