



LEADER GUIDE

FIGHTING BETTER

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WELCOME

Thank you for being brave and leading a group through the *Fighting Better* study! We want to help you be successful, and go in bravely. We've created this leader guide knowing it can be intimidating to take charge of a group, even if it's just you and a friend or two. Some of you are seasoned professionals at leading so many of the points in the introduction will simply be reminders for you. **Do make sure and read the section on *Why This Study Is Different*.**

Fighting Better is a 7-week Bible study. Adding a kick-off session makes for eight weeks of questions and discussion to use with your group. This study was written as a follow up to the *Knowing Better* study continuing with themes and lessons on how to truly know God intimately where life change happens. (Don't worry, if you have some who have not done *Knowing Better*, it's not a deal breaker for getting major goodness from this one.) **In *Fighting Better* you'll learn how to stand with God Almighty and do battle to deeply grow and repair your life.** It's going to be deep, eye-opening, intriguing, and fun. Warriors will learn more on how to have an intimate and experiential relationship with God and how to communicate authentically with Jesus. This is appropriate for those just starting the journey or those who've been with Jesus for years.

Together, we're going to fight for the victory over fears, worries, and life-controlling issues and capture the beautiful promises of God along the way. Prepare for a magnificent battle!



WHAT TO KNOW GOING IN

WHY THIS STUDY IS DIFFERENT

Like *Knowing Better*, *Fighting Better* was originally written so anyone could do it on their own. There were a number of reasons for that.

First, one area God wanted this study to be used was with **people who were incarcerated**. In jail or prison, inmates don't always have video access or even Christian pastors, priests, or Christian mentors available to guide or ask questions. (Covid left many with no outside influence.)

Second, when we are in groups, **we aren't always honest or real**. Even in church. We may worry about what others think about us, getting the "right" answers, and what we do or don't know. We fear looking foolish, uninformed, or "out there." It can stifle our authenticity and vulnerability.

Third, some of us have some big stuff that is incredibly hard to share with others. Shame. Guilt. **There are some things so deep they may never be told to anyone but God**. People will definitely not share if that space feels unsafe. When we don't know if you are a gossip, judgmental, or will reject us, we won't share until we can be certain of trust. Don't think you know who has these struggles. It may likely be someone in your group.

This study is deep. You will learn to talk to God about everything. You will unpack some hard things. You'll get to the root of issues. You won't do that real and raw if you are worried about having to share that in group. **We will NOT share anything too personal from the daily homework in group**. We will be asking questions in a way that feels safe. There will be opportunity to go deep, but it should never feel required or overly encouraged. If it's meant to happen, it will happen.

THE GOAL

To help people understand that through a deep and authentic relationship with God that they can experience true victory in their lives.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOK

The *Fighting Better* study has five days of homework each week that average around 30-45 minutes to complete each day (depending on time spent on question reflection and prayer time). Each week ends with a *Wrap Up* day that can be done on a sixth day. Some have used the *Wrap Up* as the group discussion guide. Each week there is a memorization verse and "Fighting Better Battle Tips."

STUFF YOU NEED

Each participant will need their own *Fighting Better* study guide, Bible, and something to write with.

IDEAS FOR YOUR UNIQUE GROUP

WHICH SCENARIO BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SITUATION?

Fighting Better can be used alone, with one, two, or a few getting together, in small groups, or not so small groups. Following are ideas on how you might approach various situations.

Using the study books:

ALONE

Both *Knowing Better* and *Fighting Better* Bible studies were designed to use on your own. In some ways, this is the best way. The whole goal of these studies is to not only meet God but to learn to experience Him in life-changing ways. The studies are written conversationally and should be easy to understand even if this is your first introduction to Jesus. The only resources needed are a Bible and something to write with. These are perfect for loved ones who are incarcerated, away at college, or feeling alone. It's also great for yourself if you are in some deep waters and absolutely need something to change in your life. While perfect for gospel sharing and new believers, neither is a "beginner" Bible study. **Both are designed to teach you how to ENGAGE with and EXPERIENCE God in life-changing ways.** Sometimes when we have a great deal of shame, guilt, or doubt, working with others doesn't work. These studies offer a safe place to find answers and hope in the presence of God.

ONE-ON-ONE

If you are a believer who wants to help someone else understand who Jesus is and to know God deeply, a good way is to do the study together. Do the daily work on your own, then get together each week to discuss what was most impactful, interesting, and thought-provoking. Some have used each week's Wrap-Up to spark conversation and questions.

One caution: Make it clear going in that you will not be sharing all your answers. Often people will not answer honestly if they know others will see their responses. Some people will not feel comfortable "getting real" yet. This needs to be a safe place for them to meet God and learn to trust.

