

WELCOME

Research shows that nearly fifty percent of the people in the United States make annual New Year's resolutions. The bulk of these relate to health and fitness, but other common resolutions include getting organized, becoming more disciplined with finances, or picking up a new skill. Yet research also reveals that fewer than *ten percent* of these people actually achieve those resolutions. They start out well, but they fail to follow through on their goals past the first few months.

So many of us can relate. We try to make positive changes in our lives, but it seems we too often end up failing—and then we feel worse about ourselves than we did before we began. It could even be the enemy has convinced us that we *cannot* and *will not* ever move from where we are to where we want to be. Maybe we realize, for the first time, that we have allowed the enemy to get a seat at our table. He has been infiltrating our thoughts and convincing us with his subtle lies that things will never be any different.

The good news is that the outcome God has planned for us is *victory* and not *defeat*. He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to mark out the path for our success through His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. Our Good Shepherd took on the curse of our sin, fought our fights, and overcame the enemy. While we still have battles to face, we can know that we are all overcomers and victors because of what Christ did on our behalf.

When we adapt this mindset, we begin to operate from a position of strength rather than weakness. We begin to

THE PATH TO VICTORY

recognize, in spite of what the enemy is telling us, that change is always possible because our Lord is always at work. As this sinks into our minds, we begin to retake ground the enemy has claimed—much like soldiers reclaiming an enemy beachhead—and push him back. We retrain our thoughts and begin to live out our story of victory.

This will not be an easy process. Reclaiming enemy territory is difficult and involves active resistance. It requires putting on the spiritual armor that God provides and waging war each day to win the battle for our minds. But in the end, we can know it is a war worth waging, for we have the promise that our ultimate victory has been secured through Christ.

SHARE

Take some time to share at least one key takeaway or insight you had from this week's personal studies. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- Do you typically make New Year's resolutions or set annual goals for yourself? What have you learned about yourself from such attempts?

— o r —

- What are some victories you can claim when it comes to changing any past patterns of behavior? How were you able to make those changes last?

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

READ

Ask someone in the group to read aloud the following passage from Ephesians 6:10–18. Underline or circle each piece of spiritual armor that Paul lists in these verses.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

How does Paul describe the battle that is taking place for your heart and mind?

THE PATH TO VICTORY

What does it mean to “put on” the armor of God?

Which piece of armor do you need most in your life right now? Why?

WATCH

Play the video segment for session four. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or key points that stand out to you.

God’s Word tells us that our thoughts dictate the kind of people we become (see Proverbs 23:7). We can’t harbor thoughts that are against God’s will and expect to live a righteous life. Giving shelter and sustenance to such thoughts will lead to a different outcome.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

The outcome God has planned for us is victory—to win the battle for our hearts and minds. But the enemy has a different narrative. He is going to tell us we are not going to make it, we will never succeed, and we will never measure up to whatever it is that God has put into our hearts.

God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has moved us from death to life spiritually. The very life of Christ has now become our life. So whatever we are facing today, it is not just us against the world. If we are in Christ, we are starting at a point of victory.

The paradox of the Christian life is that we have the victory, yet we still fight the battle. Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), but He still instructs us to fight the good fight. We must remember that we are not fighting *for* victory but are fighting *from* a place of victory.

THE PATH TO VICTORY

Like the twelve spies who investigated the Promised Land, we often decide our own fate based on what we perceive to be our ability to win the fight in front of us. But God is telling us that He is giving us the victory. We still fight the battle, but we do so in the knowledge that God has already won.

Winning the battle of our mind begins with uniting with Jesus. We join with Him in His death in order to then join with Him in His resurrection (see Romans 6:5). We identify with Him and His suffering—and we identify with Him and His life. We are united with Christ. It's a story of victory.

It often helps if we have a daily rhythm—a method to retrain our minds that we are not in a story of defeat. Here are seven daily statements that we can make to turn our minds around during the week:

Monday: *My God knows my name* (Isaiah 43:1)

Tuesday: *My God goes before me* (Deuteronomy 31:8)

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

Wednesday: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)*

Thursday: *My present sufferings pale in comparison to the future glory that God has stored up for me in my life (Romans 8:18)*

Friday: *No weapon formed against me will prosper (Isaiah 54:17)*

Saturday: *I am a child of God (Romans 8:16)*

Sunday: *The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead lives in me (Ephesians 1:19–20)*

Allow the way that God sees you to inform how you see yourself. For how you see yourself will inform how you live and win the battle for your mind. This is the path to victory.

DISCUSS

Take a few minutes within your group to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. "For as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV). What is the connection between your thoughts and your actions? How have you seen the truth of this verse play out in your life or the life of someone close to you?

2. Share a time in your life that you realized you had to make drastic changes to pursue the plans that God had for you. What factors caused you to come to this realization?

3. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). What does it mean to fight the enemy from a place of victory? How does this change your mindset regarding the spiritual battles you face?

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

4. God had promised to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites. However, when Moses sent twelve men to explore the land, ten came back with this report: "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:33). What conclusions were they making about their situation that was not correct?
5. Think about how your life has changed since you accepted Jesus as your Good Shepherd. What are some ways that you are now "joined" with Christ in His death and resurrection?
6. What are some of the daily rhythms you have developed to remind yourself that your story is one of victory? What Bible verse or passage of Scripture do you rely on the most often to remind yourself of God's truth in the face of the devil's deceptions?

