



RE:GENERATION for Students

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RE:GENERATION for Students

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Book work schedule

To help you stay on track, fill in the blanks above with actual "finish by" dates that will be given to you by a leader.

**Walking the
steps toward
HEALING**



Welcome

Congratulations! Do you know how rare it is for a teenager to find and commit to a recovery program like this one? God has brought you to RE:GENERATION for Students because he loves you, and he wants to help you find healing from the brokenness of life.

This curriculum will introduce you to life-changing truths given to us by God through the Bible. New friends will encourage and inspire you. Committed leaders will guide you with their teaching and their personal stories of healing.

As you begin your journey with RE:GENERATION for Students, here are two simple pieces of advice to help you get the most of your time:

1 | Be committed

Make a personal commitment to do your weekly book work and attend as consistently as possible. If you have to miss a meeting, communicate your absence with your Step Group leaders, do the lessons on your own, and try to catch up with what you missed by checking in with a leader or a friend from group. Prioritize the time and do the work.

2 | Be real

Be as honest as possible with God, yourself, your leaders, and your group about what has happened and is happening in your life. Don't bury your hurts, failures, questions, or doubts. Pretending everything is always amazing is not the path to growth. Put it all out there and see what God can do.

Overview

RE:GENERATION for Students is a 10-week introduction to the steps of healing given to us by God through the Bible. The curriculum and teaching represents a condensed version of the 12 step process utilized in the original adult version of re:generation. Below is a basic outline of the program compared to the adult version.

RE:GENERATION for Students

re:generation

Week 1: Orientation

Week 2: Help! Step 1: Admit

Week 3: Entirely trust God Step 2: Believe, Step 3: Trust

Week 4: Entirely trust God Step 2: Believe, Step 3: Trust

Week 5: Assess the situation..... Step 4: Inventory, Step 5: Confess

Week 6: Assess the situation..... Step 4: Inventory, Step 5: Confess

Week 7: Life change Step 6: Repent, Step 7: Follow

Week 8: Life change Step 6: Repent, Step 7: Follow

Week 9: Initiate reconciliation..... Step 8: Forgive, Step 9: Amends

Week 10: Initiate reconciliation Step 8: Forgive, Step 9: Amends

Week 11: New habits Step 10: Continue, Step 11: Intimacy

Week 12: Go and share Step 12: Regenerate

Key Verses

Titus 3:3-7

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

Jeremiah 17:14

O Lord, if you heal me, I will be truly healed; if you save me, I will be truly saved. My praises are for you alone!

Weekly Curriculum

1 | Book Work

Throughout the week, participants complete a curriculum of 2 or 3 lessons per week and a “footprint” that serves as a marker for their progress toward healing. Lessons are designed to help students understand the steps of healing given to us by God through the Bible. Each lesson is followed by an inspiring written testimony of a former participant. As an additional resource, “issue sheets” are available to help students learn more about overcoming specific struggles.

2 | Testimony and Teaching (20 minutes)

Most weeks begin with a testimony of a Step Group Leader or former participant followed by a time of teaching which outlines and further explains one of the steps of healing given to us by God through the Bible.

3 | Step Groups (60 minutes)

Step Groups are arranged by age and gender, and have up to 8 students led by 2 adult Step Group Leaders. In Step Groups, participants share what they are learning in book work as well as challenges or questions they are facing. This is a safe place for each participant to be known, accepted, and encouraged to continue walking the steps toward healing.

The Gospel

The gospel is the center of the Christian faith, the theme of the Bible, and the only hope of every human soul. It is the inspiration and foundation of RE:GENERATION for Students. Simply put, the gospel is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to deal with our sin and to bring us back to himself. Healing begins when a person believes this good news and entrusts their entire life to God. Every part of this program will point to the gospel.

To learn more about the gospel, turn to Appendix F: Understanding the Gospel Using Romans 6:23 and a Bridge Illustration.

