

TIMES OF REFRESHING STUDY #2

Note: In churches there are 4 kinds of people. Use this study to deal with them. The 4 kinds are:

- IN or OUT - if there is no immediate change they are out of the church.
- DANGER ZONE - if they don't change they'll walk away, so get them back on the right road.
- NEEDS IMPROVEMENT - doing fine, but needs to do awesome!
- DOING GREAT - encourage them to keep doing great.

Make sure when you teach them that you make them feel you are on their side. You are simply telling them what Jesus thinks. These are not your own opinions. }

C: Today's study is not just a regular discipling study. Today you need to make decisions that will change your Christian life forever. Some of the things we talk about will be challenging. But I'm doing this because I really care about you. Are you ready to be challenged by God's word?

Acts 3:19-20

Q: If we truly repent, how will we feel? [Refreshed . Full of Jesus.].

Do you want to be refreshed?

C: Let today's study refresh your Christian life with a real change.

Q: Are you ready?

C: We'll read one of the greatest parables in the Bible and then we'll consider 5 questions that tell us how we are doing spiritually.

Luke 15:11-32

1. Are You Righteous?

[verses 11-16]

Q: What did the younger son ask his father in v12? [Give me my share of the inheritance now, before you die].

What do you think about this? [It was insensitive and very selfish].

What did the younger son do when he went to the distant country? [He wasted money (v13). He went with prostitutes (v30). He had worldly, wild friends (v31). He was not in touch with his father.]

C: The son was not righteous. He went far away from his father God.

Q: Does this story describe your life in any way? Do you feel like you are righteous or are you falling into different sins?

James 1:27

Q: How does God want us to live? [To care for others, and to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world.]

Q: How do you feel about helping the poor and helpless? How much do you help others? {Let them share}

Do you spend a lot of time with worldly friends? What about your old sins – have you fallen back to them? How is it really going with

- Sexual purity
- Lying at work
- Smoking / drinking / tobacco / Pan
- Anger
- Masturbation/Lust
- Laziness-not helping at home

{Take this opportunity to warn them sternly if they've ben repeatedly falling into a particular sin}.

2. How is Your Relationship With God?

[Luke 15:17-20]

C: This young man had gone far away from his father. He hadn't really talked to him in years. He was no longer like a son. But in verses 18-19, he planned to start talking with his father. He was going to apologize to him.

Q: Do you ever apologize to God and confess your sins in prayer? {Let them share. Take a minute to pray together, confessing and asking forgiveness for sins.}

C: Let's look at what Jesus said about prayer in Matthew 6.

Matthew 5:15-16

Q: What does v8 say about God? [He knows what we need before we ask him]

Q: According to v9, what should we call God? [Our Father in heaven]

C: In v11, it says that we should ask God for our daily bread. We should depend on him every day. We should talk to him as our dad.

Q: How is your relationship with God? Is it like a son-father relationship? Or do you feel like he is your boss, or far away? {Let them share}

How much do you pray every day? For how many minutes? What are your prayers like – do you feel close to God?

C: You need to pray for a minimum of 20 minutes per day. {Give them a structure to help them}.

C: In v16 he mentions, “when you fast”. Jesus expected that we would fast sometimes.

Q: Have you ever fasted? How often do you fast? {Let them share}.

C: We all should fast and pray for all our disciples, for peace in our region and open doors for the gospel. That would be a great day for you to fast too.

C: The great news is that if we come to God like a child, he is gracious and compassionate and will accept us.

C: Prayer and fasting are not the only part of our relationship with God. We must also listen to him, by reading the Bible.

Q: How has your Bible study been going? How much do you read a day?

C: You need to at least spend 20 minutes per day. (if you can read – otherwise, arrange for a Christian to read to you)

3. What Makes You Happy?

[Luke 15:20-24]

Q: How did the father feel when his son came home? [he ran to meet him v20, he was filled with compassion v20, he wanted to celebrate v23, because his lost son had been found v24.]

C: God celebrates when souls come back to him.