RESPOND

Briefly review the outline for the session four teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down your most significant takeaway from this session.

PRAY


End your session by sharing any requests that you would like the group to lift up in prayer. Thank God for providing you with the spiritual resources that you need to defeat the enemy's assaults. Praise Him for being your Good Shepherd and for protecting you. Ask Him to continually make you aware that you are operating from a place of *victory* rather than *defeat*. Pray that He will guide you on how to counter any lies the enemy tries to plant in your mind.






SESSION FOUR

BETWEEN-SESSIONS PERSONAL STUDY



Continue exploring the concepts you discussed during this week's group meeting by engaging in the following exercises for your personal study time. Be sure to write down any key points that stand out to you so you can share at the next meeting.



CONNECT

Check in with your group members during the upcoming week and continue the discussion you had with them at your last gathering. Grab coffee or dinner, or reach out by text and share what's going on in your heart. Use the following questions to help guide your conversation about how to actively resist giving the enemy a seat at your table.

How would you describe your personal path to victory over the enemy based on what you have learned so far with your group?

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

What are some ways you can speak God's truth into other people's lives who may be struggling with giving the enemy a seat at their table?

How are you making sure the enemy knows that he is unwelcome at your table?

REFLECT

Act

Historically, at the conclusion of a battle, the winner would often deliver a victory speech to reflect on the conflict and how the adversary was ultimately defeated. As followers of Jesus, though the battle still rages, we have already been assured of victory. So, we can likewise deliver a speech to reflect on the conflict and how we are defeating the enemy. Today, spend a few minutes writing out your victory speech to remind yourself of God's truth and how He has been with you in the midst of your darkest valley. You can fill in the blanks below to get you started or come up with your own. After you have written your draft, feel free to share it with the group at the next session.

My Victory Speech

The battle was fierce, and the enemy often tried to take me down by claiming this about me:

For a while, I felt like I was losing the battle because:

But then I remembered this truth about who God says I am:

I focused on this truth and put on the armor of God each day by:

Now, the enemy has been defeated, and I live in the freedom that Jesus secured for me. Among the many blessings I experience now that the battle is won, I particularly enjoy:

In conclusion, I would like to say, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20–21).

Worship

As you've seen, one of the best ways to counter the enemy's attacks is by focusing on God's truth and the spiritual realities of who you are in Christ. God's Word reinforces this practice by reminding you to keep your mind focused on what is *holy* and *eternal* rather than on what is *worldly* and *temporary*. Keep this contrast in mind as you read the following passage from Philippians 4:4–9, and then complete the questions that follow.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

According to this passage, what is the remedy for anxiety? How does praying, giving thanks, and presenting your requests to God compel you to quit worrying?

When have you most recently experienced “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding” (verse 7)? How does God’s supernatural peace naturally repel the enemy and keep him from getting a place at your table?

The apostle Paul urges us to focus on a number of traits that reflect God’s character—including whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Yet it can be challenging to focus on such qualities if we only think of them as abstract concepts. So today, take each trait and try to think of a specific way you have witnessed or experienced God based on that quality. For example, for “true,” perhaps the enemy has been trying to convince you that you’re unworthy in some way. But recently, God revealed to you through the encouragement of a friend that you are loved and valued. Complete the rest with your own personal examples.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

| Quality | How God revealed this quality to you |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| True | |
| Noble | |
| Right | |
| Pure | |
| Lovely | |
| Admirable | |
| Excellent | |
| Praiseworthy | |

DEEPER

Our Good Shepherd Has Won the Victory

“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing” (Psalm 23:1). The enemy will try to convince you that you are living out of *lack* rather than *abundance*. He will try to convince you that you are operating from a place of defeat—that you can’t move from where you are to where you want to be. Maybe you’ve listened to the voices of fear. Or been caught in the spiral of sin and temptation. Or convinced yourself you have no value.

The enemy has accomplished this by sitting down at your table. But you don't need to let him stay there. You do not have to entertain the enemy's voice. Through Christ, you can move to a place of victory. This happens when you learn to win the battle for your mind. Of course, the enemy knows this. So, one of his main ploys is to go after your thought life. If he can win the battle for your mind, then he can win the battle for your life.

In Numbers 13, when Moses dispatched the twelve spies to explore the land of Canaan in preparation for Hebrew conquest, ten spies returned with a fearful, faithless report. "We can't attack those people," the ten spies said, shaking in their boots. "They are stronger than we are. . . . All the people we saw there are of great size . . . We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (verses 31, 32–33).

Hang on. How did the ten spies know what they looked like in the Canaanites' eyes? Did the spies ask their enemies, "Hey, what do you think of us? How small and puny do we look to you?" No, a seed had been planted in the spies' minds. They tended that seed and let it grow and acted on it, and as a result, they wandered in the desert for the next forty years. They never tasted the promises of God for their lives.

It didn't have to be that way, in the wilderness never tasting God's promises—not for them, and not for you and me today. Victory can be yours. Right here. Right now. Victory is about examining the seeds that have been scattered in your mind and not letting them take root. It's about pulling up and throwing away the thoughts that do not coincide with the heart of God. It's about changing the way you think.

