

Foundations for the Study of God's Word. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12 NASB) All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. (2 Tim 3:16 NASB) The *sum* of thy word is **Truth**; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endures for ever. (Psa 119:160 NASB)

def·ni·tions[©] is dedicated to the Truth and meaning of Biblical words and precepts!

INTRODUCTION TO def·ni·tions[©] FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

As an introduction, I have been teaching small groups for about twenty years and have faced many obstacles that are more or less common to this ministry. I wanted to share my experiences so that you, as a teacher/leader, might be more prepared when these problems come your way. So my prayer is that you will be blessed in your effort to teach others.

MISSION STATEMENT:

Calling:

Col 1:28-29 LITV

- 28- [Jesus Christ] whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ Jesus,
29- for which also I labor, struggling according to the working of Him who works in me in power.

RESULT:

Col 2:6-7 KJV - Not Philosophy but Christ

6- As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

- 7- Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

God gave us His Word to give us hope, direction and an absolute foundation for making all decisions that pertain to daily life and family matters. When we deviate from His instructions, life starts to unravel and become confused. The nature of man is to be in control of his life. The nature of Satan is to promote our sinful nature and to continually deceive us through confusion as he did with Eve at the very first act of sin, and as he tried to confuse Jesus in the garden with his devious questioning techniques. My goal is to present the gospel and doctrine of Jesus Christ by adhering to the Word so that we build our foundation in Christ on solid rock. There is only one way to overcome this world, and that is through the whole gospel of Jesus Christ and by keeping the

Living Word of Christ in tact. We must believe that, God's Word is Truth and that He meant what He said and that He says what He means.

There is a tendency today to water down the Gospel and to soften the blow of revealing sin in our lives, in order to not offend. But that is contrary to the purpose of sanctification. The Light of the gospel is offensive to the darkness of sin. If we do not deal with sin on a continual basis, then we misunderstand why Christ died on the cross. A prevailing doctrine throughout the Bible is that sin [always] brings eventual death (separation from God) [Rom 5.12; Rom 6.23; Jam 1.15]. There is not one verse or phrase in the Word of God that says, "OK, you have repeated the sinner's prayer, you are now free to continue in sin." When we sin however, God's grace allows us to *run* to His throne and to confess our sins for He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [1 John 1.9] We will cover this subject in depth in the article on "What is sin? And it's effects". I want to say at this point, that I believe firmly in Eternal Security for those who have 'truly' repented and allowed Jesus Christ to become the Lord of their life. My champion mentor on this subject is John MacArthur and I would suggest that you read his trilogy book that includes "The Gospel According to the Apostles", "The Vanishing Conscience", and "The God Who Loves" (published by the W Publishing Group). In this trilogy, he writes at length on the subject of Eternal Security and why those who are truly saved do not go on sinning, but set their minds on the righteousness of Christ. This is an excellent primer to your understanding the Gospel of Christ and the separation that sin brings. Another 'must read' book by John MacArthur is "Hard to Believe" (published by Thomas Nelson 2003).

Many times when a church decides to start a small group program, the leaders will simply find several people who are willing to lead a small group, give them a book and tell them to go. I have found that without training we have doomed the small group to failure. My purpose in this series of articles is to give a foundation for leaders to work from and to try to avoid some of the common pitfalls. Some problems that you as a teacher will run into very quickly are;

- Lack of preparation or knowledge of a specific subject. This might seem like an all inclusive statement, however, once you master the six topics covered in the

workbook (listed below), you will have a foundation to deal with just about any subject.

- Questions that seem biblically correct but are designed to trip you up. To the unprepared, the three questions posed to Christ in the garden [Matt 4.1-11] would look and sound OK. But as you prepare and mature in the Word, you will be able to discern between God's voice and the voice of the deceiver.
- Individual interpretations of scripture – this can be a big problem because there is a tendency today to make the Bible say what *we* want it to say. As an accountant once said, "If you massage the numbers long enough, you can make them say anything you want." We can do the same thing with scripture. This subject is covered in greater detail in the article 'What is the Bible?'
- Belief that there are errors in the Bible, so many so-called Christians today are practicing sin willingly and their justification is that the scriptures that specifically points out their trespass were interpreted incorrectly and therefore it is OK.
- A tendency to apply a scientific or secular world view to the interpretation of scripture, EG: creation. I can't tell you how disappointing it is when people who claim the title of Christianity, declare openly that our understanding of the Bible should be interpreted and clarified by science or philosophy. You can openly see political correctness being displayed both in the church and secular world. We live in a day when we are being forced into not 'offending' anyone 'except' the born again Christian.

