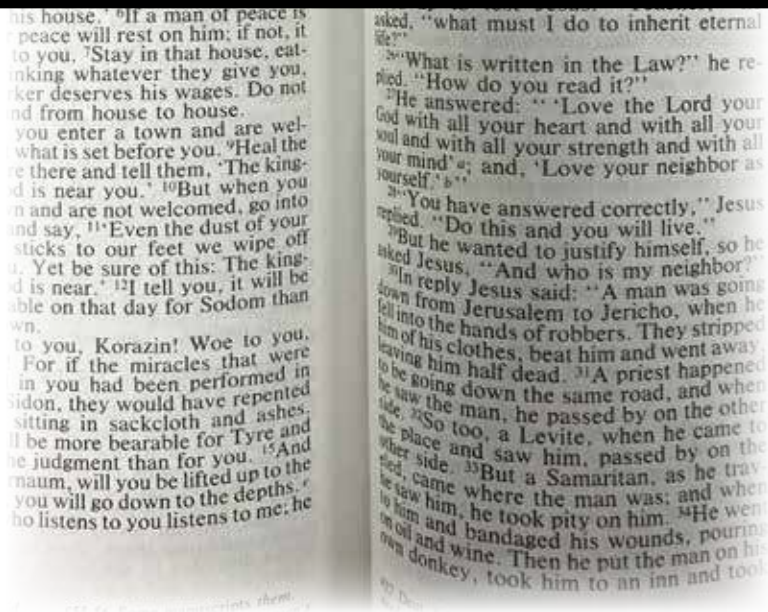


2017 STARTER KIT **WEEK 7**

UNFORMED • FORMED • DEFORMED • REFORMED

FOR YOUR YOUTH GROUP OR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS



HERE IS WHAT WE PROVIDE IN EACH SESSION:

1. A brief reading on the topic. This can be read, but of course should be shared instead in the leader's own words, adding or subtracting details that fit your group. Usually, there are Bible readings and questions worked into the text.
2. A short devotion that brings home the principles of the topic of the week. This is intended to be shared with the whole group.
3. An activity suggestion. These are simple, requiring few, if any, materials, but we all learn and retain better if we do something physical with what we've heard and seen.
4. A short skit. If you have time to rehearse and learn, these can be done on different weeks, or even for other meetings such as church services. But they can also be and done in impromptu fashion, each person reading his/her part expressively. Always allow time to discuss people's reactions after skits.
5. Very important: Each week's starter kit includes a page called "7 Days of Soul Food." Print these out and give copies to each person, or give each person the link if they have online access. These are personal applications that will carry the devotion through the whole week. It is highly recommended that each person begin some sort of prayer journal and use it all year. We general think of journals as being full of writing, but if you don't like to write, you can draw, doodle, paste in pictures that bring the lessons of the week to mind—anything that helps you draw closer to God.

INTRODUCTION

UNFORMED

In the beginning, God. Always. Everywhere. The “formless and void” earth described in Genesis 1:2 was also created by God.

FORMED

He took that formlessness and gave it form, brought order out of chaos, separated and named darkness and light, dry land and sea, created moss and flowers and vines and trees, made creatures innumerable in gorgeous variety. By His word, he shaped the whole world into a form that He defined as *good*. Last of all, God formed human beings who could live in community and choose to love, just as God did.

People were formed “in the image of God.” But not necessarily, physically, or at least there was much more to this form of life. God and those astonishing beings we name angels (oh, yes, they were formed by God, too) walked with our first parents and taught them to shape their lives after Him, which is to say, around Love. Love was what made everything, and love was to be the center and wellspring of their lives. They didn’t, of course, know that love, by definition, is the willingness to sacrifice all for the beloved. There was nothing to sacrifice—not yet. But as they walked with God, it is certain that each put the other’s desires and needs before their own. It’s hard to imagine what their lives were like, but we can safely say that each—no doubt—offered the other the choice of which work to do first on a given day, or deferred to the other’s wishes in the matter of where to explore next. Each gave the other the first bite of some newly discovered fruit.

Well...until that one time...

When Eve stood before the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* and listened to the serpent, the battle for the souls of the whole universe, begun in the very throne room of heaven well before this day, suddenly heated up sickeningly. Unseen angels begged silently, *Say no! Say no!*

God—the whole Godhead, all together as always—drew on her heart as only God knows how to do. And she *knew* God, personally, in a way we can’t even fathom. So, what she did next is a mystery. How could she have simply taken the serpent’s words for it that the God who made her with His own hands, who walked and talked with her, who loved her...had deceived her? Why would she...?

But she did. She ate. Then offered it to Adam.

DEFORMED

And so God's formation of this world, the form of *good* and *love*, was shattered. Those beings God loved chose to break the mold. They gave their allegiance to themselves and their own desires rather than to their Maker. Or so they thought. In fact, they had given their allegiance to another. They turned over the rule of their bright new world to the unformer, the deformer, the devil.