WITH A SMALL GROUP

While doing Bible study in a small group is a fantastic way to develop fellowship with our family in Christ, these studies are a little different. Read the bold text in the paragraphs above and the sentences that follow them. In order to truly experience God and the transformed life He has for us, we need to feel safe enough to be authentic, unearth some things that are buried, face things we avoid, and confront uncomfortable topics. There is comfort and safety in doing that with God, but not with everyone else. Leaders will need to be considerate of that dynamic and make sure to maintain a safe small group environment.

FOR JAIL/PRISON/REHAB MINISTRY

Depending on your ministry, situation, and restrictions within the facility you serve, one of the ways mentioned on the previous page may work for you too. Here are some different ways we've seen others use the books with inmates and those in recovery programs.

JAILS

Many churches make the *Knowing Better* study available to the inmates who attend a weekly Bible study hosted by church laypeople. Because inmates are in for different durations of time and new inmates are always coming in, the study is given for the inmates to use on their own. Oftentimes, when a few inmates are working on the study within their pod, others get interested and more want to do it for themselves. One group told us that they used the devotionals (in the back of the *Knowing Better* study) to do a daily group session and encouraged each other to keep going in the main study on their own. Your group will need to make Bibles available to the inmates as well - which you probably are already doing. The thing we hear over and over is that those who never knew HOW to read their Bible learn how to get into it and see how valuable it is in their lives.

PRISONS

One pastor we work with goes into the prison each week and meets with several guys one-on-one who want to visit. When she feels they would benefit, she gives them the *Knowing Better* study to work on at their pace. Each week she checks in and asks what stood out to them that week. Sometimes they've only gotten through a few pages, but they always seem to have something meaningful to share. Sometimes they come back with eye-opening revelations.

One church member faithfully visited an inmate during a 3-year sentence. He gave him the *Knowing Better* study to work on. He was so impacted that the rest of his time there he formed 6-week-long small groups of 5-6 guys and had them all go through it too. More and more guys kept asking him to include them. He took dozens of men through the study during his incarceration. The *Fighting Better* study works as a great follow up for those who are eager to continue learning.

REHAB

The methods for use in rehab situations will be the same as many of the scenarios we've already mentioned. One story that stands out is a young woman who works with kids in a juvenile detention center. For some of her teens she knew needed God in big ways, she'd make a deal with them: Complete the *Knowing Better* study and she'd give them \$100! She knew it was a big motivator but she put some parameters around it. They'd have to have a conversation with her after each week was completed to report on what they got out of it and she needed to see that all the blanks were filled in. Kids took the challenge. One teen that completed it got the \$100, but I asked if it was truly impactful for him. She had three words for me, "Death to life!"



TIPS FOR A GREAT EXPERIENCE

Leading discussion for your group doesn't have to be intimidating. If it makes you feel better, refer to yourself as the "facilitator." It's okay to admit you don't feel qualified, confident, or even comfortable leading the group. The biggest job is to get the group together and engage. Create a place to be together, love on one another, learn about our great God, and have fun!

ORDER EARLY

Make sure to allow enough time to get your *Fighting Better* books ordered at least a couple of weeks ahead to ensure timely delivery. Especially important if you are ordering a bulk shipment of 15 or more. Packages may come slower than individual books.

KEEP A SCHEDULE

Make sure everyone knows where and when you'll meet. Keeping the time and place consistent helps, yet, if things need to change, making sure you communicate details well alleviates many issues. Also, make a point to start on time even if some haven't arrived. This will ensure punctuality over time and show you value everyone's schedule.

SET THE TONE

Decide ahead of time if you'll offer snacks, beverages, or nothing. Some love putting out a big spread and others find that too much week after week. Do what is best for you and your group. We're all so used to carrying our travel mugs and bottles of water that it's no big deal to ask them to come with their own beverage. Whatever you decide is fine, just let everyone know the plan.

BE PREPARED

Look through the content that will be covered each week in leader's guide ahead of time so you know where the discussion is going. You'll know your group best and can tailor any questions you feel aren't quite right or it may spark additional ideas you can plan for. Also, as you do your study each week, make note of any insights you feel are important to cover that week.

REFLECT

After each gathering, ask yourself what went well. What wasn't so great? Evaluate your time together and see if you need to make improvements or adjustments for the next time.

PRAY

Be in conversation with God about the people in your group and be praying for their unique challenges, gifts, and journey.

WEEKLY GROUP GATHERING

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

Here's a plan that might work for structuring your weekly group meeting. Yet, it's your group so do whatever you need to do to accommodate your resources, circumstances, and time.

WELCOME: 15-30 min.

This is a good time to get any announcements done, have everyone introduce themselves, do ice-breakers, check in with people (briefly), and just get everyone comfortable and settled in.

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today.

Praying in a group, out loud, can be terrifying if you've never done it. If you are in this boat, don't even worry. We've got you. Check out the info in the back of this guide, *Help for Group Prayers*, on how to pray and prayers that are ready to go that you can use for each week on **pages 23-27**. Read the prayers aloud to open and close your group time. It's a great idea to have group members take turns each week so everyone can experience hearing their own voice praying out loud.

