



grow groups

Valley Ranch  
BAPTIST CHURCH

# Week 1: Faithful to Forgive the Sinful

## 1 John 1:8-2:2

**GOAL:** Regularly identify and confess our sins to receive forgiveness and cleansing from God.

### CHECKLIST

- Continue inviting people to your group. Check out the spreadsheet Amy sent with names and contact info of people we're asking you to invite to your particular group. A personal invitation from you will have a big impact!
- Reach out individually to all group members (new or returning) to welcome them and to give details about this week's GG meeting.
- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Spend time catching up with your group and meeting any new members
- Discuss any logistics (weekly schedule, snack signup, serve project, etc.)
- Share about the new Inreach Coordinator role and identify someone to serve. (Then send his or her name to Amy.)
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members. Help new members register for your group using the QR code in your room or at [vrbc.net/grow](http://vrbc.net/grow).

### PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

*Faithful God, thank you for loving us so much that you show us the best way to live, through your example and through your commands. You and I both recognize the effects of sin in my life. Forgive me when I am tempted to hide or cover up my sin. Help me to see that healing that can only come through confession and repentance. Thank you for your grace and your sacrifice on the cross to atone for my sins. Thank you for cleansing us and restoring us as your beloved children. Enable me by the power of your Spirit to increasingly live by your character and ways and reflect your glory and goodness to the world. Amen.*

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*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25*

## CONNECT

Begin by introducing new members and catching up with returning members.

**If you have new members:** To help new members connect with the group, take time to let ALL members, both new and returning, introduce themselves. You can ask them to share basic info, like telling about their family or what they do during the day (work, school, etc.), or you can make it creative, like like a hidden talent they have, their favorite snack or dessert, etc.

**All Groups:** Since this is the first time your group will have been together in a month or so, spend some time checking in to find out how each person's break was. Give each group member the opportunity to share what's been happening in their lives over the last few weeks. You might use "highs/lows" or just ask them to share a thing or two about their break. As people share, you may want to take note of any items for prayer.

## COORDINATE

Spend a few minutes covering any details the group needs to know:

**Schedule:**

1. Go over any specific schedule notes (weeks when you'll do something different, etc). Remember, no groups will meet individually between March 25-31. Instead, all groups will attend the Table to the Cross service together on Thursday, March 28, at 7pm.
2. If your group has children or students, please note that VR Kids and VRSM Grow Groups will not meet on Sunday, March 10 (the first weekend of spring break). If your group decided to cancel that week, please be sure to let us know.

**Roles:** This is a great time to invite people to serve in the group. Share with your group about the new role of Inreach Coordinator and identify someone who can serve. (They would attend training on Feb 4, and the role is to help with attendance, birthdays, care, prayer, and reaching out to group members.) Additionally, you might ask some group members to plan a social event, others to coordinate snacks, and someone to coordinate your group serving together for Building For the Better. Also, please be thinking about who in your group you'd like to ask to facilitate one week during the semester.

**Growth Guide:**

- Stop by the table in the lobby after the service this Sunday for copies to share with your group.
- Encourage your group members to spend time in Scripture and prayer each day. The Growth Guide readings each day are designed to prepare them for the upcoming Sunday sermon, and each Friday we will cover the Scripture that will be used in Sunday's message.
- If someone is already using another tool or resource for their daily time with God, that's great!
- Starting next week, for those who are following along with the Growth Guide, we will begin asking a question or two about it during Grow Group.

## DISCUSS

**Leader's Note:** As always, we are including more questions than you have time to discuss. We depend on you to know your group and see where the Spirit is leading you. The questions **in bold** are the key questions for this Scripture and topic, and we encourage you to prioritize those. For the other questions, feel free to select the questions that will work best with your group.

Read 1 John 1:8-2:2.

- **What is sin? Why does sin matter so much?**

**Leaders Note:** In his sermon, Pastor John said that a lot of people view sin as stepping across an arbitrary line that God set up. Even though the bad stuff may be more fun, we aren't allowed to do it because God will get mad at us. So in this view, Christians find themselves either trying really hard to do the good stuff or doing the bad stuff they want and then saying a quick prayer afterwards, reminding God that his job is to forgive you.

But as he pointed out the obvious lie, John said:

- God's commands are not arbitrary - they are purposeful.
- God's commands are not meant to punish us - they are for our good
- God's commands are not meant to keep us from joy, they're meant to give us joy!!

Sin matters because it is so damaging—to us, to others, and to our relationship with God. It leads us astray from the best life that God has for us.

- Do you remember a time as a child, like John with the broken koozie, when you first realized that you had done wrong, and had to decide whether or not to confess? What were the factors that weighed most heavily in that decision?
- Do you tend to believe that God's commands are restrictive or loving? What are some examples of things that God calls us to that seem hard or counter-cultural, which are actually for our good? Is there an area of life that you have difficulty trusting God's commands are for your good?