Managing Expectations: 3 Points of Emphasis

1 | This program does not promise a quick fix. Students who fully engage with the curriculum should expect to learn about the love, goodness, and power of God and how to, over the span of a lifetime, daily walk the steps of healing given to us by God through the Bible.

2 | This program does not offer licensed professional counselors, psychologists, or clinical diagnoses, therapies, treatments, or referrals. Students who fully engage with the curriculum should expect to discover that biblical and Christ-centered discipleship and community are fundamental building blocks for healing and recovery.

3 | This program is not committed to strict confidentiality or anonymity. Students who participate should expect the church to follow the Bible's guidance to care for them and take action as advocates for their healing, health, and safety.

- We will notify the appropriate authority (parent or guardian, law enforcement, etc.) immediately if we have any suspicion that a student is facing imminent danger or demonstrates a pattern of behavior that could endanger them in the future. (Matthew 18:5-6, Proverbs 31:8)
- As required by law, we will report any allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect to our state's Department of Family and Protective Services. (Romans 13:1)
- We will encourage students to submit to the authority of scripture and to share with others as the Bible directs. For example, biblical practices like confession and making amends will call students to have conversations with people outside of this program. (1 Corinthians 12:25-27, James 5:16, Matthew 5:23-24, 1 John 1:7)

4 Guidelines for Step Groups (ABC and GAG)

“A river without boundaries is a swamp.” Guidelines are necessary to keep a group moving in the right direction. If you can remember “ABC” and “GAG”, you can remember the 4 Guidelines for Step Groups!

1 | About Self

Each participant will have a few turns each week to share what they are learning or struggling with. When it is your turn to speak, share about your own personal thoughts and feelings. You’re in recovery to work on yourself, not others. “Cross talk” is a term that describes speaking out of turn, interrupting, or giving advice. Resist the temptation! Cross talk is not allowed during Step Group.

2 | Brief

When it is your turn to speak, you will be expected to limit your sharing to less than three minutes. Step Group leaders might help by keeping a timer.

3 | Clean

In an effort to honor God and be respectful of others, please avoid profanity or graphic details. If you have questions about whether or not something is appropriate to share, ask a Step Group leader.

4 | Guard Against Gossip

Step Group should be a safe environment for sharing. As a general rule, what’s said in the group stays in the group. Do not share what is said in the group with anyone outside of the group unless specifically directed to do so by a Step Group leader.

Introducing Yourself in Step Group

Always introduce yourself to the group the first time you share each week. Warmly greet others following their introduction. Use one of the following two templates to share your name and what you’re working on at RE:GENERATION for Students.

Hi, my name is _____. I’m recovering from _____.

Hi, my name is _____. I have a new life in Christ and I’m recovering from _____.

Behavioral Expectations: Common Issues and Responses

Common issues in Step Groups are:

- Incomplete book work
- Unexcused absences or lack of communication
- Apathy, lack of interest or motivation
- Defiance, disruptive or bad attitude
- Tension or unresolved conflict among group members

Students will be expected to honor God's word and the value of processing it with others. Participants must also honor volunteer leaders who are giving their time and respect other participants who are seeking healing.

Requests

If a Step Group leader notices any of the issues listed above, the first thing they will do is request a change in the inappropriate behavior. Along with this request, students will be informed that if they continue, the next step will be to remove them from the room.

Removal from Step Group

If a student repeats an offense, Step Group leaders may make a second request but will not make a third. If a student continues to disengage or disrupt the group, Step Group leaders will ask them to leave Step Group and go into the open group room. In the open group room, students will do their book work, talk to other leaders if they choose, and hopefully come back to the Step Group the next week with a good attitude so that they can benefit from future discussions.

Removal from Program

Participation in RE:GENERATION for Students is a privilege. If behavioral issues continue, a student may be asked to not return for the remainder of a session. Refunds for fees will not be issued. Students will always have the option of registering for another session in the future. Conflict resolution and reconciliation may also be required in order to rebuild trust and unity.

