**-W*alking in Victory***Study guide

Leader's Copy

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By Dennis McCallum

My thanks to Doug Patch for his help writing this guide.

**Leader's introduction**

This study guide follows, chapter by chapter, the book, *Walking In Victory,* by Dennis McCallum. I have referred to myself in the third person in order to keep the focus on the text. We have seen excellent results using this book as a basis for both small group and classroom study. The book challenges young and mature Christians alike to seek maturity in Christ at all costs, and to do so through the power of God, not self-effort. Romans 5-8 is the most complete and exciting explanation of Christian growth in any of the letters of Paul. I hope you are challenged and edified by this wonderful passage that never grows old.

**How to lead a study based on this book:**

First discuss the idea of going through the book with the group, and proceed only if they agree to do the work. *Walking in Victory* is not a typical Sunday School quarterly, and will require careful reading, thought, and prayer on the part of your group members. If you, the leader(s), have read the book and benefited from it, you should be able to convince the members of the group they, too, will benefit. People usually respond to a challenge, and may like the idea that they are not just going to go over simple ideas.

Obtain a copy of *Walking in Victory* for each member of the group. If you cannot get quantity pricing from your local bookstore, come to the Xenos Home Page (http://www.xenos.org) and order at substantial discount.

This study guide is designed for leader-facilitated discussion. The leader will not be lecturing, unless for short five minute introductions. Participation is a preferable way to learn. You will be reading in the group, so at least most of the members need their own copy to follow along. *Walking in Victory* is written very tight, so members won't have to read long passages before you have material to discuss. Unlike most books, this book can be read in the group without boring your members.

The best results come when the members answer the questions before coming to the group, and then compare their work. But you may also answer them together in the group after reading. With some questions, possible answers have been given. When copying the study guide for the group, be sure to mask these suggested answers out by making them hidden text, and printing with hidden text turned off. In Word 6.0 this is done in the tools menu under options/print. Check the box for hidden text to print, and leave it unchecked to print for the discussion guide.

An average study will include about fifteen or twenty minutes of reading, and twenty to thirty or more minutes of discussion based on the questions in this guide.

Please feel free to send me feedback about problems or positive results by email, to mccallumd@xenos.org, or come to the Xenos Web Site at http://www.xenos.org, and send me response there.

**General introduction**

Welcome to a study of Romans 5 through 8 using the book, *Walking in Victory*, by Dennis McCallum. Prepare to have all your ideas about Christian growth challenged, shaken down, and even shattered by a passage of Scripture that flies in the face of every form of human religious thinking! Ask God to help you stick with this study faithfully, and to benefit fully from Paul's deepest discussion of Christian identity.

**Chapter 1  
Who Are You?**

After reading through the text, return to reconsider certain points.

The author claims:

We will be looking at God's answers to human nature--your nature--as detailed in Romans chapters 5 through 8. Any Christian who understands and applies this remarkable passage will see exciting change in his or her life -- a change not only in outward action but also in inner attitudes and thought patterns. Why not commit yourself before God to invest a few hours to complete this study? As you do, ask God to grant you the full understanding He wants you to have of this vital passage. p. 6

Are you ready to make this commitment? If so, before long we will have this section of Romans--one of the most important in the Bible--in our hearts and lives.

**The Negative Mandate**

He also states:

. . . Before we can experience God’s ‘yes’, we have to comprehend his ‘no’.... God's answer to our problems has to do with our being "in Christ." But before we can appreciate what that means, we have to understand what it means to be "in Adam."

 Read Matthew 23:25-28. Some of our biggest problems don't show on the outside.

 On page 11 the author presents a list of six typical negatives in our lives.

 Read each of these and prayerfully consider which ones you can identify with.

Rate your reaction to the following: (1=not much, 5=frequent, painful struggle)

I am struggling with my feelings, especially sorrow

1 2 3 4 5

I am struggling with envy and/or bitterness

1 2 3 4 5

I am struggling with feelings of inferiority

1 2 3 4 5

I am struggling with the sense that I am failing

1 2 3 4 5

I am angry that people aren't appreciating me enough

1 2 3 4 5

People around me seem very unreasonable

1 2 3 4 5

I am worried about aging and death

1 2 3 4 5

My walk with God seems dry or stale

1 2 3 4 5

I'm having trouble with my children, and I'm not satisfied with my responses

1 2 3 4 5

Do you see anything here that could be motivation for seeking spiritual maturity at any price?

**The positive mandate**

Which of these possible outcomes looks attractive to you? (1=I already have that, 5=I really want that)

A strong and joyful prayer life

1 2 3 4 5

Discovery and fruitful application of my gifts in a concrete ministry

1 2 3 4 5

Relative victory over my nagging habit

1 2 3 4 5

Deeper relationships with others, including my family

1 2 3 4 5

More strength in times of trial

1 2 3 4 5

Personal stability and emotional health

1 2 3 4 5

Is your desire for these things strong enough to motivate you for this study? Let's go!

**Seeking change**

Go around the room, having members take turns reading sections in chapter 1. The whole chapter takes only a few minutes to read.

Focus on the last section: Doing and Being. McCallum says:

*Doing* arises out of *being.* You *do* what you *do* because you *are* what you *are . . .* What we *do* arises out of what we *are* . . . . If we focus only on changing our behaviors, we miss the real point. . . . The point is not just that we *do* the wrong thing, but that we *are* the wrong thing! pg.9

Many Christian leaders and writers focus on changing what we do as Christians. Paul also speaks about the need to change our behavior, but here, we seem to be seeing an emphasis, not on *behavior*, but on *identity*.

 Have you ever approached spiritual growth by trying to behave better?

 Have you ever dealt with pain in relationships by trying to change the other person's behavior?

 Have you ever thought that the key to further progress in your life is to change your circumstances?

 Have you ever felt frustrated that, even though you try to change, nothing seems to be happening?

What if you are missing something so important it could defeat all your best efforts to grow? Even those of us who know all about our identity in Christ will find, if we are honest, that we repeatedly fall back into outward performance orientation.

**Chapter 2  
As In Adam, So In Christ**

We are born with an identity in Adam, according to Romans 5 and parallel passages. The importance of this teaching is not just that we have this identity, but how we got it--the principle of *federal headship*. This principle, so important for understanding our negative traits, is also the principle by which God wants to grant us victory over sin, and power to live for him.

Have members read sections of the chapter until done. Then:

Read Psalms 51:5 and Ephesians 2:1,3

 Discuss what these two passages describe. How does the biblical view of human nature compare to other religions? Have you seen confirmation of the biblical view in your life? In history? Have you ever noticed that the forbidden fruit is sweeter? That rebellion comes naturally? What about children? Are they already fallen? Or do they learn their fallenness from adults?

 Discuss how we receive this sin nature. Why did Adam's sin affect his offspring? Discuss the definition of federal headship. Make sure all members of the group understand it. Return to the illustration on page 17 if necessary.

The author states, "Because Adam acted for us in this way [his rebellion], bestowing a certain nature and identity upon us, he is called our federal head. Adam stands at the source of a humanity that is the way it is because Adam -- our head, our source -- acted for all of us. (p.13)"

 What are the problems you see with this doctrine? Does anyone in your group feel like it's unfair that we have inherited a sin nature from Adam when we were neither present nor made the choice he did?

 The nature we inherit from Adam describes the "half empty glass." What hope can you see in this principle?

**Chapter 3  
Losing Our Identity   
in Adam**

Hopefully, by now we see that our problems are much deeper than outward actions. In fact, our actions are really only symptoms of the deeper problem--our very identity! If we want real change we have to lose our identity in Adam. Remember the author's distinction, losing our identity in Adam is different from losing our sin nature. This will be examined in more detail later.

Read through Chapter 3 together.