VIDEO: 17-20 min.

There's a video to help kick off the study and then weekly videos that offer some additional thoughts to wrap up the theme each week. Encourage your group to jot down notes from the videos (*note: there is no specific area for video notes within the study book*). The videos are helpful, but totally optional. It's best to watch the video at the beginning, before group discussion, as there are some extra questions pertaining to the video if you want more to discuss. *Note: Watching the videos is not necessary to the main discussion time.* To access the videos, follow the instructions in the study book.

DISCUSSION: 30-60+ min. (Typically, an hour to 90 min. would be ideal).

Go through the questions for that week (on the following pages) along with any questions you may have come up with in your personal study throughout the week.

PRAY

Ask people to share something they would like prayer for. If you're comfortable, pray for any requests mentioned and for their journey through the study. If you're uncomfortable praying, ask that everyone pray for the group's requests during the week, then use the prayers on pages 23-27 to close.

ENCOURAGE

Remind your participants what to work on for next time, schedule changes if needed, and give lots of encouragement.

STUDY KICK-OFF . DISCUSSION GUIDE

LAUNCH **Note:** This session happens before any work has begun in the study books.

WELCOME your group and pray for your time together (see pages 23-26 for opening prayer if needed). Do introductions and an **ice-breaker** or two to create connections. Here are a few options:

- 1) What is the most competitive sport or event you were part of?
- 2) What has been your greatest victory in life? (AKA: What's the hardest thing you've ever had to fight for?)
- 3) What's one thing you are unbeatable at?

DETAIL the schedule and expectations of your time together each week and hand out books. Read *“Warrior! Yes, you”* on page 7 talking through the points as needed. This is a good time to discuss the time it will take to complete the homework each week and talking through obstacles and how to approach committing to the process (especially for those new to Bible study). Seasoned studiers can share what they've found works best for them.

WATCH the video **“Kick Off Video”** and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*).

DISCUSS the following questions to get thinking about the upcoming study.

1) Read through the information on the back cover. Based on the text and bullet points, what are you most interested in gaining from this study?

▶ Can you offer any insight as to why that's appealing to you?

2) Have your group read 1 John 5:4 (from various translations if possible).

“For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” (NLT)

▶ What do you think it means to DEFEAT the evil world? How would your life look if you have victory over the evil world?

▶ What do you think it's going to take to fight against the things of the world that are keeping you from complete victory in life?

3) On the cover it states that this study will teach you **“How to win the battles in your life and live victoriously.”** Is that comforting to you, scary to you, or both? Explain your thoughts?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 1 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

COMMIT TO THE BATTLE

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. Warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two, especially if people don't know each other well. Here are a few options:

- 1) What did you commit to that you later regretted?
- 2) What was the longest commitment you ever made (gym membership, marriage, job, etc.)?
- 3) How do you get motivated for difficult tasks?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video "Week 1 . Commit to the Battle" and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ *below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.*

DISCUSS the following questions in your group related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ Yet, It's Good News

- ▶ Is there something you used to think was good, right or true that you later found was not? (Something you had to UN-learn?)
- ▶ Have you ever discovered you were on the wrong road headed somewhere? How did it feel when you realized that? How didn't feel to get on the right road? How long did you beat yourself up for being on the wrong road?
- ▶ What part of the Good News (see pages 13-14) seems like the best news to you?

Day 2 ▪ Start A Fire

- ▶ If your life went up in flames today, what possession would you be most upset about losing?
- ★ In the video, Jenn talked about looking at what New Life thing we feel God moving us toward (like volunteering, finding new friends, changing jobs, studying something meaningful, etc.) Discuss what God might be nudging you to do.

Next, Jenn discussed what CURRENT commitment might get in the way of that (too much social media, TV, or gaming, too many hours working, a wrong group you hang out with, etc.). Talk about what you can see takes up more time in your life than it should.

- ▶ Have someone read Deuteronomy 30:19-20. At the bottom of page 19, we answered a couple of

questions about those verses. Review those then discuss HOW OFTEN you think God wants you to do the last two things you listed on that page and what that might look like in your life.

- ▶ Read Colossians 3:4. Discuss what making Christ “your life” would require.

Day 3 ▪ The Boss Of Me

- ▶ Have you ever jokingly, or not so jokingly, told someone (or thought), “You’re not the boss of me?” Share if you won’t get yourself in trouble :)
- ▶ Read Ephesians 2:1-3. When you sin (gossip, are prideful, lie, cheat, want things your co-worker has, etc.) Paul says that’s us “following...the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Satan)”. In other words, when we’re not following Jesus, we’re following the devil. Have you ever thought about that reality before?
- ▶ How easy, or difficult, is it for you to tell others that you follow Jesus? Discuss how often that even seems to be a thought or opportunity in your day to day. Who might it be easy to tell? Who do you feel it would be difficult to share that with?

