

MY NEXT STEP STUDY GUIDE

The My Next Step study guide presents the material from the book in a format that can be used as a small group, study group or cell group curriculum, or as a study guide for discipleship groups.

HOW TO USE THE STUDY

The study for one lesson or chapter of My Next Step normally lasts between one half and one hour. How long the

study lasts depends on how much discussion is generated by the introduction and application questions.

Preparation

Before the group meets, all of the participants should read the chapter of My Next Step that they will be discussing during the study. However, this shouldn't be a prerequisite to being able to participate in the study.

Big Idea

The Big Idea is an extremely concise summary of the chapter's main idea.

Start the study by simply reading the Big Idea out loud. This serves to establish the topic for the rest of the conversation or study.

Discussion

There are one or two questions that help to start to think about how the study's topic relates to our practical life.

The goal of this portion of the study is to generate discussion and conversation around the topic.

Chapter Summary

The Chapter Summary contains a brief explanation of the material that is taught in the chapter. In this part of the study,

you can read this outloud, alternating readers with each new paragraph.

This serves to provide an overview of the topic to everyone who is participating in the study, both those who read the chapter beforehand and those who didn't read.

Application

The study concludes with an application question. This question should be read out loud and everyone should share their different answers to the question. In this section of the study, we want to focus our attention in how to apply the chapter's main idea to our lives in practical ways.

Study 3

LEAVING SIN

Big Idea

We think that sins are actions that we commit. The reality is that the persistent sins we have actually work inside of us. These sins grow, they change us and eventually they can separate us from God.

Discussion

- What do you think about the sin in your life?

- Do you have the tendency to minimize your sin, to not think of it as being a huge deal, to think you really don't do that many bad things?
- Do you have the tendency to be very conscious of each sin you commit and to feel very guilty when you sin?

Chapter Summary

The second habit that leads us to become more and more like Jesus is that of recognizing and leaving our sin. It is the discipline of continually analyzing our life to be able to see the sin that enters into our character, fight against that sin and work to leave it behind.

Our sin

The biblical definition of sin is to "disobey God." We sin when we do something that God has prohibited, or when we don't do something that God has asked us to do.

The reality is that every person has persistent sins. A persistent sin is when we sin in the same way, doing the same thing, over and over again. It is an area of our life in

which we know that we aren't pleasing God. It is a habitual sin.

All sin, all disobedience to God, is a great offence against our Creator. However, persistent sin is extremely dangerous. It is much more dangerous than the isolated sins that we commit from time to time. Let me say again that all sin is bad, I don't want to minimize a single sin, however persistent sin is the most dangerous sin of all.

OUR SIN GROWS AND CHANGES US

The reason that our persistent sin is dangerous is because our sin always grows, and as it grows, it always changes us.

Hebrews 3 12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Sin grows

What we don't take into account is that, as long as we let a persistent sin reside in our lives, it always grows. The persistent sin never stays the same, it always grows and progresses.

When our sins are small we don't see them as being that bad. That is why no one thinks that their sins are a big deal when they are just starting out. For example, when someone has a little bit of impatience, says little white lies or gets in the habit of sharing a little bit of gossip.

Our persistent sin grows. It doesn't stay the same. It starts small, grows and all of the sudden is a habit. The persistent sins that are so difficult for us to stop, always start as small "character defects."

Sin changes us

The persistent sin in our life doesn't just grow. While it is growing, sin changes us. Little by little, we become different people when we live with persistent sin, because sin changes us from the inside out.

When we live in persistent sin, our sin deceives us. It lies to us. It changes the way we think.

It deceives us because sinning, little by little, leads us to sin more. We all have done or said things in our lives that before, we thought we would never do or say. Why did we do thing that we never thought we would do? Because sin deceives us. It grows, but since it starts small and grows little by little, we don't realize where it is taking us, until it is too late.

Sin also deceives us because it makes us think that things that truly are bad, really aren't that bad. As we continue in our persistent sin, all of a sudden we don't think it is as bad as we had thought at the beginning. We don't see it as being as repugnant as it really is.

While sin is deceiving us, it is also hardening our heart. When we live with persistent sin, our heart becomes harder and harder, and we become rebellious. We laugh at sin. It doesn't repulse us like before. Our conscience doesn't reproach us when we do something we shouldn't. It becomes easier and easier to sin more.

Sin moves us away from God

When all is said and done, persistent sin separates us from God. Someone starts out close to God. Later, they end up far away from him. Why? It is almost always the same story: Some small sins were allowed to grow and they changed the person, until now they don't feel anything for God and their heart is far away from him.

IDENTIFY AND FIGHT AGAINST YOUR SIN

We are able to see our persistent sin when we inspect our life. It is easy to hide our persistent sin, to not think too often

about that part of our life and pretend, as much for ourselves as for others, that everything is alright.

When we identify our persistent sin, God asks us to fight to remove this sin from our lives. In other words, when we become aware of our sin, we have to leave it behind. The Bible describes this action of leaving our sin behind as a fight.

We have to fight against our persistent sin, but we don't fight alone. God has put his Spirit inside of his children, and this Spirit helps us in the fight against our sin.

Our work in this fight is to follow the guidance of the Spirit. Following the Spirit's guidance means to pay attention when we read the Bible and see sin in our lives. It is obeying the inner voice that guides us away from sin.

You will have victory

God promises his children victory over their persistent sin, when they follow the Spirit's guidance and fight against that sin.

While we fight against our sin, God says that he forgives us. As we fight and at times fail, our enemy Satan will try to make us feel like we aren't a good children of God and that we will never overcome this sin. This is called condemnation.

God says that he forgives his children as they fight against the persistent sin in their lives, even when they fail in that fight.

A never-ending cycle

The process of inspecting your life in order to identify your persistent sin and fighting against that sin, is a never-ending cycle. As long as we live, we will always have persistent sin that we will have to identify and against which we will have to fight.

Application

- Where are you in this process of inspecting your life and fighting against your persistent sin?
- What is your persistent sin?
- What is the sin that you are fighting today?
- How are you doing in the fight?