Date: **April 26, 2016.** (This guideline is a work in progress. It covers lessons 1-7. Please check back soon for the entire guide.)

Dear Facilitator:

We are excited to share with you the following facilitator’s guide. It is a product of leading Spiritual Discovery groups for several years and leading bible classes for decades. We are not professional counselors and this is not a group counseling session. This is a guide for leading an effective study of *Spiritual Discovery.* Every group has its own strengths and weaknesses. The following guide may need to be adjusted for your group.

**Spiritual Discovery Facilitators Guide**

**Group Structure and Guidelines:**

Our groups are made up of members of our church and friends of members who are interested in Bible study.

We have separate men and women’s groups. The lessons are too personal to have men and women in the same class. When we use Spiritual Discovery as a resource to help married couples, we split up men and women.

The most effective group size is 5-8 people. Participants benefit when others share what they’re learning, but if the group gets too large, there will not be enough time for everyone to respond to the questions. If the group is smaller than 5 people, you will miss the benefit of a broader range of experiences. In any case, the discussions are a very important part of the meetings.

We announce when new groups are forming and ask anyone interested to speak with one of the facilitators. Here are some of the questions we ask those who want to attend:

- “Why do you want to be a part of this group study?”
  - Hopefully, the answer is, “I want to grow.”
  - Sometimes the answer is, “My friend wants me to attend.”
  - It is important that every participant give their whole heart. If they feel pressured to come and their heart is not in it, they can struggle with attendance and doing the homework.
  - If they have been urged to come by someone else, we ask “Do you want to be a part of this group?” and “Will you give your heart?”
  - If they just want to observe, we explain that we do not want anyone coming to observe, because it will create an environment where participants will not feel safe to share their personal experiences.
  - So if someone’s heart is not in it, we ask them to wait until they are ready to participate fully.
“What do you want to change or how do you want to grow?”
  ◦ They cannot fully know how they will grow through this study, but if they can identify an area they want to grow in, it will help them be more engaged in the class.
“Do you have an addiction of some kind?”
  ◦ If they have an alcohol or drug addiction, we ask that they be involved in a counseling program before they participate in this class.
  ◦ If they are making progress in a program, we welcome them to our group.
“Are you experiencing strife in a close relationship?”
  ◦ This question helps us know more about the challenges the individual is facing.
“Will you be able to attend all the meetings and do the weekly homework?”
  ◦ They most likely will need to adjust their schedule to be able to attend every meeting and do their homework.
  ◦ If they try to add something new to their schedule without thinking through the commitment, they may begin to miss meetings or not complete the homework.

Lastly, so they know what’s expected during the meetings, we cover the Guidelines for Group Meetings on page 9 of Spiritual Discovery.

**Role of the Facilitator:**
These lessons are designed to be led by a facilitator who leads every meeting. The facilitator can be a participant who is also reading the book and doing the homework right along with the rest of the class. Experience leading group bible studies is helpful but not required.

**Tips for being a good facilitator:**
- Be well prepared. Study the lesson and answer the discussion and homework questions ahead of each class. (If you have led these classes before, review the lesson and homework before each class.)
- Set an example of openness and humility and share how you’re applying the material to your own life.
- Keep the group on task. Each lesson is important and they build on each other from week to week, so keeping everyone focused on the topic being discussed will be beneficial.
- A facilitator must be patient and a good listener, but this does not mean you let someone monopolize the discussion. If they do, you must step in and respectfully redirect the discussion. (This is always a judgment call, but you will learn who in the group tends to get off track or monopolizes the discussions.)
- Gauge how much time to allow for each discussion question. Some questions are more personal and all the participants need to answer. However, some questions don’t need a response from everyone once the material is covered.
- Keep an eye on the clock. Starting and ending on-time shows respect to the participants and allows them to plan other activities after meetings.
• It is not the facilitator’s responsibility to “fix” anyone or take on the problems of the members. (We will explain more about this throughout the lessons.)

Meeting Formats:
We have used two different meeting formats: one meeting for each lesson or two meetings for each lesson. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

One meeting per lesson
In this format, the participants meet only once for each lesson.
• In preparation for their meeting, the participants study the lesson, write their answers to the discussion questions and complete the homework.
• When they come together for their meeting, they share their answers to the discussion questions and the homework.
• These meetings usually take 1½ to 2 hours depending on the size of the group.

Advantages:
• The study is completed in 15 weeks.

