



Untangled

Breaking Free From Emotional Strongholds



COUNTRY CHRISTIAN GROWTH GUIDE
5—WEEK SERMON SERIES
July 5,12,19; Aug 9, 16



DATE

WEEK 1

ANXIETY

WEEK 2

FEAR

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Untangled: Breaking free from emotional strongholds

God has created us as emotional beings, but what happens when our emotions get the best of us? In this 5-week series, we will be looking at 5 different emotions that can often paralyze us from moving forward in life. In this series, we will investigate how to transition FROM FEELING your way into your beliefs, TO BELIEVEING your way into your feelings.

RESOURCES FOR THIS GROWTH GUIDE

We want to encourage you through this series to open your heart and mind to how different emotions are impacting your life. Here is a list of resources that we would encourage you to look into as you did into Gods plan for your emotions throughout this guide:

BOOKS:

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero

Rhythms of Renewal by Rebekah Lyons

True Feelings by Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Mahaney Whitacre

Untangling Emotions by J. Alasdair Groves and Winston T. Smith

Feelings and Faith by Brian S. Borgman

Switching on your Brain by Dr. Caroline Leaf

anxiety

WEEK 1 | JULY 5TH, 2020

BIG IDEA: You don't always have the power to control but you always have the power to surrender.

MATTHEW 6:24-34

Matthew 6 is part of the greatest sermon ever taught. Jesus took time to teach the people about how to be a part of the Kingdom of God through His sermons on the mount. Jesus was serious about the impact of a life focused on God and His kingdom and His teachings on anxiety were no different. He spoke boldly about the anxiety that easily can impact the mind when it comes to the issues of money, clothing and shelter.

Jesus' message was that God was worthy of focusing our thoughts on. In fact, He's the only thing worthy. The issue that He readily addressed is that when we focus on the provision instead of the provider, we deceive ourselves and focus on the temporary things that will never bring true fulfillment. When our hearts, minds, and attention are wrapped up in the provider, we realize that He is holding us AND everything that we care about. What are you holding onto today that you can hand over to the Father.?

PRAYER

This week pray this prayer each day and submit yourself to Him by trusting in Him.

“Lord, you say in Paul's letter to the Philippian church, ‘And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.’

Father, I'm thanking you now for the fact that you are going to meet all my needs. I have a hard time seeing how, but I'm going to trust and believe your promises. I believe Lord, help my unbelief.

I thank you that you supply my every need out of your endless riches in Jesus Christ. You know my needs before I recognize them and just like I love to provide for my children, you love to provide so much more abundantly for your children.

So Father I'm asking you to provide for me with all the boldness I have in me. Confident you will answer, putting your glory on display in my life for all to see. Be glorified in me, Lord. Father I'm casting all my cares on you because you care for me. Amen.”

Charles Spurgeon: *“It does not matter how heavy troubles are if you can cast them on the Lord. The heavier they are, so much the better; for the more you have gotten rid of, the more there is laid on the Rock”.*

READING PLAN

This week use the following steps to dig into the truth of God's word:

Reading:

Begin with reading through the passage a few times and really seek to understand the individual words, phrases, and thoughts that make up the passage. Take time to journal any specifics that stand out to you. Don't try to add your own meaning, but read the text as it comes off of the page. The goal is not to see the words with your eyes, but to feel them in your heart, mind, and soul.

Meditation:

This step has everything to do with thinking of specific chunks of the passage in front of you. Think about phrases and specific words that stood out to you. Focus intently on why the Holy Spirit might have chosen these words to speak to you today. Reflect on how it might apply to your life. Is it relevant to something that you are going through? Does it bring to mind a struggle you have been dealing with? Journal some thoughts that followed your meditation time.

Prayer:

Our next step is to take all of the words, thoughts, feelings, actions, fears, and convictions that we've just experienced and offer them to the Lord in prayer. Ask him to illuminate what he would have you do with them. Simply talk to God and tell him how you are feeling. Confess any anxieties, praise him for who he is, ask him for what you need. Take time to record your prayers in a prayer journal.