Tips from Former Participants

- Bring a water bottle with you each week.
- Bring a pen and take notes when you hear something you want to remember.
- Bring a jacket, a sweatshirt, or a blanket.
- Bring a Bible so you can look up verses.
- Review the steps toward HEALING weekly and memorize the 7 letters.
- Text your leader back. They are here to help. It takes two-way communication to build a friendship.
- As you go through book work, take the time to find every verse in your Bible, and mark it with a highlighter or underline it with a pen. You will find that God's word is very powerful!
- There are multiple lessons assigned to each week. Make sure you complete *all* of the book work assigned for each week so you don't fall behind. Pay attention to the directions at the end of each lesson. When in doubt, text a leader.

Before Next Week...

Complete all the book work (lessons and footprints) through page 26.

The Steps Toward HEALING

Help!

We are broken and powerless to heal on our own. We admit that we desperately need help. (Step 1: Admit)



Entirely trust God

Believing that a powerful and loving God exists, we turn our lives completely over to him. (Step 2: Believe, Step 3: Trust)

Assess the situation

We courageously and thoroughly examine our lives and invite others to walk with us. (Step 4: Inventory, Step 5: Confess)

Life change

We take action and make changes that God wants to make in our lives. (Step 6: Repent, Step 7: Follow)

Initiate reconciliation

We do our part to make peace with others by following God's plan for forgiveness and amends. (Step 8: Forgive, Step 9: Amends)

New habits

We seek God daily, our faith grows, and we continue to walk the steps toward healing. (Step 10: Continue, Step 11: Intimacy)

Go and share

As we experience new life in Christ, we invite others to walk the steps toward healing with us. (Step 12: Regenerate)