Disadvantages:
• Participants will have a lot to do to prepare for each meeting.
• The participants will not get as much time to discuss the concepts presented in the lessons and what they are learning about their own spiritual battle.
• If participants are unable to complete their homework ahead of time, they will not benefit as much from the meeting and can quickly get behind.

Two meetings per lesson
In this format, the participants meet twice for each lesson.
• In preparation for the first meeting, the participants read the lesson and answer the discussion questions. They are not expected to do the homework before the first meeting.
• 1st Meeting: The participants read the lesson together and answer the group discussion questions.
• In preparation for the 2nd meeting, the participants review the lesson and do the homework.
• 2nd Meeting: We call this the “process” meeting. Everyone shares their answers to the homework questions and what they are learning about themselves.

Advantages:
• This format is more thorough. If the participants read the lesson beforehand and then read the lesson together at the meeting, they will have a better understand of the material. This can help the participants look more deeply into their own hearts.
• The participants will understand the lesson better and likely get more out of the homework.
• The participants have more time to process the material and apply it to their daily lives.

Disadvantages:
• It takes 30 weeks to complete. Note: When we try to rush deep changes, we may not be successful. We are often in a hurry to grow spiritually, but spiritual growth is like any other growth – it takes time. You can only grow a year’s worth in a year.

Meetings:

To begin your meetings, lead the group in prayer to help bring a spiritual focus to the meeting and to seek God’s blessing on your time together.
At the conclusion of every meeting, ask someone in the group to pray.

At the beginning of the first few meetings, read the following Guidelines from page 9 of Spiritual Discovery:

1. Our standard is the Bible.
2. Come with a spirit of openness.
3. Show respect for others:
   ◦ If you are unable to make a meeting, let your facilitator know.
   ◦ Be on time.
   ◦ Turn off your cell phone and put it away.
   ◦ Raise your hand to speak.
4. You can share your own experiences and what’s worked for you in the past, but you are not here to fix anyone else’s problem or give advice.
5. Do not try to comfort anyone who is sharing. Give them room to feel what they are feeling. When you offer comfort to someone when they are emotional, you shut down their emotion and keep them from growing.
6. Be whole-hearted and do your homework! Completing your homework is vital for personal growth and prepares you to participate in group discussions.
7. Always remember that our conversations are confidential. What is said here, stays here.

These guidelines are to help create a safe and respectful atmosphere.
• If someone in the group is not complying with a guideline, a gentle reminder may be all that is necessary. If that is not enough, speak with them individually about it.
• If the class gets lax on complying with the guidelines, begin the next lesson with a review of the guidelines.
Reading Suggestions:

- Most lessons are 10-12 pages so reading the lesson takes about 20 minutes. The discussion questions will take the rest of the time.
- If reading aloud is not your strength, or you don’t have a strong voice, ask participants who are good readers to read the lessons.
- These lessons are written in an outline form. That makes them easier to study but the format can make reading aloud more challenging. Here are a few things we do to make the reading flow more smoothly.
  - We read the bulleted lists in the outline as if they were sentences in a paragraph.
  - We also find it helpful when reading the scriptures to not read the Bible book-chapter-verse references. We just read the text of the verse.
  - We do not read the references to Bible verses at the end of some of the points or look up those verses in class. Those are for personal study during the week.
  - When we come to a chart, we stop and discuss the principles they illustrate.

Lesson 1 – Spiritual Discovery

If your group already knows each other well, you can combine lessons 1 and 2.

Lesson 1 is an introductory lesson where the participants will get to know each other and share their goals. They will discuss the distractions that could interfere with attending class and doing the homework every week. It also addresses the need to “Show-up” with openness, honesty, humility and vulnerability. This concept is used throughout these lessons.

Lesson 2 – Your Spiritual Battle

This lesson will raise everyone’s awareness of their spiritual battle. It will help them to be more aware that Satan is their true enemy.

In this lesson, the discussions will begin to be more personal. As participants share their “strongholds” and the impact of these strongholds in their lives, thank them for sharing, then ask the next person to share. Even if they share with tears, thank them for their vulnerability and move to the next person. As the facilitator, your goal is not to “fix” anyone or resolve a situation that is shared. If anyone in the group begins to offer advice to try to resolve someone’s problem, remind them of the meeting guideline of not giving advice. Also, keep everyone on track and do not let anyone monopolize the discussion.
Lesson 3 – The Truth about God

This lesson helps the participants begin to identify what they truly believe about God. It addresses Satan’s lies about God and the impact of believing Satan’s lies. Some of Satan’s most damaging lies are about God. The clearer picture we have of God, the more we will depend upon him and seek his help.

