

RELENTLESS

Study Guide

A 10-12 Lesson Study Guide, serving as a companion to
**Relentless: The True Story of God's Relentless Pursuit
of Three Brothers**

Designed for a biblical discussion, personal reflection, and Christ-centered application.

"The God of heaven will do what He needs to do to get us to where we truly want to be."

How to Use This Guide

This guide follows the structure of *Relentless* and is designed for a conservative, Bible-centered Christian Small Group and/or Personal Reflection. It could also be used in a Sunday School setting with participants doing the assigned readings. (For convenience in photocopying, the Contents and Reading Plan page (below) is also on the last page of this study.) If taught in a group setting, the leader will want to pick which discussion questions to ask, and possibly come up with some others on his or her own. The stories in the book provide the setting; Scripture provides the final authority for doctrine, discernment, repentance, faith, and application. Each lesson combines assigned reading from the book with additional Bible passages so that the group can test every conclusion by the Word of God.

Suggested Small Group Rhythm (60-90 minutes)

- Welcome and interactive ice-breaker — 10–15 minutes
- Review the assigned reading — 5–10 minutes
- Study the additional Scripture — 15–20 minutes
- Work through selected discussion questions — 20–30 minutes
- Personal application and prayer — 10–15 minutes

A Word to Leaders

Some chapters address addiction, anger, sexual sin, family wounds, suffering, and spiritual warfare. Encourage honesty without pressuring anyone to disclose details that should remain private. Do not let the group become a place for gossip, amateur diagnosis, or sensationalism. When serious safety, addiction, abuse, or mental-health concerns arise, encourage appropriate pastoral and professional help while continuing to offer prayer, friendship, biblical truth, and practical support.

The Big Idea of *Relentless*

The book repeatedly returns to the conviction that the God of heaven pursues His people for their good. The three brothers do not travel identical roads. One story emphasizes self-deception, another anger and the search for peace, and another addiction, suffering, and forgiveness. Yet the book sees a common hand of Providence: God exposes false refuges, interrupts destructive paths, and draws people toward deeper surrender to Christ.

Core Commitments for the Study

- The Bible is the final authority. Personal stories illustrate truth; they do not establish doctrine.
- Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by moral improvement or religious performance.
- Repentance and faith produce a changed direction of life, while sanctification remains a lifelong work of grace.
- God is sovereign and good even when His providence is difficult to understand.
- Christians are called to truth and compassion together: neither excusing sin nor treating strugglers as beyond grace.
- The goal of every lesson is not merely to understand the brothers' stories, but to respond personally to God's Word.

For Personal Reflection

Read the assigned material slowly. Mark statements that challenge you. Answer the questions in writing, look up the Scripture passages in context, and end each lesson by identifying one concrete act of obedience.

Contents & Reading Plan

1. The Deceiver and the Danger of Self-Deception

Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1 + Chapter 4, through point 2

2. Relentless Pursuit No. 1

Chapter 2 + Chapter 4, points 3–5

3. Pursuit No. 1 Continues

Chapter 3 + Chapter 4, points 6–8

4. The Brawler and Peace in an Anxious World

Chapter 5 + Chapter 8, p. 98 – paragraph ending at the top of p. 101

5. Relentless Pursuit No. 2

Chapter 6 + Chapter 8, first paragraph, p. 101 – first paragraph, p. 104

6. Pursuit No. 2 Continues

Chapter 7 + Chapter 8, second paragraph, p. 104 – end of chapter

7. The All-American Nice Guy and the Struggle to Forgive

Chapter 9 + Chapter 12, p. 157–160

8. Relentless Pursuit No. 3

Chapter 10 + Chapter 12, p. 161 – first paragraph, p. 165

9. Pursuit No. 3 Continues

Chapter 11 + Chapter 12, second paragraph, p. 165 – end of chapter

10. Pulling It All Together, or Why Bad Things Happen

Chapter 13

11. Extra Lesson: A Deeper Look at Demonic Activity

Appendix B

12. Extra Lesson: Addiction, Choice, and Gospel Hope

Appendix C

Lesson 1 — The Deceiver and the Danger of Self-Deception

Reading assignment: Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 4, through point 2

Lesson Overview

The opening story presents a striking contrast between outward religious familiarity and inward spiritual blindness. The narrator could speak confidently about salvation while living in patterns that contradicted the lordship of Christ. Chapter 4 then begins to name the deeper problem: the human heart is remarkably skilled at hiding truth from itself. This lesson asks the group to examine the difference between “profession” and “possession,” between knowing Christian language and walking in repentant faith.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Hunting 101

Either have everyone participate or ask for three volunteers for the following competition. Review the guidelines from Chapter 1 on how to catch a seagull. Take turns following the instructions; have the group vote and determine the best seagull hunter.

Key Biblical Truths

- God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance, not to make us comfortable in sin.
- Self-deception thrives when we compare ourselves with other people instead of submitting ourselves to God’s Word.
- Genuine conversion produces a changed direction, even though growth and sanctification continue throughout life.
- The Holy Spirit exposes what we would rather excuse and renews the mind so that we increasingly think like Christ.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Romans 2:4 • 2 Corinthians 11:3 • Jeremiah 17:9-10 • James 1:22–25 • Galatians 6:7-10

Additional passages for further study: Psalm 139:23–24 • Romans 12:1–2

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. Read Romans 2:4. What does this passage reveal about God as our refuge and about His kindness in leading us to repentance?
2. Read Jeremiah 17:9–10. Why is the heart an unreliable final judge of its own motives, and why do we need God’s searching evaluation? How does this work out in our lives?
3. Read James 1:22–25. How does hearing God’s Word without obeying it work itself out as self-deception in everyday life?
4. Read Galatians 6:7–10. What does sowing and reaping teach about choices, consequences, and how we view the hardship that we and others go through?

5. Read Psalm 139:23–24 and Romans 12:1–2. What practices help a believer invite God’s correction and help provide resistance to conformity to this world’s deceptive patterns?

Connect Scripture and Story

Chapter 1 shows how a person can know Christian language and still be blind to the true condition of the heart. Connect Bill’s experience with Romans 2:4, James 1:22–25, and Galatians 6:7–10. Where did God’s kindness, His Word, and the consequences of choices begin to expose self-deception? Keep the story under Scripture: the testimony illustrates these truths, while God’s Word defines them.