 *True or False?* Attempting to control our external behaviors is pure legalism and will never produce results. Why do you think this is true or false?

*This is a false statement, according to McCallum. "There is nothing wrong with controlling negative symptoms. (p.20)" It becomes a problem only "when it is the only thing we do. It becomes a serious problem when we begin to define our spiritual state by how well the battle with behavior is going." p.20*

 Have someone read Romans 6:3-4. Discuss what Paul means when he says we are "baptized into Christ's death and resurrection." What arguments would favor understanding this baptism as referring to water baptism? What arguments favor spiritual baptism into Christ (ICorinthians 12:13)?

*Make sure the members in the group understand that the word "baptized" (or* baptizo *- Greek) means more literally "placed into." The Christian has been placed into Christ. We now have a NEW identity of being with or in Christ. In other words what is true of Christ becomes true of us.*

 Read 1 Corinthians 15:45. According to this verse, Jesus is a federal head just as Adam was. We didn't feel anything when we got our identity in Adam, and yet were directly impacted by what he did. (also read 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Will we feel anything when we receive our new identity from Christ? Can we sense ourselves dying or resurrecting?

 Discuss what people think the term "identity" means. What effect does your sense of identity have on your life?

 Review the table on pages 20 - 21 to highlight the importance of the concept of our position in Christ. Do the group members feel like they are really experiencing the full impact they should from these truths?

*For example, you might feel very insecure in your relationship with your spouse. Subsequently you demand regular proof from him or her of their allegiance This would undoubtedly drive a wedge between the two of you. Do the members of the group understand what it means to draw their security from Christ? This has to do with our identity in him. Now imagine how freeing it would be if you would experience security and love* regardless *of the actions of your spouse.*

**Chapter 4  
Identity: What Is It, and   
How Do We Perceive It?**

This chapter includes some abstract material, which can be a problem with some concrete thinkers. Go through this exercise briefly before reading the chapter.

How do people derive their sense of identity?

Often, from the things they own. What about you?

I feel better about myself when people I respect see me driving a newer or fancier car. (1 = Yes, very true; 5 = not at all)

1 2 3 4 5

Would you feel embarrassed if they saw you driving an old and rusty car?

1 2 3 4 5

Often, from the prestige of their job. What about you?

If things go well at work, I feel good about myself.

1 2 3 4 5

If things are messed up, I am deeply affected, not only at work but at home. I can't enjoy myself unless I know my work situation is right.

1 2 3 4 5

I am driven to perform at work even at the expense of my family.

1 2 3 4 5

Often we derive our sense of identity from what others think of us.

When significant people in my life express disappointment in me, I set about trying to correct their view.

1 2 3 4 5

I regularly wonder what this person or that person thinks of me.

1 2 3 4 5

I sometimes feel I am not being appreciated enough.

1 2 3 4 5

Now read around, section by section through this eight page chapter.

Does the group understand the difference between an external *finite* reference point and an external *infinite* reference point?

*External finite reference points are points outside ourselves that we can refer to in order to come to conclusions about ourselves. They are like ourselves in that they, too, are finite and do not possess any inherent position of authority to make these determinations. Our parents, teachers, friends, relatives, the media, and even our own observations all give input to the formation of our identity. What we think is important and what we think of ourselves is primarily determined through these external finite reference points. The conclusions we draw based on these might be true (consistent with what is actually true about us) or might not be. Most likely we simply view things the way the important people in our lives viewed them. Obviously if our conclusions are inaccurate, and our actions and attitudes are derived from our sense of who we are, then we have a miserable life ahead of us to one degree or another.*

*An external infinite reference point would be a point that stands above all of creation and is inherently in a position of authority. This would be an absolute point of reference, not a relative one. God doesn't need to compare himself to anyone or anything to determine who he is, rather, he is the standard. What he says is true about the identity or significance of anything would be the final word, regardless of what all the finite reference points believed.*

 If we compared other's view of us to God's view of us, what would we discover? We get the sense that God's view might be different than others', but how?

 How might his view be different than our own view of ourselves?

 If there is a difference between the way God views me and the way I view myself, would it matter? What impact would such a difference have on my life?

*Possible answers:*

*Our attitudes and behaviors grow out of who we are. We must have a certain identity and we must know what that identity is if we expect to see change from the inside out.*

*God is an absolute and infinite reference point. Therefore, His view of us is the real view of us. Any difference between his view and our own indicates that we are under some level of deception about ourselves.*

This chapter mentions two modern (and non-biblical) solutions to self-image problems. See if the group members can summarize the limitations of both methods.

1) Self-Affirmation:

*Some schools of counseling advise daily self-affirmation, perhaps while looking in a mirror. The client repeats in confident tones that he or she is a good person, is worthwhile, has a lot to offer, etc., etc. The problem with this view is that the reference point for changing how a person thinks and feels about himself, is himself, and is therefore completely arbitrary. We could decide we are superhuman or that we are worthless, but either conclusion would have no necessary correspondence with reality.*

2) Others-Affirmation:

*Some counselors urge the client to hang around with people who are affirming and willing to remind us why we are significant. The problem with this approach is two-fold. First, the people upon whom we are depending establish our sense of identity are as finite as we, ourselves. Second, their opinion of us is subject to change based on how we've treated them. Therefore we may well become the slaves of those we hope will establish our sense of identity. The result is that we live for the approval of others -- we become man-pleasers: a position that is incompatible with pleasing God (Galatians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 10:12).*

Our sense of identity is our knowledge of who we are, and why we matter. We either make up an identity based on nothing more than our hunch about who we are, or we find out who we really are by consulting the God who created us. In the next chapter, we begin to consider how to appropriate God's view of us.

**Chapter 5  
Knowing, Believing,   
Reckoning**

Have someone in the group read Romans 6:3-10 (not 8:3-10 as the book suggests)

In this passage, we see the "baptized into" language. Do you think this refers to baptism in water or do you agree with McCallum, that it refers to *spiritual baptism into Christ*?

*Identity* is the key to incorporating the truth of this passage into daily life. We must answer two questions: First, what am I? And then, how do I see myself?

 I am someone. But who? I must matter. But why? Do I just have to guess the answer to these questions? Must I just try to *sense* the answer? Or maybe Doug Patch has the answer.

Read around through the chapter, looking for the answer to these questions.

McCallum says,

According to the Bible, what matters is what I *actually am*. . . We view ourselves a certain way, and that may or may not be in accordance with reality. As we shall see, our faulty view of our identity can interfere with our relationship with God. Pg.34

**Knowing and Reckoning**

Read around pp. 34-38. Note that in this section of Romans, he refers to knowing the facts three times. Later, he refers to reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. In your own words, how would you express the difference between *knowing* and *reckoning*?

Can you think of any area where you have at times *known* something, but failed to *reckon* it?

McCallum concludes,

This is the way God views us. And according to our findings in the last chapter, the way God views us is our true identity. Here is the key for victory in our lives (p. 35).

**An Important Distinction**

McCallum claims that we must differentiate between our *sin* *nature* (which we continue to have until our death) and our *old* *self* which refers to our former identity in Adam.

You may want to do a word study on *katargethe* (translated here in Romans 6:6 by the NASB as "done away with"). How is this word translated in Romans 6:6? Compare versions and check any marginal alternatives to the standard translation. Check in your analytical concordance to see how the word in used in other passages. How is it usually translated in other passages? [Certain groups could do a word study together. In others, someone should do the study in advance and report on his or her findings.]

Have someone read Romans 6:6 and 2 Corinthians 5:17

 How do these passages differentiate between our *sin* *nature*, which has a bias against the things of God, and our *identity*? In your own experience, would you say that you experience no more struggle against temptation to do wrong things? If you are still struggling, is your sin nature dead? Apparently not. Yet, this passage says you have died with Christ.