Was God caught off balance, at a loss as to what to do? Not for a second. "Before" this (whatever "before" means when there is no time) God had already planned a way to win us back. God immediately went after His erring children and promised them a Messiah, the ultimate Reformer, who would rescue and remake them and at last, the world.

For the following millennia, the deformation of the planet proceeded in an ever-downward spiral. Brother killed brother. Men began to take more than one wife, showing that already, the value of the women God had formed in His own image was dropping to that of possessions. The Flood came.

Talk about deformation! The whole planet nearly fell apart. And the whole population, save only eight individuals, died. God started over.

And they immediately began a tower to take over heaven.

More millennia, more destruction.

The fullness of time arrived, and an immortal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent Being became a mortal, unknowing, helpless Baby, present in just one place at a time, beginning with the womb of a young girl, and coming into the world in a little stable.

REFORMED

And so Creation, still groaning, was brought back under the dominion of the God who made it. And how? By this God/Man *giving Himself up to the dark deformation!* How could that reform everything? Again, it's a mystery. We only know it is so.

We know it because of the witness of millions, first in New Testament times, and continuing through to our day. We know because we see the reforming of lives all over the world, lives in our countries, in our towns, in our homes. We know because we feel the reforming begin in our own souls, the minute we turn to God.

It's not finished. The plan of Salvation is complete, but the reformation isn't. We still live in a world that seems even more deformed. Together with a groaning creation, we wait for the day when all will be made new—reformed, re-shaped into what God still calls *good*—a world shaped by and centered on His self-sacrificing Love.

And then, at long last, we and our world will be...

Transformed!

DEVOTION

Note to leader: Because there was less opportunity for interaction in the reading, there is extra interaction in this devotion. Bible texts in this section are all taken from the —New King James Version (NKJV)

Think about your own personal life. We can't, of course, remember the time we were yet unformed. But we can imagine it. Try to picture a time before you came to be. Now imagine your first forming into the beginnings of a little human.

READ OR HAVE SOMEONE READ PSALM 139:13-16

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;[a] Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.

—New King James Version (NKJV)

Ask questions and allow time for discussion.

1. How does this make you feel?
2. What are your reactions to this passage?

NOW HAVE SOMEONE READ JEREMIAH 1:5

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

Ask questions and allow time for a little discussion and sharing.

1. This says the same thing, but from God's point of view.
2. Do you believe He knew you and had plans for you before you were even born?
3. Do you know yet what some of those plans are? Allow sharing.

Once you were formed and completed, you were born.

1. But were you really complete yet?
2. What are some of the things that have formed you, physically and otherwise, since your birth?
3. Do you feel “grown-up” yet? *Discuss.*

HOW ABOUT DEFORMATION?

1. Are there ways you feel your life has been deformed, either physically or otherwise? If you are willing, share some.

Reformation, of course, is our theme, and is what we most want to concentrate on. We can rejoice at our forming, and trust God to carry us through any deforming, or forgive us for any that is because of our own sinful choices. But most of all, we want to emphasize His reforming of us.

1. How has God begun the reformation of your life?
2. Are there things you rejoice in and would like to share?
3. Are there things you privately want to offer for God's reforming touch?

Pray for each other.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

1. Divide into pairs.
2. Give each pair some clay or dough, or pipe cleaners or something that is malleable and shapeable.
3. One person creates a shape with the material and the other destroys it.
4. Then they switch and the other makes something which the first person destroys.
5. Within each pair discuss what feelings are raised by the other's destruction of what they made.
6. Next, work together to make something, and discuss how that feels.
7. Share insights with the whole group.

SEVEN DAYS OF SOUL FOOD

SEVEN DAYS' WORTH OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27). To put it another way, body + heart + mind = one living soul.

We can't really divide ourselves into different sections, but it's useful to look at these different aspects of ourselves and be sure we have a well-balanced faith that uses all the avenues of a soul. Each of these starter kits will include a week's worth of food for your soul in each of these four methods of understanding and expression.

Write about each of the following in your prayer journal this week. Strive to use language of emotions, thought, physical health and strength, or spirit.

DAY ONE: Remember the four categories we have considered: unformed, formed, deformed, and reformed. "Unformed" can mean more than simply not yet made. Young children have unformed ideas and incomplete learning, for example. Some of your opinions as a young person are still unformed, or not completely formed. Bear this in mind as you study this week. Choose a favorite Bible character, look that person up, and read about him or her in your Bible. Write about how the four categories were revealed in that person's life.

DAY TWO: *Heart:* Which of the four categories would you say most characterizes your emotions at this point in your life, and why? Read all of Psalm 139 and pray about what you think God wants to do with your heart this week.