Contemplation:

Be silent in the presence of the Lord. Relax, embrace, and just be with the Lord. Don't rush this. Quiet your mind and soul sitting patiently with Him. Take time after contemplation to write down your experience with God in silence.

SCRIPTURE

Monday: - Matthew 6:19-34

Tuesday: - Philippians 4:4-20

Wednesday: - Matthew 11:25-30

Thursday: - Psalm 23:1-6

Friday: - 1 Peter 5:5-11

Saturday: - Catch up, Reflect and Pray.

NOTES

SMALL GROUP GROWTH GUIDE

WEEK 1 | July 5th, 2020

BIG IDEA: You don't always have the power to control, but you always have the power to surrender.

BELONG

Supplies: Index cards, pens, Bibles

Instructions: Give each member of your small group an index card and pen. Have each person look up and copy Philippians 4:6-7. Pair up and have each pair practice memorizing the verse together for 5 minutes. As a group, discuss how memorizing could help reduce the experience of worry and anxiety. Have group members continue to commit these verses to memory between this and your next meeting. Review them at your next meeting.

Bonus: Look up and copy Matthew 6:33-34 onto an index card. Commit these verses to memory and review them at the next small group.

GROW

1. Consider Matthew 6:24-34. How does a believer's anxiety suggest that there is little thought of God (vs 24-29)? How does a believer's anxiety diminish that person's confidence in God's concern for him or herself (vs 26,30)? How might anxiety function as a false prophet to a believer that experiences anxiety (vs 27, 34)?
2. Read Matthew 6:24-34 together. What do these verses suggest about the difference between feeling your way into your beliefs and believing your way into your feelings? Which do you tend to do? Which is more appropriate for a follower of Christ? Why?
3. Considering Matthew 6:24-34 and Philippians 4:6-7, what is the importance of our emotions? How did God design our emotions to function? Which should our decisions be based upon, feelings or truth? How can we appropriately take our emotions into consideration as a source of information when we are making decisions?
4. Look at Matthew 6:24-34 and Philippians 4:6-7. Does anxiety ever make it difficult to react to a situation that you encounter appropriately? Does anxiety ever paralyze you or keep you from appropriate action? What do these verses tell you to do in this situation? When might it be appropriate for a believer to seek professional counsel for anxiety with either a pastor or Christian counselor?
5. Read Matthew 6:33-34. Who saved you yesterday? Who delivers you today? How can this lead to certainty about His provision for tomorrow? How can this truth be translated daily into your emotions and behaviors?

REACH

Read Matthew 6:24 together. Who do we serve as believers? How should this influence our behavior towards others, both believers and nonbelievers? How can this free us up to be more generous? How may this affect our testimony to non-believers as we share the Gospel.?

Going Deeper:

Look at Matthew 6:33-34 and Philippians 4:6-7. When have your emotions gotten the best of you? How did you react? How would you like to have reacted? How can the instructions in Philippians 4:6-7 help you to react to difficult situations in a way that honors Christ and the people around you?

fear

WEEK 2 | JULY 12TH, 2020

BIG IDEA: Do not be surprised if the world hates you for your faith in God.

PROVERBS 14:26-27

The first Sunday in November is set apart as the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Open Doors USA explains, “while Christian persecution takes many forms, it is defined as any hostility experienced as a result of identification with Jesus Christ. Followers of Christ are targeted for their faith. They are attacked; they are discriminated against at work and at school; they risk sexual violence, torture, arrest and much more.”

“In just the last year there have been:

- ◆ 1847 churches and other Christian buildings attacked.
- ◆ 3150 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.
- ◆ 4305 Christians were killed for their faith.”

Prayer is the action most requested by those who are persecuted. Mature believers in persecution often may say something like, “Don’t pray for our persecution to end. Please pray that we will be obedient through our suffering.”