—FROM CHAPTER 7 OF *DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE*



DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

How has the enemy tried to convince you that you are operating from a place of defeat?

How do you typically respond when you are faced with an overwhelming situation?

How can you remind yourself this week to operate out of God's strength rather than your own?

For Next Week: Before your group's next session, read chapter 8 in *Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table*.

SESSION FIVE

GOD'S INVITATION ALWAYS STANDS

The enemy wants to define you by your scars. But Jesus wants to define you by His scars. The grace of Jesus Christ removes your old identity and replaces it with a brand-new identity. You are a son or daughter of God. You are a child of the King. You are written into God's will. You are a beneficiary of the lavish love of God, which has changed you from failure to family. Grace not only cancels guilt and shame—grace also redefines you. You are a beloved family member of God, and because of that you are given a seat at the table with Almighty God.

LOUIE GIGLIO

—FROM CHAPTER 8 OF *DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE*

WELCOME

God's selection of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles seems like an odd choice. Born Saul of Tarsus, he emerges on the scene not as a hero of the faith but as a persecutor of the church. We first meet him at the execution of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, watching over the proceedings and approving of everything that was done. From there, he starts dragging men and women out of their homes, putting them in prison and sentencing them to death.

Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus forever changed his life. Years later, we find him penning such statements as, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). How could Paul say this based on everything he had done? The answer is simple. Paul understood the power of *confession*, *repentance*, and *forgiveness*. He recognized—and believed in his heart—that Jesus had "canceled the charge" of his sins and "taken it away, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

Paul did not believe his past disqualified him from accepting Jesus' offer in the present. He recognized that he had been *guilty* of falling short of God's holy standard—that he was "the worst" of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). But he did not allow that guilt to lead to *shame*. He did not allow the guilt he felt from his past to *define* who he was as a new creation in Christ.

It is important for us to recognize the depth of our sins so we can understand the mercy and grace of God. We must allow our guilt to lead to *repentance*—a 180-degree turn from the direction we were headed to the direction of our Good

GOD'S INVITATION ALWAYS STANDS

Shepherd. We *can't* allow that guilt to lead us away from the dinner invitation that our King has extended to us.

SHARE

Take some time to share at least one key takeaway or insight you had from this week's personal studies. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- People likely considered Paul "too far gone" to be used by God. What does his story tell you about the dangers of thinking this way?

— o r —

- What are some of the most notable ways that you have seen a person turn his or her life around? What led to this change in that person's life?

READ

Ask someone in the group to read aloud the following passage from James 5:13–16. Look especially for what James recommends as it relates to confession of sins.

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

What are the benefits of being in community with other members of God's family?

Why does James instruct you to confess your sins to others?

Based on what you've covered in this study so far, why do you think confessing your sins to another person stops the enemy's attacks against you?

WATCH

Play the video segment for session five. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

While it's true that Jesus is alive, the grave is empty, and our future is victory through Christ, we are still in a battle. The enemy still wants to invade our thoughts and tempt us to sin. All of a sudden, we find him seated at our table.

Satan tempts us and deceives us. If we're not able to immediately defend ourselves with the Word of God, or if we're not in a community of people who can help us through that moment of temptation, we might fall. When we do fall, the most amazing thing happens. The one who tempted us in the first place becomes the one who turns around and then accuses us.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

The enemy wants to convince us that we are in a unique situation. We are a special case—we are really up against it like nobody else has been—so it is okay for us to say yes to this temptation. But God wants us to know we are all on an even playing field. What has come into our lives has come into everybody else's life. He will always provide a way out.

The "way out" always starts as a big door—come to know the Almighty, get into a community of faith, get friends around you who want you to grow up in the faith. But often we pass by that door. When we do, the doors along that spiral of sin and temptation get smaller. There is still a way out, but we better act now. Go through that door!

The enemy knows that if he can put condemnation in our story, he can keep us locked into a cycle of temptation and sin. Condemnation does in our lives what it did in Adam and Eve's story. When they heard God walking in the cool of the day . . . they decided to hide from Him.

GOD'S INVITATION ALWAYS STANDS

Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit. Condemnation comes from the enemy. Condemnation is born out of guilt, but conviction is born out of grace.

Condemnation leads us to conceal our sin. This is where Adam and Eve found themselves. But conviction leads us to confess our sin. It leads us to repentance.

Condemnation leads us to rededication—to vow over and over that we will never commit that sin again. Conviction leads us to a place of absolute and total surrender.

Condemnation leads us to a future decision that isn't going to get us where God wants us to be. But conviction is the doorway that leads us to real change in our lives.

Say hello to conviction. It's coming from the Spirit of God out of a rule of grace. Say goodbye to condemnation. It's coming from a spirit of guilt that has already been canceled in Jesus Christ.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

DISCUSS

Take a few minutes within your group to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. God has given us the victory over the enemy through the death and resurrection of Christ. So how does the enemy still gain access to our table?
2. Paul writes, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Why does the enemy want us to think that our situation is unique? What is the danger of thinking that our situation is "special" or that we are an "exception"?
3. What are some of the "doors" that God provides to give us a way out when we are tempted? What happens if we pass by those doors?