My goal is to equip you to be ready for these obstacles and be able to 'stand' [Eph 6.13] on the Word of God. You will find in a debate, that if the conversation is not based on scripture, you can have a losing argument. But when your conversation is built on scripture, the Word of God is powerful to the pulling down of strongholds. This workbook is designed to present lots of scripture on each of the topics.

CONTENTS -TOPICS to be covered

- Our belief systems [John 1.12]
- What is the Bible (what is Truth?) [Psa 119.160]
- What is sin? [Rom 6.23]
- What is Salvation - the test of a true Christian [1 Cor 13.5]

- Who is Jesus Christ, and what difference does it make? [1jo 1.1-4]
- The development of Faith [Heb 11.6]
- The FEAR of the Lord [Pro 3.7]
- Being 'Transformed' by the renewing of your Mind' [Rom 12. 1&2]
- Setting up our 'Practice' as ambassadors of the gospel. [1 John 2.29; 3.7; 3.10]

Why do we need this teaching?

This list could get very long, but I just want to capture a few reasons for the purpose of this workbook.

- It is believed that we are the last generation of this age, [Mat 24.34] and that
- Jesus is coming for those 'looking for His return', [2 Pet 3.10-14]
- To prevent individuals from falling into the 'Seeker' or 'Emergent' church trap of 'softening' the Gospel in order to attract new members, [Col 2.4]
- To guard against 'Apostasy', [1 Tim 4.1]
- To understand what 'lukewarm' means, [Rev 3.16; Heb 2.3] - Negative impact of being 'lukewarm' on these principles of basic doctrine include;
 - Worst case: Apostasy
 - Apathy: lukewarmness
 - Inactivity in the Kingdom
 - Indifference to 'walking in the Spirit' and obedience to the Word.
- To build a Biblical view of our Eternal Security in Christ, [John 15, 16, 17]
- To develop a correct Fear of the Lord, [Pro 3.7] and
- To understand why the Bible uses almost every book of the Bible to warn against false teachers. [Mat 7.15]

All of these topics will be discussed throughout this workbook.

What is a small group?

A small group (for the purpose of this workbook) is defined as two to a maximum of twelve. While a group can be larger, the effectiveness of the group starts to diminish rapidly. The purpose of the small group refers back to our mission statement of presenting every man complete to the Lord Jesus Christ at His return. This requires participation by each of the members of the group. We cannot be hearers only. The book of James covers the topic of 'hearers only' completely. When members are non-participants, there is not growth, faith becomes dead.

Our goal is to create dialog from each member. You will always have members that disagree or have a different view of the topic being taught, and it is important to allow those individuals to be able to voice their understanding in a safe environment, without fear of ridicule. It is also very important for their view to be verbalized and then compared to a scriptural based explanation. A lot of times we can 'think' about something and assume that it is correct thinking, but when we verbalize it, errors will be revealed.

It is important to monitor your own emotions when allowing others to verbalize their beliefs. If you become anxious or frustrated when others have a differing opinion, then you can know that you need to understand the subject more in depth.

How to use this Manual

This manual is designed to create a bond between the small group leader and the Word of God. There will be lots of scripture and the reader must take full advantage of this material. I do not want you to accept my views on any subject. The Word says to 'test' every spirit and you do that by comparing what man has spoken with what God has spoken in His Word. Although I have included numerous scriptures to back up ideas that have been presented, you will soon discover that I have not exhausted any subject. In the Bible, there are no separate subjects. God inspired the Word to be precept upon precept. To fully understand any subject, you would have to include in your research, God's complete plan for man. All of our problems are a result of sin. All of God's remedies are designed to bring us back into right relationship with Him. So our concept of God's purposes from Genesis 1.1, creation, to Revelation 22.21, the completion of redemption, must be a part of the whole Word of God.

2Ti 3:15-17 ISV

(15) From infancy (when you first accepted Christ) you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to give you the wisdom you need for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- (16) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
 (17) so that the man of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

As you read the above verses, you will note that your knowledge of the Word is not just for you, but also for those immediate to you (EG: your family, your work group, etc.), and then extended groups such as home Bible study groups, Sunday School classes, board meetings and many others. We all have groups, from one-on-one over coffee, to more organized groups. God wants us to be equipped for every good work.

