

Starter Kit

2017: WEEK 3

This quarter we will study Luther and other reformers, but most importantly we will study all the varying meanings of this word, what it meant to many people throughout the Bible, and what it means to us.



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INTRO: Using the Starter Kit

We have provided twenty-five sessions that can be used for youth meetings or for whatever you need them for. Besides that, there are five group Bible studies. We recommend you use the Habakkuk Bible study very early in your series—even the last week of 2016 if you can.

If you use all the starter kits (you don't have to; you can pick and choose the ones that are best for your situation), you will have twenty-two more weeks in the year. You may create whatever programs you wish for those weeks. Or you could choose to make these starter kits last for two sessions, choosing certain parts for the first week and the rest for the second week.

Twelve of the Starter Kits are based on twelve principles of Luther's reformation, delineated by Thomas F. Fischer, M.Div., M.S.A., found here:

http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/263_luther_principles_reformation.html
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In between these twelve principles you will find kits based on Bible characters whose lives exemplify the principles.

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 "**Seven 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.

The Whole Soul

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is one of the foundational texts of faith. It reads, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Jesus enlarges slightly on this text in Matthew 22:37 (capitals show that He is quoting from the Old Testament). And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." Mark 12:29-30 reports Him as saying, "HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH."

Luke 10:27 tells a slightly different story: Jesus asks a lawyer how he reads the Law, and the lawyer says, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."

From all this, we can learn that there are four ways we can express our love for God: heart, mind, soul, and strength, which we can apply to physical strength, or using our bodies to love God.

Each page of the "**Seven Days of Soul Food**" includes suggestions for showing love to God and others in all these ways.



WEEK 3: Blind Man's Revolution

WEEK 3: Blind Man's Revolution

Saul of Tarsus was a dedicated man. He was the kind of person who gives himself, heart and soul, to whatever he believes. He had given himself to study under Gamaliel, one of the greatest Jewish sages of all time. Then he had given himself to being the best Pharisee he could possibly be. He even said, many years later, that he could stand before God with a “perfectly good conscience to this very day” (Acts 23:1). How many people can claim to have done perfectly? So, when Saul became convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was a sinner who was leading good Jews astray, Saul dedicated himself to eradicating Christians.

Read or have someone read Acts 26:9-11 to hear Saul's own description of what he did and why. (Keep this passage open.)

God loved this about Saul. He had given him that very strength of heart. But He certainly did not love what Saul was doing with it. And it did mean that God had to go to great lengths to get Saul to turn around.

We know the story: One day, on the road to Damascus to persecute some more Christians, Saul was knocked down by a light from heaven. Read Acts 26:12-18 to hear Saul's firsthand account of what happened on that day.

Can you imagine what a shock this was to him? Saul really, truly believed he had been doing God's will. Now he learned he had been acting directly counter to God. It caused an internal crisis.

Acts 9:8, 9 tells us that the people with Saul led him by the hand into Damascus and apparently to the house of a man named Judas, who lived in Straight Street. For three days, Saul was blind, and refused to eat.

Why do you think he didn't eat? (**Allow time for answers.**)

This must have been a severe catastrophe to Saul. For one thing, as a Pharisee, he had been taught the most rigorous salvation by works system you can imagine. He had not been taught to think of God as forgiving and merciful. We can know this because of his own description of his attitudes during that part of his life. Did he report that he tried to reason with the Christians and lead them back into what he thought was the right path? No. He said he was “enraged” with them, and tried to force them to blaspheme.



WEEK 3: Blind Man's Revolution

Now, here he was in a dark room, faced with the fact that he had done precisely the opposite of what God wanted him to do. He must have wondered, is God angry? What will my punishment be? Will I be blind for life? And he must have thought that if he was, he deserved it. So he was fasting, afflicting his soul as he had been taught to do on the Day of Atonement and other times. Some Pharisees fasted two days a week; if Paul was one of those, he was now fasting even longer.

Then came the revolution. Into his darkened room entered a man he had never known. The man said God had sent him, healed Saul's blindness, and affirmed the message God had already given, that He was calling Saul to be "a light to the Gentiles." Saul rose up a reformed man. He immediately began to proclaim in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. He was so changed that the local Christians didn't believe it at first.

We are not told exactly when the name change from Saul to Paul occurred. In Acts, the story goes on with Peter's ministry, and we don't hear of Saul again until Barnabas goes to Tarsus to get him in Acts 11. He is still called Saul all the way to Acts 13:9, on his first missionary journey, where it suddenly says "also called Paul," and names him that from then on.

What we do know is that the reformation in Saul's soul was one of the more dramatic in the Bible. He was still a dedicated man. He still had the strength of heart and conscience and mind that God had given him. Only now, instead of doing what *he believed* God wanted, Paul dedicated himself *to God* and let *Him* decide what Paul would do, and when, and where.

