

Begin a New Life

Six-Week Program for Small Groups

Week 2 Group Meeting

Step 2: Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin

Leader Guide

Meeting notes:

1. For a full description of how to run this meeting, go to the *Begin a New Life* website (www.BeginaNewLife.info) ⇒ *Group Activities* ⇒ *Six-Week Small Groups*. Scroll down and click on the *Overview of Weekly Meetings*.
2. This outline is an example of a one-hour meeting that starts at 7:00 PM. Groups that want more time for *Group Sharing* can lengthen that part of the meeting and adjust the meeting's end time accordingly.

7:00 PM Opening activities

1. Opening prayer
2. Readings

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things in the city of Jericho, for Achan took of the accursed things....

Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it." So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. (Joshua 7:1, 19-23)

Then the prodigal son arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." And they began to be merry. (Luke 15:20-24)

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." I tell you, this man went down to his house justified more than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14)

3. Check-in
 - a. One highlight from each person's day or week, or one opening comment.
 - b. No cross talk or conversation during this part of the meeting.
 - c. Acknowledge each person's contribution with the words, "Thank you," before moving on to the next person.
 - d. Groups larger than eight are broken into groups of four to eight.
4. Group business
 - a. Any announcements or group decisions that need to be made.
5. Task for this meeting (to be read out loud)
Step 2: Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin
 - a. Do *one* of the following:
 - 1) Using a new set of worksheets, go through all four steps of the *BNL* process for the issue you're working on.
 - 2) Using a new set of Step 1 and Step 2 worksheets, go through Steps 1 and 2 for the issue you're working on.
 - 3) Review the Step 1 worksheets you've filled in so far, then go through a set of Step 2 worksheets for the issue you're working on.
 - b. Read *Section E* of the *Sourcebook*, titled, *When You're at Fault for a Wrongdoing...and When You're Not* (see the *Begin a New Life* website ⇒ *Program Materials* ⇒ *Consult the Sourcebook*; click on *Section E*).
 - c. Come to the next meeting ready to share your experience of Step 2 of the *BNL* process—*Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin*.

7:15 Group sharing

1. People share their experience of doing the task. Sharing is initiated by the question, "What was your experience of doing the task for this week?"
2. Note: In the event that sharing lags, there is a set of additional questions that can help. It appears at the end of this meeting outline. As group leader, you can listen during *Group Sharing*, decide which questions you think would be useful for the group, and ask them when appropriate. (Note: Some of the questions may have already been answered during initial sharing.) Continue in this way as needed until *Group Sharing* is over.

7:45 Closure

1. Task for the next meeting (to be read out loud)

Step 3: Pray to the Lord

- a. Do *one* of the following:
 - 1) Using a new set of worksheets, go through all four steps of the *BNL* process for the issue you're working on.
 - 2) Using a new set of worksheets for Steps 1-3, go through those steps for the issue you're working on.
 - 3) Review the Step 1 and Step 2 worksheets you've filled in so far, then go through a Step 3 worksheet for the issue you're working on.
 - b. Come to the next meeting ready to share your experience of Step 3 of the *BNL* process—*Pray to the Lord; Beg for His Help and Power in Resisting Your Sin*.
2. Leader for the next meeting
 - a. If the group will have multiple leaders, decide who will lead the next meeting.
 3. Closing comments
 - a. One closing comment per person.
 - b. No cross talk or conversation during this part of the meeting.
 - c. Acknowledge each person's contribution with the words, "Thank you," before moving on to the next person.
 - d. Groups larger than eight are broken into groups of four to eight.
 4. The Lord's Prayer
 - a. The group stands, holds hands, and says *The Lord's Prayer* together. Those who prefer to listen may do so.