Day 4 ▪ What You Believeth

- ▶ How did you feel about the expanded explanation of what it means to BELIEVE? (Pages 26-27)
- ▶ How different does it feel to say, “I’m committed to Jesus” vs. “I believe in Jesus?”
- ▶ How did the comparison of *accepting Jesus* being like a *marriage proposal* make you think?

Day 5 ▪ Just Do It

- ▶ If to love Jesus is to OBEY Him, what scares you the most about that? How will you overcome that fear?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you’d like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 2 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

TRUST YOUR KING

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. If you want, warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) Who is one person you look up to?
- 2) What smell, image, object, or sound triggers a good memory for you?
- 3) What was the most recent thing you did for the first time?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video “**Week 2 . Trust Your King**” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ *below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.*

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ This God

- ▶ What comes to mind when you think about the word **RIGHTEOUS**? How do you think about it in reference to you?
- ▶ Read 1 Peter 3:12. Discuss how this benefits you and how you feel about it. Do you feel you are taking full advantage of this?

Day 2 ▪ Who I Am

- ▶ Read Matthew 7:24-27. Who will experience the storms of life? Why do you think the ones “*on the rock*” (the ones of us building our foundation on Jesus) will have a hard time just like the ones without Jesus?
- ▶ On pages 48-49 review the **5 Foundational Truths of God**. If you're willing, share which one is most meaningful to you and why OR what new information you uncovered in this section that you found interesting or significant.

Day 3 ▪ The Best Plan

- ▶ Review D.L. Moody's quote in the margin on page 52. List some “successes” we chase that might not really matter. After you've discussed some ideas, look up Proverbs 14:12 and share your thoughts.
- ▶ Review the comment in the margin on page 53. Do you believe this to be a true statement?

- ▶ Review page 55. How did going through the S.A.R.P. process work for you?

Day 4 ▪ On Purpose

- ▶ Read Psalm 48:14. Spend some time discussing the story of the missionaries and Barbara Youderian's diary excerpt on page 59 - especially the quote in the margin there.

- ▶ Review Rev. Chuck Smith's perspective on the bottom of page 60 and share your thoughts.

★ In the video, we heard the story of David and Svea Flood and how David spent decades of his life mad at God until he saw the miracle of what God did through one boy's life they impacted. Discuss what you imagine his life might have been like if he had trusted God throughout everything.

Day 5 ▪ Knowing Things

- ▶ From your *Who I Am In Christ* list on page 64, share the most meaningful one(s) to you and why.
- ▶ What are your thoughts about Neil T. Anderson's idea that, "We are not sinners saved by grace; we are saints who sin"?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 3 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. If you want, warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) Has anyone ever told you you look like someone else? Or thought you were someone else?
- 2) What's the worst haircut you ever had?
- 3) What housekeeping chore do you hate the most?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video “Week 3 . Know Your Enemy” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ *below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.*

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ He Attacks Your Mind

★ In the video, we heard the story of David Gibbs who had to listen to the voice to get home safely. The message was that those who don't listen to the right voice (God's over their own/wrong thoughts) “crash and burn.” The “voice” told how too many don't understand that HE can see them in their situation and they need to trust that and not listen to the thoughts THEY are having in a hard moment. How often do you feel you listen to the right voice vs. the wrong voice? Is there a specific time you listened well or listened wrongly?

- ▶ Read 1 John 2:14 that you filled in on page 70. Discuss what you think the Apostle John means by “the word of God lives in you” and how that impacts you.
- ▶ This week's memorization verse was John 10:10. Recite it together and then discuss how you see that being played out in your lives and in your thinking.

Day 2 ▪ He's A Skilled Liar

- ▶ If you're open to sharing, is there something you have believed that you now know was a lie? How did you discover it was a lie? There may even be a lie that you are trying NOT to believe but find that you still do.
- ▶ Discuss why you think it's easier to believe the bad stuff/the lies than what God says about us.

Day 3 ▪ He Looks Like Us

- ▶ What are some ways you see that you are your own worst enemy?
- ▶ On page 84 we read Ephesians 1:3-14. For the first part you were to personalize it (replacing *us* and *we* to read *me* and *I*) and letting it speak directly to you. How did that change your thoughts about it?

Day 4 ▪ He Stokes Unforgiveness

- ▶ What do you think about the idea that to forgive is to set yourself free?
- ▶ Why do you think the statement “The devil’s favorite playground is isolation” makes sense?

Day 5 ▪ He Wants To Misidentify You

- ▶ Reread the quotes in the margins on pages 93 & 95. Discuss what it would mean for you to have your identity so solidly in Christ that you would be unshakable no matter what.
- ▶ You were given the exercise to write how Jesus would live out your life in your shoes, career, situation, responsibilities (like the character Edward Norton did). If you’d like to share some thoughts on what you came up with and what would be different, please do.