You should first skim through the manual to get a concept of how the book is laid out and the subjects being covered. Then start building precept upon precept. If you are diligent in your study of the Word, you will gain a wonderful God given confidence both as a daily doer of the Word and as a leader of the groups that God places you in.

Equipment for good study

One of the Topics covered is 'Setting up your Practice'. We are Ambassadors for Christ and we should be prepared to fulfill our duties. As your understanding in increased, you will be applying your understanding to real world applications and problems, and you will want to be thoroughly equipped.

Bibles: I recommend that your primary Bible be the 'New King James', or the 'New American Standard Version'. Other solid translations would include "English Standard Version", 'International Standard Version', and 'Literal Translation of the Bible'. There are other translations which are handy to have available as secondary resources. Also you will need a Strong's Concordance, a bible dictionary and several commentaries of your choosing. If possible I strongly recommend having a Windows PC because you can get all of these resources (except the New King James version) for free from www.e-sword.com. If you own a Apple computer then you will have to pay for resources. Again, if you own a PC, you can get your word processing program (does everything Microsoft Office will do) for free from www.openoffice.org.

As Christians, we have to speak God's Truth. Satan canNOT win against God's Word. However I want to make a strong warning, that today many church leader/pastors have watered down the Truth to the point that it is now only a half-truth. We are to speak God's promises but God honors obedience and sacrifice. He honors a broken and contrite heart. When we speak God's promises we must include how we obtain fulfillment of those promises. All of the promises God breathed in the

Bible have conditions. I want to re-emphasize, ALL of God's promises have conditions. You begin with salvation, and while we cannot do anything to earn our salvation, we DO have to repent, confess, believe, and have faith.

The Calling

Colossians 1.28 - We proclaim Him,
 -admonishing [warning] every man and
 teaching every man with all wisdom,
 -so that we may present every man
 complete in Christ.

I wanted to end this article with the mission I believe that Almighty God has given to me. There are three main points in this verse that need to be illuminated upon so that the 'Calling' can be clarified.

First of all our goal is to proclaim Jesus Christ. The entirety of God's Word centers around Jesus Christ and His love and great sacrifice of the cross, so that we can be reunited back into fellowship with Him. God created us for eternal fellowship. Sin broke that fellowship, but through Christ, we have hope of that future day when there will be no more sin and we spend eternity with Him.

Second, the book of Colossians is a letter warning of imminent deception that is to infiltrate the church in the days prior to Christ's second coming. The second chapter of this letter goes into detail of warnings on how to discern and avoid that deception. Paul mentioned the church of Laodicea several times and in the 4th chapter of this letter he requested that the Laodiceans also hear the warnings given. We can read the fate of the Laodiceans in Christ's letter to that church in the third chapter of the book of Revelation. God sees lukewarmness, apathy and indifference as a serious departure from His calling us to Holiness and making Him the Lord of all our life.

Third is a very thought provoking statement that should stop every man in his tracks. I have in the past, read this passage many times and just glossed over it. But in November of 2005, the Holy Spirit quickened it in my spirit and it literally brought me to my knees before the throne of God. "...that we may present every man complete in Christ." One day in the near future, Christians are going to stand before God to give account of his actions. The great commission that Christ gave us is to make disciples of all who come to know Christ. The implication in this verse in Colossians is that we are at that judgment seat, going to present to Christ those who we have been made responsible for, or have had an influence on during our time here on earth. Personally, I want to have many more than one or two souls that I can 'present' to Christ.

My prayer is that as you read and study these articles, that you will become a Berean and search the scriptures to be approved by God. That you will run the race, contend for the faith, and finish the course complete in Him.

We invite you to visit our website for additional articles on preserving the Definitions of the Word of God. These articles are written for small group leaders as a foundation for Biblical Truth.

For further reading on this subject we recommend two books by

John MacArthur:

Hard to Believe – Thomas Nelson Pub – 2003

Truth War – Nelson Books – 2007

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✓ Unbelief is when God has spoken and you do nothing.

✓ Presumption is when you act when God has not spoken.

✓ Faith is when you act upon God's instructions.