And the revolution spread like wildfire. Paul and the other disciples traveled far and wide. The whole world that they knew of, which spread from Asia to Britain, throughout most of Europe and the northern portions of Africa, was reached with the gospel in one generation.

And so, the whole world was reformed. Not everyone accepted the new message. Not even the majority did. But it changed their world, just the same. There are very few places on our planet where some change brought by Christ's life and the preaching about it, (dating systems, for instance) does not reach.

Have you been reformed? Have you joined the blind man's revolution and added your candle to the reformation that is still passing the Light to the world?



DEVOTION

Most of us have heard stories in our own time of dramatic conversions like Paul's. The drug addict who turns to Jesus and is now a pastor. The prisoner who ends up giving Bible studies. The pagan who is now a dedicated Christian.

Some of you may have dramatic conversions like that. But many of you may not have such experiences. You may wonder if you have truly been converted if you can't tell an amazing story that jumps from darkness to light. But most people don't have stories like Paul's. We often come to God in gradual steps, over time. We may even have been following God from our babyhood, so when the time comes that we make a stand and ask for baptism, it may not feel like a *conversion* at all.

Let's see what we can learn from the Bible about what conversion is and how you can know you are converted.

First of all, the words "convert" and "conversion" are not that common in the Bible. The usage of this actual English word varies depending on the Bible you use. Use a concordance or online resource and count the ones you find in your version. By cross-checking different translations, you'll find that "turn" or "return" is often used in the same verses.

Psalms 19:7, in KJV, says the law of the Lord *converts* the soul; NASB says *restores* the soul.

In Psalm 51:13 both say sinners will be *converted*.

Isaiah 6:10 and 60:5 both say *convert* in KJV and *return* in NASB.

So convert can mean to restore or return. Other verses may use *turn*.

In Luke 22:32, when Jesus says to Peter that He has prayed that Peter will be strengthened, He says "when you are *converted*" in KJV and "when you *turn again*" in NASB. Remember, this is after Peter has been faithfully following Jesus for three and a half years! It doesn't mean he's not converted—just that he needs to be converted even more. Peter's behavior later that night underscores his need for much more of Jesus' faith and love and courage in his own heart.

The word *convert* as used in the mechanical world can give us some insights. We can convert a vehicle to use different kinds of fuel, or a stove to use either natural gas or liquefied petroleum. We can convert a van into a camper; in fact, in the United States there is a term, "conversion van," for a certain type of large van whose cargo space has been changed into a special purpose, such as a camper.

Which gives us another word for convert: to change.



DEVOTION

So conversion is a change, a turning, or a returning or restoring. Hmm...that means that *reformation*—forming, re-forming—is all about conversion!

Now take another look at your life.

If you think of conversion as turning to God, you may have done this all your life, or you may just now be doing it. Or anywhere in between.

If you think of it as *returning* to God, you may have done it after you have turned away in disobedience or in apathy.

If you think of it as a *change*...now we've reached the heart of the matter. We are all changed all the time, every day. While we are young, we are growing physically, and we are growing spiritually, too—one way or the other! When we stop physically growing, our brains are still constantly rewiring themselves and growing new connections. Are we also retuning ourselves to God, growing new connections with Him?

Ultimately, God is working to *restore* every one of us to the image of Him that He originally created us to be. Every time you learn some new bit of heart truth—maybe in this lesson—you are continually being converted. God bless the process!

Activity Suggestion

Allow those who are willing to share conversion stories.

Pass out large pieces of paper. Have each person fold a piece of paper into one form, then convert it into any other form they wish. Some possibilities: airplanes, hats, boats, houses, animals.

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food



Psalm 19:7-14

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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.

Day 1: Read Psalm 19:7-14 in your favorite version of the Bible and then in as many other versions as you can. Decide which your personal favorite is. Pray over these verses and ask God to help you live by them this week.

Day 2: Heart: Sometimes music can reach the heart as nothing else can. Psalm 19:7-14 as found in the KJV has been set to music. If you have access to YouTube, here is one source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L0rWaeSUSg> As you listen (or sing along) and consider how God wants to work in your heart this week, choose one particular verse or two that especially touch your heart. Write about them in your prayer journal.



JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

Day 3: Mind: Use a concordance or online resource such as Bible Gateway or Bible Hub to find as many uses of convert and conversion as you can, in different Bible versions. Make a list of the synonyms you find, and which you think are most active in your own life right now. How does God want to work in your mind this week?

Day 4: Strength/body: Take a look at your diet this week. Is it making a healthy body? Are there things you need to change or reform? What are the ways God wants to strengthen your body this week?