*Possible answers: Romans 6:6 points out that although our* old self *was crucified (our old identity in Adam), that our* body of sin *might be* done away with*. (*katargethe*) Our sin nature hasn't been eliminated yet. A much better translation would be that our body of sin can be "*rendered powerless.*" The struggle between our sin nature and new nature rages on throughout our life. In Romans 7 Paul describes this very struggle in his own life as a Christian.*

Be aware some teach that our sin natures have been killed or destroyed once we become Christians. This can lead to perfectionism (the belief that Christians can be completely freed from sin in this life), or to the conclusion that, because we still struggle, we must not be saved! What do you think about this distinction?

Please note the comment on page 36 regarding the *King James Version*. This is an important mistake. It is still present in the *New King James Version* as well.

McCallum summarizes the path to victory over our sin nature when he states,

In truth, my sin nature is still alive. But if I respond correctly to the truth of my new identity in Christ, this sinful nature can be *rendered powerless. . . .* Paul is trying to give us the key to breaking our sin nature's power over us. . . In this passage we are only being asked to recognize the truth. If we appropriate this truth, the awesome power of our sin nature can be broken to a substantial degree. God is not promising sinless perfection here; he is offering an opportunity for *relative* victory over sin. (pg. 36)

**Believing**

Remember, unlike New Age religion, where the power comes from my determination to believe something until it is true (imaging, or mind power), in Christianity, power comes from the *object* of our faith. Our beliefs must be based on what is *true*. We cannot believe what is true about us without first *knowing* what is true.

*Knowing* can only happen as we turn to, study, and learn these truths from God's word through the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, *knowing* is the first and necessary step to believing what God says is true about us.

 Consider this scenario:

Your spouse just forgot your birthday! No present, no card, *nada!* How do you feel? Loved? Probably not. Rejected is more like it. Your spouse didn't view you as important enough to do anything for your birthday.

Discuss: What would it mean to draw our identity from our position in Christ in this situation?

*Possible answers: Two types of reaction are likely.   
1) The one who bases her identity on her spouse's view of her (or, his demonstration of love toward her) would feel completely defeated and unimportant. She might lash out in personal hurt, unable to control her wounded reactions. She might cause alienation and harm to the relationship far beyond what the circumstances warrant.   
2) The one who has learned to draw her identity from her position in Christ would also be hurt, but not to the extent where her own identity is threatened. She knows who she is and why she matters whether he has caught on or not. At the same time, she knows that his thoughtlessness and insensitivity are issues that are damaging his life, and which therefore need to be confronted. In the confrontation that follows, she stands a much better chance of doing him good, because he will sense she is not just lashing out for her own sake, but disciplining for his sake.*

 Is it possible to *know* what is true about us without believing? Can you name a situation where this has or might happen?

*Possible answer: You know in your mind that a climbing rope can support your weight, but you still can't bring yourself to rappel down a cliff with it.  
Or) You know in your mind that God accepts you entirely in Christ, but you still sometimes feel shame and reluctance to approach him.*

 When does knowing the truth change to faith in the biblical sense?

*Not until you are prepared to entrust yourself to the truth, have you believed it in the biblical sense.*

**Reckoning**

Read Romans 6:11-13 (The KJV says we should "reckon" ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God.)

 How would you know whether you are truly reckoning yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus?

Rate yourself in the following areas:

(1 = Hardly, if at all; 5 = Definitely, nearly always)

When I have sinned, I feel my relationship with God is just as secure as when I have been serving him.

1 2 3 4 5

When I come to God in prayer, I am always overflowing with gratitude and appreciation for who I am in him.

1 2 3 4 5

I always avoid spending any time telling myself I'm a loser, a flake, a fool, or any related concepts.

1 2 3 4 5

I never have trouble sharing my feelings and thoughts with God in the most intimate fashion.

1 2 3 4 5

I never feel reluctant to talk to God.

1 2 3 4 5

My vision for my spiritual life is always crystal clear.

1 2 3 4 5

This sounds great! But it isn't very easy for most of us. The next chapter looks more specifically into this important step of *considering ourselves dead to sin and alive to God*.

**Chapter 6  
Considering Ourselves:  
The Specifics**

Read this chapter first, then go through the exercises here.

McCallum says,

God calls on believers in this passage [Rom. 6], not to do good but to present themselves to God as instruments of goodness. This is because of our limited ability to change ourselves and our absolute need to depend on God for change. Rather than calling on believers to set their minds on law living, this verse calls on us to set our minds on God and on who we are in Christ. The result is a Christ-focus rather than a sin-focus! p. 43.

What does the term, "sin-focus" mean to you? Have you ever been in a frame of mind that could be described this way? Answer these questions to find out.

Do I ever find I'm focusing more on how to avoid sin than on how to love and serve God?

Do I ever try to take my spiritual "temperature" based on how my struggle with sin is going lately?

Have I ever found a time of prayer ruined because I never got further than ruminating about a sin problem I have?

Have I ever worried about failing at sin more than I have thanked and praised God for what he has done for me?

As a group, read the illustration on page 46, paragraph 3and answer the following questions.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation you realized was no longer appropriate for you as a Christian?

Have you ever succeeded in stopping a sinful habit because you felt it no longer fits in with your life as a Christian?

One Christian describes going to a party where his non Christian friends were getting high, and feeling out of place. Have you ever experienced this?

Are these good illustrations of how living out of our new identity in Christ can render sin powerless?

**Exercise:** McCallum claims that this passage and others delineate a difference between our *position* and our *condition*. Do you agree that this distinction is real in the New Testament? Not everyone does, but it's an important question. For each of the following verses, tell three things:

1. What it would mean if it refers to our lives in this life.

2. What it would mean if it refers to our position only, or our condition only.

3. Whether, in your opinion, it refers to our position, to our condition, or to both.

Discuss your reasons for each conclusion, as well as the implications. If you need them, we include definitions of position and condition in the boxes below.

**Before We Leave This Chapter**

Are we more prone to view ourselves according to our condition or position? Why?

*Answer could include: We tend to view ourselves more according to our condition. Our circumstances affect us immediately and experientially so we are prone to react to them more than we are to the truth. Although we have a new identity, we often choose to present ourselves as we were in Adam -- autonomous, self-reliant, abhorring authority. It is also a matter of habit: it takes time to establish new ways of responding in our thought-life to our various circumstances.*

Also, before leaving this chapter, be sure the group understands the principles in Appendix A of *Walking in Victory*. At the end of the appendix is a list of additional passages which you can look up and identify the indicative(s) and imperative(s). Again, notice the connecting words to determine the nature of the relationship between the two in each passage. The following questions may help ascertain that everyone has grasped this concept.

What is an indicative? An imperative?

*Indicative: This is the verb mood that tells of what God has done, is doing, or will do.*

*Imperative: This is the verb mood of command. These are the passages in which God tells us how to act, what to do, and what attitudes to adopt.*

What is the key relationship between these two as found in the Bible?

*Anything that God asks us to do is in response to what he already has done, is doing, or will do.*

What is the opposite of this perspective that many of us, even as Christians, fall into?

*That we do things* in order to *gain God’s acceptance, approval, and blessings.*

How do we know when we have fallen into this mentality?

*One unfortunate sign of this is when our circumstances are bad we might try "pedaling harder" to get God to come through for us. We attribute bad circumstances to our poor performance. If we feel our performance has been adequate, we may become upset with God for not sparing us from problems and wonder why this is happening. We lose motivation for following him.*

**Chapter 7  
Law School**

Why is the forbidden fruit more exciting? Isn't it our rebellious nature, inherited from Adam? And what agitates and stimulates that nature more than the perfect law of God?