PRAYER EXAMPLES THIS WEEK:

- ◆ Pray that whatever their circumstances, God will give persecuted Christians the right words to speak. Ephesians 6:19-20
- ◆ Pray that persecuted Christians will understand and find peace in the sufficiency of God’s grace even in their weaknesses. 2 Corinthians 12:9
- ◆ Pray that Christians facing hardship will draw from a source of power larger than themselves in God. 2 Corinthians 1:7-19
- ◆ Pray that God would be present with persecuted Christians in their hardship, protecting them according to His will. Matthew 26:39
- ◆ Pray that their witness would inspire those who seek to harm them. Luke 6:27-32; Acts 16:25-34

Above information from Open Doors USA

READING PLAN

This week, dig into the scriptures below using the Two Truths and a Lie method:

Truth 1:

What is the biggest Truth that you pulled from your reading today? Why did it stand out to you? What made it an important truth for you to cling to? How can you apply it to your life? Write down the scripture and the truth that you gleaned.

Truth 2:

Use Bible study tools or Google to find another Bible truth that supports the statement from the first truth that you found. Write down the scripture. What does this verse or passage say to support that truth? What do you need to do to walk in the power of that truth?

Lie:

What lie are you believing or are tempted to believe that stands in the way of these truths? Take time to refute that lie with the truths that you've learned. God has given Christians a spirit of power, love and self-control, 2 Timothy 1:7, therefore there is victory over fear. Write down a sentence that says something like this, "The lie I've believed is _____, but God's word says that _____."

SCRIPTURE

Monday: - Proverbs 14:26-27, Isaiah 41:10, Philippians 4:7

Tuesday: - Proverbs 9:1-12, Isaiah 26:3-4, Joshua 1:9

Wednesday: - Psalm 91:1-16, Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 27:1-3

Thursday: - 2 Timothy 1:3-14, Romans 1:16, 5:1

Friday: - Matthew 10:26-33, Luke 21:14-15

Saturday: - Catch up, Reflect and Pray.

NOTES

SMALL GROUP GROWTH GUIDE

WEEK 2 | July 12th, 2020

BIG IDEA: Do not be surprised if the world hates you for your faith in God.

BELONG

1. Come up with a list of some of the countries where Christian believers are being persecuted for their faith.
2. Where do you see opposition to the Gospel in your life?

GROW

1. Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. List the different types of difficulties faced, the resources God provides and the anticipated outcomes in these verses.
2. Based on these verses, how do believers deal with difficulties and persecutions?
3. Read Acts 4:29-31 and 5:40-42. What type of difficulties did the church face in these verses? What was their response and for what did they ask God?
4. Based on these verses, how do believers deal with opposition and persecution?
5. Why do you think that the believers did not seem to struggle with fear?
6. How do we respond to opposition or the potential of opposition?

REACH

1. What can you do to encourage, and strengthen those who are being persecuted for their faith?
2. What prevents you from being bold when it comes to sharing your faith?
3. Take time as a group to pray for believers in the countries that you listed above.

depression

WEEK 3 | JULY 19TH, 2020

BIG IDEA: God's mercies are new every morning, even in the darkest situations.

LAMINTATIONS 3:1-33

Maybe you've felt it. The deep and uncontrollable sense of despair, panic, and darkness. Maybe these feelings were caused by circumstances of hurt, loss, or pain. Maybe these emotions float around in your heart with no discernible root. Either way, these feelings of brokenness and pain can stop us in our tracks and keep us from embracing the fullness of life.

One distinction that is important to make in our understanding of depression and depressive feelings is that we don't always have the answer. For those struggling with clinical depression, help from professionals and treatment with medicine can be helpful and necessary.

But as believers, it is important to remember that while God asks us to cast our cares upon Him and trust Him, the fallen state of the world allows for negative emotions, brokenness, and sin in our bodies and minds to still be barriers that we face. The best thing that believers can do is to trust God, trust in His word, trust in the different means that He has provided for us to find wholeness, and to walk alongside each other as we all struggle with the emotions that might be more prevalent in each of our lives. While depressive and melancholic feelings might fade away or cycle in and out, clinical depression can be a serious condition. If you are struggling with depression, please contact us and let us connect you with people and resources who can walk alongside with you.

PRAYER

Pray one of these two prayers this week as you consider how God answers depression:

"God, lifter of bowed-down heads, help me recognize Your presence with me in this depressive time in my life. O God, as I'm feeling depressed, may this heaviness speak to me. Help me listen to what depression may have to teach me at this time. Holy Spirit guide me to a person, a place of resources to support me during these moments. Or guide someone to me as I seek you. Provide comfort, healing, hope and help in this time. O, Lord, I cry out to you. Help me to see you all around me trusting in you and your provision in this time. Amen."