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you’d like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 4 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

EXPOSE YOUR WEAKNESSES

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. If you want, warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What are you terrible at?
- 2) Kryptonite zaps Superman's strength? In real life, what zaps your energy?
- 3) What's something you want to get better at?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video "**Week 4 . Expose Your Weaknesses**" and encourage participants to take notes (if you've chosen to use the videos). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ Exposed: Ignorance

▶ The majority of those who call themselves Christians don't know their Bible very well. For those who do know some of it they often feel they aren't as far along in their knowledge as they could be. Be honest and discuss what obstacles, lies, thoughts, and misunderstandings have kept you from reading and being more knowledgeable about God's Word in the past.

▶ Read Matthew 6:28-33 that ends with our memorization verse for the week. Jesus lists some things we worry about. What are the things you worry about day to day? Jesus tells us to "seek first the kingdom and his righteousness." Where does seeking God fall in your priorities typically? How will that change?

Day 2 ▪ Exposed: Pride

▶ Read the Focus quote on the top of page 107 by T.S. Eliot. Can you identify any area of pride where this quote doesn't fit? Discuss why we each have a tendency to want to feel important.

▶ We read that the cure for pride is obviously humility. In Romans 8:5 (page 111) we read the method for leaving pride behind and living humble. Read the verse then discuss why you believe that would work and how we do that.

★ In the video, Jenn poised the idea that if we could eliminate pride in our lives we'd also eliminate many other weaknesses in our lives. How would a humble spirit vs. a prideful spirit make us stronger?

Day 3 ▪ Exposed: Self-Sufficiency

▶ Read the quote by President Lincoln on page 114. Discuss in what ways we live today that seems to say we don't really need God.

▶ Also on page 114 we looked at Matthew 7:21-23. While someone reads the verse think of the things that you do to serve God/your church and hear Jesus listing those jobs in his list. Does this verse scare you? What would need to change so it's not fearful for you?

Day 4 ▪ Exposed: Fear

▶ Read Psalm 34:4-5. Go back and review the three questions asked regarding those verses in the middle of page 120. Really think about that. How will seeking the LORD deliver you from ALL your fears? Do you truly think that's possible?

▶ The only fear the Bible tells us is good is the fear of God. We looked at Proverbs 19:23. Read it again, in multiple versions if possible. Discuss your thoughts around that and what you think God wants YOU to hear in that verse.

Day 5 ▪ Exposed: Unwillingness

▶ Read the opening paragraph for Day 5 on the top of page 125. It's not unusual to NOT want to do some things God might be moving us to do. If you're okay with being a little vulnerable, which things that list covered make you think, "Not me!?" Anything on that "uncomfortable" list you'd be willing to endure?

▶ Reread Randy Harris' quote on page 128. Discuss your thoughts on what he's getting at and the value of that.

Wrap Up

▶ On page 130 we looked at 1 Timothy 6:20-21. A weakness we can all be susceptible to is what Paul describes as "*godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge...*" Discuss some current news items that would qualify. How do we protect ourselves from these scripturally "*opposing ideas*" being a weakness that could draw us away from God?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 5 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

STRENGTHEN YOUR POSITION

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. If you want, warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What's one thing that gives you energy and joy?
- 2) Have you been pleasantly surprised by anything recently?
- 3) What's the best advice you've ever gotten?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video “**Week 5 . Strengthen Your Position**” and encourage participants to take notes (if you've chosen to use the videos). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ Go For More

- ▶ Review Francis Chan's quote on page 133. Discuss how you've thought about the Bible in the past. Have you ever considered it a “treasure map?” What if you did?
- ▶ Read Exodus 43:11. While we may not experience God face to face, to date, is there an encounter with God (a moment, particular day, season of life) when you have experienced God in an undeniable way?

Day 2 ▪ Hear This

- ▶ How we hear God is something that every Christian wants to know. Talk about what you learned on Day 2 (and through what Jenn shared in the video). Share any experiences you've personally had hearing God.

In particular, review the sections on page 137 “Want to hear” and “Show up to hear.” Also look back over “When is it not God” from page 140 and A.T. Pierson comments quoted there and discuss your thoughts.

Day 3 ▪ Move Forward

- ▶ We looked at how little we have control over. Review Jeremiah 10:23. What scares you about having no real control over your life? How does the fact that God IS in control help...or does that scare you to some degree?

▶ On pages 144-145 we did some life mapping. Feel free to keep the left side personal but if you are willing to share, please offer any action items you've decided to begin.

Day 4 ▪ Employ Your Gifts

▶ Are there things that you are good at, gifted with, that you have used for God's purposes? Anything you are good at that you haven't used for God's purposes but maybe could in some way?