Personal Reflection

Where am I most tempted to confuse familiarity with Christian truth for obedience to Christ? What has God been using—His kindness, His Word, consequences, or the counsel of others—to expose a blind spot in me? Write one area in which you need to ask God to search your heart honestly.

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see the clearest evidence of self-deception in Chapter 1?
2. What are some of the most common things people deceive themselves about?
3. Was your story similar to Bill’s when it comes to self-deception? If so, is there an example that you could share?
4. Would you be willing to share something you struggle not to deceive yourself about now?
5. Why can religious background, church attendance, or correct vocabulary become substitutes for a living relationship with Christ?
6. How does Romans 2:4 correct the idea that God’s patience means He approves of our choices?
7. What “mirrors” has God given believers to help expose spiritual blind spots?
8. How should a Small Group lovingly challenge someone whose profession of faith and pattern of life seem badly disconnected?

Personal Application

1. Identify one truth from Scripture in this lesson that you need to obey rather than merely agree with.
2. Name one pattern of self-deception, excuse, or comparison that you need to reject.
3. Choose one concrete act of repentance or obedience to take before the next meeting.
4. Ask a trusted believer to pray with you about this specific area.

Prayer Focus

Thank God that His kindness leads us toward repentance. Ask Him to search your heart, expose self-deception, and give you grace to be a doer of His Word. Pray for courage to sow to the Spirit rather than to the flesh and for a life increasingly shaped by truth.

Lesson 2 — Relentless Pursuit No. 1: God Interrupts Our Illusions

Reading assignment: Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, points 3–5

Lesson Overview

Chapter 2 traces God’s pursuit through fear, consequences, conviction, providential encounters, and the growing inability to remain comfortable in a self-directed life. The middle portion of Chapter 4 deepens the study by showing how rationalization and selective thinking protect cherished sin. God’s relentless pursuit is therefore not cruelty; it is mercy that refuses to leave a person peacefully deceived.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Let’s Be Honest

Go around and have each person name one harmless way people commonly overestimate themselves—driving skill, athleticism, memory, cooking, technology, singing, etc. If possible, give an example of someone you know. Then discuss: Why is it easier to spot self-deception in someone else than in ourselves?

Key Biblical Truths

- Conviction is a gift when it drives us toward Christ rather than away from Him.
- God may use consequences, disrupted plans, faithful witnesses, and Scripture to dismantle our excuses.
- Repentance involves more than regret; it turns from sin toward God in faith and surrender.
- The Gospel confronts self-righteousness and self-salvation while offering forgiveness through Christ alone.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: 1 Corinthians 15:8 • 1 Corinthians 15:33 • 1 John 1:8-9 • James 1:13-18

Additional passages for further study: Psalm 32:1–5 • Acts 2:36–39 • 2 Corinthians 7:9–11 • Titus 3:3–7

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of Relentless with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33. How can close relationships shape our thinking, habits, and spiritual direction?
2. Read 1 John 1:8–9. How does denying sin deepen self-deception, and how does confession bring us back into the light of God’s truth and forgiveness?
3. Read James 1:13–17. Where does temptation come from, and what does this passage insist is true about the goodness of God?
4. Compare Psalm 32:1–5 and 2 Corinthians 7:9–11. What is the difference between hiding sin, worldly sorrow, and repentance that leads to life?

Connect Scripture and Story

Chapter 2 describes God's pursuit through conviction, relationships, disrupted expectations, and the growing collapse of Bill's excuses. The Scriptures in this lesson clarify what the story means: bad company can influence us, denying sin deceives us, temptation arises from our own desires, and every good gift comes from God. Identify where these truths appear in the story and where God's grace began turning conviction into repentance.

Personal Reflection

Which part of Bill's pursuit most closely challenges your own tendency to resist God—relationships, excuses, fear of consequences, pride, or reluctance to confess? Where are you tempted to blame circumstances or other people for choices that Scripture calls you to own?

Discussion Questions

1. Which events in Chapter 2 seem most significant in breaking through the narrator's self-deception?
2. How can we distinguish God's loving conviction from mere fear of getting caught?
3. People often become more defensive when truth gets close to a cherished sin. What are some common ways that defensiveness is expressed?
4. Can you remember some of the props that got knocked out in your life? Can you share one or two?
5. What role can Christian friends play in God's pursuit of a wandering person?
6. What excuses are most common in our culture for avoiding repentance?
7. Why must repentance and faith be centered on Christ rather than on self-improvement?
8. Describe a time when an uncomfortable circumstance became spiritually useful in your life.

Personal Application

1. Confess one specific sin or wrong attitude rather than explaining it away.
2. Evaluate one relationship or influence that may be shaping you away from obedience to Christ.
3. Replace one excuse with the truth of James 1:13–17 about temptation and God's goodness.
4. Take one practical step that demonstrates godly repentance rather than mere regret.

Prayer Focus

Praise God as your help, shield, and source of every good gift. Confess without excuse where you have denied, minimized, or blamed others for sin. Ask for godly sorrow that produces repentance and for faith to receive the cleansing and forgiveness promised in Christ.

Lesson 3 — Pursuit No. 1 Continues: Testing What We Believe

Reading assignment: Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, points 6–8

Lesson Focus

Self-deception reaches its most serious level when we are wrong about ourselves, wrong about Christ, and/or wrong about salvation. Scripture calls us to examine ourselves and rest in the true Gospel.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: True, False, or Almost True

The leader reads several everyday statements that are true, false, or almost true. The group votes. End with this question: Why can “almost true” be more dangerous than obviously false?

Lesson Overview

Chapter 3 shows the aftermath of surrender: new desires, new priorities, ministry, testing, and continuing dependence on grace. The final third of Chapter 4 warns that believers are not immune to self-deception. Spiritual maturity requires humility, Scripture, prayer, accountability, and a willingness to let God correct us. Transformation is real, but it never gives us permission to become careless or proud.

Key Biblical Truths

- Sanctification is evidence of grace, not a ground for boasting.
- Believers must continue to test their thinking by the Word of God.
- Humility welcomes correction because the goal is Christlikeness, not self-protection.
- Past failure can become a testimony to grace when it produces gratitude, vigilance, and compassion for others.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Hebrews 12:1-7 (Appendix A) • Ephesians 6:10–12 • Philippians 2:9–11 • 1 Corinthians 3:18 • 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 • Matthew 24:4 • James 1:26–27 • 2 Timothy 3:13 • Job 12:16 • Revelation 20:10 • James 1:26-27 • 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 • Matthew 7:21–23 • 2 Corinthians 13:5

Additional passages for further study: Galatians 2:20 • 1 Corinthians 10:12–13

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. Read Ephesians 6:10–12 and Philippians 2:9–11. What do these passages teach about spiritual conflict and the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 Corinthians 1:27–29. How does God overturn human pride and worldly definitions of wisdom and strength?
3. Read Matthew 24:4. Why must believers remain alert to deception even when they are confident in Christ?