Day 5: Soul/spirit: Your food and drink give you energy. Unlike muscle and bone and skin and hair, energy can't be seen, yet it's an essential part of you. As you prayerfully ponder what your physical food is doing for your physical energy, also ponder the spiritual food you are taking in and the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week. Is it increasing your spiritual energy?

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

Day 6: Family/community/church

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

- a. Write a poem or song or story
- b. Create a poster
- c. Write a letter
- d. Paint or draw a picture
- e. Make a sign
- f. Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings
- g. Build something
- h. Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s)

Use whatever creativity God has given *you*. We all have something. Share the love!



SKIT

SKIT

A SHORT SKIT (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

CHARACTERS

1. Saul/Paul
2. Companions (numbers may be determined by how many people you have and how many wish to take part)
3. Voice of Jesus
4. Judas of Straight St.
5. Ananias
6. Angel (or voice)

PROPS

1. At one side of room, set up something to represent Judas' house. This may be as simple as a couple of chairs and a bench or floor mat to represent Saul's bed.
2. A walking stick or two for the journey would be a nice touch.
3. If you have a way of suddenly turning on a light or bright flashlight when Jesus' voice is heard, that would be great.
4. Scales for Saul's eyes could be made out of paper, cardboard, small shells, anything you have on hand. If they are left on the bed at Judas' house, Saul can get them into his hands while the audience is watching Ananias. Then, when Ananias says he's healed, he grabs at his eyes, gasping, and drops the scales.

**SKIT**

ACT 1

Saul and his companions walk from opposite sides of room as Judas' house, with Saul talking about how he is going to destroy the Christians in Damascus. As they reach the center, the light, if any, flashes on. Saul grabs his eyes, and falls to the ground.

VOICE OF JESUS

(Loud and stern) Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting Me! It is hard on you to keep on kicking against the goads.

SAUL

(Terrified) Wh-who are you, Lord?

VOICE OF JESUS (MORE GENTLY)

I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (Saul acts horrified.) But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do.

(The light disappears, and the group begins to get up, still very frightened and confused. They help Saul up.)

SAUL

I can't see! I can't see anything!

A COMPANION

It's all right. Here's my hand. We'll lead you.

(Gathering around to help Saul, they lead him to Judas' house and confer as if they are telling Judas the story. Judas offers food, but Saul refuses. He kneels down on the bed to pray, and the others leave.)

ACT 2

(In another part of the room, Ananias is lying down.)

VOICE OF JESUS

(Loud and stern) Ananias!

ANANIAS

(Pauses) I need to have time to pray and consider my answer.

VOICE OF JESUS

Get up and go to Straight Street. Find Judas' house and ask for a man named Saul of Tarsus. (Ananias gasps.) He is praying, and he has seen in a vision that a man named Ananias is going to come and lay hands on him so he can be healed from his blindness

(All participants freeze in place.)

ANANIAS

But Lord! I have heard from many about this man! He has done much harm to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here in Damascus, he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name!

VOICE OF JESUS

Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.

(Ananias shakes his head, but gets up to obey.)

**ACT 3**

(Ananias goes to Judas' door and knocks, and Judas lets him in. They confer for a minute and Judas leads Ananias to Saul, who is still praying, but looks bent and weak. Judas may stay and play a supporting part in remainder of scene or may go as if to prepare food.)

ANANIAS

(Still reluctant, takes a deep breath, looks up to heaven, then bends over Saul lovingly and puts his hands on his head. Saul looks up, startled, but acting as if he can't see.) Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road while you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

SAUL

(Gasps and grabs his eyes again. The scales, if any, fall from his fingers, and he looks up.) I can see! Oh, praise God, and thank you, brother! What did you say your name is? (Stands up from bed, weak and shaky. Ananias supports him and introduces himself.)

SAUL

I have never had such an experience! I still can't believe it! I've been killing people who were really following God! (Shakes head sorrowfully.) It will haunt me all my life. And now—now—can you believe it? I feel—I feel—I can't describe it. I've never felt like this before!

ANANIAS

That's the Holy Spirit. He'll be your guide from now on.

**SKIT**

SAUL

(Still looking stunned) I guess I'll need that. Do you know what God told me?

ANANIAS

(Smiles) That you're to be the light to the Gentiles?

SAUL

(Astonished) He told you? Yes. This is what He said. (Speaks as if he's memorized it—it would be great if he actually had time to do that.) He said, "For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Turns to Ananias) Can you believe it?

ANANIAS

(Shakes his head and looks at audience, smiling) No. I really can't. I mean, I couldn't, except it's from Jesus. And He's always unbelievable, so what else is new? (Turns to Saul.) May I shake your hand, brother Saul?

SAUL

(Shakes Ananias' hand, but also shakes his head some more) How can you be so loving to me after everything I've done?

ANANIAS

(Turns to lead Saul away) Let's go eat, and I'll tell you more about Jesus. He makes us all brothers and sisters.