As covered in *Walking in Victory*, some theologians think the law is good for spiritual growth. They claim that the negative effect of the law (stimulating sin) is only for non-Christians. Their position requires that Romans 7 be referring to the non Christian's struggle with law, not with a Christian's struggle. McCallum argues that the Law of God is not directly helpful for growth, but only indirectly helpful, as it underscores the hopelessness of self-effort.

Decide whether this is an issue in your group. Do all the members already agree with McCallum's position? Or do some side with critics who believe Christians should follow the law? If some or all members believe the latter, you should definitely take the time to try to settle on an interpretation of Romans 7 and its parallels. If, on the other hand, the members already agree with *Walking in Victory* and understand the exegesis of Romans 7, you may decide to skip this part of the study and focus on the application points regarding legalism later in the chapter. We will refer to the two sides in the debate as the "law will help you" position, and the "no more law" position.

**Under Law? Or Not Under Law?**

Make sure everyone understands McCallum's arguments against the pro-law position. You can use the chart on pages 57-59 to summarize the debate. Then, together, draw up two lists:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Problems with the "law will help you" position** | **Problems with the "no more law" position** |
|  |  |

For each of the following verses, discuss how the two sides in the debate would interpret. If you don't know, either guess, or get a commentary representative of each side and check. Try to be as fair as possible to each position, but don't be afraid to take a side. Then, put which one you think is more persuasive on the right.

Remember, we are only engaging those who believe the law is good for spiritual *growth*. Radical legalists go as far as claiming that even salvation itself is dependent obeying the law. We are not interested in this extremist position, so none of our formulations should reflect it.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Passage** | **The "law will help you" position-"A"** | **The "no more law" position- "B"** | **A or B is better** |
| Heb. 7:18 |  |  |  |
| Gal. 3:3 |  |  |  |
| Gal. 2:19, 20 |  |  |  |
| IICor. 3:3-6 |  |  |  |
| James 2:14ff |  |  |  |
| I John 3 |  |  |  |
| Mt. 5:16-38 |  |  |  |
| Gal. 5:18 |  |  |  |

Whether all your group members agree with McCallum or not, there should be some area of agreement. The following statements should find agreement from all but the most extreme interpreters. Ask your members if they agree.

1. There is such a thing as Christian legalism.

2. Christians should serve God from right motives, depending on him for power.

3. It is possible to do the "right" thing according to the law but still fall short of what God wants for us if it was not done in faith.

4. Dependence on God is not the same as passivity. Both willingness to act and dependence are important.

If your group members agree on these points to some degree, you have a basis for benefiting from the study.

Remind your group that the issue is not *whether* to perform, or, if you will, to obey God. We all want to obey, and to do what pleases God. The question in the law-grace discussion is not *whether* to obey God but *how* to obey him.

The issue before us is this:

Identity based on performance = legalism

Performance based on identity = grace

Another way to say this is found in the indicative/imperative language used in the Appendix of *Walking in Victory*.

Have your group consider each of the tables in Chapter 7. Whether you read the accompanying text in the meeting is up to you. If you have adequate discussion you may not feel the need to read. If discussion flags, suggest someone read the text. Also, we have supplied you with more discussion possibilities here than you can cover in one week. Either select the ones you want to cover, or, if you want to go in-depth on this part, plan on taking more than one week.

**Table7.2**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| View of the law | A set of detailed obligations that I must keep  Rigid application of case law | The underlying principles of the law describe the ultimate goal toward which God is moving me: a loving life-style |

Is this distinction between principlized ethics and legalistic case law meaningful? Or do we seem to be engaging in double-talk?

Can you think of any examples where strict, legalistic churches or other groups (even other religions) seem to hammer away at seemingly insignificant rules, while perhaps ignoring more important ones?

*Some bizarre and funny examples could be given. In Shiite Islam, great stress is placed on the importance of men urinating only in a sitting position. But it's legal to marry a prostitute at the door of the brothel and divorce her at the door on the way out! In Brazil, most Christian churches in the Amazon area teach their men not to participate in soccer games because they are the venue where many used to sin (like bars in the US). Many churches in the US forbade women to shave their legs in the 30's and 40's because it was considered vain. Now the same churches require it, because failure to shave one's legs is a rejection of femininity. Many of the same churches that disallowed makeup thirty years ago, also wouldn't let blacks sit with whites in church.*

How are people in your group doing on sins of omission? How about materialism? How righteous do we think we are?

**Table 7.3**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| View of self | I am regenerate, and therefore I am able to keep the law.  The law helps me live for God. | I am regenerate, but I still can't keep the law, because of my "outer man."  By relying on the Spirit, not the letter, I can gradually change. |

McCallum says, "We are not arguing in favor of licentiousness. We are arguing in favor of grace, which is totally different." What is the difference?

He also says, "Licentiousness is not the cure for legalism, any more than legalism is the cure for licentiousness." Is it licentious to whine that I cannot keep the law? Isn't this unbelief and fatalism? Or is it humility?

**Table 7.4**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| View of the Holy Spirit | Little practical understanding of the Spirit's ministries | Depends on the Holy Spirit for all power, Motivation, and direction |

HHave you ever sat under teachers whom you believed have little understanding of the ministries of the Holy Spirit?

Are the ministries of the Holy Spirit taught sufficiently in the church today?

*No need to go into great depth here yet, because we are going to cover walking according to the Spirit in depth later.*

**Table 7.5**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| The Key to spiritual growth | Self discipline    Or    Special experiences | Knows self-effort is futile Rom.7:18        Looks to a process, not to quick fix experiences |

McCallum says, "Just as some economically disadvantaged people are vulnerable to "get rich quick" schemes, the defeated, law-living Christian is highly vulnerable to short-cut plans that yield instant spiritual maturity or escape from personal problems." Do you think this is true? Is the church today too interested in quick fixes?

McCallum says, "Many of these experiences are perfectly legitimate in the right context. The problem comes in when we view them as the cure-all or short-cut for fixing our fallen natures." Have you ever looked to an experience as the answer for your life? What happened? Have you ever had a wonderful experience spiritually, only to find that it or its effects didn't last? Were you disappointed? Or was there another reason?

God uses experiences in our Christian lives. But how much can we expect from them?

**Table 7.6**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| Approach to Scripture | Relies on an inconsistent hermeneutic  Unable to harmonize Jesus and the epistles | Is consistent, and is able to harmonize the gospels and epistles |

McCallum says, "Galatians 4:4 confirms that Jesus was "born of a woman, born under law." What do you think this passage means?

McCallum refers to inconsistent and self-contradictory authors in the pro-law tradition. Here is an example. A prominent author says, "Jesus characterizes true righteousness as obedience not just to the letter of the law, but to the spirit of the law as well. (Mt.5:21-48)" Yes, that is what Jesus says. Unqualified obedience is his standard. The author goes on, saying, "Faith obeys. Unbelief rebels. The fruit of one’s life reveals whether that person is a believer or an unbeliever. There is no middle ground."   
  
In both these comments, our author has consistently and fairly reported Jesus' position on human sin in the sermon on the mount. But then he adds a footnote to the last comment: "Again, this is not to deny the obvious truth that Christians can and do fall into sin . . ." But wait! That is exactly what Jesus *is* saying! To "be perfect" means that you *cannot* fall into sin. Again, the author adds, "Pursuing the standard of perfection does not mean that we can never fail. It means that when we fail we deal with it. . .confess his sin and come to the Father for forgiveness. . ."  
  
No. Confession and forgiveness are **not** mentioned in this passage. On the contrary, he suggests plucking out our eyes! He warns that even one sin in thought, word or deed will condemn the hearer to hell.   
  
If Jesus was concerned about his Pharisaic hearers diluting the law to make it "keepable" do you think this author might be doing the same thing? Do you agree with this author, or with McCallum when he says that when Jesus said he came "to fulfill the law" he is describing an alternative to flawless obedience?