"God, in your grace and mercy, hear my prayer. Help me to be available to those around me who live with depression and I don't know what to do. I feel powerless and inadequate to help, but you will provide me with the words, time and wisdom to just be a friend. Help me to be a resources of a listening ear that I need to be with those who are struggling during these times of pain. May your Holy Spirit guide and direct my path and provide strength to those in pain. Thank you Jesus. Amen."

[Both prayers adapted from Guideposts](#)

READING PLAN

This week, use the PLANT method to look into the truth of scripture:

Prepare:

Put away distractions and ask God to prepare your heart for your reading and journaling time.

Learn:

What does this passage have to teach me today? Write down lessons that the characters learned or a principle(s) that are present that you can glean from this passage.

Ask:

Ask questions of the passage. What don't you understand about the passage and take time to write down these questions. What could be illuminated through further study? What principles should you discuss with those around you?

Name Truths:

What are some of the nuggets of truth from this passage that you can learn from? What truths do you need to take away and put into practice?

Take Action:

What will you do with what you've read? How can you put the lessons and truths into action this week? Write out your steps and follow them.

SCRIPTURE

Monday: - Lamentations 3:1-20

Tuesday: - Lamentations 3:21-33

Wednesday: - Psalm 40:1-17

Thursday: - Psalm 8:18-30

Friday: - Romans 8:18-30

Saturday: - Catch up, Reflect and Pray.

NOTES

SMALL GROUP GROWTH GUIDE

WEEK 3 | July 19th, 2020

BIG IDEA: God's mercies are new every morning, even in the darkest situations.

BELONG

To begin, ask the group for 2 volunteers. After they have been identified, assign one as the “sales person”, and the other as the “customer.” Choose a small item from nearby (pen, vase, table, chair) and have the sales person give their best sales pitch to the customer to see if they will buy. Feel free to repeat with new volunteers if desired.

1. What do you typically do if you are trying to turn around a bad day? What avenues do you or others you've observed do to turn a bad day around? (Be alone, workout, wait for tomorrow).
2. Did you notice anyone this week who was clearly having a bad day? Were you able to help them at all through your interaction with them? Did you feel compassion for them or were you unable to be empathetic toward them or their situation?

GROW

1. Lamentation 3, we read about the sad state of affairs following Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Although the writer of this book is not named, it is most widely believed to be the prophet Jeremiah. The weeping prophet as he's sometimes referred to is believed to have witnessed the fall of God's holy city of Jerusalem first hand, and although he was understandably saddened by the events, he maintained faith in God and hope in His mercy for His people.
2. In order to get a brief picture of the sequence of events that lead us to Lamentation 3, read the following verses in the group, reading them in order.
Lamentation 1:3, 5, 8, 17-18; 2:9-10, 21-22
Have you ever experienced circumstances as dire as those detailed in these passages? Share. How do you think the author or the other survivors have felt?
3. Have your group read through Lamentation 3:1-20. In terms of what we now call “depression”, would you say that the author was depressed based on this passage? Why or why not?
4. Although the current moment was extremely dark for the author of Lamentations, he still held firm to his faith and hope in God and could say with complete conviction, “Great is thy faithfulness.” Read Lamentation 3:21-33 as a group again and discuss God's faithfulness and mercy. What mercies have you experienced in your life?

REACH

1. Are you in a time of darkness currently? Are you able to share with everyone? Are you unable to feel the truth of Jeremiah 3:22-23 that God's "mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning..."? If so, how has this been a help to you? If not, can you identify what it is that may be hindering you?
2. Do you know anyone who is suffering with depression in your circle of influence where you live, work, and play? How can you share the goodness of God with them this week?

anger

WEEK 4 | AUGUST 9TH, 2020

BIG IDEA: Anger is a part of God's character designed by Him to be a tool and resource to help you respond to the evil in the world in a powerful way.