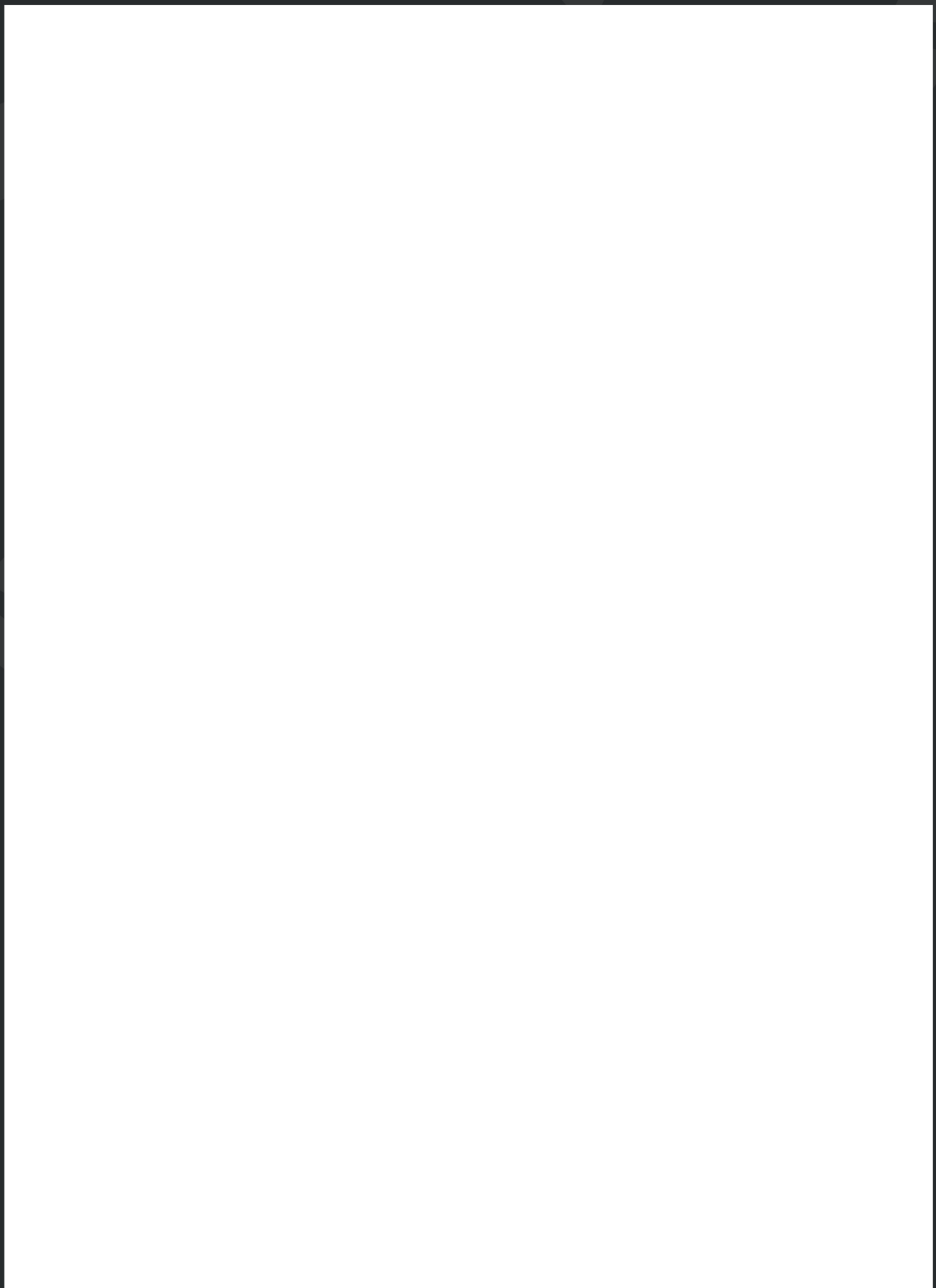


FOOTPRINT

LETTER TO ME

Start your RE:GENERATION for Students journey by writing a letter to yourself in the space provided. Record the reason(s) why you came to RE:GENERATION for Students. Write down the circumstances, pain, and feelings that brought you to this point in life. Write what you hope will be different after going through this program. End with some encouraging words that will motivate you to stay committed and be courageous.





HELP!

LESSON 1: UNCOVERING BROKENNESS

When was the last time you put on a mask? Masks can be useful to disguise your identity, protect you in dangerous environments, or add beauty and drama to festive occasions. While masks are sometimes fun (Halloween, for example), wearing invisible “masks” in everyday life is exhausting and lonely.

You have probably tried using different “masks” to hide your pain, imperfections, and struggles. Many people put on daily performances designed to impress others and think faking it is the only way to survive. If you have been pretending for a long time, you may have even convinced yourself that your “masks” are working in your favor. But if that were true, you wouldn’t have come to RE:GENERATION for Students.

Broken:
Not functioning properly; out of order; damaged

For healing to begin, you must first learn to remove all “masks” and courageously face the truth about yourself and the world you live in. As you have likely experienced, this is a **broken** world full of pain and struggles.

*For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan...for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. **Romans 8:22-23***

1 | List some ways you see brokenness, pain, and suffering in creation:



LESSON 1

The Bible says that all creation experiences brokenness. This includes you, even if you are a Christian. You may be broken in the following ways:

- **Emotionally:** Many people struggle with insecurity, fear, self-hatred, sadness, depression, anxiety, and anger. Some entertain thoughts of suicide.
- **Relationally:** Everyone has hurt others and been hurt by others. Many children have absent, divorced, or unloving parents. Most people feel rejected at some point.
- **Physically:** Bodies become sick and injured. Abusers harm others physically and sexually. Some people even harm their own body through unhealthy habits, self-injury, or disordered eating.
- **Spiritually:** In the midst of pain, it's easy to doubt God's existence and love. Many people feel alone or lost because they don't really know God or understand what he wants for them.

God sees every part of you, including your sin and suffering. He cares about your pain and freely offers you healing through his son, Jesus Christ. You may have trouble accepting this if you can't admit that you need it. You may still think you can handle things on your own, or you might compare yourself to other people and decide that your problems aren't that bad.

Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: "Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.' But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." **Luke 18:9-14**

Sometimes it is easier to spot brokenness in others than in our own hearts. But the sobering truth is that unless you have the **humility** to honestly admit that you are broken, you won't see your need for God, and you won't begin to heal. It's time to remove your "masks," confess your brokenness, and humbly admit to God that you need his help.