GOD'S INVITATION ALWAYS STANDS

4. How did the enemy use condemnation in the story of Adam and Eve? How does he use condemnation today against followers of Christ?
5. Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit. What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit convicts people of sin? What typically happens as a result of that conviction?
6. Condemnation comes from the enemy. What are some of the results of giving in to feelings of condemnation? What is the remedy to breaking that cycle?

RESPOND

Briefly review the outline for the session five teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down your most significant takeaway from this session.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE


PRAY

End your session by sharing any requests that you would like the group to lift up in prayer. Thank your Good Shepherd for the invitation that He extends—in spite of your past—to dine with Him at His table. Ask that He would make you aware of the enemy's tactics so that you do not fall into condemnation. Thank the Lord that He always provides a way out when you are being tempted. Choose today to go through those doors of escape when He offers them.





SESSION FIVE

BETWEEN-SESSIONS PERSONAL STUDY



Continue exploring the concepts you discussed during this week's group meeting by engaging in the following exercises for your personal study time. Be sure to write down any key points that stand out to you so you can share at the next meeting.



CONNECT

Check in with your group members during the upcoming week and continue the discussion you had with them at your last gathering. Grab coffee or dinner, or reach out by text and share what's going on in your heart. You can use the following questions to help guide your conversation about the battle for your mind as you overcome the enemy.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

On a daily basis, how often are you aware of feeling guilt or shame for something that you have already confessed to God and know that He has forgiven? How do you handle these lingering feelings of condemnation that the enemy uses against you?

When have you recently struggled to forgive someone else for their offense against you? How have you seen the enemy use this tactic to try and get a seat at your table?

James writes, “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (5:16). When have you witnessed the benefits of doing this in your life?

REFLECT

Act

The enemy loves to isolate us in the guilt-and-shame quagmire of our sins—especially the ones we keep hidden. Confession

enables us to break out of this isolation. It frees us from the endless cycle of sin and shame that the enemy wants to establish in our lives.

By this time, the group should hopefully be a place where you feel valued and safe to share. So, before the next session, meet with someone you trust and share one thing in your life that continues to cause you shame. Be honest, listen to the other person, and make sure to keep everything shared confidential. If this feels too great a step at the moment, then pray these words from David: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24). Listen for God to lead you after you say this prayer.

Take some time after this exercise to reflect on what this meant for you.

Worship

One of the greatest prayers of confession is found in Psalm 51. Scholars believe this psalm was composed by David after he was confronted by Nathan about his adulterous affair with Bathsheba. This psalm expresses David’s desire to start over with God and experience His mercy and forgiveness. Read through it slowly as you think of areas of your own life that you need to confess before the Lord. Make the words your own as you seek God’s grace to restore your relationship with Him—and to overcome the taunts of the enemy in your life. Use the questions that follow to help you make this psalm your own personal prayer of repentance.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence

*or take your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

According to the psalmist, what is the source of God's mercy?

What does the psalmist confess about himself and God's "verdict" of his sins?

What does it mean to be "restored to the joy of your salvation"?

DEEPER

Our Good Shepherd Restores Us

"He leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul" (Psalm 23:2-3). The pathway to freedom from both guilt and shame is found in the story of grace. This pathway is open to all people in the covering of grace. Grace isn't some ethereal, flimsy,

milquetoast kind of thing. Grace has grit, backbone, and muscle. Grace is the left hook that destroys the power of sin.

Shame is a powerfully destructive force. It causes us to feel we are unworthy of God's love, acceptance, or plans. It causes us to feel marred so strongly that we feel damaged beyond repair. When we feel shame, we're prone to hide. We try to hide from God behind denial or by trying to keep out of his way. Or we hide from people behind layers, walls, titles, busyness, or accomplishments. Shame imprisons each of us to the past.

It is telling that when God created the first human beings, "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). Before the fall, everything God created was described as "good," and being naked and unashamed was part of the goodness of Paradise. Yes, the garden was beautiful. Yes, there were plants and food and animals. Yes, everything was in pristine condition. But the ultimate description of goodness in Paradise was a *lack of shame*.

Then came the fall. Adam and Eve made disastrous decisions that resulted in huge consequences. Earth broke apart as a result of their choices. Both guilt and shame entered into their story—and into ours as well. One minute Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. The next minute they were hiding from God, desperately trying to cover themselves with fig leaves.

Fortunately, God formed a rescue plan. He sheltered and clothed the two humans in garments of animal skin that He made for them. He pointed to the future and to the cross, when the serpent would harm Jesus, the Good Shepherd, by striking His heel. But Jesus would gain full victory by crushing

the serpent's head. In other words, God would destroy sin and death and fully reconnect people to the purposes and personhood of God.

Thanks to the work of Jesus on the cross, you can be free from shame. Don't let that truth pass you by. Shame does not need to be part of your story!