8:00 End time

Additional Questions for Sharing

1. Questions related to Step 2.1—*Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin*:
 - a. What is it like for you to admit to yourself that you've been mistaken or wrong? Please explain.
 - b. What is it like for you to admit to yourself that something you've done is against God? Please explain.
 - c. Step 2.1 invites you to consider two biblical terms—*evil* and *sin*. What is your personal reaction to either (or both) of these terms, and why?
 - d. The words *evil* and *sin* are key terms and concepts in the Bible. For purposes of the *BNL* process, *evil* is anything in conflict with God's purpose, plan, or intention in creation. It's anything that is truly harmful or destructive and in that sense bad. *Sin* is defined as *evil* specifically against your neighbor and God as summarized in the biblical Ten Commandments and also reflected in the Word of God / divine revelation. What value, or what potential value, do you see in the use of these terms? What place could they hold in the successful use and completion of the *BNL* process? Are there effective alternative terms that you think of?
 - e. Step 2.1 asks, "Are the things you've uncovered during self-examination harmful or destructive (that is, 'evil')? If so, in what way(s) is this true?" What was your experience of answering this question?
 - f. Step 2.1 asks, "Do the things you've uncovered during self-examination go against any of the Ten Commandments? If so, which commandment do they seem *most* to go against, and what are one or two ways in which they do so?" Did you consult one of the *Quick References* from Section D of the *Sourcebook* for answering this question? If so, what was your experience of this?
 - g. The second to last question in Step 2.1 asks, "Are there any other truths that now come to mind, or that you search out and discover, which help reveal the true nature or quality of the thing you looked at during self-examination? If so, what are they?" What was your experience of answering this question?
 - h. The final question in Step 2.1 asks, "Given the information and also your discoveries in this step, what would you now say is the true nature or quality of the thing you uncovered during self-examination—how would you briefly describe or encapsulate it? What *title* would you give it?" What was your experience of answering this question?

2. Questions related to Step 2.2—*Accept Responsibility*.
- a. What is it like for you when one of your personal mistakes or weaknesses shows—to yourself? to others?
 - b. What is your experience of admitting personal mistakes or weaknesses to yourself?
 - c. What do the words “accept responsibility” mean to you?
 - d. During Step 2.2, what was your experience of accepting responsibility for a sin’s presence or persistence in your life? How easy (or difficult) was it to do this? What went on inside of you as you as you did so? What did it take for you to complete this step?
 - e. Footnote 10 on the Step 2.2 worksheet (see just below) offers a fresh and helpful perspective on when you’re at fault for a wrongdoing / sin and when you’re not. In addition, Section E of the *Sourcebook* goes into further detail on this. How did either (or both) of these things strike you? What reactions, thoughts, or insights did they spark?

Footnote 10: If you have done or said something that is contrary to God, but you haven’t done so knowingly and also willingly, you aren’t fully, *spiritually* responsible. You may be guilty and accountable on the level of outward life or in the eyes of the law, but not on the level of your heart, mind, or spirit. This process suggests that a person who does something that is against God, but who doesn’t know better, or doesn’t realize what’s going on at the time, or who does so because of an overwhelming feeling, emotion, desire, etc., isn’t spiritually accountable—it isn’t something you planned to do, and you don’t support or justify it. What matters under these circumstances, spiritually speaking, is what you do “after the fact”—once you know that a thing is against God, and when your mind is fully free to choose.

3. Questions related to Step 2.3—*Confess Your Sin before the Lord*.
- a. Before coming to a *BNL* seminar-workshop, and/or going through Steps 1 and 2 of the *BNL* process, what would the idea of “confessing sins before the Lord” have meant to you? How would you have reacted to the idea? Please explain.
 - b. By comparison, *after* attending a *BNL* seminar-workshop and/or going through Steps 1 and 2 of the *BNL* process, how has your idea of confessing sins before the Lord been impacted, modified, or changed? Please explain.
 - c. Before coming to a *BNL* seminar-workshop, and/or going through Steps 1 and 2 of the *BNL* process, if you had wanted to “confess sins before the Lord,” how would you have done that?
 - d. The question on the Step 2.3 worksheet invites you to imagine coming before the Lord in a spirit of confession. It then asks, “Between you and him, what is now accomplished through the early parts of this process—self-examination, recognition, and acknowledgment—and what are you discovering is your state of mind and life, or your personal condition, through all of it?” What was your experience of answering this question? How does this way of “confessing sins before the Lord” differ from your answer to question “c.” just above?
 - e. At the end of the Step 2.3 worksheet there are four inspirational quotations (see just below). How do these quotations strike you? What reaction(s) do you have to them? Here are the quotations:
 - 1) Indeed I have sinned.... (Joshua 7:20)
 - 2) Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. (Luke 15:21)
 - 3) The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18:13)
 - 4) The confession is to be that we see, recognize, and admit to our evil, and that we are discovering that we are miserable sinners. (Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, paragraph no. 539)
 - f. What was the *overall* impact of Steps 1 and 2 of the *BNL* process on you? In other words, what is the final “place” that they brought you to?