

Starter Kit

2017: WEEK 4

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 4: Blind Man's Revolution

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Genesis 1:1—In the beginning God...

John 1:3—All things came into being through Him...

Revelation 22:13— “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Jesus is the center. From the beginning of the Bible to its end; from the beginning of the history of this earth—even of the whole universe—to...well, forever! This earth will end, but Jesus' reign will not.

To say that Jesus is the center could sound as if we mean that God the Father or the Holy Spirit are less important, which of course is not the case. In some way that humans will never fully understand even in the light of eternity, the Godhead is one and three at the same time. It's more than just the oneness we see in good marriages, and more than the imagery we try to use, like the yolk, white, and shell of an egg, or the seed, flesh, and skin of an apple. The three-strand cord might be closer. But the fact is, we don't get it! And we don't have to. The “mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16) is big enough to cling to and trust in, without knowing every aspect.

But even in the Godhead, Jesus is the center. And every bit of trouble we ever have on this earth, whether individually, or in our families, communities, governments, even among nations—every bit! —is because we get “off-center” in our relationship to God.

In Martin Luther's time, (and in lots of other times, too, including ours) people had gone off center by putting the church itself, and its doctrines and teachings, in the center. They didn't necessarily do this deliberately. When it began, people were trying to follow God more closely, so, just like the Jews, they made more rules. And then more rules. And then made more and more people in charge of the rules.

And the next thing they knew, people were being born, living, and dying just trying to follow all the human rules of the church and thinking this pleased God. But the Bible says we “live and move and have our being” *in God*.

Read or have someone read Acts 17:22-29. Paul is talking to the highly educated people in Athens, Greece, who knew that God was bigger than they could imagine. Or at least some of them knew it. Most of them worshiped a whole gallery of gods who married and had children

WEEK 4: Blind Man's Revolution

and fought with each other like big, undisciplined humans. But someone had put up an altar “to the unknown God.” So Paul gave this sermon.

Now, it's clear that he's talking about God, the whole God, the Three-Person Being we call the Godhead, here. But now look at verses 30 and 31. You will notice that in this context, Paul doesn't yet say that Jesus is divine. He simply says He is “a Man whom God has appointed.” That's because Paul knows what he has to say about resurrection will be hard enough for them to take. In the rest of the chapter, some people agree to study more with Paul. This will be his chance to teach them that Jesus is central—the only source of salvation, both the kind of salvation that takes us to heaven and the daily kind that keeps us spiritually alive and following God.

Martin Luther and the other reformers rediscovered this nearly-lost truth. Luther said, “Remove Christ from the scriptures and there is nothing left.” <http://deeperchristianquotes.com/luther-on-the-centrality-of-christ/>

Have you ever thought about it?

The creation story is about Jesus. Enoch preached about Jesus. The entire sacrificial system foreshadowed Jesus. All the prophets taught of Jesus. As for the whole New Testament...well, Martin Luther was right. Take away Jesus, and you have nothing!

It's true for our lives, too. Take away Jesus, and we have nothing. Let's center our lives daily on Him.

DEVOTION

It's easy to say Jesus is the center. It's easy to say we'll center our lives on Him. But what does it really mean? Of course, one thing it means is simply to accept with your whole mind and heart the truth that all things were made by Jesus, and that He is the beginning and the end, the Creator around which the universe turns.

But belief is just the beginning.

One of the best and clearest passages on the whole salvation truth is Ephesians 2:8-10. Let's look at it in detail.

First, have someone read the beginning of the chapter, leading up to verse 8. Take a moment to ask for opinions and thoughts on the context. What are some of the things that strike you? Where are human beings at the beginning of the passage? Have you been "lost in your sins"? Now read verses 8 and 10. Have a scribe write each phrase and what people say about it.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith..."

What does this mean? Is this beginning part of salvation enough? If you died just knowing this, would you be saved? (Yes! It's all the thief on the cross knew.)

"...that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God..." This is almost like a repeat or a deeper unfolding of the first phrase. Why do we keep forgetting that it's *not* of ourselves? Is it really a free gift? Are you sure?

"...not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Just in case you didn't get it the first time! Why does Paul repeat this again? If our salvation was 99% God's grace and 1% our works, what would happen?

Read all of verse 10. Here is where we sometimes get confused, even after we have accepted the gift of salvation. We think we are saved by grace, but walk by works. Or we do good works to thank God for salvation. Or we do good works so we won't lose our salvation. Let's keep looking phrase by phrase to find the whole truth of the life of salvation. Yes, it's a whole-life thing.

"For we are His workmanship..." Whose? Take a minute to discuss the role our parents, our education, and our own choices play in forming us. Does any of this change or enlarge on the fact that we are *God's* workmanship? (Hint: It could, if we forget to keep Jesus in the center and think that now we are saved, we should go and *make ourselves* what we ought to be so that we can work for God...).

DEVOTION

“...created in Christ Jesus for good works...” Wait, what? Oh, so we *are* supposed to do good works. If we don’t read the rest of the verse, we could still get off the path into legalism and trying to be a good Christian to show God how glad we are that He saved us. But keep reading.

“...which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Spend extra time on this last phrase. What does it mean? Who did the works first and prepared them for us to do? In what ways does God prepare the same good works for everyone? Does He also prepare some different works for different people? What kinds?