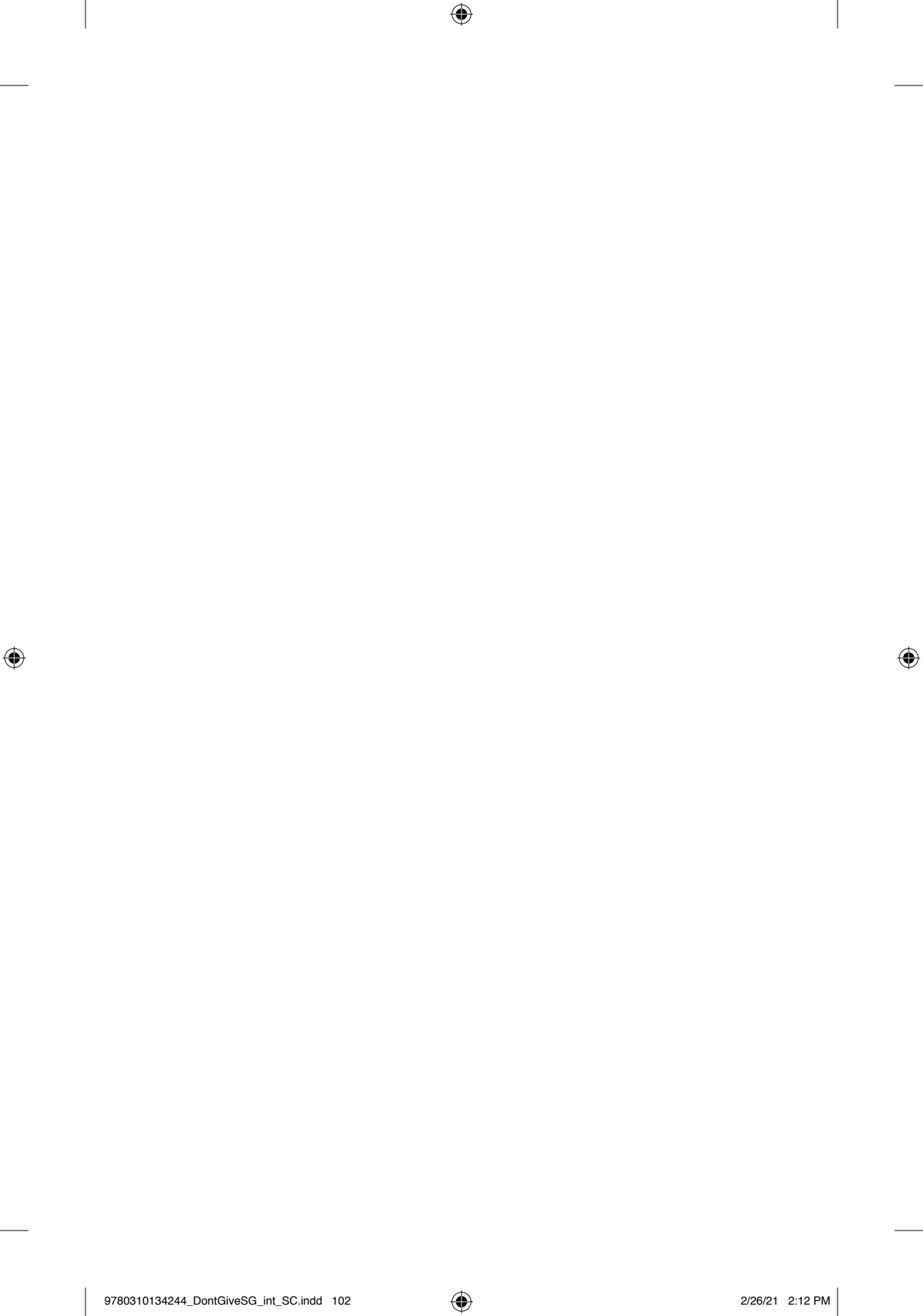
—FROM CHAPTER 8 OF *DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE*

How would you describe God's grace at work in your life?

What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin that we still experience today?

How can you remind yourself this week that your past does not define you?

For Next Week: Before your group's next session, read chapters 9 and 10 in *Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table*.



SESSION SIX

IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES

You can win the battle for your mind. But this only happens when you surrender your life completely to Jesus. He will lead you to green pastures and quiet waters. He will guide you through dark valleys. You will not be in want, because He will restore your soul. Jesus will prepare a table for you in the presence of your enemies. But there's nothing to worry about, because your head is dripping with anointing, your cup overflows with abundance, and goodness and mercy are following you all the days of your life. The Good Shepherd is sitting at your table. Jesus has invited you to all the abundance He offers. It's a meal for the two of you.

LOUIE GIGLIO

—FROM CHAPTER 10 OF *DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE*

WELCOME

The imagery of Psalm 23 is vivid and comforting. The Lord is our *shepherd*. He makes us lie down in *green pastures*. He leads us beside *quiet waters*. He guides us along the *right paths* and through the *darkest valley*. He prepares a table for us in the *presence of our enemies*.

Wait . . . what was that again? God sets the table for us in the presence of our enemies? Wouldn't it make more sense if the table was simply in *His* presence? Why do our enemies get a ringside seat? Why wouldn't God simply change the circumstances and vanquish our foes?

It's stunning when we picture it. The Good Shepherd has set a banquet table for us. Remember, this is not some rustic picnic with hot dogs and potato chips. No, we're enjoying prime rib and potatoes au gratin! We are at a feast filled with all the delicious foods that satisfy and sustain us. And we are dining with the King of kings.