4. Read James 1:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9–11. What evidence should accompany a credible profession of faith, and how does grace both forgive and transform?
5. Read Matthew 7:21–23 and 2 Corinthians 13:5. What is the difference between religious activity and truly belonging to Christ?

Connect Scripture and Story

Chapter 3 describes a changed direction after surrender, while the final points of Chapter 4 warn that deception can involve pride, false teaching, empty religion, and even false assurance about salvation. Connect the changes in Bill's life with the Scriptures that call believers to humility, discernment, transformed conduct, and self-examination. The point is not confidence in a dramatic testimony, but confidence in Christ that bears biblical fruit.

Personal Reflection

Where has God clearly changed your desires, priorities, or conduct? Where do you still need to remain teachable and watchful? Consider whether your assurance rests primarily on a past experience, religious activity, or the present reality of faith in Christ and a life being transformed by His grace.

Discussion Questions

1. What changes in Chapter 3 most clearly demonstrate a new direction of life?
2. Why is it dangerous to assume that past spiritual victories make us immune to present deception?
3. How can accountability help without becoming controlling or legalistic?
4. What is the role of Scripture in exposing motives as well as actions?
5. How can a believer speak honestly about past sin without glorifying it?
6. Why is humility essential for lifelong growth?
7. What practices help you remain teachable before God?
8. What would it look like for your group to become a safer place for confession, correction, and restoration?

Personal Application

1. Examine one area of your life in light of 2 Corinthians 13:5 rather than by comparison with other people.
2. Identify one form of worldly wisdom, pride, or religious appearance that you need to reject.
3. Strengthen one practice of discernment—Scripture, prayer, accountability, or careful testing of what you hear.
4. Thank God for a specific evidence of grace and ask Him to continue His transforming work.

Prayer Focus

Exalt Jesus Christ as Lord over every spiritual power and every part of your life. Ask God for humility, discernment, and a faith that produces genuine fruit. Pray that He will protect you from deception, expose false confidence, and continue conforming you to Christ.

Lesson 4 — The Brawler and Peace in an Anxious World

Reading assignment: Chapter 5 and Chapter 8, p. 98 – paragraph ending at the top of p. 101

Lesson Focus

Human toughness cannot produce the peace the soul needs. Biblical peace is rooted in the character of God and ultimately in a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Pressure Gauge

Using a 1–10 scale, have each person choose a number that represents how stressful an ordinary week can feel—without explaining too many details. Discuss healthy and unhealthy ways people respond to pressure.

Lesson Overview

Section II introduces Mike as strong, capable, driven, successful—but significantly affected by anger. His outward accomplishments could not produce inward peace. The opening portion of Chapter 8 moves from story to biblical diagnosis: anger can reveal pride, fear, woundedness, control, and misplaced desires. Scripture does not treat uncontrolled anger as a harmless personality trait; it calls believers to put it away and to pursue the peace of Christ.

Key Biblical Truths

- Anger often promises strength while quietly enslaving the person who nurtures it.
- Success and competence cannot substitute for peace with God and peace within the soul.
- Righteous anger exists, but human anger is easily corrupted by pride and self-interest.
- Biblical change addresses the heart beneath the outburst, not merely the outward behavior.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Romans 8:6 • Judges 6:24 • Isaiah 9:6 • Romans 15:33 • Ephesians 6:15 • Colossians 1:20 • Isaiah 53:5 • Romans 5:1 • Matthew 5:9 • Colossians 3:15 • Psalm 57:7 • Psalm 112:6–8 • Matthew 28:20

Additional passages for further study: James 1:19–20 • Ephesians 4:26–32 • Proverbs 14:29 • Proverbs 16:32 • Colossians 3:8,15

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. How do Romans 8:6 and Romans 5:1 distinguish the source of true peace from mere self-control or outward success?
2. What does Isaiah 9:6 reveal about why lasting peace is ultimately found in Christ, the Prince of Peace?
3. In Ephesians 4:26–32, what attitudes and actions must be put away, and what Christlike qualities must replace them? Which of these do you see in your life today?

4. How do Proverbs 14:29 and 16:32 challenge the idea that anger proves strength?
5. Read Psalm 112:6-8. What is most likely to unsettle your heart? When are you the most steadfast, or fixed?
6. Where does Mike's story show the difference between appearing strong and actually possessing peace?

Connect Scripture and Story

Mike's strength, drive, and willingness to fight could win outward battles but could not quiet the heart. Read his story alongside the passages in Chapter 8 that identify God as the source of peace and Christ as the Prince of Peace. Discuss how anger can become a false refuge and how surrender to Christ begins to redefine genuine strength.

Personal Reflection

1. When pressure rises, what does my anger usually reveal that I want, fear, or feel I must control?
2. Am I more likely to excuse anger as personality, or to bring it under the authority of Christ?
3. In which relationship do I most need the peace and restraint described in these Scriptures?

Discussion Questions

1. What strengths in Mike's life could also become vulnerabilities when not surrendered to Christ?
2. What does anger seem to accomplish for a person in the short term? What does it cost in the long term?
3. How can we tell the difference between righteous anger and self-centered anger?
4. What desires commonly sit beneath explosive or simmering anger?
5. Why is "that is just the way I am" an inadequate Christian response to sinful patterns?
6. How does the Gospel challenge both the angry person and the person who fears conflict?
7. What does it mean to be "slow to anger" in practical terms?
8. What relationships in your life would benefit from a more deliberate pursuit of peace?

Personal Application

1. Identify one recurring trigger for anger and name the heart desire beneath it.
2. Memorize or repeatedly pray Romans 8:6, Matthew 5:9, or Colossians 3:15 this week.
3. Take one concrete step toward peace in a strained relationship without compromising truth.
4. Ask a trusted believer to pray specifically for gentleness, self-control, and a heart ruled by Christ's peace.

Prayer Focus

Praise Jesus as the Prince of Peace. Confess anger, pride, fear, or the desire to control where these have ruled the heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you slow to anger, quick to listen, and willing to pursue peace. Pray by name for relationships in which Christ's peace needs to govern your words and responses.