Humility:

**Freedom from pride;
not having a high
opinion of your own
importance or ability**

2 | List some ways you have personally experienced brokenness, pain, and suffering:

PRAY | God, show me my brokenness and my need for your help.

IF I COULD WRITE A LETTER TO ME...

Included with each lesson in this curriculum, you will find a letter written by someone who has been through the adult re:generation program. They have composed a message to their teenage self with the advice and encouragement they would give themselves if they could go back in time. These letters are intended to inspire and motivate you to continue walking the steps toward healing. Let a Step Group leader know if you would like to meet or talk more with one of the authors of these letters.

KELSEY CASSELL'S "LETTER TO ME"

Dear Kelsey,

All you crave is to feel normal, feel as though you belong, yet each day you feel less and less like yourself. You feel desperate for rescue, but if you were honest with yourself you would say it is impossible. The thoughts that come with obsessive-compulsive disorder plague you every second of the day and you can never seem to quiet your mind. I understand you're tired and yet you are never quite tired enough to stop worrying – no matter how hard you try.

It can be overwhelming to crave joy and fun yet feel only pain and sadness. Through the trenches of this war, let me comfort you with something I wish someone told me: mental illness is not your identity. There are facts and statistics, but God can work miracles. Your diagnosis does not have to become your prison. God can heal and bring peace to chaos. He has the ability to defy all odds and, through his loving mercy, allow you to live a happy and full life. I cannot promise your mind will never obsess or you'll never feel the pull of compulsions, but I can promise that there will be a day the Lord will grant you a peace that comes with trusting in him. When you let go of the chains of fear and anxiety, you will be one step closer to the freedom promised in Christ. Philippians 4:7 says, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

In the midst of obsessive thoughts and panic attacks, one thought haunts you above all else: you cannot ever be fully known and fully loved, and you are simply a burden to those you love. You believe you must earn love and therefore your broken mind has condemned you to a life of loneliness, a life where even the God of the universe could never love you. Work at letting people in and express your fears. People may try to comfort you and end up making you feel misunderstood, but give them grace and try again. One day you'll find a support system that loves you beyond your wildest dreams.

In three of the Gospels, there is a story where the disciples were terrified in a storm and they questioned Jesus' intention to save them. Matthew 8:26 says, "He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm."

He will calm the raging storm within you, just have faith. The boat may rock and the waves will still crash. You will still experience hardships here on earth, but you will feel peace and joy in the presence of the one who can calm even the most dangerous storms.

The gentleness of the Lord will calm the war inside of you.

In Christ,
Your Older Self

There are two more lessons and a footprint for this week. Keep going.

HELP!

LESSON 2: UNDERSTANDING BROKENNESS

Have you ever wondered where brokenness comes from? Why does life have to be so hard? The book of Genesis in the Bible offers an explanation. It says that God created a perfect world where human beings were blessed with special honor, constant closeness with God, and complete security and provision. But things didn't stay that way.

God gave Adam and Eve, the first people, just one boundary: never to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve had only known goodness. God was trying to protect them from evil. God's enemy, Satan, came in the form of a snake to deceive Adam and Eve by casting doubts about God's good motives and appealing to their pride:

*One day [Satan] asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'" "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. **Genesis 3:1-6***

There was no logical reason to disobey God. Adam and Eve had everything they needed. But they believed Satan's suggestion that God's command was keeping them from something good rather than protecting them from evil. Satan fooled them into believing a lie – that rebelling against God would bring something better than what God had planned for them – and so they sinned.



LESSON 2

1 | Describe a time you gave in to a temptation to sin:

Sin:

An action, thought, or desire that falls short of God's perfection

The consequences were immediate. Intimacy with God was shattered as Adam and Eve hid from him for the first time. They tried to blame others for their **sin**.

*At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked." "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?" The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." Then the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." **Genesis 3:7-13***

2 | What are some specific ways you have tried to avoid taking responsibility for your sin (blaming, hiding, making excuses, etc.)?

Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the perfect world he created for them to enjoy became a source of suffering and difficulty:

*Then [God] said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." And to the man he said, "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return." [...] So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. **Genesis 3:16-19, 23***

Sin is the source of all brokenness (read Romans 5:12 in the margin). Adam and Eve may have sinned first, but just like them, you invite brokenness when you believe the lie that following your own will instead of God's can bring something better than what God has planned.

3 | What are some consequences you have experienced as a result of sin (your own sin or someone else's)?

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

Romans 5:12

PRAY | God, help me see the damage of sin.

JASON CIRONE'S "LETTER TO ME"

Dear Jason,

I am here to warn you that the peace you seek is not found in this world. The path you are about to venture upon for the next **20** years will leave you lost and broken (spiritually and financially). When you finally come to the end of yourself and your plans, God will receive you. However, there will be consequences for your willful wrongs. Don't wait! God is willing to do *now* what you will seek him to do at age 36. Completely HEAL YOU! (Acts 3:16) The 20 years that you spend running in rebellion from fear, doubt and despair can be avoided if you trust in Christ today. (Romans 10:9-10, Proverbs 3:5-6)

But, you might ask, what about the fear I live with every day? Yes! Your first panic attack came at ten years old. Fear-based anxiety ruled from then on. You thought the world was against you and you had to find your place. You will try anything to "fit in," never thinking God calls you to **stand out** (Ezekiel 22:30). You think that controlling your surroundings will combat the fears. But, I can tell you now, God is bigger than any of your troubles. Do **NOT** turn from him. Put your trust in Christ and he will guide you through this trial, and every trial that is yet to come. (Isaiah 26:3-4, Romans 15:13, John 16:33)

So, do you choose the path that will leave you broken, alone and longing for more? Or, do you choose Jesus (which God, in his mercy allows you to do even after your rebellion)? Choose **wisely**! Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 4:16, Titus 3:4-5, Romans 6:14, Romans 11:6 can influence your decision. Please turn to God's Word before you turn away in ignorance.

You will be the happiest when you commit your life to being a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:24). I guarantee you will not regret this decision.

Ask God to put a hunger and thirst for his Word within you; read the Bible as a love story, not a rule book. Don't base your beliefs on the way your family or friends act or treat you. You were not born into the perfect family. But, the Perfect Father, the Heavenly Father, loves your imperfect family just as much as he loves you. Pray! *"Father, use me to be an agent of change to help my family to come to know You. I am willing. Strengthen me to do Your work and don't let me get caught up in the ways of the world. Will You help me? In Jesus Name. Amen."*

God loves you! He is wild about you. This world has mistreated you but don't try to get back at it by mistreating others. Forgive them as the Lord has forgiven you. It will be an amazing adventure with an eternal pay out!

With God's Love,
Your Older Self

There is one more lesson and a footprint for this week. Keep going.

HELP!

LESSON 3: THE START OF HEALING

A broken bone is a serious and painful injury that must be set and cast by a specialized doctor in order to be healed. What if someone breaks a bone and just ignores it? They might take some medicine for the pain or put on a movie for distraction. But if the break is left untreated long enough, it won't heal correctly, leading to more pain, infection, or loss of movement.

Pain is unpleasant, but it serves an important purpose: bringing your attention to something that is wrong. If you silence your pain without listening to it, you will be crippled for life by wounds that never fully heal.

You have probably tried to ease the sting of brokenness. Maybe you use socially acceptable comforts like popularity or good grades to help you cope. Maybe you soothe yourself with more dangerous things like illegal drugs and premarital sex. Even if you successfully numb your pain for a while, do not confuse painkillers with actual healing. If the wounds of sin are not properly treated, they will continue to cause damage, often growing worse.

**"God whispers to us
in our pleasures,
speaks in our
conscience, but
shouts in our pains."**

C.S. Lewis

1 | When you are hurting, where do you usually turn for comfort?



