A black text on a white background

Description automatically generated

Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners

Author: Dane C. Ortlund

Lesson Title: “Despair and Union” (pp. 137-151)

Session 10

May 5, 2024

The main point of this lesson is: Real change comes only after we despair over our sin and recognize our union with Jesus.

Focus on this goal: To help adults grow deeper in Christ by understanding more fully their union with Jesus

Key Bible Passages: Rom. 3:9-18; 6:1-5

Before the Session

1. Before learners arrive, write Change only happens when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on a large piece of paper and display the paper. (Step 1)

2. Bring enough “Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” stickers for every learner to have one. (Step 2)

3. Prepare to use a large writing surface. (Step 4)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **direct attention** to the prompt on the paper and **encourage** adults to consider fitting responses to the blank. After the group has assembled, **ask:** *There was a time in your life when you decided a situation was going to change. What caused that pivotal decision?* Situations may include getting healthier, choosing to parent differently, approaching your job with a new attitude, and so forth.

After learners share their answers to the prompt, **read** the main point of the lesson (p. 149) and **open with prayer** that today participants will see this truth clearly.

Step 2. Despair, Part 1

**Enlist** a volunteer to read Ecclesiastes 9:3. **Engage** learners in discussing whether or not they see humanity as a whole as being described accurately in the verse. **Ask:** *Would we go so far as to say the verse accurately describes us?* **Stress** that even Christians underplay their sinfulness with, “Nobody’s perfect” or “We all make mistakes.”

**Hand out** the name tag stickers and **instruct** each learner to write *Sinner* on it and stick it on themselves. As they do that, **read** Romans 3:9-18. **Use** the Day One content in the section entitled “The Sinfulness of Sin” (pp. 138-139) to **help** learners see the pervasive problem, not only of sin, but the fact that we don’t even see our sinfulness.

**Read** the Day One paragraph (p. 138) that begins “The only sure foundation . . . .”

Step 3. Despair, Part 2

**Invite** a volunteer to read Luke 5:1-11. **Reread** verse 8 and **use** Day Two content (p. 140) to help learners see that Peter’s confession of his own sinfulness came from seeing the holiness of Jesus.

**Use** “The Great Prerequisite” (p. 140) to **guide** learners to see how our understanding of our sin patterns can lead us into a “healthy sense of self-futility” (p. 140), helping us to humble ourselves and make us more dependent upon the mercy, grace, and power of Christ.

**Invite** volunteers to read Galatians 2:20 and 2 Corinthians 5:7. **Point out** that faith is required not only for salvation but for our entire Christian walk; only when we are aware of our inability will we truly walk by faith.

Step 4. Union, Part 1

**Say:** We’ve addressed the despair required for seeing our sin clearly; let’s see how that brings us into union with Christ.

**Enlist** a volunteer to read Romans 6:1-5. **Use** Day Three content (p. 142) to **help** learners grasp this passage.

**Direct attention** to the four different concepts of Christian growth (“God in Me,” pp. 142-143). **Explain** each concept as you **write** it on the writing surface. **Help** learners distinguish unity in Christ from other beliefs about growth.

**Read** 1 Corinthians 15:10, **engaging** learners to share how God’s grace and our work are a united approach.

Step 5. Union, Part 2

**Invite** a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 1:8-9. From the first two paragraphs of Day Four (p. 144), **stress** the unbelievable safety of our unity of Christ. **(OPTION: Read** those two paragraphs in their entirety.)

**Lead** participants to read 2 Corinthians 5:14 and Romans 6:6-8. **Help** learners understand the macro dimension of unity with Christ, that one represents many and many are represented by one.

Then **read** John 15:1-10 to help **explain** the micro dimension of that unity, that we are connected with Christ as an intimate, sharing, oneness. As a group, **brainstorm** how both macro and micro elements shape our understanding of being united in Christ.

Step 6. Union, Part 3

**Invite** learners to turn to the Day Five section (p. 146-147) entitled “The Umbrella Doctrine.” **Instruct** learners to read through the list and descriptions silently. After allowing a few moments for adults to read, **ask:** *Which of these stands out to you today? Why?*

**Read** the paragraph following the bulleted list (p. 147), **explaining** that union with Christ is “all or nothing.” If we feel like we’re only halfway there, it’s time to grow deeper!

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

**Draw from** the final paragraphs of Day Five, entitled “Taking It Deep” (pp. 147-148), to **wrap up** today’s discussion.

**Guide** learners to prayerfully, thoughtfully, read the paragraph (p. 148) that begins, “So consider the darkness that remains in your life . . . .”

**Direct attention** back to the question you posed in Step 1: “Change only happens when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” and **say:** *I’m praying we’re all ready to change. We’re ready to see our sin clearly and walk confidently in the unity that is already ours in Christ.*

**Close in prayer.**

After the Session

**Email** learners, **offering** to talk further with any of them about what it means to be *in Jesus.*

A black and grey logo

Description automatically generated