And finally, what does this mean for reformation? Is it even *possible* to reform without the power of Christ (living in us now through the Holy Spirit) to do the working? If He is solidly in the center, then what role will parents and choices and education all play in forming and reforming our lives and our work?

Activity Suggestion

If you have access to anything that spins, like an old record player or a potter’s wheel, try making something that’s off center. Fasten a piece of paper on the wheel and try to draw a circle on it that is not in the center, while the wheel is spinning. How does that go? Or try spinning around in a circle with a heavy weight in one hand, or with your upper body bent sideways. (Do this in a safe place! It will make you dizzy much more quickly than normal spinning would.)

If it’s possible, watch in person or online how a potter or a wood turner centers his or her work before beginning.

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food



Luke 10:27

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

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

1. **Day 1: Read John 1:1-18.** Consider all the ways that John describes Jesus as the center of everything. Write in your prayer journal all the ways you can think of that you seek to center your life on Him. Ask for the wisdom of the Spirit to be even clearer about where your center is.

2. **Day 2: Heart: Reread John 1:1-5** and consider how these verses apply to centering your heart on Jesus. What is one thing you can do to let the Light of life shine in you and through you?

3. **Day 3: Mind: Read verses 6-13.** How did John the Baptist use his mind to understand who Jesus was? How did John the Beloved use his mind to write this passage? How does God want to transform your mind this week with His Light?

JOURNAL TIME: 7 days of soul food

4. **Day 4: Strength/body: Read verses 14-18.** Here is a passage specifically about the flesh. How did Jesus sanctify human flesh? Why do you think He had to come as a flesh-and-blood human to save us? Write in your journal about the ways you want to use your body to show the Light this week.

5. **Day 5: Soul/spirit: Reread the whole passage and write** all the ways you see heart, body, and mind becoming a whole soul. As you prayerfully ponder the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week, how do you see your whole spirit being reformed and renewed?

6. **Day 6: Think about your family, friends, or community.** Has God put into your soul some ideas about how to share the Light you have learned about making Jesus the center of everything? Like Paul, can you find ways to talk about Jesus that might intrigue people who think He was just a good teacher? Might you be able to move them just “one inch” toward considering Him as something more?



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7. **Day 7: Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned.** Write a poem or song or story. Create a poster. Sing or play an instrument. 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!

SKIT

A SHORT SKIT (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

One of the Bible characters who made it clear that her life was completely centered on Jesus is Mary Magdalene. Here is a brief skit of her life in three acts.

CHARACTERS

1. Mary
2. Jesus
3. Martha
4. Lazarus
5. Some disciples (any number)
6. Two angels

PROPS

1. There could be real dishes and food for Martha to be working with, or she can just pretend. Some chairs for Jesus and some of the disciples.
2. A place that represents the tomb, with a bench or two chairs set apart from each other to represent the place where Jesus' body had lain. This could even be at a door out of the room, or into a closet. Some houseplants could represent a garden.



SKIT

ACT 1

(Jesus and Mary are alone. She is acting crazy and terrified, flailing her arms.)

Jesus (catching Mary's arms) Get out of her!

Mary (still flailing, but less)

(Repeat seven times, Mary getting saner each time, falling to her knees at Jesus' feet by the fifth time, weeping with gratitude.)

Seventh time:

MARY

(Fully healed) Oh, Master, thank You, thank You!!
How can I ever repay You!

JESUS

Follow Me.

MARY

I will follow you until the day I die!

Act Two

(Jesus, Lazarus, and the disciples are sitting and talking. Some of the disciples could be seated, and some on the floor, but Jesus is sitting on a chair. Mary is on the floor at his feet, gazing up intently. A little apart from them, Martha is very busy with meal preparation.)

JESUS

(Talking and teaching, looking earnest, perhaps using his hands. We are not told what Jesus was talking about. He had just completed the story of the Good Samaritan, so he could be enlarging on that, or telling any parable or teaching of your choice. As he talks, Martha is getting more and more annoyed.)

MARTHA

Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Tell her to help me! (Mary looks alarmed, and starts to get up.)

JESUS

(Lovingly) Oh, Martha, Martha, you're so worried and upset about everything! Only one thing is really necessary. (He gestures to Mary.) Mary has chosen the good part, and it will not be taken from her.

MARY

(Looks grateful and joyful)

MARTHA

(Looks thoughtful. You could even have her join the others if you like.)

Act Three

(Two angels are seated in the tomb. They could have their hands over their faces to signify that they are not yet visible.)

MARY

(Standing outside tomb, weeping, then goes to look in. Angels uncover their faces. Mary gasps and draws back in shock.)

ANGEL

(Gently) Woman, why are you weeping?

(Jesus comes up behind her.)

MARY

(Sobbing and having a hard time talking) Because they have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid Him! (Turns away sobbing, hands over face.)

JESUS

(Even more gently) Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?

MARY

(Through her hands) Sir, if you've carried Him away, tell me where you've laid Him! I'll take Him away! (She turns away.)

JESUS

(A wealth of love and compassion in His voice)
Mary!

MARY

(Whirling around and looking at him) Rabboni! My master! (Hugely smiling through her tears, she acts as if she will fling her arms around him.)

JESUS

(Drawing back and holding up his hands, still speaking lovingly) Don't cling—I haven't yet ascended to My Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I go to My Father and your Father; My God and your God.' (He turns away.)

MARY

(Overcome with joy, turning to face the whole room and flinging her arms out) I have seen the Lord!!