

# Begin a New Life

## Group Meeting #5 An Easier Kind of Change

### 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

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Matt. 11:28-30)

Active repentance is extremely difficult to practice, for a number of reasons.... Therefore, here is an easier kind of repentance: When we are considering doing something evil, and are forming an intention to do it, we say to ourselves, "I am thinking about this, and I am intending to do it, but because it is a sin, I'm not going to do it." Doing this counteracts the enticement that hell is injecting into us and keeps it from making further inroads. (Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity* 535)

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. Talk about the final meeting coming up:
    - 1) Day, date, time, and location.
    - 2) There will be two main parts to the meeting:
      - a) A review of where we've been over the past 6 weeks.
      - b) Holy Communion—a ritual of life change and spiritual transformation.

- (1) People who do not wish to take part in this communion with God will be free to observe that part of the evening or depart from the meeting before it happens.
  - b. Make a *BNL* ongoing support group available:
    - 1) After the last meeting of the 6-week program, people will have an option to attend an ongoing *BNL* support group.
    - 2) The meeting is for sharing and support around the *Begin a New Life* process.
    - 3) Day, time, frequency, and location.
  - c. Any other 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:

### **An Easier Kind of Change**

By now (week 5 of this program) you have gone through the full process of active life change and spiritual transformation for one particular sin in your life. But in addition to that one sin, you may experience any number of additional evils that come knocking at the door of your heart or mind in a day or week's time, trying to find their way into your life.

There is a quick and effective way to address any of these additional evils that come your way. It's a kind of change that is *easier* than the full, four-step process, and which helps you head off any hurtful or destructive thoughts and intentions as they first enter your mind, stopping them in their tracks before they do any damage. This "easier kind of change" is as follows:

When we are considering doing something evil, and are forming an intention to do it, we say to ourselves, "I am thinking about this, and I am intending to do it, but because it is a sin, I'm not going to do it." Doing this counteracts the enticement that hell is injecting into us and keeps it from making further inroads.<sup>1</sup>

Having this easy method of change at your disposal means that any of these *additional* evils that present themselves to you need not go unnoticed or unaddressed in your outward life. At the same time, you'll be able to stay focused on the one primary sin you're abstaining from using the full process of change.

Your task for this week had three parts:

- First, read the section of the *Sourcebook* which talks about this easier kind of change (see the *Begin a New Life* website under *Program Materials*, the *Sourcebook* page, *Section C* of the *Sourcebook*).

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<sup>1</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, paragraph no. 535

- Next, do *exactly* what this easier kind of change suggests. Any time you are considering doing something hurtful, damaging, or destructive (evil)—*different* from the one sin you're currently abstaining from using the four-step process—say the above words to yourself, and *mean* them. Notice the effects that this has on your inner world, and how quickly and fully these effects are felt. (In addition, you may benefit from saying these words to yourself over and over again—even when they don't apply—until they become ingrained in your thinking and memory. Otherwise, you may easily forget this valuable tool for life change and spiritual health.)
- The third part of the assignment is to come to the next meeting ready to share your experience of this easier kind of change.

### 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*.

### 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:
    - 1) Use a new set of worksheets and go through all four steps of this process relative to the sin you've chosen to work on.
    - 2) Come to the final meeting prepared for the following:
      - a) A final time of sharing on this four-step process of change.
      - b) Holy Communion—a ritual of life change and spiritual transformation.
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. As you went through the past week, were you able to distinguish between the sin you're currently abstaining from using the four-step process and *other* forms of evil that may have come knocking at the door of your heart and mind? Please explain.
2. When you noticed additional forms of evil trying to creep into you, what was your awareness of this? Please explain.
3. How effective was the easier kind of change? Please explain.
4. Were there times when the easier kind of change was *more* effective and times when it was *less* effective? If so, what do you think made the difference?
5. What did you do when you noticed the easier kind of change being *less* effective, and what effect(s) did this have?
6. When you noticed yourself thinking about committing an evil, and intending to do it, and you used the easier kind of change avoid *committing* it, did you try using substitute words for the word "sin"? For example, instead of the words "because it is a sin," did you try words like, "because it's hurtful," "because it's damaging," "because it's destructive," "because it's bad," etc.? What effect did it have to use *substitute* words? What (if anything) do you conclude?
7. You now have *two basic responses* to sin in your life—one of which applies to the sin you're currently abstaining from using the four-step process, and the other of which applies to *additional* forms of evil that come knocking at the door of your heart and mind. These two responses are as follows:
  - "I do not want this (or "I do not will this") because it is a sin against God" (the response that is used at the end of the four-step process).
  - "I am thinking about this, and I am intending to do it, but because it is a sin, I'm not going to do it" (the easier kind of change).

These two statements are quite similar, and you might wonder, "If the final words that I say at the end of the *four-step* process are so similar to the *easier* kind of change, why bother going through the full, four-step approach in the first place? Why not use the easier kind of change and skip all the extra work?" With these questions in mind, what is your experience of the four-step approach to sin as compared to the easier kind of change? What does each one uniquely accomplish in your life (or do they both accomplish the very same thing)? Please explain.
8. What was your experience of using the two responses to sin *together*—side by side—in your spiritual work? Please explain.
9. During the past week, were there times when an "additional" form of evil presented itself to your heart and mind, and you actually gave in to that evil and acted on it? If so, did it occur to you to say the words of the easier kind of repentance *after* you'd actually given in to the evil? If so, what effect(s) did it have to use the easier kind of change "after the fact"? What do you conclude from this?