**Table 7.7**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| Mental focus | My duty: to do what the rules require | Identification with Christ  Personal relationship with God  Loving others as a means of growth |

Can you identify any time in your life where your focus has been more on a list of do's and don'ts than on the personal dimensions of your relationship with Christ?

McCallum says, "We also need to speak against a mentality which views the Bible as a source book for things we don't have to do." Have you ever seen this mentality in action? Have you ever suffered from it yourself?

**Table 7.8**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| Reaction to failure | Surprised and distressed  Rationalizations, minimization, blame-shifting, and self-recrimination  Vows to do better | Not surprised  Confident of God's acceptance  Return to active dependence |

William Newell said, "To be disappointed in yourself is to have trusted yourself." Does this statement do anything for you? Do you disagree with what Newell said?

Disappointment in ourselves leads to various dishonest and annoying tricks designed to help us live with ourselves. Three are mentioned. How would you define each? What is the difference between them? Which is your favorite?  
  
Rationalization:  
  
Minimization:  
  
Blame-Shifting:

Did you ever vow to never again commit a certain sin? How have you done?

**Table 7.9**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| Reaction to success | Proud and intolerant of others | Humbly grateful  Still able to empathize with those who fail  Sees continued need for growth |

McCallum says, "Those who are legalistic often develop a disagreeable demeanor of self-righteousness." How would you describe the difference between being self-righteous and merely knowing you did something good?

You can't deny that some people are more sinful than you are, can you? Should you? How should we view the very sinful without being either relativistic or intolerant?

What do you think of the proposition that young Christians think maturity is when you *avoid* sin. Mature Christians realize that maturity is when you *admit* sin?

**Table 7.10**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Under Law** | **Under Grace** |
| Eventual result | External conformity, but increasing internal defeat and hypocrisy  Growing cynicism and despair OR: Self-righteous externalistic comparisons--self deception | Gradual transformation into a person with a measure of victory over sin and a spiritual mind-set  A more loving person |

McCallum seems to contrast self-righteousness with being more loving. Do you think this contrast is fair?

What image do you get from the phrase, "external conformity"?

**Chapter 8  
The Third Reaction to the Law:  
Dependence**

Chapter 8 is a transition chapter, and may not take a whole week to cover.

The illustration where the spouse lays a .45 on the table while asking a favor is to illustrate a point. How would you feel if someone did this to you? What would be your motivation for doing what they ask? Do you think some Christians live this way with God? Have you ever heard a teacher or preacher threaten Christians with God's anger?

McCallum says, "The mind is the true battleground when it comes to spiritual things." Not everyone would agree with this statement. Do you? What about emotions? What about behavior?

The next 4 chapters of *Walking in Victory* are based on the argument on pp. 88-89. Be sure your group members understand the argument. To focus on the things I died to in Christ is to focus on the things of the flesh.

**Chapter 9  
Walking According to the Flesh:  
Self-Focus**

On page 90-91 of *Walking in Victory* a chart appears comparing the mentality of the old self in Adam, versus the new self in Christ. Here, we have reproduced it one column at a time. On the right, record how you feel about the statement.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Old Self (in Adam)** | **My Reactions** |
| Alienated from God- Therefore, we think of our old self on a horizontal plane--me vs. my problems, others, circumstances, etc. | I find myself engrossed in my problems and circumstances a lot. (1=not really/ 5= You bet)  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Doomed to death- Therefore, everything is temporary, and temporary things are valuable. We spend our time trying to acquire or hold onto temporary things like material wealth. | I'm struggling with materialism. I worry about money a lot, and I'm nervous about not making my financial goals. My giving is a little weak.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Alone, with unmet needs- Therefore, we look to others to meet the hunger of loneliness by loving us the right way. Much of our thought lives are spent trying to understand why others won't meet our needs, or how to make them meet our needs. In our pain, we pity ourselves and are often angry at God and others. | I think about others a lot, and many of my thoughts include a note of dissatisfaction. I want my spouse to change.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Unclear sense of identity (like the man in the bubble)- Therefore, we doubt our own acceptability, and spend time seeking acceptance and affirmation from other people who assure us we are an important person. We spend much of our thought lives fretting about what others think of us. | Yes, I want to be popular and well-liked. Sometimes this leads me into things I would prefer to avoid. I spend a good part of my income on clothes. I'm worried about what I see in the mirror.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Guilty of sin- We *feel* guilty because we *are* guilty. When our mind is set on the old self, we experience an abiding sense of shame that depresses and robs us of motivation. Our focus locks increasingly onto self, bringing distance into all our relationships. | I have been realizing some of my problems come from feelings of shame. I am depressed, and I spend much of my time thinking about myself.  1 2 3 4 5 |

Now see how much you identify with the other column in the chart.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **New Self (in Christ)** | **My Reactions** |
| Alive to God- Therefore, we think of our new selves on both a horizontal and a vertical plane. Our interactions with others, our problems, circumstances, etc. are all considered in the light of how God is, or may be, working through them. | I always look at life in vertical perspective. I never worry because I always know God has me in his care. I'm content in all circumstances.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Guaranteed eternal life- Therefore, temporary things become only means to an end. Only things that are eternal have ultimate value (like God, the truth, and people). Our stewardship of material and natural things in this life is important, mainly because these will affect our future lives with God. | I don't care about money or possessions, only that whatever I have accomplishes spiritual goals. I love giving a large proportion of my income to God's work.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| In Union with Christ and with other Christians, our needs met fully in Christ (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:3) Therefore, our focus is on how we can meet the needs of others. Instead of pitying ourselves, we find ourselves praising God for his provision. | I am other-centered most of the time. I am aware that I have problems, but I don't worry about them. I draw my relational needs directly from Christ daily, and I need nothing from others around me.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Identity based on God's view of us- Therefore, we become less concerned about what others think of us. We are able to leave the question of who we are behind, as a settled matter, and direct our thoughts outward, increasingly free from self-doubt and man-pleasing. | I really don't care what others think of me except to the extent it could influence my witness. I know who I am, and I don't have to prove it to others or myself. I'm confident, because I know God will work through me.  1 2 3 4 5 |
| Forgiven completely, dead to sin- We are able to look away from sin, laying it aside at the cross of Christ. Our thought life is spent contemplating how we may accomplish spiritual goals, not on how we failed earlier. | I know I sin, but that isn't the main point. I'm able to resolve sin quickly and easily with God, and most of my time with him is spent on positive issues.  1 2 3 4 5 |

Did you score more on chart #1 that on #2? If so, thank God! You've come to the right place! We are going to spend the next few weeks studying how to enhance your score on chart #2 while decreasing it on chart #1. You'll be happier for it.

Pages 94 -97 contain an assessment of the family systems and inner-child therapies that are so popular today. According to these, and to several other related approaches, we need to spend *more* time thinking about ourselves not less. According to these theories, the key to spiritual advancement is looking deeper within ourselves. What do you think about this? Is there any truth here? Is there much truth here?

How does the Bible square with these modern theories? Can you think of any passages that teach that we should get into our feelings?

Do you think Americans repress their feelings and hate feelings, or do you think they dwell on their feelings and worship them?

What do you think of the old Campus Crusade formula: Fact  Faith  Feelings? (The claim was that we start with the facts of God's word, we believe them, and then our feelings follow behind eventually) Is this formula valid, or is it a formula for denial?

Do you think it is coincidence that Christian thinkers today are discovering parental shame theories just at the same time secular thinkers have discovered them? Is this teaching found in historical Christian teaching? Is it found in the Bible?

McCallum says, "If we compiled a list of passages in the Bible which teach on the need to enter more deeply into our suffering and pain and we compared it to a list of passages teaching on the importance of gratitude, thankfulness and worship, how would the lists compare?"(pg.96) Well, what do you think?