Lesson 5 — Relentless Pursuit No. 2

Reading assignment: Chapter 6 and Chapter 8, first paragraph, p. 101 – first paragraph, p. 104

Lesson Focus

God's peace is not denial of trouble. Through prayer, thanksgiving, disciplined thinking, and trust in Christ, believers can experience peace that guards the heart and mind.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Worry Box

Give everyone a small slip of paper. Without names, write three general categories people worry about—money, family, health, work, the future. Mix the slips and read them aloud. Notice how universal anxiety is, and vote on which are the most common.

Lesson Overview

Chapter 6 records a long, painful pursuit in which repeated physical hardship, public humiliation, relational strain, and inner turmoil expose Mike's need. The decisive issue is not simply that circumstances became difficult, but that God used them to bring surrender. The middle of Chapter 8 turns toward the positive biblical vision of peace: not avoidance, numbness, or control, but settled confidence under the lordship of Christ.

Key Biblical Truths

- God can use hardship to expose idols of control, reputation, comfort, and self-sufficiency.
- Peace with God is rooted in justification through Christ; the peace of God grows as we trust and obey Him.
- Surrender is not weakness. It is the proper response of a creature to a wise and gracious Lord.
- Christ's peace can coexist with difficult circumstances because its foundation is not circumstantial.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Philippians 4:6–7 • James 1:8

Additional passages for further study: Romans 5:1–5

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of Relentless with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. What does Philippians 4:6–7 tell believers to do with anxiety, and what does God promise in response?
2. What part of the discussion on these verses helps you the most?
3. What does James 1:8 look like in real life?
4. What are the negative consequences of being a double-minded, unstable person?
5. What is the relationship between peace with God in Romans 5:1 and the peace of God in Philippians 4?

6. Where in Chapter 6 did hardship expose Mike's inability to create peace through strength, reputation, or control?

Connect Scripture and Story

Chapter 6 shows circumstances that steadily stripped away Mike's confidence in his own ability to manage life. The assigned Scriptures answer that pressure with prayer, thanksgiving, trust, and surrender. Connect the turning points in Mike's story with the movement from a divided, anxious mind toward a heart made steadfast in God.

Personal Reflection

1. What circumstance am I trying hardest to control right now?
2. When anxiety rises, do I move first toward prayer and thanksgiving or toward worry and self-reliance?
3. What truth about God would help make my heart more steadfast this week?

Discussion Questions

1. Why are strong and competent people sometimes especially resistant to surrender?
2. Which events in Chapter 6 appear to function as turning points?
3. How can hardship reveal what we have been trusting besides God?
4. Why does biblical peace not require the removal of every conflict or problem?
5. How do prayer, thanksgiving, and disciplined thinking relate to peace in Philippians 4?
6. Where are you currently tempted to seize control rather than trust God?
7. How can a group support someone in hardship without offering shallow explanations?

Personal Application

1. Turn one recurring worry into a written prayer using Philippians 4:6–7.
2. Add specific thanksgiving to that prayer each day.
3. Replace one anxious thought pattern with a truth from Isaiah 26:3–4 or John 14:27.
4. Share one burden with a mature believer and ask for prayer rather than carrying it alone.

Prayer Focus

Bring present anxieties to God by name. Thank Him for His faithfulness before asking for changed circumstances. Ask for the peace of Christ to guard heart and mind, for humility to surrender control, and for steadfast trust when the situation remains difficult.

Lesson 6 — Pursuit No. 2 Continues: A Heart at Peace

Reading assignment: Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, second paragraph, p. 104 – end of chapter

Lesson Focus

The peace of God reaches body, mind, relationships, and witness. It is cultivated through trust, obedience, gratitude, prayer, and a growing awareness of God’s presence in suffering.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Peace Practices Swap

Each person shares one simple, healthy practice that helps quiet the mind and turn attention toward God—walking, Scripture memory, prayer, singing, journaling, silence, gratitude. Collect the ideas as a group resource.

Lesson Overview

Chapter 7 reminds readers that surrender does not place the believer on “Easy Street.” Faith is tested, stabilized, and deepened through trials. The closing portion of Chapter 8 calls Christians to become peacemakers whose words, responses, forgiveness, and trust display Christ. Peace is not passivity. It is active obedience under pressure, made possible by the Spirit of God.

Key Biblical Truths

- Trials do not necessarily signal God’s absence; they may become instruments of spiritual formation.
- Peacemaking requires truth, courage, forgiveness, restraint, and a refusal to repay evil for evil.
- The believer’s security in Christ makes it possible to respond without being ruled by fear or rage.
- Spiritual peace grows as we surrender outcomes to God while remaining faithful to what He commands.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Proverbs 14:30 • Isaiah 26:3 • 1 Peter 5:7 • John 14:27 • 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Additional passages for further study: Matthew 6:2–34 • Galatians 5:16–25 • Hebrews 12:14–15

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. Read Proverbs 14:30. How does this verse apply to everyday life?
2. What does Isaiah 26:3 look like regarding having a mind that is “stayed” on the Lord?
3. Read 1 Peter 5:7. What does “casting” look like in real life?
4. Read John 14:27. What does the world’s peace look like, and what does Jesus’ peace look like?

5. How does Chapter 7 show that peace can deepen through trials rather than only after trials end?
6. According to Isaiah 26:3–4 and 1 Peter 5:6–10, how do trust, humility, and casting our cares on God work together?
7. Now that you have finished the discussion on Philippians 4:6–7, what was the most important truth you learned regarding this passage?

Connect Scripture and Story

Mike's continuing journey shows that surrender does not remove every hardship. Chapter 8 closes by describing peace as a settled heart and a Christlike way of responding to people. Compare the trials in Chapter 7 with the commands to cast cares on God, refuse vengeance, walk by the Spirit, and become a peacemaker.

Personal Reflection

1. Is my present lack of peace mainly tied to circumstances, thought patterns, resentment, or an unwillingness to surrender an outcome?
2. Where am I tempted to repay hurt with hurt, withdrawal, or bitterness?
3. Which fruit of the Spirit is most needed in my response to conflict right now?

Discussion Questions

1. What false expectations about the Christian life are challenged in Chapter 7?
2. What about prison life as discussed in Chapter 7 is different than what you thought?
3. What about prison life as discussed in Chapter 7 surprised you the most?
4. What would you fear/dread the most if you were unexpectedly sentenced to prison?
5. Under what circumstances in your life is peace the most elusive?
6. If you are at odds with someone, what is one concrete step you can take this week toward that individual?