Luke 15:3-7

Q: What does the shepherd do if he loses a sheep? [He goes after it until he finds it v4.]

How do you think God feels about all the lost people in this world? [He wants to bring them back to Him]

How does the shepherd feel when he finds the lost sheep? [Full of joy v6.]

How does God feel when people are saved? [He rejoices v7]

C: Happiness does not come from money or fun or a nice marriage or house. Joy comes when we know that our life has a meaning. The Christian life is happiest when we are fruitful, when we are saving souls.

Q: What is the purpose of a Christian? [To make disciples]

Has that been your purpose?

Q: How has your evangelism been going? Do you share your faith as you go, on your own? Who have you invited who has become a Christian this year? What would be a good goal for the number of personal fruits you will bring? [If they do not want to share their faith at all, they should leave the church]

C: Here are some keys to evangelism.

- Do “lifestyle” evangelism – as you go along, always invite people. Be sure to carry invitations everywhere. Don’t just evangelize in the evenings, when you meet the brothers and sisters. Use them especially on Saturday and before Bible Talk.
- Have visitors over for tea, games, dinner
- Give yourself goals for daily or weekly conversations with non-Christians.

4. Is Your God Too Small?

Q: What was the Father like towards his son? [He was very giving. He gave him a hug, a ring v22, a robe v22, the fattened calf v23, a celebration party v23, earlier he had given him his share of the inheritance v12.]

C: God is not a stingy, tiny God who gives a little to us. He is amazingly generous, incredibly powerful. He can do anything if we believe it. If we believe in a BIG, AMAZING God, we will give money generously to the church, because our father in heaven will take care of us. We’ll give wholeheartedly in all the meetings, because we are excited about our awesome Father in heaven. In Ephesians 3, Paul talks about how big God our Father is.

Ephesians 3:14-21

C: Here it says that Paul knelt before the Father v14. He prayed that God would strengthen them v16. He prayed that they would understand how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ v18-19. He wanted them to understand that our God’s love is not small. In v20, he said that God can do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine”.

Q: Do you believe that God can do much in your life?

C: When your God is BIG, you’ll pray for him to do great miracles. And you will be so fired up that you can serve a great and awesome God who can do anything.

- For example, at Bible discussion we need to participate and make comments. How have you been doing on that?
- At church, we need to learn the songs and sing out loud. We need to encourage the speaker. How have you been doing?
- Every month, we need to give at least 10% of our income (even if you are a student) as contribution. How have you been doing in this area? What did you give last month? How about this month? Let's decide on a figure for you to give regularly every month. {Get them to write it down}
- For special contribution, we need to sacrifice. How did it go this year? {If they are giving zero for special contribution and they've been around for more than 6 months, challenge them very hard. Everyone can give something.}
- We need to be generous with each other. Have you had people over to your house very often? It is great to feed others.

5. Who runs your life?

[Luke 15:25-32]

Q: How did the older brother feel when he heard the celebration? [He had a bad attitude v28]

C: The older brother had worked hard for many years v29. He had always obeyed his father. But he was not grateful. And his father did not run his life. His father begged him to come in, but he refused v28,30. He was unwilling to love his own brother. He said to his dad in v30, "this son of your...". And so he missed the kingdom of God. His father was not really running his life.

Q: You may be coming to all the meetings, but who is really in charge of your life? When you make decisions about your future, do you do it with God in mind? Do you get bad attitudes when people mistreat you? Do you miss meetings?

C: Some common excuses

- Urgent office work
- Family fights and persecution
- Relatives from out of town
- Small sickness
- Urgent house work
- Wedding / other functions
- Cricket

C: Let's not be like the older brother, who did not let his father run his life. He would not meet with his brother. His heart was angry. He had the wrong priorities.

C: If you are not regular in the meetings, you can't be considered a true Christian.

C: The following are few areas to focus in your commitment.