You may find that some participants harbor negative beliefs about God. Remember that you are not trying to “fix” anyone’s beliefs in this lesson. The goal for the participants is to begin to identify their deeply held beliefs about God. Future lessons will help them overcome any wrong conclusions they have come to about God.

You may also find that some participants are uneasy about sharing their true feelings. It may take several lessons before some of their true feelings come out. If that happens, suggest that they revisit this lesson and rework the homework. They also might find it helpful to read the Bible verses referenced on pages 32-33 that describe God’s attributes.

Lesson 4 – Emotions

This lesson lays an important foundation for future lessons. God gave us emotions to help us navigate and enjoy life, but our emotions can become one of Satan’s most effective tools to tempt us and disconnect us from each other and God. Understanding our own emotions and how Satan uses them to tempt us will help us fight our spiritual battle more effectively.

This lesson will also help the participants identify the “Family Rules” that they followed in childhood that can still be impacting how they feel about showing emotions as an adult. You will refer to these rules throughout subsequent lessons.

This lesson introduces three of the Seven Principles for Spiritual Growth.

- Stop & Consider (“What am I feeling?”)
- Recognize Your Spiritual Battle
- Tell the Truth

The 7 Principles for Spiritual Growth will be used throughout the lessons to help the participants begin to change unhealthy patterns. Encourage your group to memorize them. You may find it helpful (and fun) to use incentives for those who can recite them. On page 255 of the book, you will find the 7 Principles formatted so they will fit in a 4x6 inch frame.

The principles will help you to direct a participant who shares about a difficult situation. Rather than trying to resolve a problem for them, you can ask them to Stop & Consider what they were feeling. It may seem trivial to name an emotion, but it is actually very empowering.

www.SpiritualDiscoveryBook.com
When the participants can identify their emotions, they can begin to fight their spiritual battle more effectively.

On page 55 is an Emotions Chart that you will refer to throughout the lessons.

Lesson 5 – Shame and Self-Worth

Note: For this lesson, you will need a copy of the book You are Special by Max Lucado. This book is available on Amazon.com. It can be bought in Kindle, hardcopy or paperback formats for as little as $1. (The less expensive options take longer to ship.)

This lesson gives an in-depth look at the painful emotion of shame and the power it has to disconnect us from each other. It will help participants identify how feeling shame impacts their behavior. It will also help them begin to evaluate their measures for self-worth and whether their measures are healthy or worldly measures.

The book You Are Special takes less than 10 minutes to read aloud, and it gives a very good picture of true worthiness. After you read the book, ask for a minute of silent reflection to consider the message of the book. Then ask, “How does this story impact you?”

Being able to identify shame is a great step in fighting the spiritual battle. Don’t forget to ask the group to share their answer to the question on Page 72. This can be very faith building as each member shares their insights into why God is the true foundation for worthiness.

Lesson 6 – Unspiritual Defenses

This lesson is another building block in learning to fight the spiritual battle well. It is intended to help the participants identify how they typically move out from under painful emotions and how their response can keep them stuck in a painful cycle. It is important for the participants to identify not only how they “move” but then how they justify their reaction to the pain.

The homework in this lesson is very important for the group members. It will help them understand their “knee jerk” response to emotional pain and the impact their response may be having on those around them.

Encourage the group to reflect on the cycle chart on page 86 and to fill in the blanks with current examples. It will be beneficial if they carefully consider how they respond to their emotions. The chart is a valuable tool for breaking a painful cycle.
Lesson 7 – Identifying the Lies You Believe

In this lesson, the participants will again look at what they believe about God. They will also begin to look at their core beliefs about themselves and others.

Identifying lies that we believe can be challenging. The lies can feel like the truth especially when you are experiencing strong painful emotions. Remember that you are not trying to “fix” anyone’s beliefs shared in this lesson, but you can help the participants identify their core beliefs when they share an event from their past by asking:

- “How did that make you feel?”
- “What did you come to believe (about yourself, God or others) based on that situation?”
- “Does that still feel true today?”

If someone uncovers a core belief, encourage them to write it in their book on page 102 so they can refer to it the next lesson. The goal of this lesson is for participants to identify core beliefs about God, themselves and others. The next lesson will help them begin to uncover the truth about these beliefs.