Day 5 ▪ Show Up

▶ Jenn wrote that "Purpose is what you do — what you GIVE. Meaning is what YOU GAIN." Have you done something for someone and found that you got something out of the experience that was incredibly important to you?

▶ We read Viktor Frankl's quote from his book, *The Meaning of Life*: "Man can only find meaning for his existence in something outside himself." Review Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 on page 153 that seems to confirm that idea. Discuss how this makes you think about what you are currently pursuing in life.

Wrap Up

▶ Review Frederick Buechner's fable on page 155. Discuss how seeing ourselves accurately can be the ultimate means to strengthening us.

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group, giving any reminders, and encouragement.

WEEK 6 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

FIGHT IN POWER

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. If you want, warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What's a challenging or adventurous thing you've done?
- 2) What meaningful or helpful thing in your life would you recommend to others?
- 3) What's something you do to relieve anger or stress?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video “Week 6 . Fight In Power” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ Ruling Power

- ▶ Reread Ephesians 6:12 from page 158 and Matthew Kelly's thoughts and quote on page 159. Discuss how you see living by “The Spirit” instead of focused on our “flesh.”
- ▶ Reread John 8:12 from page 162. If Jesus is leading us in the light, what is going on in those times we feel we are in the dark still? Who's ruling our life then?

Day 2 ▪ Thought Power

- ▶ Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Discuss how you understand HOW “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” How do we do that?
- ▶ Review Dr. Logan's how-to in the margin on page 167. How did it make you feel to explore that some of your negative/dark/ugly thoughts may not be self generated?

Day 3 ▪ Refining Power

- ▶ We read Richard Stearns story of giving up the ultimate life he had made for himself to do what God wanted him to do. At the end he said, “It turned out to be the greatest adventure of my life.” What if a different life, a life you wouldn't pick (maybe one you're in now), turned out to be where your great adventure with God begins. Would that change your attitude?
- ▶ So far, in your journey with God, do you feel SURRENDERED to Him and His plan, His refining in your life? If not, what word (other than *surrendered*) would you say describes where you're at?

Day 4 ▪ Experience Power

▶ Review the story about the father and child on page 172 and Romans 8:12 in the margin. Jenn discussed the ability to experience God in the here and now. As God's child, can you identify any moments that The Spirit has let you know God is with you?

▶ Sharing every moment with God makes life feel more connected to Him. You'll sense His presence more often. How do you do trying to include God in all that you're planning, thinking, and doing? If you're doing it well, what are the benefits? If you're doing poorly at it what could you do to improve your God-focus?

Day 5 ▪ New Life Power

▶ Review the KNOW YOUR GOAL paragraph, quote, and John 17:4 verse on page 177. In what ways are you succeeding in the things of God?

▶ One big lesson Jesus' life teaches us is to find something other than yourself to care about. Obviously, our new life with Christ involves looking out into the world and finding others to help. Who or what cause do you feel an interest or passion about? Are you serving them now or do you have plans to get involved?

Video reflection: *(If you watched the video and you have time to discuss)*

★ In the video, Jenn quoted a pastor who asked, "If you had to give a sermon each Sunday, how different would your life be?" If you had to tell someone about Jesus or report on what He's doing in your life each week, would you have to live differently to be ready?

If you have a longer discussion time here are a few more discussion options:

- ▶ What scripture, quote, or point stood out to you most this week?
- ▶ What is something that was really important or impactful to you this week?
- ▶ Is there anything you'd like to share from your time with Jesus this week?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group.

WEEK 7 . DISCUSSION GUIDE

LIVE IN VICTORY

WELCOME your group and go over any announcements. If you want, warm things up with an **ice-breaker** or two. Here are a few options:

- 1) What's one thing you've changed your mind about lately?
- 2) What's a personal side project you're working on or want to work on?
- 3) What's one small thing or practice that has vastly improved your quality of life?

PRAY

Get everyone settled in and pray for your time together today, focusing on this week's theme. If you need help there are tips and prayers for each week on pages 23-27.

WATCH the video “**Week 7 . Live In Victory**” and encourage participants to take notes (*if you've chosen to use the videos*). A ★ below indicates a related question from the video that you can add to your discussion if you have time. Otherwise, group questions are not specifically related to the video.

DISCUSS the following questions related to the past week's theme.

Day 1 ▪ Enjoy God

▶ C.S. Lewis said, “God can't give us peace and happiness apart from Himself because there is no such thing” (*Focus* on page 184). And author Jonathan Cahn said, “The purpose of life can only be found in the One who created it — God” (bottom of page 186). Therefore, to be separate from God is to be separated from one's purpose and reason for existing.” Discuss your thoughts on whether these two statements make sense.

▶ Review Jeremiah 31:3 on page 188. Talk about ways you are enjoying God so far.