**Leader's Note:** God's commands are loving, because they are designed to protect us and to lead us in the way of the abundant life God has for us. Help your group to think through some areas where God's ways might diverge from cultural norms:

- Loving enemies
- Putting the needs of others before our own (instead of insisting on our rights)
- Showing honor and respect to those with whom we disagree
- Trusting God's plan for sexuality (rather than giving in to lust, pornography, etc)

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Now make it personal. Are there some areas where your group members have struggled to trust that God's ways are best? This is a great opportunity for your group members to encourage and pray for one another.

- **John's first point was a diagnosis: We have sinned and we are sinners. What is the distinction? Do you tend to overestimate or underestimate the impact of sin?**

**Leader's Note:** Each of us has sinned by our thoughts, words, actions, and sometimes failure to act. On top of that, by our very nature we are sinners. We are born with sinful, selfish natures. Romans 5:12 says, "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."

In his sermon, Pastor John said that when we sin, too often we underestimate the damage that we have caused. We underestimate the value of God's plan and therefore underestimate the seriousness of our sin. John quoted another pastor who pointed out, "The world is a very dark place, and our eyes have adjusted."

As another example, one pastor talked about the intense frustration he felt when he saw a number of deep scratches on the hood of his brand new car. After asking his family if they might know anything about how it happened, his four-year-old daughter innocently piped up, "Daddy, I was just practicing my letters." He went back out for a close look, and sure enough, he could see a capital letter "A" etched over and over into the paint. His daughter had no idea how serious this was, and there is no way he could have communicated to a four-year-old what her handwriting practice had cost. In the same way, we often don't recognize the damage that our sin has done.

- Consider this case study: Imagine that a coworker treats you unfairly, and you gossip about them to someone else. What are all the potential ways this can cause harm?

**Leader's Note:** Here are some potential consequences:

- Robs the coworker of the Christlike love we are called to give them (Remember Jesus' words on the cross in Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.")
- Harms the person you are gossiping to
- You are missing out on the blessing of reflecting the grace and character of Christ
- What other ramifications can your group think of?

If you feel like your group is ready to take this a step further in personal application, you might ask them whether any of them has a personal example they're willing to share how how their sin has had an impact on themselves and others.

- **Pastor John compared confession to going to the doctor when we have a tumor. What damage can be done by refusing to acknowledge our sin? What benefits do we receive from confessing**

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**our sins? How can we practice confession in our everyday life with God?**

**Leader's Note:** *It would be ludicrous to know that you have a tumor and to conceal that from your doctor. As John pointed out in his sermon, when it comes to cancer, confessing doesn't lead to consequences. NOT confessing leads to consequences! Confessing your condition to the doctor is the only way we can experience the healing that the doctor can bring.*

*1 John 1:9 says that confession leads to forgiveness and cleansing. In other words, if we agree with God about our sin and if we turn from our sin and turn toward God in faith, God is FAITHFUL. As promised, God will forgive us, releasing us from the punishment that our sin deserves. And God will purify us, removing our guilt and shaping us to leave behind our sinful ways and follow God's ways that are designed for our good.*

*As you seek to establish a regular discipline or practice of confession, here are some ideas:*

- *Personal Reflection & Self-Examination: There is an ancient spiritual practice called the Daily Examen, which involves reviewing your day together with God. Think through your different actions and interactions, confessing anything sinful that the Spirit brings to mind.*
- *Journaling: Keep a spiritual journal where you can reflect on your thoughts, actions, and emotions. Write about your experiences, confessing those times when you fell short, and ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing.*
- *Accountability Partners: Share your spiritual journey with a trusted friend, family member, or mentor. Having someone to confide in can provide accountability, encouragement, and an assurance of God's forgiveness when we repent.*
- *Scripture Memory: Commit to memory several Scriptures (like 1 John 1:8-9) that talk about our sinfulness and give an assurance of God's forgiveness. Let these Scriptures be a guide for your daily prayers of confession. Other good verses might include Acts 3:19, 2 Chronicles 7:14, James 5:16, Proverbs 28:13, and Matthew 6:14-15.)*

*If some of your group members already have a regular practice of confession, give them a chance to encourage others with ideas and by sharing the benefits they receive from it. Also use this opportunity to encourage people to give it a try. If your group is willing, you can all commit to practice confession this week and then share your experience when you meet back together the following week.*

## PRAY

As you close, lead the group in a prayer of confession. You might consider playing some soft background music during the prayer, especially the silent part. Ask in advance for two volunteers to read Scripture.

To begin, ask someone to read 1 John 1:8:

***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8 (NIV)***

LEADER:

*Join with me now as I lead us in prayer:*

***Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.***

LEADER:

*Let us now humbly and silently confess our sins to God.*

Leave about 3 minutes for silent confession.

Ask someone to read 1 John 1:9:

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NIV)***

LEADER:

***For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.***

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