- Come on time to all the meetings
- Come to fun times / sports / picnics / optional times as much as you can. Don't just come 3 times per week.
- Come for organized evangelism during the week. {If they have a tough schedule, they don't have to come daily. But everyone should come sometimes to meet the disciples outside of the meetings.}
- Make sure you have weekly time with your disciple.
- Don't go out of town for long periods (more than 15 days) or without taking advice. Everyone who goes away for more than 15 days struggles.

Conclusion

Matthew 6:25-34

C: We've seen what we should be doing as Christians. In this passage, Jesus talks about how God takes care of the birds and the flowers. He tells us not to worry, but to seek His kingdom and his righteousness FIRST in our lives. What about you? Has God been absolutely FIRST in your life? Has God been in control of your money? Are you close to Him? Are you seeking his righteousness? Do you tell others about Him? Or is something else first in your life? {Discuss. Talk about whether or not they have been seeking God's Kingdom and righteousness as FIRST priority}

Q: Do you want to change?

C: The great news is that God is our Father in heaven. He loves you and me. He wants us to change. If you make a radical decision today, you'll stay faithful until death. Let's get RIGHTEOUS. Let's have a great RELATIONSHIP with God. Let's get happy about REACHING the lost. Let's REALLY give financially and really believe that God can do incredible things. And let God RUN your life. I really love you. I want to be a happy Christian and go to heaven. That is why I've shared these things with you.

Q: How do you feel about all this?

"Let Everyone See Your Progress"

C: You remember that last month we did a study called "The Times of Refreshing". In that study, we talked about changing different areas in our lives. Now that several weeks have passed, I think it would be great to see how we are doing with the decisions we made that day.

1 Timothy 4:11-16

C: Here Paul told Timothy to command and teach certain things v11. That is what we are doing with these studies.

C: In v12, he says that our life should be an example for the believers in speech, life, love, faith and purity. In v13 he says we should be involved in public scripture reading (like at Bible discussion).

Q: What does v15 say? [Be diligent in these matters]

What does diligent mean? [Serious].

C: In v15, it says we should give ourselves wholly to these things so that everyone can see our progress. In v16, it says that we should watch our lives and doctrines closely and PERSEVERE (don't give up), because then we and others can be saved.

C: I want everyone to be able to say that you are growing. Let's talk about these areas and see how you are doing.

a. Speech

Our last point in the Times of Refreshing study was about EVANGELISM. How has that been going? How many visitors have you had in the last four weeks? How many people have been inviting each week? Have you been sharing your faith as you go, on your own? {Share yourself and see how they are doing}

Have you been going to the evening group evangelism for your family group? Are you studying the Bible with anyone?

b. Life

Has your life been a life of GIVING, like that of Jesus? Did you end up giving to SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION? Did you give your regular contribution this month? Have you been having anyone over to eat with you at your house? Have you been participating more in the Bible talk and at church, singing aloud?

c. Love

How about our COMMITMENT to the church? Are your relationships in the church growing? Are you getting regular weekly time with your discipler? How are your relationships where you live? Do you have regular devotionals? Do you have rota for flat/house responsibilities? Have you been coming late? Do you think it is loving to miss meetings or come late? Have you been involved enough with the brothers and sisters, or do you need to do more?

d. Faith

How is your RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? Have you fasted at all since we did the study? How much have you been praying and reading the Bible each day? Have you been doing at least 20 minutes of each? Paul told Timothy to "devote himself" to reading the Bible in v13. Do you think you are devoted to God enough?

e. Purity

How are things in your life? Have you been AVOIDING SIN? Have you been smoking? Any lust or masturbation? Do you have anything you need to confess? {Pause for a minute to let them think. Share yourself if you have messed up}.

What about your old sins? Has anything happened? Have you been kind with people or angry? Have you been lazy?

C: Suppose God were to give you a grade for your spiritual life in the past month, what grade would it be?

F – Failing, going to fall away

D – barely hanging on, not too committed

C – needs big improvement

B – doing fine, but still can do better

A – doing the best you've ever done spiritually.

Which grade would you get?

C: The good news is that our FINAL EXAM will be on judgement day. Now we can still change. Now it is time to rededicate ourselves to the decisions we made last month and to be fruitful in this year.