**Chapter 10  
Walking According to the Flesh: Sin-focus**

Do you begin your time with God by confessing all known sin? If so, you probably base your practice on 1 John 1:9, " "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

McCallum makes the controversial suggestion that this passage is not about our devotional lives. Let's try to understand why he would say such a thing. In the following chart, the verses in 1 John 1 are arranged across from one another under two headings: Heretics or True Christians. First comes a topic, or summary, verse: 1 John 1:5 "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." Then he goes on to parallel two positions, the false and the true:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Heretics:** | **True Christians** |
| 1 John 1:6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. | 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. |
| 1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. | 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 1:10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. | 1 John 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. |

Who would claim to be without sin? (verse 8 and 10)

*1 John was written to refute proto-gnostic heretics who believed that spiritual things had nothing to do with the physical world. They managed to deny all human sin by claiming that things we do with our physical bodies don’t count because the body is not spiritual. The result was what some have called "libertine gnosticism" -- a gnosticism which issued in wanton, unrestrained sin.*

*Proto-gnostic heretics believed that spiritual things had nothing to do with the physical world. They managed to deny all human sin by claiming that things we do with our physical bodies don't count because the body is not spiritual. The result was what some have called "Libertine gnosticism"-- a gnosticism which issued in wanton unrestrained sin.*

Do you think the boxes on the left could be describing Christians who are living carnally? Or would it be better to see them as describing non-Christian heretics?

If you think the left column is referring to non Christians, what does this suggest about verse 9?

According to 2:1, what is John's purpose in writing the passage?

In light of 1:6, wouldn't it seem that he is concerned that they will be influenced by the heretics to discount the importance of sin?

Which do you think is more likely?  
a.) The confession of sin in verse 9 refers to daily confession during times of prayer?  
b.) The confession of sin refers to admitting we are sinners--i.e. that we need to be forgiven?

If we accept that this verse (9) is referring, not to a general admission of sinfulness, but to confessing specific sins, then it teaches that God's forgiveness is conditional on confession (because of the "If"). If forgiveness is conditional on confession, according to this verse would we be forgiven if we fail to confess a sin?

Some authors claim this verse is not teaching on forgiveness in the case of Christians, but on "cleansing," that is, bringing us back into close fellowship with God. But doesn't the verse say *both* cleansing and forgiveness are conditional on confession?

Whether you reach agreement on this point or not, would you agree with these statements? Put a Y or N by each statement and discuss your reasons.

\_\_\_\_\_There is such a thing as a sin-focus

\_\_\_\_\_People who become sin-focused are not free to focus on the positive directions God wants for them

\_\_\_\_\_Since we died to sin, focusing on sin would be focusing on the things of the flesh

McCallum says,

"Sin *is* important, so much so that Christ died to forgive it. But the sad irony is that if we develop a sin-focus in our lives, we fall ever deeper into the grip of sin, like a man struggling in quicksand. This was Paul's fate in Romans 7:14-24 before he looked away from "that which I am doing" and onto Christ. The power to be set free from sin comes, not from dwelling on how bad it is, but by dwelling on the "things of the Spirit." (pg.101)

Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

He also says, "No wonder Satan, the accuser, is so intent on pressing our sins upon us, as though our identity had never changed." What is the difference between acknowledging our sin in the good sense, and succumbing to accusation?

**Chapter 11  
Walking According to the Flesh: Kosmos-focus**

Section A

Read through the chapter, which is only 7 pages long. This should take less than thirty minutes. Then, discuss the Kosmos. Be sure your group is at home with the concept of the *Kosmos*.

For leaders who are unfamiliar with the concept of the Kosmos in the New Testament, here is a short outline you can use for background study. Several of the passages are also in *Walking in Victory*. Survey the passages and identify any that would be interesting to read in the group. Mark these and ask someone to read them aloud if you feel they would be helpful. If your group is unfamiliar with the notion of the Kosmos, focus more on definition. If they are already familiar, bypass this part and go to Section B.

A. Different meanings for Kosmos:

1. The physical globe of earth.

2. The race of man alienated from God (Heb. 11:38; Jn. 14:17; Jn. 15:18)

3. The underlying qualities which animate the world. - I Cor. 2:12 - the spirit of the world - I Cor. 3:19 - the wisdom of the world - I Cor. 7:31 - the way of the world - Titus 2:12 - the lusts of the world - II Pet. 1:4 - the corruption that is in the world - II Pet. 2:20 -the defilement of the world - I Jn. 2:15 - the things that are in the world

B. The hostility of the world system toward God and Christ.

1. I Cor. 1:21 - the world knew not God

2. Jn. 7:7 - the world's works are evil

3. Jn. 14:17 - the world cannot receive the spirit

4. Jn. 15:18 - the world hated Christ

C. Therefore Christ says:

1. Jn. 18:36 - My kingdom is not of this Kosmos

2. Jn. 16:33 - I have overcome the world

3. Jn. 12:31 Now is the judgment of this Kosmos

In addition:

4. James 4:4\*- Friendship with the world is enmity with God

5. I Jn. 2:15\*- If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

6. I Jn. 5:4 - our faith overcomes the world

D. This is because there is a mind behind the system.

1. Jn. 12:31; Jn. 14:30; Jn. 16:11 - the ruler of this world

2. II Cor. 4:4 - the god of this world (the term here is not Kosmos, but ho aeon houtos which is a synonym but contemplates the world system from the aspect of time, or age, rather than space as does Kosmos. See also Rom. 12:2).

3. Eph. 2:2 - the prince of the power of the air

4. I Cor. 2:8 - the demons are the rulers of this age or this world

5. Eph. 6:12 - the demons are the world rulers (Kosmoskrators) of this darkness

6. I Jn. 5:19\*- the whole world lies in the power of the evil one

E. The believer is not to withdraw from the world system.

1. Jn. 17:15, 16

2. I Cor. 5:9,10

3. Phil. 2:15

4. Mt. 5:13-16

5. Jn. 16:33

Section B

Focus on the illustration of the Forks on pp. 104, 105. Does this help explain what obsession with the Kosmos is? How would a person know whether he or she was overly entangled in the things of the Kosmos?

*Possible Answers: when things of the Kosmos come into conflict with things centering around ministry and God, which do you routinely choose? A person's time allocation reveals his values system. People who never have time for the things of God are saying more with their actions than they ever will with their words.*

For most Americans, money has an inordinate appeal. As Christians, we must determine whether we have a problem in the area of money, and ask God for his gracious help. Remember, those under grace have the ability to admit fault, as well as the power to change it. The following discussion questions usually help people think through this area.

1. Do I distinguish between "needs" and "wants"? If I do, how do I define that distinction?

2. Is it right to have a proportional relationship between what I make and what I buy? In other words, should my standard of living increase as my income increases?

3. Of money spent on myself, do I make any distinctions between those things which are greater and lesser in spiritual value?

4. Am I equally stable in conditions of abundance and scarcity? If I am not, what does this mean?

5. Do my actions show that I realize that greed can lead to the destruction of my spiritual walk? How so?

6. Aside from normal allotment of time for vacation, school, family and sleep, where is my free time specifically invested: in material and personal gain, or in spiritual growth and ministry?

7. Do opportunities for my spiritual and material advancement ever conflict? If they do not, what could this mean? If they do, how do I routinely choose?

8. Do I ask for spiritual counsel regarding my personal finances (i.e. major purchases, job changes, saving and giving plans, etc.)? Is there a relationship between my answer and my view of possessions?

9. Have I demonstrated the ability to "draw the line" with my job's demand of my time? Am I willing to pass up promotions, or even get a different job if it conflicts with my spiritual growth and the advancement of my personal ministry?