Personal Application

1. Practice casting one specific care on God each morning this week.
2. Refuse one habitual form of retaliation—spoken, silent, or internal.
3. Take one biblical peacemaking step that is within your responsibility.
4. Thank God for one way a past trial has equipped you to comfort someone else.

Prayer Focus

Ask the Lord of peace to give peace “always in every way.” Release resentment and the desire for vengeance to Him. Pray for the Spirit's fruit in conflict, courage to pursue peace without compromising truth, and grace to comfort others with the comfort you have received.

Lesson 7 — The All-American Nice Guy and the Struggle to Forgive

Reading assignment: Chapter 9 and Chapter 12, p. 157-160

Lesson Focus

Being outwardly respectable does not remove the heart's need for grace. Christians forgive because they have been forgiven, and Jesus calls His followers to a posture of repeated forgiveness.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Small Debts

Give everyone ten coins, beans, or paper clips. Ask them to imagine each represents a minor irritation from the past week. As examples are named, place the objects in a pile. Discuss how small offenses become heavy when accumulated.

Key Biblical Truths

- Moral respectability can hide spiritual self-reliance just as surely as open rebellion can.
- Christian maturity is not measured only by usefulness, competence, or reputation.
- Forgiveness begins with the believer's own experience of God's grace in Christ.
- To forgive biblically is not to call evil good; it is to relinquish personal vengeance and respond under God's authority.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Ephesians 4:32 • Matthew 6:12 • Ephesians 4:15 • Proverbs 28:13 • 1 John 1:9 • Matthew 18:21–22

Additional passages for further study: Matthew 6:12–15 • Luke 18:9–14 • Ephesians 2:8–10 • Ephesians 4:31–32 • Colossians 3:12–13

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. How do Ephesians 4:32 and Matthew 6:12 connect our forgiveness of others with the forgiveness we have received from God?
2. What do Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:9 teach about covering/hiding our sin? What do they teach about confession, forsaking sin, mercy, and cleansing?
3. Why does Jesus' answer in Matthew 18:21–22 reject a bookkeeping approach to forgiveness?
4. How does Luke 18:9–14 warn an outwardly respectable person against spiritual self-reliance?
5. What parts of David's "nice guy" story show that moral respectability is not the same as dependence on grace?

Connect Scripture and Story

David's outward respectability makes the lesson on forgiveness especially searching: people who appear "good" still live entirely by grace. Chapter 12 begins by moving from God's forgiveness of

sinner to our responsibility to forgive others. Connect David's story with the call to confess honestly, receive mercy, and extend to others the grace we ourselves need.

Personal Reflection

1. Where am I tempted to measure spiritual health by being respectable, useful, or better than someone else?
2. Is there an offense I keep counting even though Jesus calls me to a posture of repeated forgiveness?
3. How does remembering my own need for mercy change the way I view the person who hurt me?

Discussion Questions

1. Why can "being a good person" become a spiritual danger?
2. If Pastor Jay Sutton said to you what he said to David about wasting his time and not being serious about his spiritual life, how would you respond? Would there be some truth to it?
3. What circumstances (certain people, certain situations, etc.) make forgiveness the most challenging for you?
4. How does the Gospel humble both obvious sinners and respectable sinners?
5. Why is forgiveness difficult even for mature Christians?
6. How does remembering God's forgiveness change our posture toward those who wrong us?
7. What is the difference between forgiveness and pretending that no wrong occurred?
8. Can forgiveness be commanded even when feelings lag behind? Explain.

Personal Application

1. Thank God specifically for sins He has forgiven rather than speaking only in general terms.
2. Identify one resentment that needs to be released from your personal ledger.
3. Choose one act of kindness, prayer, or restraint that reflects Ephesians 4:32.
4. If you have sinned against someone, prayerfully consider whether confession and a humble request for forgiveness are needed.

Prayer Focus

Thank God for mercy and cleansing through Christ. Confess self-righteousness and any unwillingness to forgive. Ask for a tender heart that remembers its own debt to grace and for wisdom to forgive repeatedly without calling evil good.

Lesson 8 — Relentless Pursuit No. 3

Reading assignment: Chapter 10 and Chapter 12, p. 161 – first paragraph, p. 165

Lesson Focus

Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant places our offenses in the light of the immeasurable debt God has forgiven in Christ. Gospel perspective loosens our grip on resentment.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Perspective Challenge

Show or name two very different quantities—for example, one minute versus one year, one dollar versus ten thousand dollars. Ask: How does comparison change the way we feel about a number? Connect this to Jesus' deliberately enormous debt in Matthew 18.

Lesson Overview

Chapter 10 traces the gradual progression of opioid misuse from legitimate pain treatment to secret dependence and devastating consequences. The story is a warning about the deceptive nature of sin and a testimony to the grace that meets us when hidden things come into the light. The middle portion of Chapter 12 helps the group think carefully about forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, trust, and consequences—related realities that should not be confused.

Key Biblical Truths

- Sin often grows through a series of choices that seem small when considered one at a time.
- Secrecy strengthens bondage; truth and confession are essential parts of walking in the light.
- Forgiveness can be extended while consequences remain and trust is rebuilt over time.
- Reconciliation ordinarily requires truth, repentance, wisdom, and the participation of both parties.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Psalm 51:17 • Isaiah 57:15 • Isaiah 66:2 • James 1:2–3 • Matthew 18:23–28 • Colossians 2:13–14 • Proverbs 19:11 • Proverbs 12:16

Additional passages for further study: John 3:19–21 • James 1:13–16 • 1 John 1:5–10

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of Relentless with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. What does Psalm 51 teach about genuine repentance, brokenness, and the kind of heart God does not despise?
2. In Matthew 18:23–28, what contrast does Jesus establish between the servant's enormous forgiven debt and the debt owed to him?
3. How does Colossians 2:13–14 describe the completeness and cost of God's forgiveness in Christ?
4. How do John 3:19–21 and James 1:13–16 explain the progression of temptation and the pull toward secrecy?

Connect Scripture and Story

Chapter 10 shows how hidden choices can grow into bondage and devastating consequences. Jesus' parable then places every personal offense beside the immeasurable debt God has forgiven in Christ. Connect David's movement from secrecy into brokenness with the biblical movement from darkness to light, confession, forgiveness, and restored life.

