

# Begin a New Life

## Group Meeting #2

### Step 2: Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin

#### Meeting Outline

Note: For a full description of how this meeting runs, go to the *Begin a New Life* website ([www.BeginaNewLife.info](http://www.BeginaNewLife.info)), the page titled, *Six-Week Program for Small Groups*, and view the pdf titled, *General Description of Meetings*.

**Quiet music can be played while people arrive and during the first two opening activities—Opening Prayer and Readings.**

#### 7:00 p.m. 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 thought.
  - b. No cross talk or conversation.
  - c. Acknowledge each person's contribution with brief words of "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. Reading of the task for this week
  - a. Read (out loud) the task that was assigned for this meeting. Here it is:  
**Step 2: Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin**
    - 1) Do *one* of the following:
      - a) Using a new set of worksheets, go through all four steps of the *BNL* process relative to the issue that you've chosen to work on.
      - b) Using a new set of Step 1 and Step 2 worksheets, go through Steps 1 and 2 relative to the issue you've chosen to work on.
      - c) Review the Step 1 worksheets that you filled out during the seminar-workshop, then go through a set of Step 2 worksheets relative to the issue you've chosen to work on.
    - 2) 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 under *Program Materials*, the *Sourcebook* page, *Section E* of the sourcebook).
    - 3) Come to the group meeting ready to share your experience of practicing Step 2 of this process—*Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin*.

### 7:20 Group sharing

1. People talk about 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 questions that can elicit further sharing (see below following the meeting outline). Your job as group leader is to listen to the sharing that is going on, and decide which of the questions is an appropriate "next step" in *Group Sharing*. Then you pose that question at an appropriate time. (Note: Some of the questions may have already been answered in the initial sharing.) This continues as needed until the end of *Group Sharing*.

Cont.

## 8:05 Closure

1. Task for the next meeting
  - a. Read the assignment for the next meeting out loud and answer any questions about it. Here is that assignment:  
**Step 3: *Pray to the Lord***
    - 1) Do *one* of the following:
      - a) Use a new set of worksheets and go through all four steps of the process relative to the issue you've chosen to work on.
      - b) Using a new set of worksheets for Steps 1-3, go through those steps relative to the issue you've chosen to work on.
      - c) Review the Step 1 and Step 2 worksheets that you filled out during the seminar-workshop, then fill in a Step 3 worksheet relative to the issue you've chosen to work on.
    - 2) Come to the group meeting ready to share your experience of practicing Step 3 of this process—*Pray to the Lord; Beg for His Help and Power in Resisting Your Sin*.
2. Closing thoughts
  - a. One closing thought per person.
  - b. No cross talk or conversation.
  - c. Acknowledge each person's contribution with brief words of "Thank you" before moving on to the next person.
  - d. Groups larger than eight are broken into groups of four to eight.
3. 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.

## 8:15 End time

# Additional Questions for Sharing

1. Questions related to Step 2.1—*Recognize and Acknowledge Your Sin*:
  - a. What is your experience of admitting to yourself that you have been mistaken or wrong? Please explain.
  - b. What is your experience of admitting to yourself that something you're doing is against God? Please explain.
  - c. Step 2.1 asks, “Are the things you’ve uncovered during self examination hurtful, damaging, or destructive in any way? If so, in what way(s) is this so?” What was your experience of answering this question?
  - d. Step 2.1 invites you to consider two biblical terms—*evil* and *sin*. What is your personal experience of either (or both) of these words? What reactions, responses, thoughts, or insights do they invite (if any)?
  - e. The words *evil* and *sin* are key concepts in the Bible. What feelings or thoughts do you have about integrating them into your practice of the *BNL* process? (Note: Sometimes people are uncomfortable integrating these terms, due to a sense of guilt, blame, or condemnation that may be associated with them.) If you are uncomfortable integrating these terms, what alternative(s) do you see that might allow you still to benefit from this part of the *BNL* process? Please explain.
  - f. Step 2.1 asks, “Do the things you uncovered during self-examination break any of the Ten Commandments? If so, which Commandment do they seem *most* to break, and what are one or two ways in which they break it?” What was your experience of consulting one of the *Quick References to the Ten Commandments* (Section D of the *Sourcebook*) for this purpose? Please explain.
  - 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 (especially from the Word of God/divine revelation) 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 these questions?
  - h. The final question in Step 2.1 asks, “Given the information and your discoveries thus far, 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 these questions?

2. Questions related to Step 2.2—*Accept Responsibility*.
- a. What's it like for you when your weaknesses show—to yourself? to others?
  - b. What is your experience of admitting personal mistakes or weaknesses to yourself?
  - c. What do the words, “accepting responsibility for personal mistakes or weaknesses mean to you?
  - d. What was your experience of accepting responsibility for a sin’s presence or persistence in your life? What did it take for you to accomplish this? What impact did it have on you to do so?
  - e. One of the footnotes on the Step 2.2 worksheet (see the asterisk (\*) below) offers a fresh and perspective on when you’re at fault for a wrongdoing or sin and when you’re not. Additionally, Section E of the *Sourcebook* goes into further detail on this. How did these things impact you? What reactions, responses, thoughts, or insights did they invite (if any)?

\*If you have done or said something that is hurtful, destructive, and 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 harmful and in conflict with God, but who 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 to blame—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 you came to the seminar-workshop, what would the idea of “confessing sins before the Lord” have meant to you, and how would you have accomplished it?
  - b. Since attending the seminar-workshop and going through Steps 1 & 2 of this process, how has your idea of confession before the Lord been modified, or changed (if at all)? Please explain.
  - c. 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?

- d. At the end of the Step 2.3 worksheet there are four inspirational quotations (listed below). What impact do these quotations have on you? What reactions, responses, thoughts, or insights do they invite (if any)? Please explain. Note: Here are those 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 acknowledge our evil, and that we are discovering that we are miserable sinners. (Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity* 539)
- e. What would you say has been the *overall* impact of Steps 1 and 2 of this process on you? In other words, what was the final "place" that the Lord brought you to via these first two steps of the process? Please explain.