DAY THREE: *Mind:* Which of the four categories would you say most characterizes your thinking and intellect at this point in your life, and why? Read James 3:13-18 and ask God how He wants to work in your mind this week.

DAY FOUR: *Strength/body:* Which of the four categories would you say most characterizes your body at this point in your life, and why? Read 1 Cor. 6:12-20. Some parts of this passage may not apply to you, but you can still think about them.

You are at the perfect age to consider purity in your life. How can you devote your body and strength to God's formation and reformation this week?

DAY FIVE: *Soul/spirit:* Taking into consideration your answers above, which of the four categories would you say most characterizes your whole soul/self at this point in your life, and why?

Read Ephesians 4:10-16. Can you find yourself here, or has God not yet made it clear where He wants you to fit into the mature body of Christ? As you prayerfully ponder the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week, ask Him where you can work for Him right now.

DAY SIX: Bearing in mind our four categories, consider prayerfully your family, community, and church. Where do you see the different categories at work? Pray about how God would have you work to help everyone around you be a part of the reformation, not the deformation.

DAY SEVEN: Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned.

- Write a poem or song or story.
- Create a poster.
- Write a letter.
- Paint or draw a picture.
- Make a sign.
- Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings.
- Build something.
- Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s).
- Make food and give it to someone in need.

Use whatever creativity God has given *you*. We all have something.

Share the love!

a short skit

REMINISCING - GRANDPA ADAM AND GRANDMA EVE

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A SHORT SKIT (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

We are going to imagine what it might have been like for Adam and Eve, when they were very old, to tell the stories of their youth to a group of their descendants. There will not be very many written lines; the characters may tell the stories as they think Adam and Eve might have told them. You may want to have Bibles open to **Genesis 1-3** to help be sure your memory is correct. Remember not to act weak and trembling, as very old people might be now. ***They were meant to live forever, and were still in their prime at hundreds of years old.***

CHARACTERS

1. Adam
2. Eve
3. As many of their descendants as you like. Several can have speaking parts. There are four given in this skit, but you can have more. Some can pretend to be children for some of the questions, if you wish. Use your imagination.

PROPS

1. Nothing necessary except chairs for Adam and Eve.
2. Descendants can be around them on the floor or on mats.

Adam: I am glad you have all gathered, my great-great...many times great-grandchildren. It saddens me deeply that so many of our descendants are choosing not to listen to the old stories, or the things that God taught us in the garden.

Eve: And even since then, my husband. God has continued to teach us throughout our long lives. (She looks sad.) Though, I admit, it's not at all the same as it was when we walked and talked together.

Eve: And even since then, my husband. God has continued to teach us throughout our long lives. (She looks sad.) Though, I admit, it's not at all the same as it was when we walked and talked together.

Descendant: Tell us about that, *Grandmother Eve!* What was it like in the Garden of Eden?

Eve: *(Here is where your imagination can come into play. Try to imagine what it would be like to be able to see God and angels and talk with them. Tell short stories, doing your best to act as if you really were there. Adam can join in, too. He can tell about when he first awoke, naming the animals, and God creating Eve.)*

Descendant: (sighs) I wish we still lived there!

Adam: Well, we probably wouldn't all live *in* the Garden. There are too many of us now. But if we had obeyed God, we would now be turning the whole earth into a garden of delights. We would still have access to the Tree of Life. (He looks away and is silent for a moment.) No one would be doing the things I hear about now...

Eve: Don't fret, my husband. God promised He would send a Redeemer.

Descendant: Yes, but what happened? Why did you—well, I don't want to be disrespectful, Grandfather and Grandmother, but...

Eve: Don't worry, my child. It is no disrespect to ask for the truth. It was all my fault. (Tells the story of the temptation.)

Adam: It was *not* all your fault, my wife! I should have immediately called to God, the minute you brought that fruit to me! I *know* He would have known what to do! (Both shake their heads sorrowfully, and all descendants look sad, too.)

Descendant: Yes, but Grandfather, God *does* know what to do! You said He promised a Redeemer, right?

Adam: Yes, thank the good Lord. But first, we had that terrible day...(He tells the story of their hiding from God and the expulsion from the Garden.)

Eve: Still, in the curses, I could hear the sorrow in God's voice, and see, through my tears, the love He still felt for us, despite everything. I don't believe God was cursing us Himself. He was only telling us what would happen now. That our sin had changed the earth. And we can see it, all around us. Every year it's worse. But there was that promise. God said the seed of that serpent would bruise the heel of my seed, but my seed would bruise the serpent's head. I believe that means somewhere, sometime, perhaps soon, a son of mine will destroy the power of the destroyer. (She pauses.) Each time I had a son, I wondered...

(Depending on time, you can tell any additional stories you like: Cain and Abel, Seth, etc. Be sure to end on an uplifting note, though. Talk last about the promised Redeemer, and perhaps have Adam and Eve lead the descendants in a song and a prayer of hope.)