Day 2 ▪ Know His Word

▶ Smith Wigglesworth stated, “I don't like reading the newspaper because if I go in I come out dirtier than when I went in. But if I read the Bible I come out cleaner than when I went in.” What are some things you've read, viewed, listened to lately that did not leave you feeling better than when you went in? How do you feel when you think about not “going in” to those to avoid getting “dirtier?”

▶ Read Psalm 1:1-3 on page 192. Talk about the truths of that scripture for YOUR life and whether you've experienced the fruit God's word promises.

Day 3 ▪ Let Him Clean You Up

▶ Re-read Candace Cameron Bure's analogy on the top of page 195 about the sheep. In the past, when have you found yourself sizing up your actions/sins against the world's vs. against the perfection of Christ?

▶ Jenn had us ask ourselves a question: Are we really allowing God to change us or are we just trying to act better. If you're willing to share, what issue or character trait do you believe you may be trying to overcome in your own strength?

Day 4 ▪ Live Your New Life

▶ Francis Chan said, "We never grow closer to God when we just live life. It takes deliberate pursuit and attentiveness." Can you think of anything worthwhile in your life you haven't had to be deliberate and attentive with? What does that look like to cultivate this new life with God?

▶ Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. People can go back to their old life if they think what they've done is too bad. What do Paul's words tell us about that thinking?

▶ Another problem is certain struggles and sin from the old life can seem insurmountable. Read John 3:6. What does John say the problem is? So what's the solution for conquering sin?

★ In the video, Jenn shared some thoughts from Dr. David Jeremiah: "Too often we give attention to doing because staying busy is easier than taking responsibility for who we are." He went on to say, "Often Christians focus first on doing what we ought to do...without giving due consideration to being what we ought to be." Jenn offered three verses: Matthew 2:36-40; Joshua 1:9; Colossians 3:12. Look them up and reflect on where you're at on taking responsibility for being who God says we should be. (Note: if you're not too far along, identify what one thing you could do to start moving toward one of them.)

Day 5 ▪ Love Well

▶ Read Timothy Keller's quote on page 203 and the *Bold Love* quote inset on that page. Discuss how those ideas are or should be impacting your life - and what may need to change in light of that.

Final thoughts

▶ How has spending time with Jesus throughout *Fighting Better* changed your relationship with God and impacted your life these past seven weeks?

▶ What has been your biggest takeaway?

END with prayer requests and praying for the group.

HELP FOR GROUP PRAYERS

OPENING & CLOSING PRAYERS

If you are not used to praying aloud with a group, and members of your group aren't either, you can use the prayers on the following pages. Learning to pray in a group comes with practice so use these to get more comfortable in the process.

WHAT TRIPS PEOPLE UP

There are two basic reasons people have trouble praying in a group. One, they just don't know how to pray, and two, they are afraid of what other people are going to think. Hopefully, the information following will help you work on both of those. It's a process, and the more you do it the more comfortable you'll get. Realistically, the more you get to know God, the less you'll worry about what others think.

WHAT PRAYER IS

Prayers are simply conversations with God. Prayers do not need to be fancy and definitely not fake. It's just talking to God about life — the good and confusing, the hard and the funny, the tragedies and the blessings — everything. At different times we may want to talk about who God is, what He says, how we're living, the people around us, what's going on in your family, neighborhood, area, nation, or across the planet. We'll pray about what we need, and what we're thankful for. Prayers should always be genuine. It's what you want to talk to God about in the moment. What's important, meaningful, scary, serious, what went wrong, what you want to go right. Sometimes it'll be about your relationship with God.

BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END

How you pray is essentially the same as how you start other conversations in your life, or how you'd write a letter: A greeting, the conversation, and a wrap up. Let's think about each section.

GREETING - Imagine walking in to have breakfast with Your Father (God). What would you say? *"Good morning Father."* Unless we've got something big to talk to Him about, it would be normal to have a little small talk. I find telling God what I was particularly thankful for, and why, gets me in a good head space. *"Yesterday, I was so excited when my son called and told me how good he was doing! I just see You doing good things in his life!"* or *"I loved that it rained yesterday. It help me stay focused on what I needed to get done inside."*

When Jesus teaches the disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13) He has them start out remembering who God is, *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,"* He wants us to remind ourselves who He is so we will be encouraged, have confidence in Him, and be strengthened in our prayers. Tell God what comes to mind about His holiness, authority, power, character, or something you've witnessed

Him do. *“Father, You are my strength! I can’t even believe how you saved me from ...”* or *“Heavenly Father, you are everything to me. I can’t believe you gave your Son for ME!”* Maybe, *“Father God, you feel like a safe place I run to when ...”*

CONVERSATION - Now you just continue the conversation. Talk about how you want to do things His way instead of your way, pray about what you need, what you need Him to forgive you for, who you need to forgive. Ask Him to keep you safe and evil far away.