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

Have you ever looked at injustice or brokenness in the world and felt anger boiling up inside of you? Did you know that God created that feeling? Throughout God's Word, anger is an emotion that God exhibited in His righteousness. Like most other emotions that have a more negative connotation, anger is an emotion created by God to be used in a specific way. Where we mess up is when we misplace our anger and let it rule our lives instead of focusing it on the thing that God wants us to be angry about.

Maybe you've been in a place recently where anger has gotten the best of you, maybe it feels uncontrollable at times. Both James and Paul remind us of ways to keep anger in check. Paul says in Ephesians 4:26 to "Be angry and do not sin", and James says "Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger." All our emotions are from God, as we are created in His image; however, God expresses them perfectly and even in our sin, He can use sin, sinlessly.

How can you practice these steps found in scripture this week and use your anger in a way the God created it to be felt?

PRAYER

Pray this prayer this week as you consider any anger, bitterness, or resentment that you might be holding on to: "Gracious Lord, I'm confessing my anger and bitterness that I too often hold and hide in my heart. I place it at your feet at the foot of the cross and pray that in your grace you will expose all that is causing the bitter poison that can be lodged within my heart to surface. Set me free from it, I pray, that I may see the victory in my life, giving you glory for it.

Lord, I confess all of my anger, resentment, and bitterness knowing that when I allow this to surface in my heart it breaks the fellowship we have together. I know that when I confess my anger, You are faithful and just, to forgive, cleansing me of all unrighteousness for which I praise Your holy name. Lord, I desire that you set me free from this pollution within my heart so that the root of anger shrivels up within. I ask You to examine me and root out all that is not pleasing in Your sight. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Author Unknown

READING PLAN

This week, use the WORD reading plan to dig into what God says about anger:

Word:

Pick a verse that stands out to you from today's passage. Write that verse out in your prayer journal. Read over this verse several times and pray for God to illuminate its meaning.

Observe:

Try to answer the Who, What, When, Where, and Why questions about this passage. Who wrote it? What is it about? When was it written? Where did it take place? Why did they include what they wrote in this passage?

Relevance:

How is this passage relevant to your life today? In what ways is it applicable and how can you immediately put to use what you're learning through reading?

Declare:

Write out any promises that you've gleaned from these portions of scripture, whether explicitly stated, or inferred. Declare these promises over your life in prayer. Ask God for His will and His timing in these promises.

SCRIPTURE

Monday: - Ephesians 4:17-32

Tuesday: - James 1:19-25

Wednesday: - Proverbs 15:1-18

Thursday: - James 4:1-12

Friday: - Ecclesiastes 7:1-13

Saturday: - Catch up, Reflect and Pray.

NOTES

SMALL GROUP GROWTH GUIDE

WEEK 4 | August 9th, 2020

BIG IDEA: Anger is a part of God's character designed by Him to be a tool and resource to help you respond to the evil in the world in a powerful way.

BELONG

1. What are some things that make you easily angry?
2. What are some examples of righteous anger? Is this type of anger appropriate or not? Why?
3. Explain and contrast when anger is righteous and when we sin in our anger.

GROW

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-32. If you had to come up with the theme of this passage, what would it be? What example did Christ set that Paul is challenging believers to understand?
2. What specifically does Paul instruct believers to do with their anger in this passage? How does corrupt talk and the other negative behaviors in this passage play into anger?
3. What does it mean practically to put off the old self? Is this a realistic commandment for believers? Can it be done in our lives? In our culture? What makes this so challenging?
4. When it says to be angry and do not sin...to never let the sun go down on anger, how can we achieve these things? Are there situations you can think of where you didn't follow these examples? Are there situations where you did? What were the results of each?
5. What are examples of when Jesus was angry? Read Isaiah 53:7. What does this show us about the direction of anger? What was His focus? Was it on him, others?

REACH

Is there someone you are harboring anger towards now? How should you respond in light of what we just read? Is there someone harboring anger towards you that you know of? How should you respond? What will you do this week and who in the group will ask you about your attitude and actions?

envy

WEEK 5 | AUGUST 16TH, 2020

BIG IDEA: Envy rots us down to the bone, but a thankful attitude is the enemy of envy.