Personal Reflection

1. Where am I most tempted to hide, minimize, or manage appearances instead of walking in the light?
2. What does the size of my forgiven debt before God do to my sense of entitlement to hold another person's debt forever?
3. Is there an area in which I need the "broken and contrite heart" of Psalm 51 rather than mere regret over consequences?

Discussion Questions

1. What small compromises in Chapter 10 eventually became life-altering?
2. Why is secrecy so powerful in addiction and other habitual sins?
3. How should Christians respond when a respected leader's hidden sin is exposed?
4. What is the difference between forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored trust?
5. Why can consequences remain even after genuine repentance and forgiveness?
6. Have you ever experienced a situation where you or someone you know was "found out," like the daughter using the cordless phone?
7. What does it take for you to be okay? Discuss honestly as a group the various things that leave you not okay.
8. Has addiction been a part of your story, either personally or with a friend or family member?
9. Who has permission to ask you difficult questions about your spiritual life?

Personal Application

1. Bring one hidden or rationalized area honestly before God.
2. Where appropriate, confess to a trustworthy mature believer and invite accountability.
3. Rehearse Colossians 2:13–14 when shame tempts you to hide after genuine repentance.
4. Name one offense you need to view through the perspective of Matthew 18's unpayable debt.

Prayer Focus

Ask God for the honesty and brokenness of Psalm 51. Confess secrecy and self-protection. Thank Christ for canceling the debt of sin at the cross, and ask for grace to release resentment in light of the far greater mercy you have received.

Lesson 9 — Pursuit No. 3 Continues

Reading assignment: Chapter 11 and Chapter 12, second paragraph, p. 165 – end of chapter

Lesson Focus

Biblical forgiveness means releasing the offense to God, while reconciliation calls us to pursue peace wisely and humbly. Believers should neither be easily offended nor careless about genuine wrong.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Drop It

Give each person a small object to hold tightly for thirty seconds. Then have everyone open their hand and let it drop onto the table. Ask: What is the difference between saying “I’m not holding it” and actually releasing it?

Lesson Overview

Chapter 11 follows David through the aftermath: recovery, service, suffering, deepened surrender, and what the book calls the “dark night.” The final portion of Chapter 12 presses forgiveness into the hardest situations, where wounds are deep and simple formulas are inadequate. Christian forgiveness rests finally in God’s justice and Christ’s cross, not in the worthiness of the offender.

Key Biblical Truths

- God may deepen faith through seasons in which answers are incomplete and suffering remains.
- Forgiveness is an act of obedience that may need to be reaffirmed as painful memories return.
- Forgiving does not eliminate appropriate boundaries, civil justice, or wise protection from further harm.
- The cross shows both the seriousness of sin and the astonishing mercy of God.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: James 1:2–3 • Hebrews 12:1–2 • Philippians 4:11 • Matthew 5:23–24 • Matthew 18:15 • Isaiah 43:25 • Luke 17:3–4 • Romans 12:18

Additional passages for further study: Genesis 50:15–21 • Romans 12:17–21 • 1 Peter 4:12–19 • Hebrews 12:14–15 • Luke 23:32–34

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. Read Philippians 4:11. How is contentment learned?
2. How do Matthew 5:23–24 and 18:15–17 place responsibility on believers to take initiative in conflict?
3. What do Luke 17:3–4 and Romans 12:18 teach about forgiveness, repentance, and the limits of our control over reconciliation?

4. How does Genesis 50:15–21 help a wounded person release vengeance while still naming evil truthfully?
5. How do Chapter 11 and Hebrews 12:1–2 portray endurance when suffering and unanswered questions remain?

Connect Scripture and Story

David's later suffering and "dark night" place forgiveness in a setting where pain is not quickly removed. The final portion of Chapter 12 distinguishes overlooking small offenses, confronting real wrong, forgiving, and pursuing reconciliation. Connect those distinctions with David's continued surrender: faith entrusts both suffering and justice to God while doing what Scripture requires of us.

Personal Reflection

1. Am I carrying an offense that Scripture would call me simply to overlook?
2. Is there a genuine conflict in which I have avoided the biblical responsibility to go humbly to the other person?
3. What part of reconciliation is mine to pursue, and what outcome must I leave with God?

Discussion Questions

1. Consider Philippians 4:11. What have you learned about contentment? How did you learn it?
2. What does David's "dark night" teach about the difference between faith and easy circumstances?
3. How can suffering deepen surrender rather than destroy it?
4. Why may forgiveness need to be repeated at the level of the heart even after a sincere decision has been made?
5. How can Christians maintain boundaries without feeding bitterness?
6. What role does confidence in God's justice play in releasing vengeance?
7. How does the cross keep forgiveness from becoming sentimental?
8. What would you say to a believer who wants to forgive but still feels deep pain?
9. Is there a wound you need to place again into God's hands this week?

Personal Application

1. Decide whether one current offense should be overlooked, confronted, or released—and act biblically.
2. If a conversation is needed, prepare to speak truth in love rather than rehearsing accusations.
3. Release personal vengeance to God and refuse to keep feeding the grievance.
4. In a continuing trial, fix your attention on Christ and choose one faithful act of endurance this week.

Prayer Focus

Entrust both wounds and justice to God. Ask for discernment to know when to overlook and when to address an offense, humility to take initiative in reconciliation, strength to forgive repeatedly, and endurance to follow Christ faithfully when pain remains.

Lesson 10 — Pulling It All Together, or Why Bad Things Happen

Reading assignment: Chapter 13

Lesson Focus

Scripture does not reduce suffering to one explanation. God remains good and sovereign, and He can use hardship to discipline, redirect, restrain, deepen witness, display His glory, mature His children, and draw them back to Himself.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: One Event, Many Purposes

Name a neutral event such as a road closure or delayed flight. As a group, brainstorm several possible reasons or purposes behind it. Then discuss why we should be cautious about claiming we know the single reason behind another person's suffering.

Lesson Overview

Chapter 13 gathers the three stories into the book's central theological claim: God is good, sovereign, wise, and purposeful even when His providence is painful and mysterious. The chapter addresses the problem of evil and suffering from a biblical worldview, affirming both God's power and His character. The three brothers' stories do not answer every question, but they illustrate how hardship can become a severe mercy that exposes, redirects, and matures.