Meanwhile, all around us, our enemies are prowling around watching us there at the table. The battle is still raging. We still live in a fallen world with calamities, crises, and chaos. But our Good Shepherd wants us to know that He is there with us in the midst of the pain, and the trials, and the struggles. And He wants our *enemy* to know this as well.

Paul wrote, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). *God* is on our side. We are at the table with the wisest, kindest, most joy-filled, *and* most powerful person in the universe. Sure, the enemy is still out there, prowling like a lion. But we don't need to fear him. Instead, we can choose to

IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES

stay focused on our host. As we do, we are winning the battle for our minds.

SHARE

Take some time to share at least one key takeaway or insight you had from this week's personal studies. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- What comes to mind when you picture God setting out a banquet table in the midst of a battlefield?

— o r —

- What does it look like to stay focused on God in the midst of the trials, battles, and struggles of your day?

READ

Ask someone in the group to read aloud the following passage from 2 Corinthians 3:12–18. Consider what Paul writes about the access that believers have to God the Father.

¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

What does this passage say about the access that you have been given to God?

How does the apostle Paul say that you should approach the throne of God? How could this approach change your day-to-day relationship with Jesus?

What is the end result of spending time in God's presence?

WATCH

Play the video segment for session six. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or key points that stand out to you.

As we read David's words in Psalm 23, perhaps the most important question of all is, *why has God set a table in the presence of your enemies?* The table is not set just in God's presence—it's set in the presence of the difficulties, the trials, the challenges. So why is the table set there?

God has put the table close enough to the fray so that those in the fray can hear what is going on. Christianity is not exclusively suited for sequestered moments between us and God. It's a relationship in the *midst* of the fray so that someone who needs to know there is something called abundance can lean over and listen to what is going on between us and the King.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

If we want to look different than the world, we need to put “being radiant” on our to-do list for the day. We want to have light in our eyes today—and live like there is joy in our hearts. We do this keeping our eyes locked on the King at the table instead of on the fray around us.

The table is set in the middle of our enemies so we can respond to the invitation to linger with the Savior. We don't live in a “lingering” world. But lingering in the presence of the Almighty is one of the best methods of defense against an enemy who is trying to get at our table.

So why does God set the table in the presence of our enemies? The first reason is so that **we can know that God is enough**. None of us want trials, difficulties, or moments when we feel no one has our back. But those are the moments when we recognize God is real and is with us.

IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES

The second reason for the location of the table is so **our enemies can see that God is enough**. God loves our enemies, and He wants them to have a witness. When we are looking at God, our faces reflect Him, and they begin to see God in us. We reflect God's glory.

A third reason why God put the table in the presence of our enemies **is so that we can let our cup overflow**. When we are focused on God, our cup overflows, and we have plenty of God's goodness to share with others. We find we can love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and speak well of those who are not speaking well of us.

When we are focused on God, people will notice there is something different about us. But before long, they will begin to do what we always long for people to do—stop looking at us and start trying to figure out who we are looking at. They are going to be drawn to the King.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

DISCUSS

Take a few minutes within your group to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. When have you experienced God's presence unexpectedly in the midst of a difficult time? How did your awareness of His presence affect your response to the situation?
2. What is the difference between knowing *about* God and knowing Him on a *personal* basis? What are some ways that you seek to better know God personally?
3. Why is "lingering" so counterintuitive in today's world? What would it look like for you to "linger" in God's presence? What obstacles would you have to overcome to do this?
4. How would you summarize the reason why God puts the table in the presence of your *enemies*? How does the "location" of this table impact your life and the lives of others?

IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES

5. David wrote, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). What is the impact on others when they witness God showing up in this manner and delivering you from all your fears?

6. David continued, "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame" (Psalm 34:5). How are you staying focused on the King at your table regardless of what is happening around you in your world?

RESPOND

Briefly review the outline for the session six teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down your most significant takeaway from this session.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

PRAY

End your session by sharing any requests that you would like the group to lift up in prayer. Close with a time of thanksgiving to God, just lingering in His presence for a few minutes. Praise Him for the gift of Jesus, your Good Shepherd, and for the victory you have been given through His death and resurrection. Ask the Lord to continue to show you ways the enemy tries to get a seat at your table so that you can always be prepared to counter his strategies.




FINAL

PERSONAL STUDY

Continue exploring the concepts you discussed during this week's group meeting by engaging in the following exercises for your personal study time. Be sure to write down any key points that stand out to you.



CONNECT



Check in with your group one last time to discuss what you learned and celebrate what God has done during the past six weeks. Grab coffee or dinner, or reach out by text and share what's going on in your heart. Try to make sure that everyone in your group hears from someone else. Reflect on the questions below on what you've learned about winning the battle for your mind during this study.

How do you feel about turning the enemy away now that you have completed this study?



DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

What have you learned about the enemy's tactics in trying to get a seat at your table?

What strategies have you learned to keep him from getting a place there?

REFLECT

Act

Look back through your notes, questions, and reflections that you have written down, both from your group meetings and from your personal study in between sessions. Then answer the following questions as you evaluate your experience during this study.

How has your relationship with God changed during the course of this study? Where do you see evidence of this change as you review your notes, answers, and written reflections?

IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES

How has the battle for control of your thoughts changed since you started this study? What have you learned about God and how you relate to Him?