It’s okay to ask Him to help you to pray. Talk about what comes to mind. Look back on the last page under *What Prayer Is* for things you might want to pray about. Make things personal. Don’t just say, *“I want to pray for my mom.”* Tell Him why. *“I want to pray that my mom stops drinking and that she can have a better life.”* Being specific gets us invested (in the conversation with God and with others who need Him) so prayer becomes something meaningful, real, and valuable in our lives.

WRAP UP - There’s no set amount of time or words you need to use. In Matthew 6:7-8 Jesus calls out some people who go on and on, repeating words over and over, as if that gets their prayers heard. He says that’s meaningless. He’s not limiting our words, He just wants it to be a conversation and not a ritual. When you’re done, you’re done. Some people end with, *“Amen.”* That simply means, *“Let it be so.”* Others like to say, *“In Jesus Name, Amen.”* That reminds us that without belonging to Christ, we have no place being in God’s presence or asking God for anything (John 14:6). It reminds us of our place, and our blessing.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Like anything, the more you do it the better and more comfortable you’ll get. Above all, remember that prayer is to come into the presence of God so keep Him in mind as you pray and you’ll be just fine.

SESSION PRAYERS

KICK OFF SESSION

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, It’s likely we are missing a lot in our understanding of what a full relationship with You is like. We have so much to learn and more to take hold of to enjoy the victories of a life with You. Let this study open us up to understand and seize all You have for us. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, In order to gain victory in this life we’ll have to do battle against the world and learn how to follow your plan, fight for the right things, and be brave to embrace change. Give us the courage, strength, and perseverance to fight better for all you have for us. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 1

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, This week we learned we'll need to commit to the battle if we are going to have any real victory in this life. Give each of us a fresh perspective, commitment, and the wisdom we need to stick it out. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Help us to leave behind what we've lived for in the past and commit, or re-commit to You. Motivate us to surrender to Your leading, authority, and commands. Committing is often easier in the beginning, so we'll need you to give us the strength to stay when we're pushed out of our comfort zone down the road. Let us not waiver in this life-altering commitment. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 2

OPENING PRAYER

Good and Loving Father, Lead our time and discussion as we dive in more into how to trust You. Help us to have a better understanding of Your power, Your plan, and Your purpose. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Good and Loving Father, As we grow to fully trust You, we see that we can become more confident in your plan for us, feel safe in the world, and enjoy you greatly. It will likely take us time and some trial and error to get to that unshakable trust in You. Help us to fight better to gain that trust. Provide us opportunities to succeed in relying on You so that we may build our trust solidly in You. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 3

OPENING PRAYER

Father God, It's not hard to see that in this world, there are enemies out to destroy us. Help us to clearly see what is coming against us and how to stand strong in the battle. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, So much of our victory against our enemies will come by realizing who YOU truly are. Help us to fully grasp your power, the triumph you've already won, and the protection we have as your children. Let Your Spirit be alive and well within us, let us be ever aware of His promptings and warnings to keep us safe. Let us fight better to see the weakness of our enemies in light of You, our Protector and Defender. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

WEEK 4

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, When we don't expose all that's holding us back, all that's keeping us from moving forward in victory, our weaknesses rule over us. Guide our time today and help us to expose and defeat what keeps us from the full life you have for us. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Let us learn to humble ourselves so we can let go of pride, self-sufficiency, and fear. Let us not bow down to an unwillingness to grow or stay in ignorance that robs us of a full life. A victorious life. Let us fight better for knowledge of all that you are, of who you've created us to be, and for the abundant life you have prepared for us. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 5

OPENING PRAYER

God Almighty, Give us insight and wisdom today on how we become stronger and more resilient in the life You have for us. Keep us battle ready, and open us up to new strategies that will motivate us and move us toward ultimate victory. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

God Almighty, Don't let us become complacent, but motivate us to want more, to lean in and hear You clearly, to keep learning, growing, and using our gifts. Help us fight better to show up and be present for all that you've planned for us to do. Strengthen us by your mighty hand. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 6

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Guide our time today to learn how to fight in power. How to battle well against what holds us back and battle for what will take us toward victory. Show us your power, your plan, and your purpose for our lives. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Help us to surrender to your rule and refining in our lives. Show us how to more effectively take our thoughts captive to Christ, truly experience you in life-giving ways, and live this new life fully devoted to you. Lead us to fight better, by your power. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



WEEK 7

OPENING PRAYER

Father God, Guide us once again in our discussion and teach us how to more fully live this life of victory. Help us to understand how to enjoy you more, know the power and gift of your Word, to lean in to let you clean up our lives, to live our new life fully, and to love well. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, To live in victory is to KNOW you, to hang out with Jesus, and to walk in His steps. To be victorious, help us think as Kingdom citizens, your children, ready to fight well for all you have for us and for all you have for us to accomplish in this life - to glorify your name, to reach others, and to enjoy victory won for us. In the mighty and powerful name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