Key Biblical Truths

- Scripture affirms both God's sovereign power and His goodness; Christians should not solve suffering by denying either truth.
- Not every hardship is direct punishment for a particular sin, yet God can use every hardship redemptively in the lives of His children.
- Our perspective is limited; God's purposes may be clearer in hindsight, and some mysteries will remain until eternity.
- The supreme proof of God's goodness is the cross, where the greatest evil was used in the accomplishment of salvation.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Romans 8:28–30 • Psalm 147:5 • Jeremiah 32:17 • 1 John 4:16 • John 3:16 • Psalm 62:11–12 • Genesis 18:25 • Isaiah 59:1–2 • John 9:1–3 • Exodus 34:7 • Ezekiel 18:20 • Galatians 6:7 • John 5:5–14 • Numbers 16:28–32 • Acts 5:1–11 • 2 Samuel 7:14 • Proverbs 3:11–12 • 1 Corinthians 11:27–31 • Galatians 4:13 • 2 Corinthians 12:7–10 • 1 Peter 4:12–13 • John 9:2–3 • Genesis 45:1–8 • Genesis 50:19 • John 15:1–2 • Job 1:21–22 • Job 42:5–6 • Job 23:10 • Ruth 1:19–21

Additional passages for further study: none needed

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. How do Romans 8:28–30 define the “good” God is working toward in the lives of His children?

2. Read Genesis 18:25. In what ways has God done—and does God continue to do—what is right in this world?”
3. How do Joseph’s story and Genesis 45 show God’s providence working through real human evil without calling the evil good?
4. Read John 9:1-2. What similar wrong ideas are we predisposed toward?
5. What do Job’s responses teach about worship, limited understanding, and deeper knowledge of God?

Connect Scripture and Story

Chapter 13 deliberately brings the three brothers’ stories under a larger biblical theology of providence. Their hardships did not all have the same immediate cause or purpose, yet the chapter argues that God remained powerful, loving, wise, and purposeful. Use the many Scriptures in the chapter to test that conclusion rather than making any one brother’s experience a universal formula.

Personal Reflection

1. When I suffer, which truth is harder for me to hold onto: God’s power, His goodness, or my limited perspective?
2. Have I assumed a single explanation for someone else’s suffering when Scripture allows several possibilities?
3. Where can I now see spiritual good that God brought from something I would never have chosen?

Discussion Questions

1. How do the three brothers’ stories differ, and what common pattern exists?
2. Why is the problem of evil such a serious challenge to faith?
3. What errors result from denying either God’s power or God’s goodness?
4. Why should we avoid assuming that every tragedy is punishment for a specific sin?
5. How does the cross reshape the Christian response to suffering?
6. What does Romans 8 promise—and what does it not promise—about hardship?
7. Where have you seen God bring spiritual good out of something you would never have chosen?
8. How can the church sit faithfully with people whose suffering has no tidy explanation?

Personal Application

1. Write down one present hardship and beside it list what Scripture says you know about God even when you do not know His specific purpose.
2. Refuse to offer a simplistic explanation for another person’s pain; practice compassionate presence instead.
3. Meditate on Romans 8:28–30 with attention to conformity to Christ as the promised good.
4. Use one past hardship as a testimony to God’s faithfulness without implying that everyone’s story must unfold the same way.

Prayer Focus

Worship God as both sovereign and good. Admit where suffering has confused, angered, or frightened you. Ask for wisdom not to claim knowledge God has not given, faith to trust His character, and grace to become more like Christ through whatever He permits.

Lesson 11 — Extra Lesson: A Deeper Look at Demonic Activity

Reading assignment: Appendix B

Lesson Focus

The Bible treats Satan and demons as real while consistently emphasizing Christ's absolute authority. Christians should reject both unbelief and unhealthy fascination, standing firm through truth, prayer, obedience, and confidence in Christ.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Two Errors

Draw a line with “Ignore spiritual warfare” on one end and “Obsess over spiritual warfare” on the other. Ask the group to discuss why both extremes can be spiritually unhealthy. Place “biblical vigilance and confidence in Christ” in the center.

Lesson Overview

Appendix B studies the Gospel accounts of the demon-possessed men in the region across the Sea of Galilee. The emphasis is not on fascination with darkness but on the absolute authority of Jesus Christ. The men are pictured in chaos, bondage, violence, isolation, and self-destruction; after encountering Christ, the dominant picture is sanity, order, and restoration. A conservative Christian reading takes the biblical testimony about Satan and demons seriously while refusing sensationalism.

Key Biblical Truths

- The spiritual realm is real, but Christ is not one power among equals; He is Lord.
- Satan's purposes are destructive, deceptive, and enslaving, while Christ brings truth, freedom, and restoration.
- Believers should resist both unbelief about spiritual warfare and unhealthy preoccupation with demonic activity.
- Our ordinary weapons are biblical: truth, righteousness, faith, prayer, the Gospel, and submission to God.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Matthew 8:28–34 • Luke 8:28–37 • Revelation 20:10 • Matthew 25:41

Additional passages for further study: Mark 5:1–20 • Ephesians 6:10–18 • James 4:7–10 • 1 John 4:1–4

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of *Relentless* with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. What details in Matthew 8 and Luke 8 reveal the destructive nature of demonic bondage?
2. What do the demons' words and Jesus' commands reveal about Christ's unquestioned authority over them?

3. How do Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41 place demonic activity under God's final judgment rather than presenting good and evil as equal powers?
4. According to Ephesians 6:10–18 and James 4:7–10, what ordinary biblical practices characterize faithful spiritual warfare?
5. What contrast does Luke 8:35–37 draw between the man before Christ's intervention and the man afterward?

Connect Scripture and Story

Appendix B centers the discussion of demonic activity on Jesus, not on fascination with darkness. The Gospel accounts move from violence, isolation, and bondage to a man sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind. Let the story reinforce the biblical emphasis: spiritual evil is real, but Christ's authority is absolute and the believer's response is truth, submission, faith, prayer, and obedience.

Personal Reflection

1. Am I more prone to ignore spiritual warfare or to give it unhealthy attention?
2. Does my view of spiritual conflict magnify Christ's authority or magnify fear?
3. Which part of the armor of God most needs deliberate attention in my daily life?

Discussion Questions

1. What details in the Gospel accounts emphasize the destructive character of demonic bondage?
2. What details emphasize Christ's complete authority?
3. Why are both skepticism and sensationalism spiritually dangerous?
4. How does Ephesians 6 describe the believer's response to spiritual conflict?
5. Why should prayer and Scripture be central rather than fear?
6. What does it mean practically to "resist the devil" and "submit to God"?
7. How can Christians discern spiritual issues without attributing every problem to demons?
8. What hope does the restored man in Luke 8:35 offer to people whose lives seem chaotic or ruined?