What passage or verses from God's Word has empowered you the most as you battle the enemy? Why do you think that truth from the Bible means so much to you?

Worship



God speaks to us through passages of Scripture in different ways and at different times. Now that you've completed this study, spend a few minutes reflecting on Psalm 23 one more time. Read through each sentence of the psalm below, and then answer the corresponding question. Go slowly as you do this and just take some time to linger in God's presence.



DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing” (Psalm 23:1). How does knowing that God will provide for your needs give you comfort and security?

“He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul” (Psalm 23:2–3). When has the Lord made you “lie down” in order to refresh your soul? How would you describe this time of spiritual refreshment?




“He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3). How have you seen God guide you along the right paths in this life?






IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). How has the Good Shepherd protected you and dispelled your fears when you have walked through life’s dark valleys?



“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Psalm 23:5). What image comes to mind when you read this verse? How has your understanding of this verse changed since you have gone through this study?



“You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows” (Psalm 23:5). What are some of the ways that God has made your cup “overflow”? How are you sharing this overflow with others?

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6). How have you seen God’s goodness “following you” in your life? What hope do you gain by knowing you will dwell in God’s house forever?

DEEPER

Our Good Shepherd Gives Us Abundant Life

“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life” (Psalm 23:6). When Jesus lives in you, your slate is clean. You are set free from condemnation. You are given a new life and placed into a new family. You have a relationship with God through Jesus. As a result, you experience the abundant life that Jesus promised: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Christ’s work on the cross got you out of death, so now your life can be lived fully surrendered to Him. You are alive in the Spirit, alive by the Spirit, alive for Christ, alive in Christ, to live the life of Christ so that He might be glorified. This is not a negotiation. This is a call to surrender completely to Jesus. You

are to be completely open and available to Him. He has given you a new identity. Your call is to make Him known in the world.

I don't know about you, but I want to daily set my mind and heart on Christ. I want to constantly fill my mind with Scripture. I want God to move in a supernatural way. I don't want to get to the end of my days and look back to see a cookie-cutter existence that looks like what society says a normal life should be. I don't want the easiest path. I want to know God intimately. I want my life to be abundant and defy human explanation.

I'm thinking this is the life you want too. This kind of life can be yours. One that's dependent fully on the power of the Holy Spirit. And it's activated by you stepping forward in faith. Too often we want to see miracles first before we take a step. But the fullness of the life that Jesus provides becomes evident when we move, act on His leading, and open our mouths and speak. The steps we take in faith activate the power of the Spirit.

That's your call today. Do not give the enemy a seat at your table. You *can* win the battle for your mind. The Good Shepherd *is* sitting at your table. Jesus has invited you to all the abundance He offers. It's a meal for just the two of you. He Himself is the feast.

—FROM CHAPTER 10 OF *DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE*

What evidence can others see that Jesus lives inside of you?

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

What do you want to be able to say about your life when you get to the end of your days?

What step do you sense God is asking you to take today to experience the full life He offers?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Thank you for your willingness to lead your group through this study. What you have chosen to do is valuable and will make a great difference in the lives of others. The rewards of being a leader are different from those of participating, and we hope that as you lead you will find your own walk with Jesus deepened by the experience.

Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table is a six-session Bible study based on Psalm 23 that is built around video content and small-group interaction. As the group leader, imagine yourself as the host of a dinner party. Your job is to take care of your guests by managing the behind-the-scenes details so that as your guests arrive, they can focus on one another and on the interaction around the topic for that week.

As the group leader, your role is not to answer all the questions or reteach the content—the video, book, and study guide will do most of that work. Your job is to guide the experience and cultivate your small group into a connected and engaged community. This will make it a place for members to process, question, and reflect—not receive more instruction.

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

There are several elements in this leader's guide that will help you as you structure your study and reflection time, so be sure to follow along and take advantage of each one.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before your first meeting, make sure the group members have a copy of this study guide so they can follow along and have their answers written out ahead of time. Alternately, you can hand out the study guides at your first meeting and give the group members some time to look over the material and ask any preliminary questions. During your first meeting, be sure to send a sheet of paper around the room and have the members write down their name, phone number, and email address so you can keep in touch with them during the week.

Generally, the ideal size for a group is eight to ten people, which will ensure that everyone has enough time to participate in discussions. If you have more people, you might want to break up the main group into smaller subgroups. Encourage those who show up at the first meeting to commit to attending the duration of the study, as this will help the group members get to know one another, create stability for the group, and help you as the leader know how to best prepare each week.

Each of the sessions begins with an opening reflection. The questions that follow in the "Share" section serve as an

icebreaker to get the group members thinking about the general topic at hand. Some people may want to tell a long story in response to one of these questions, but the goal is to keep the answers brief. Ideally, you want everyone in the group to get a chance to answer, so try to keep the responses to a minute or less. If you have talkative group members, say up front that everyone needs to limit the answer to one minute.

Give the group members a chance to answer, but tell them to feel free to pass if they wish. With the rest of the study, it's generally not a good idea to have everyone answer every question—a free-flowing discussion is more desirable. But with the opening icebreaker-type questions, you can go around the circle. Encourage shy people to share, but don't force them.