NUMBERS 11:1-10

Thanksgiving is an incredible time of year because we get to stop and remember all that we have to be thankful for. Interestingly, Black Friday is the very next day, where people all over America embrace the opportunities to show up early to stores for incredible sales. Sometimes it can be easy to look at what others have and think, “my life would be so much better if I had that.” How often do we let those types of thoughts creep in and rob us of the thankfulness and joy that we are given by God?

Envy is a word that we don’t like to use, but an emotion that we might feel even without thinking about it. We get those creeping feelings from time to time that tell us that we deserve more. We can start to believe those things instead of embracing the provision that God is in our lives. It’s not bad to desire good things, but we get in trouble when we desire them more than God, or forget to be thankful for how He has blessed us. Thankfulness is the natural enemy of envy.

PRAYER

Pray this prayer this week as you consider thankfulness:

“Dear God, thank you for who you are, your greatness, goodness, and graciousness. Your power to uphold the universe and how you bless the just and the unjust. Thank you for your glorious love and care in the provisions of life. Thank you for the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ, who sacrificially bore our penalty that we might be given life and freedom. Forgive me when I allow ungratefulness to enter in my heart, help me see your continued goodness in my life, the wondrous deeds you perform. Renew my heart on you each day with thanksgiving. Fill me continually with your spirit, with joy and peace, so that I will praise your name, for you alone are worthy. Amen.”

Author Unknown

READING PLAN

This week, use the 4P Method to discover what scripture teaches about envy and thanksgiving:

Purpose:

Why do you think this passage was written? Why is it important enough to be in the Bible? What do you think the overall theme or topic is?

Primary Verse:

Which verse seems to be the most important thought in this passage? Why? Take time to write out the entire verse and the reference.

Promises:

Make a list of the promises you find in the passage. How do these apply to your life?

Problems:

Is there anything that didn't make sense in the verses you read? Any words, thoughts, or concepts you have trouble wrapping your brain around? Write them out for further study.

SCRIPTURE

Monday: - Numbers 11:1-10

Tuesday: - James 3:13-18

Wednesday: - Proverbs 14:25-30

Thursday: - Colossians 3:12-17

Friday: - 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Saturday: - Catch up, Reflect and Pray.

NOTES

SMALL GROUP GROWTH GUIDE

WEEK 5 | August 16th, 2020

BIG IDEA: Envy rots us down to the bone, but a thankful attitude is the enemy of envy.

BELONG

1. Is there a difference between envy, greed, and jealousy? Take time to define each.
2. Is it bad to want things? If you had the money to buy any one thing that you've had your eye on for a while, what would it be?

GROW

1. Read Numbers 11:1-10 as a group. What was the major issue in this passage? Why was God angry at the people? Can you think of a time that you've been guilty of something similar? Take time to share with the group.
2. What do you think the remedy for envy is? Can you think of any scriptures that might validate that claim? Take time to look up scriptures that help you understand the opposite attitude of envy.
3. Is there any place for envy, greed, or jealousy in the life of the believer? Why or why not? What can we do about this attitude in our life? How should we respond when we feel these emotions welling up inside us?
4. Why is it so easy to obsess over what we don't have instead of being thankful for what we do have? Is it easier to embrace thanksgiving and joy, or to think about the things that we want? How can we turn this around?

REACH

Ask everyone to make a list, or mental note, of 10 things they are thankful for. Go around and have people pray prayers of thanksgiving for the gifts God has given. Challenge each person to make a journal of thankfulness for the next few weeks and bring it back to share with the group.

UNTANGLING EMOTIONAL STRONGHOLDS

Believing God vs. Self-Deception

7 Strongholds of Emotional Justification

Stronghold to Justify	Standard Used	God's View
Everybody is doing it	Majority	Matthew 7:13
How did it turn out	Results	Matthew 23:15 Leviticus 10:1-2
It's my life	Me	Jerimiah 10:23 1Corinthians 6:20
Changing times	Peers	2Timothy 4:3-4 Galatians 1:8
Just this one time	Frequency	Matthew 12:30 Luke 12:16
It feels good	Conscience	Acts 23:1
What does God ask or value	The Bible	2 Timothy 3:16-17 Amos 7:8 1Corinthians 8



BELONG. GROW. REACH