Personal Application

1. Read Ephesians 6:10–18 aloud each day this week and pray through its commands.
2. Test frightening or sensational claims about spiritual activity by Scripture rather than by stories alone.
3. Remove any practice that knowingly compromises obedience to Christ.
4. Encourage someone who feels spiritually defeated with the authority and sufficiency of Christ.

Prayer Focus

Praise Jesus Christ as Lord over every spiritual power. Ask for protection from deception, fear, and unhealthy fascination. Pray for truth, righteousness, faith, readiness with the gospel, confidence in salvation, Scripture-shaped thinking, and persevering prayer.

Lesson 12 — Extra Lesson: Addiction, Choice, and Gospel Hope

Reading assignment: Appendix C

Lesson Focus

Addiction involves powerful patterns of bondage and serious consequences, yet Scripture calls people to repentance, responsible choices, community, renewed thinking, and hope in the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Interactive Ice-Breaker: Chains and Supports

Ask the group to name, in general terms, habits that become easier through repetition and supports that make change easier. Keep the examples non-sensitive. Discuss why both personal responsibility and supportive community matter in lasting change.

Lesson Overview

Appendix C begins with Romans 6 and treats addiction through the biblical categories of dominion, slavery, grace, surrender, and new life. It acknowledges that believers can struggle seriously with addictive patterns while insisting that sin is not the rightful master of those who belong to Christ. The appendix also recognizes the value of wise help and structured recovery while keeping spiritual freedom grounded in the grace and power of God.

Key Biblical Truths

- A Christian can experience severe bondage to a sinful or destructive habit without that bondage becoming his or her final identity.
- Grace does not minimize addiction; grace breaks sin's claim to rule and calls the believer into active obedience.
- Freedom commonly involves confession, accountability, wise boundaries, renewed thinking, perseverance, and help from others.
- The church should reject both condemnation and enabling, offering truth, patience, practical help, and Gospel hope.

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES TO STUDY

Scripture in the assigned reading: Romans 6:12–14 • Matthew 5:3–4 • Psalm 139:23–24 • 1 John 1:9 • James 5:16 • Romans 7–8 • Luke 3:7–14 • Ephesians 4:28 • Romans 12:1–2

Additional passages for further study: 1 Corinthians 6:9–12 • Galatians 5:1, 13–25 • Titus 2:11–14 • Hebrews 4:14–16

Before the Group Meets

Read the assigned portion of Relentless with a pen or highlighter. Mark one place that encouraged you, one place that challenged you, and one statement or event you want to discuss. Then read the additional Bible passages slowly. Ask: What does this text teach about God? What does it reveal about the human heart? What response of faith or obedience does it call for?

Study the Word

1. In Romans 6:12–14, what responsibility does the believer have because sin is no longer to reign as master?
2. How do Matthew 5:3–4 and Psalm 139:23–24 describe the humility and honesty necessary for change?

3. What roles do confession and trusted Christian community play according to 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16?
4. How do Romans 7–8 and Galatians 5 describe the conflict between flesh and Spirit without removing personal responsibility?
5. How do Titus 2:11–14 and Hebrews 4:14–16 hold together grace, training in godliness, weakness, and confident help from Christ?

Connect Scripture and Story

Appendix C treats addiction neither as an excuse for sin nor as a reason for hopelessness. Its biblical emphasis is on honest admission, repentance, confession, renewed thinking, practical change, community, and dependence on God's grace. Connect these Scriptures with the patterns described in the appendix: real choices matter, bondage can become powerful, and Christ offers both mercy and a new direction of life.

Personal Reflection

1. Where am I tempted to use either "I cannot help it" or "I can fix myself" as a way to avoid humble dependence on God?
2. What habit or pattern most needs honest inventory before the Lord?
3. Do I have trustworthy Christian relationships in which confession, prayer, and accountability are normal?

Discussion Questions

1. How does Romans 6 change the way a Christian should speak about addiction and identity?
2. What is the difference between admitting powerlessness over a pattern and denying the power of God's grace?
3. How can a church support recovery without enabling destructive behavior?
4. What practical boundaries may be necessary when temptation is predictable?
5. How do grace and effort fit together in sanctification?
6. What should we say to someone who has relapsed and feels hopeless?
7. What is one specific way your group can become a community of truth, grace, and perseverance?

Personal Application

1. Identify one concrete behavior that needs to stop being presented as an "instrument" to sin and one replacement act of obedience.
2. Pray Psalm 139:23–24 slowly and write down what the Lord brings to mind.
3. Where appropriate, confess a struggle to a mature and trustworthy Christian who can pray and walk with you.
4. Build one practical boundary that supports obedience while keeping your confidence in God's grace rather than in the boundary itself.

Prayer Focus

Thank God that grace both forgives and trains His people to live differently. Confess patterns of bondage without excuse or despair. Ask for the Spirit's power, renewed thinking, wise boundaries, honest community, and confidence to approach Christ for mercy and timely help.

Contents & Reading Plan

1. The Deceiver and the Danger of Self-Deception

Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1 + Chapter 4, through point 2

2. Relentless Pursuit No. 1

Chapter 2 + Chapter 4, points 3–5

3. Pursuit No. 1 Continues

Chapter 3 + Chapter 4, points 6–8

4. The Brawler and Peace in an Anxious World

Chapter 5 + Chapter 8, p. 98 – paragraph ending at the top of p. 101

5. Relentless Pursuit No. 2

Chapter 6 + Chapter 8, first paragraph, p. 101 – first paragraph, p. 104

6. Pursuit No. 2 Continues

Chapter 7 + Chapter 8, second paragraph, p. 104 – end of chapter

7. The All-American Nice Guy and the Struggle to Forgive

Chapter 9 + Chapter 12, p. 157–160

8. Relentless Pursuit No. 3

Chapter 10 + Chapter 12, p. 161 – first paragraph, p. 165

9. Pursuit No. 3 Continues

Chapter 11 + Chapter 12, second paragraph, p. 165 – end of chapter

10. Pulling It All Together, or Why Bad Things Happen

Chapter 13

11. Extra Lesson: A Deeper Look at Demonic Activity

Appendix B

12. Extra Lesson: Addiction, Choice, and Gospel Hope

Appendix C