10. Do I have concrete short-term and long-term goals for my spiritual growth and personal ministry? If not, what does this mean?

11. Do I give substantial amounts of money to God's work in a consistent way? If not, why not?

12. Do any of these questions anger me? Why?

**Chapter 12  
Walking According to the Spirit: Prayer**

In this chapter, we see the pattern that will follow for the next several chapters. First, we discuss the particular means of growth from a number of passages and viewpoints. Then we examine how that means of growth can be distorted in the legalistic paradigm.

In this chapter, much is made of the "vertical perspective" versus the "horizontal perspective." See if you can fill out a number of points describing each viewpoint.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Horizontal Perspective** | **Vertical Perspective** |
| Reaction to problems: |  |  |
| Effect on prayer life: |  |  |
| Leads to: |  |  |
| Know you have it when: |  |  |

**Formalism**

The author presents us with a legalistic version of prayer he calls "formalism." To review, formalism is a focus on the outward forms of religion, often ignoring what is happening with the inward, or heart attitude.

The idea of formalism is confusing to many people. You know the members of your group are confused if they wonder what is formalistic--praying this way or that, reciting memorized prayers, praying during rituals, etc. Formalism is not a matter of how we pray, but of how we *view* our prayer. Formalism is an attitude, an outlook. We are formalistic when we enter into prayer in an impersonal way. Bearing this in mind, go over the following questions, some of which are designed to bait people into the wrong response. By carefully correcting them, you can lead them into a better understanding.

Place an F next to the activity that is formalistic in your view.  
  
\_\_\_\_Reciting the Lord's prayer at church worship service  
  
\_\_\_\_Saying prayers before every meal  
  
\_\_\_\_Kneeling when you pray  
  
\_\_\_\_Memorizing prayers that rhyme and reciting them  
  
\_\_\_\_Praying before and after a Bible study

*Again, each of these could be formalistic, or could be alright, depending on the prayer's attitude.*

**Persistence in Prayer**

Cover the potential problems with the idea of persistence. Make sure your people understand the *a fortiori* argument in the parable of the unrighteous judge.

Here is a copy of the chart from page 121 without the commentary. Before your people get the chance to see McCallum's ideas, have them suggest their own ideas to put in here. After you fill in the chart on your own, compare your work with McCallum's.

Ask the group, "How does prayer interact with the other means of growth?" and, "What would each means of growth be like without a strong prayer life?"

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Interaction of Prayer and Other Means of Growth** | |
| Fellowship |  |
| Ministry |  |
| Scripture |  |
| Discipline of the Holy Spirit |  |

**Chapter 13  
Walking According to the Spirit: Scripture**

**The Bible and Spiritual Warfare**

Have you ever tried using the Bible in a personal confrontation with the Evil One? Have you ever used the power of the Word in a ministry situation to overthrow Satan? 2 Corinthians 10:4,5 says:

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying **speculations** and every lofty thing raised up against the **knowledge** of God, and we are taking every **thought** captive to the obedience of Christ.

Paul says we are destroying fortresses of Satan. Each of the bold words that follow suggest that these fortresses are actually ideas, or thoughts. In other words, spiritual warfare is ideological warfare. How does this insight affect our view of the importance of the Word in spiritual warfare?

**Doctrinal Wrangling**

Sound doctrine is important. Yet, the author speaks against the practice he calls doctrinal wrangling.

Do you agree there is such a thing as doctrinal wrangling?

In your own words, how would you differentiate between an appropriate concern for accuracy and truth, versus doctrinal wrangling?

Has your group ever suffered from this practice?

Have you ever experienced it elsewhere?

**Formalism and the Bible**

What did you think of McCallum's observation that many religions read scriptures they cannot understand?

What do you know of this tendency to resist contemporary language in Christianity?

When did the Catholic church countenance an English translation of the Bible?

Do you feel you are a self-starter in the Word?

Why must interpretation precede meditation?

McCallum says:

We live in an age which is increasingly losing the distinction between our feelings and truth. In our culture, even reality itself has to answer to the feelings and impressions of the individual. The question is no longer, "Is it true?" but "Does it work for you?" Though such feelings and impressions may be in contradiction from one person to another, there's no problem. We just conclude that reality is different for different people! The most important thing, according to the modern world, is to follow our true feelings, which is being true to ourselves. The individual and his or her feelings and impressions have thus become the defining center of the universe, the one thing that can never be questioned. The individual's feelings and experience have replaced God, who used to occupy this place. (pg.131)

This paragraph is controversial in some Christian circles. What do you think of the widely held belief that people's realities are different depending on their life experiences? Are there many realities, or only one?

Here is a copy of the chart on p.133 without the commentary. Before looking at McCallum's work, have the group fill in their own ideas. How does the Word, or lack thereof, affect each of the other means of growth?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Effect of the Word of God on the Other Means of Growth** | |
| Means of Growth | Interaction with the word of God |
| Prayer |  |
| Ministry |  |
| Body Life |  |
| Discipline of the Holy Spirit |  |

**Chapter 14  
Walking According to the Spirit: Fellowship**

Discuss the difference between "going to" versus "being in" fellowship. Is there a difference in your mind between merely going to church and biblical koinonea? If so, how would you describe the difference?

Here is our blank chart again. Do like you did in the previous two chapters.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Interaction of Fellowship With the Other Means of Growth** | |
| Prayer |  |
| Ministry |  |
| Scripture |  |
| Discipline of the Holy Spirit |  |

**Chapter 15  
Walking According to the Spirit: Serving Love**

McCallum claims,

Nothing is worse than setting out on a course of self-sacrifice for the wrong reason, such as an underlying agenda of love-taking. A person who serves others for wrong motives looks sacrificial at first. Only later does the bitterness surface when the secret expectations go unmet."(pg.145)

Have you ever had this experience?

Do you know anyone who became bitter because others failed to appreciate his or her ministry?

He also claims,

Nothing will help us keep our own problems in perspective more, nothing will give us more motivation, nothing will build our faith more than serving others in the name of Christ.(pg.147)

Do you agree with this claim? We all know cases of those who enter ministry (whether lay or professional) only to be later exposed as hypocritical. Doesn't this suggest that ministry did them little good in their spiritual growth?

What do you think about the proposition that too much concern about others may be a "red herring across the path," a smoke screen for ignoring personal problems.

Do you agree with McCallum that serving love is the most ignored means of growth?

Do you think of serving love, or ministry as a means of growth for yourself?

In this chapter, we have two charts to fill out and compare with *Walking in Victory*. The first is the negative--what happens to the other means of growth if we are missing ministry. Here is the chart, minus the commentary. What negative effects might be seen in each of the listed means of growth if we leave out serving love?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Means of Growth** | **Effect when ministry is absent** |
| Scripture |  |
| Prayer |  |
| Fellowship |  |
| Discipline of the Holy Spirit |  |

McCallum asks, "Have you ever felt the thrill when the power of the almighty God moves through *you* to *another* in an act of Christian ministry? If not, you may be missing one of the most important sources of enrichment for Christians." Can members in your group share an account of a time when they sensed this power of God moving through them? Share some of these stories.

In *Walking in Victory* we read, "Personal ministry is such a valuable activity, both to ourselves and to others, we should be prepared to undergo years of training, and multiple failures, including some painful ones. There is nothing foolish about even suffering intensely in the process of establishing a meaningful ministry. The learning curve definitely extends over years, not weeks."

Do you think this claim is realistic? Can normal people really be expected to pay this sort of price in order to establish ministry?

McCallum says, "Taking our identity from our ministry results in a sickening perversion of God's plan. We derive precious boosts to our ego, or devastating personal deflation depending on how things are going in our ministry. These boosts are not the normal healthy trials found in all sacrificial service. They go beyond what is healthy because we are overloading our service with a burden it was never meant to bear--our very identity."