At your first meeting, let the group members know each session contains a personal study section that they can use to reflect more on the content during the week. While this is an optional exercise, it will help the members cement the concepts presented during the group study time and encourage them to spend time each day in God's Word. Invite them to bring any questions and insights they uncovered while reading to your next meeting, especially if they had a breakthrough moment or didn't understand something.

WEEKLY PREPARATION

As the leader, there are a few things you should do to prepare for each meeting:

DON'T GIVE THE ENEMY A SEAT AT YOUR TABLE

- *Read through the session.* This will help you to become more familiar with the content and know how to structure the discussion times.
- *Decide which questions you definitely want to discuss.* Based on the amount and length of group discussion, you may not be able to get through all the questions, so choose four to five that you definitely want to cover.
- *Be familiar with the questions you want to discuss.* When the group meets you'll be watching the clock, so you want to make sure you are familiar with the questions you have selected. In this way, you'll ensure you have the material more deeply in your mind than your group members.
- *Pray for your group.* Pray for your group members throughout the week and ask God to lead them as they study His Word.

In many cases, there will be no one “right” answer to the question. Answers will vary, especially when the group members are being asked to share their personal experiences.

STRUCTURING THE DISCUSSION TIME

You will need to determine with your group how long you want to meet each week so you can plan your time accordingly. Generally, most groups like to meet for either ninety minutes or two hours, so you could use one of the following schedules:

LEADER'S GUIDE

| Section | 90 Minutes | 120 Minutes |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| Welcome (members arrive and get settled) | 10 minutes | 15 minutes |
| Share (discuss one or more of the opening questions for the session) | 15 minutes | 20 minutes |
| Watch (watch the teaching material together and take notes) | 25 minutes | 25 minutes |
| Discuss (discuss the Bible study questions you selected ahead of time) | 30 minutes | 45 minutes |
| Respond / Pray (reflect on the message, pray together as a group, and dismiss) | 10 minutes | 15 minutes |

As the group leader, it is up to you to keep track of the time and keep things on schedule. You might want to set a timer for each segment so both you and the group members know when your time is up. (There are some good phone apps for timers that play a gentle chime or other pleasant sound instead of a disruptive noise.)

Don't be concerned if the group members are quiet or slow to share. People are often quiet when they are pulling together their ideas, and this might be a new experience for them. Just ask a question and let it hang in the air until someone shares. You can then say, "Thank you. What about others? What came to you when you watched that portion of the teaching?"

GROUP DYNAMICS

Leading a group through *Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table* will prove to be highly rewarding both to you and your group members. But you still may encounter challenges along the way! Discussions can get off track. Group members may not be sensitive to the needs and ideas of others. Some might worry they will be expected to talk about matters that make them feel awkward. Others may express comments that result in disagreements. To help ease this strain on you and the group, consider the following ground rules:

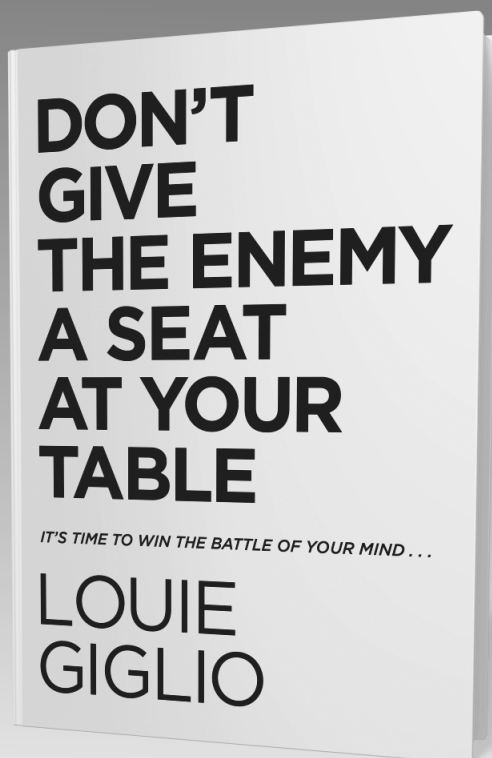
- When someone raises a question or comment that is off the main topic, suggest you deal with it another time, or, if you feel led to go in that direction, let the group know you will be spending some time discussing it.
- If someone asks a question that you don't know how to answer, admit it and move on. At your discretion, feel free to invite group members to comment on questions that call for personal experience.
- If you find one or two people are dominating the discussion time, direct a few questions to others in the group. Outside the main group time, ask the more dominating members to help you draw out the quieter ones. Work to make them a part of the solution instead of the problem.
- When a disagreement occurs, encourage the group members to process the matter in love. Encourage those on opposite sides to restate what they heard the other side say about the matter, and then invite each side to

evaluate if that perception is accurate. Lead the group in examining other Scriptures related to the topic and look for common ground.

When any of these issues arise, encourage your group members to follow these words from the Bible: “Love one another” (John 13:34), “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18), “Whatever is true . . . noble . . . right . . . if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8), and “Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19). This will make your group time more rewarding and beneficial for everyone who attends.

Thank you again for your willingness to lead your group. May God reward your efforts and dedication, equip you to guide your group in the weeks ahead, and make your time together in *Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table* fruitful for His kingdom.

COMPANION BOOK
TO ENRICH YOUR
STUDY EXPERIENCE



ISBN 9780785247227

Available wherever books are sold

