

GROW

Foundational Practice: Looking Back and Looking Forward

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this past year and sharing your responses to the following questions. As you reflect on this past year, what is one word you would use to describe it and why? How have you experienced God's love and faithfulness this past year? What word or Scripture do you want to meditate on for the new year and why?

1. **Read Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27 and Genesis 3 out loud.** What stands out to you in these passages and why? How do you see God's heart and character amidst the sin of man?

Though we were created to live life *with* God, the Fall account (Genesis 3) shows us how man rejected God's design and chose autonomy instead—life apart from God. Therefore, each of us inherit the sin nature (Ps. 51:5) and our tendency is to live life on our own. However, we are not without hope! (Romans 8:1-4; John 3:16-18) For those in Christ, we are sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14) and though sin is still present in our lives, we are no longer slaves to it.

**If preferred, men and women can split for separate discussion time.*

2. How have you experienced being rescued from the slavery of sin in your life? What are some ways that God has shown you how to live *with* Him instead of apart from Him?
3. **Read Galatians 5:16-26 out loud.** As you hear the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit, what comes to mind? How are you currently experiencing the battle between the flesh and the Spirit? In what ways do you still try to do life on your own, and how can you invite God and others into this?
4. **Read Psalm 127:1-2 and Proverbs 19:21 out loud.** How do these passages encourage your heart towards Christ and what it means to walk in step with the Spirit? What comfort do you find in God knowing and trusting that He “builds the house” and that His purpose will stand?

CLOSING CHALLENGE

Take 10-15 minutes this week to sit with the Lord and ask Him to search you, know you, and show you (Psalm 139:23-24) where you are walking in step with the Spirit and where you are walking in the flesh. Confess and repent of any sin (1 John 1:5-10), and rest in the truth that you are no longer condemned by sin (Rom. 8:1), but are FREE from the mastery of sin in Christ (Gal. 5:1). Ask Him to show you how to walk in step with the Spirit this week.