LESSON 3

**We are all infected
and impure with sin.
When we display our
righteous deeds,
they are nothing but
filthy rags.**

Isaiah 64:6

Sometimes the things you use to numb pain can become sources of pain themselves. Many addictions and destructive habits are born this way. Only God's healing can truly end cycles of pain, addiction, and brokenness.

2 | What are a few ways that trying to cope with your pain has led to more pain?

Even when Adam and Eve's sin brought down God's curse, he did not abandon them. When they tried to cover themselves with flimsy fig leaves, he provided animal skin clothing for them (read Genesis 3:21 in the margin).

God has not abandoned you either. Just as an animal had to die so that Adam and Eve's shame could be covered, Jesus had to die so your sin and shame could be covered once and for all.

The Bible tells how your brokenness can be healed:

"For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ." **Romans 5:17**

**And the Lord God
made clothing from
animal skins for
Adam and his wife.
Genesis 3:21**

Thanks to God's gift, you don't have to rely on "fig leaves" of performance, distraction, escape, pleasure, or comparison to deal with the painful consequences of your sin. You can be healed by Jesus' grace and righteousness. But that means admitting that your way isn't working. You have to cry out to him for help. Just like a patient has to trust a skilled doctor, you have to let God do things his way.

You might have a hard time accepting God's healing if:

- You aren't sure that God is good
- You think you're good enough on your own
- You don't think you deserve healing
- You tried crying out to God before and it didn't seem to help
- You aren't ready to give up the things that give you temporary relief

3 | Review the list above. What, if anything, keeps you from trusting God with your pain?

Whatever might be holding you back, God is not angry with you. He longs to help you. God is close. God hears. God rescues. God loves you. In prayer, cry out to him faithfully, seek him daily, and wait for his help.

PRAY | God, please heal me. Bring something good out of my pain.

AMANDA BUCCOLA'S "LETTER TO ME"

Dear Amanda,

You. Are. Enough. I know it feels like everyone wants you to act a certain way. Your parents want you to avoid mistakes, be involved at church and make them proud. Your friends want you to party, cheat on tests, and push the boundaries. It's neither possible nor wise to please them all. People's approval will always be fleeting and it will never satisfy.

Galatians 1:10 says "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." Don't wait until you're 25, married, and pregnant to check your motives. No matter how many "good" things you're doing, if your motivation is not obedience to God because of his love for you, it's a waste of time at best and eternally devastating at worst.

Here's a window into how that skewed motivation played out: In high school you followed the rules, checked the boxes, pleased authority figures. But college brought a new group of people to please. Because obedience to Christ wasn't your motive, you only played a role. You morphed from church girl to party girl, with no hesitation or convictions holding you back. You lied to mom and dad, distanced yourself from old friends, and became a different person. You married a guy right out of college without knowing that there were lies and hidden relationships from the very beginning. Proverbs 29:25 says "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe." Stuck in a snare of your own making, you knew deep down that this claim of being a Christian had no impact on the way you were living.

Our pastor says, "We say what we think, but we do what we believe." If you're ever wondering what you truly believe, just check your actions. Are you in a relationship with the living God, asking him to shape you into the person he created you to be? Or are you going through the motions, following the culture's standards for approval?

Striving for acceptance isn't worth it! You are enough when you are covered with Christ. Admit to yourself and others that you will let them down. Instead, live for an audience of One. Then you'll be free to be who God created you to be, and that's more fun anyway! "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Corinthians 12:9

Love,
Your Older Self

P.S. God was faithful to open your eyes when you checked your motives at 25. That guy you married decided to go all-in with God a couple of years (and a couple kids) later. Life is GOOD, only because of God's grace.

All you have left for this week is a footprint. Keep going. You can do it!

HELP! FOOTPRINT

CALL 911

Imagine you could dial 911 and connect with God directly. If he answered your call with, "This is God. What's your emergency?" what would you say? Get creative and write out a transcript of all the ways you would ask God for help, and what you think he might say in response. How would the phone call end?



Great work! You're done for the week.