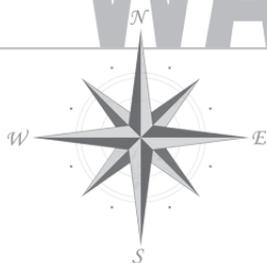


FINDING

5 Awakenings
to Your New Life

YOUR

WAY BACK



TO GOD

DAVE FERGUSON &
JON FERGUSON



MULTNOMAH
BOOKS

SESSION 2

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FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO GOD PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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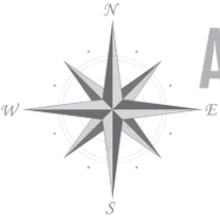
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Session 2



AWAKENING TO REGRET

“I wish I could start over.”

Session 2 Big Idea:

When we seek to fulfill our longings for love, purpose, and meaning on our own, we repeatedly find disappointment. The regret we feel for taking our own route can either lead to more longing and regret (a cycle many people never escape) or motivate us to seek help from the One who can help us most. You don't have to waste the power of your sincere regret on more self-condemnation and stuckness. You can let it move you confidently in God's direction. Why? Because now you know the truth, and it's a truth that you can put to work in your life over and over again in the years ahead: with God, we can *always* start over.

If possible, please read chapters 7 and 8 of *Finding Your Way Back to God* before participating in session 2.

OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER

Describe (a) an item of clothing you're embarrassed to admit you used to wear, (b) a slang expression you can't believe you used to say, or (c) a singer or music group you're amazed that you used to like.

OPENING THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. As you think back over the major decisions you've made in your life so far, what are some of your biggest regrets? How might these mistakes contribute to your feeling distant from God at times?

VIDEO DISCUSSION

Watch video 2 on the *Finding Your Way Back to God* DVD, then discuss the following questions.

2. How did you see a “sorry cycle” playing out in the lives of the people interviewed in the video?

3. Did Dave and Jon give you a different perspective on repentance than you’ve had before? If so, tell about that.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

Read Luke 15:11–19, showing how the son's choices brought him to a very different place from what he had sought.

¹¹ There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them.

¹³ Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants."

LIFE APPLICATION DISCUSSION

7. Have you ever felt yourself stuck in a cycle of longing, disappointment, and regret? If so, describe what was going on.

8. How do you wish you could start over in your life? How do you think your life would be different if you could do it?

9. Do you feel you're ready now for a change that would bring you closer to God? If so, what's the next step?

If not, what's holding you back?

OPTIONAL PERSONAL DECISION TIME

Jesus assures us that “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). So no matter how many failures you may have had in the past, it's possible for you to have a fresh start in your life today. The starting point is to believe in the possibility. You have to say no to the cycle of longing, disappointment, and regret.

As best you can, define the way in which you need a new

start in your life by writing out the following sentences, filling in the blank:

I need to start over in my life by _____.

And I am confident that, with God's help, I can.

Pray for a fresh start.

EXPANDED BIBLE DISCUSSION

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8–10, where Paul analyzes how some early Christians had responded to his criticism.

⁸Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—⁹yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.

¹⁰Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

1. What would you say is the difference between “godly sorrow” and “worldly sorrow”?

2. What can you learn from this passage about how to use your regrets as a springboard for positive change in your life, rather than getting stuck in bitterness?

Read Isaiah 55:6–7, a passage that shows the clear connection between finding your way back to God and repenting of your errors.

⁶Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have
mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

1. What encouragement do you find in these verses for people who have made bad choices?

AFTER THE SESSION

Sometime after participating in session 2, find some quiet time to spend alone in a peaceful place with Scripture, your own thoughts, and prayer.

Read the following Scripture passage (Isaiah 43:16–21):

¹⁶ *This is what the LORD says—*

*he who made a way through the sea,
a path through the mighty waters,*

¹⁷ *who drew out the chariots and horses,
the army and reinforcements together,
and they lay there, never to rise again,
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:*

¹⁸ *“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.*

¹⁹ *See, I am doing a new thing!*

*Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.*

²⁰ *The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,*

*²¹the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.”*

Underline one or more lines in the above passage that mean the most to you.

Think about these questions: *Where do I need a fresh start in my life? Am I ready to believe a fresh start is possible? What is God’s role in all of this?*

Pray the following prayer:

**God, if you are real,
make yourself real to me.
Awaken in me the possibility
that with you I could start over again.**



Then continue your prayer time by talking to God about the need you feel to move past the place where you’ve gotten stuck and to begin again with him.

Session 2

Awakening to Regret

Objective: To help participants realize that they don't have to waste regret on more self-condemnation and stuckness but can let their regret move them in God's direction.

What you need for this session:

- At least one copy of the book *Finding Your Way Back to God* to refer to if needed
- The *Finding Your Way Back to God* DVD
- A DVD player and a screen on which the whole group can watch video 2
- Bibles for yourself and the other participants
- (optional) Index cards or slips of paper
- (optional) Pens or pencils

OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER

If you choose to use this session's icebreaker, share your own examples of an embarrassing item of clothing, slang expression, or music group you used to think was cool but now are embarrassed by.

OPENING THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

Question 1: This question may open up wounds for some group members, so don't force anyone to respond verbally. But model openness by sharing your own response.

VIDEO DISCUSSION

Questions 2 and 3: After playing the video, use these questions to help group members react to what they saw.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

Questions 4 to 6: Help your fellow group members see how the opening verses of the lost son story illustrate this session's theme: The son had a longing for freedom and fun, but instead of his actions leading him to happiness, they led to misery. Yet to his credit, rather than just feeling sorry for himself in his humiliating job, he chose to start over.

LIFE APPLICATION DISCUSSION

Questions 7 to 9: Help group members wrestle with their need to start over if they are going to have their deepest longings fulfilled and find their way back to God. Some may readily accept the message of starting afresh. Others might feel hopeless. Be sympathetic and encouraging.

OPTIONAL PERSONAL DECISION TIME

Use this as a concluding activity if you have time and want the group members to make a personal response to the discussion you've been having.

Hand out index cards or slips of paper, plus pens or pencils, to the group members. Then invite the group members to scatter to different spots in your meeting area for quiet reflection while they decide how to complete their sentence. Encourage them to take a few moments for individual prayer before you gather the group together again.

EXPANDED BIBLE DISCUSSION

If you have time in the session to discuss more of the Bible, use one or both of the passages in this expanded material. (You may wish to insert these questions following the discussion of Luke 15:11–19 in questions four and five above.)

Expanded questions 1 and 2: Before the session starts, read all of 2 Corinthians 7 so that you are familiar with the context for the quoted verses. The key point to note is that remorse and regret can be poisonous if we don't move beyond them, but they can be life-giving if they lead to repentance and change.

Expanded question 3: In introducing this inspiring quote from Isaiah, remind the group of the definition of *repentance* found in chapter 8 of *Finding Your Way Back to God*. Repentance is “a turning point. It means to turn from whatever is distracting you or pulling you away from God and to intentionally turn toward God.”

CLOSING PRAYER

If you sense that one particular member of the group is especially excited about the idea of getting unstuck and starting over, invite him or her to close the session with prayer asking God to give each group member hope for positive change.

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT SESSION

Tell your fellow group members that there is one little problem with coming to a realization that you need to start over: *you can't start over on your own!* They should come back next time for the solution to this problem.