

gossip about those we gossip about, boast about what we want to boast about. In short, we find others who will sin with us and encourage them in doing so.

Can you think of scenarios where you might be tempted to participate in the things on this list (e.g. someone spreading gossip)? What response can you give that honors God in each scenario?

3. Good News- You don't have to settle for dead

Romans 8:9-10 NLT - 9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10 And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.

The battle between the flesh (our sinful nature) and the spirit will continue on this side of heaven. But we have the means to overcome the temptation of sin.

What is it that breaks the control of the sinful nature in us? How would you describe struggle we have against sin and in what way do we give authority either to the Spirit or the flesh to rule over us?

WRAP-UP

God offers us abundant life, but the world has lied to us about what that looks like. It is not found in pursuing pleasure. That path is full of death and the destruction of healthy relationships. But when we give the Holy Spirit the right to reign in our life, we have the power to overcome sin.

MEMORY VERSE

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you –
Romans 8:9a NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge- We will be celebrating baptisms Sept 5. If you haven't been baptized, ask God if this is your time.

“How to Ruin Your Life Without Trying” Made For More #1

INTRODUCTION

At New Life you will hear us say that we want you to live “fully alive in Jesus.” But far too often we settle for much less. It is possible that you have been lulled into settling for a rather dead existence and you may not even be aware of it. Just like Neo (if you were around in 1999 you'll remember The Matrix) we have a choice to remain blissfully ignorant of the unsettling truth, or allow our eyes to be opened to the false narratives the world wants us to believe. Let's check and see if we have been believing the lies. (Here is your red pill, blue pill moment.)

Ice Breaker

Were you a fan of The Matrix? Do you think you would choose the red pill (aware of unpleasant reality) or blue pill (continue in a pleasant dream state)?

Key Passage

Ephesians 2:4-5 NIV - 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Denying the Truth

Romans 1:20-21 NIV - 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Let's start this study by acknowledging who should be worshipped, who should be in control, and who we are indebted to. It's God! Paul tells us there is no excuse for failing to recognize God's rightful place.

Romans 1:20 says God's invisible qualities of power and divinity are revealed to us in all of creation. Where in creation do you find those qualities revealed? Do you remember when you first recognized God was revealed in His creation? Is there a particular place in nature where you feel overwhelmed by God?

Having the knowledge of God's nature, we are all now responsible for how we respond to that truth. Our choice is simple, we can recognize God for who He is and worship, glorify and praise Him, or we can deny that truth and look to something else to put in God's place.

This passage in Romans addresses those who don't acknowledge the truth.

Romans 1:25 NIV - 25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

Paul may have been thinking of carved images, like golden calf idols, as he wrote this epistle, but even today we worship and serve things rather than God.

*What kinds of things (idols) do people worship or serve today?
HINT- One indicator might be what our money is spent on.*

2. Perpetual Pursuit of Pleasure

Once we deny God, we begin to settle for an existence devoid of the spiritually vibrant life God wants us to enjoy. If we choose to push God away, He will release us to pursue whatever we have chosen instead of Him. Paul lists examples of pleasure seeking, that the bible refers to as the "lusts of their hearts" or the craving for what is forbidden. His list begins with sinful desires and sexual impurity. But that is not the only worldly pleasure that we lust after. We may be pursuing power, wealth, fame, or any number of things that we think will give us a happy life, but like Solomon, in the end, we realize are empty.

Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 NLT - 10 Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. 11 But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless--like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

Did you ever have a goal that you were driven to fulfill only to find disappointment once you attained it? Perhaps it was a level of income, or a job or a car, that after you acquired it, it failed to satisfy, and you felt you still needed more. Is there anything in your life right now that competes with God for your thoughts, your time or your money that you believe will solve your problems or satisfy you? Be careful you don't settle for less than God.

Paul had once believed the world's narratives about what gives our lives value. He had zealously chased them all. But once his eyes were open to the truth of Jesus this was his assessment of what he once considered valuable.

Philippians 3:7-8 NLT - 7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

3. The Consequences of Sin

Nobody sets out to make selfish decisions and ruin their lives, but ultimately, denying God's place in our lives and pursuing our own agenda ends in destruction and the death of healthy relationships.

Romans 1:28-32 NLT - 28 Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. 29 Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. 30 They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. 31 They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. 32 They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

We are not the only ones who suffer the consequences of our sin. As you read through the wickedness listed by Paul in this passage, you might notice that they all have a relational element, or someone else who is impacted. It is also revealing that many of these sins seek others to partner with us. We find others who hate who we hate,