How would you differentiate between normal desire for our ministry to succeed, and morbid thirst for success as a means to establish our identity?

How will God reveal to us which type of motive we have in ministry?

*There is only one way God can reveal this--failure and rejection in ministry.*

What do you think of McCallum's claim that "It is also natural to sometimes feel "burned out" in ministry." Have you viewed burn-out as a sign that you are headed wrong in ministry? Is McCallum glossing over a warning from God that we have to change something?

We find one symptom of faulty motivation in ministry in *Walking in Victory* where McCallum claims, "The one who has a legalistic mentality competes with his fellow workers and seeks recognition from men for his work." How would you define competition in this context?

What two attitudes does McCallum claim are indicators of the right attitude in ministry? Do you agree?

*"Two features; the willingness to acknowledge God as the source of our power, and the willingness to cooperate with others in humility, characterize the attitudes God is looking for."*

Is it permissible to desire that people utilize your ministry rather than another person's or group's ministry? When and why?

*If you are convinced you ministry can more fully meet the need of the person, or if you believe the other person or group is offering faulty ministry, you would be justified in promoting your own ministry over that of the other.*

McCallum argues that ministry only within one's nuclear family is insufficient. Do you agree? What are the boundaries to this concept?

Here is the usual blank chart you can compare to the one in *Walking in Victory*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Interaction of Ministry and the Other Means of Growth** | |
| Scripture |  |
| Fellowship |  |
| Prayer |  |
| Discipline of the Holy Spirit |  |

**Chapter 16  
The Means of Growth: Works or Gifts?**

This short chapter is an interlude, dealing with one important question. It is insufficient for an entire study, and should probably be added either to the previous or the following chapter during one session.

First read around through the chapter together.

The central claim in this chapter is that "We should not view the means of growth as works, but as actively receiving grace."

Is this double-talk?

What do you think of the illustration of the checks?

**Chapter 17  
One Last Means**

The next three chapters all deal with suffering, or trials as a means of growth. Here are some passages (some already in *Walking in Victory*) you can study for background on this subject. If you want to survey these passages, record your impressions about each next to the reference. What is the main point(s) of application for believers in your group from each passage?

Lk. 9:23-24

Lk. 22:3l-34

Jn. l2:24-26

Jn. l5:l8-20

Acts 5:4l

Acts l4:22

Rom. 5:3-5

Rom. 7:l4-25

Rom. 8:28,36,37

I Cor. 10:12,13

I Cor. 11:31,32

II Cor. l:4-9

II Cor. 4:7-l8

II Cor. 7:9,10

II Cor. l2:l-l0

Gal. 5:l6-l7

Phil. l:29-30

Phil. 3:10-16

Phil. 4:10-12

II Tim. 3:12

Heb. l2:5-l3

James l:2-4

I Pet. 1:6,7

I Pet. 4:l,l2-l9

I Pet. 5:6-l0

Chapters 16 and 17 in *Walking in Victory* should probably be covered together. Chapter 16 establishes some definitions and a framework within which to think about the process of "bearing the cross" or the breaking of the outward person. Read through chapter 16, and then discuss for a few minutes before reading chapter 17.

**Discussion**

Through the use of diagrams, we cover again the concepts of *position* and *condition*. Refer to your conclusions in this study guide, chapter 6.

Paul says in Romans 8:13, "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die . . ."

What do your group members think this statement means?

Do you agree with McCallum that this statement is metaphorical?

What might it be like to experience "death" in the sense he uses it here?

Paul also says in the same verse, "if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

This verse refers to "putting to death the deeds of the flesh" (NASB). Does this favor a metaphorical understanding of "death"?

In this statement, the result of death, is what?

In Romans 6, Paul said we died and rose with Christ through baptism into him. (6:5) now he says we should put to death the deeds of the flesh so we can live. (8:13) compare and contrast these two statements. What is the difference, and what are the similarities?

*The passage in 6:5 employs the past tense and refers to completed action. We are not called on to make ourselves dead and risen, only to "reckon" ourselves dead and risen (vs. 11). Here, Paul uses the present tense to describe something that is going on as we speak, and on into the future. We are called on to do something, and that is a condition for life (note the "If")*

**Chapter 18  
Life Out of Death**

Again, read through the chapter.

The goal of the life out of death process is that the life of Christ is manifested, or shown through us. What value does this have?

Is it worth possibly years of suffering just to be able to manifest the life of Christ in our mortal bodies?

In discussing 2 Corinthians 1:9 McCallum says, "Part of the process before us, then, is the unhinging of our confidence in the fleshly strategies we have employed for coping with problems in our lives up to this point."

Can you think of a way to unhinge our confidence in ourselves that would not involve much failure or despair?

We have trusted in ourselves for many years before becoming a Christian and more since then. How easy will it be to learn fundamental unwillingness to trust ourselves?

Not trusting ourselves is one thing. Trusting God is another. Describe what it would be like to distrust self but to fail to trust God. Now describe what it would be like to distrust self *and* to trust God.

*Walking in Victory* describes and critiques the religious ideal of asceticism on pages 172-174. Is asceticism really so bad? Couldn't a little asceticism help at times? What is the difference McCallum refers to when discussing 1 Corinthians 9:26,27?

In plain words, describe biblical suffering versus asceticism:

Biblical suffering is:

Asceticism is:

Do you think the distinctions between justice and discipline on page 175 are significant? Thinking of child rearing, would you, as a parent, feel comfortable using a justice approach to your child's misbehavior?

On page 175 we see a chart detailing key distinctions between the biblical notions of judgment and discipline. See if you can fill in the blank half of the chart, and then compare your work with that in *Walking in Victory*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Justice Compared to Discipline** | |
| **Justice** | **Discipline** |
| Because of his justice, God will pay back evil with punishment that fits the crime. This is the doctrine of Hell. Likewise, justice rewards good. | But with discipline . . . |
| All human beings fall short of the minimum standard of good under God's justice. They are all deserving of judgment. Christians believe that judgment was carried out on Christ. | But with discipline . . . |
| Justice looks to the past to ascertain whether the punishment fits the crime. | But with discipline . . . |
| Justice cannot refuse to punish one who deserves it. | But with discipline . . . |
| Justice would never act to punish one who has done no wrong. | But with discipline . . . |

McCallum claims that loving discipline is nonlegalistic. What is nonlegalistic about it?

Some people refer to the idea that suffering can be a means of growth as the disciplining ministry of the Holy Spirit. In summary, why is God disciplining us?

*Watch for answers to the effect that God disciplines actions, or sins we commit. While this may happen in some instances, we want to see that discipline is more intended to shape our characters as a whole and to enable the life of Christ to be manifested in our mortal bodies*

**Chapter 19  
Conditions for Life Out of Death:**

This chapter details 4 conditions that must be met before we can expect the full, intended blessing from the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Note that no one meets these conditions all the time, and accordingly, the effect of divine discipline is decreased. But this is not to say God cannot work at all unless all these conditions are met all the time. We are not dealing in a black and white area. Instead, this is a continuum from relatively less effectiveness to relatively greater effectiveness. Read through each condition and then answer the question for that section before reading on.

**Condition 1: Active Cooperative Faith**

McCallum claims, "It is never enough for us to passively assent to God's purposes in our lives." Why not?

He also says, "When we are too spiritually blind to see his hand in our circumstances we live in a world of fleshly resentment instead of spiritual thanksgiving." Think of several recent episodes of suffering in your life. Have you seen God's hand in them?

Do you have a central area of suffering in your life? Have you ever acknowledged from the heart that God is using this area to bring about your sanctification?

**Condition 2: Suffering Not the Result of sin**

We are clearly instructed to avoid suffering that is the result of sin. Yet, on some occasions, McCallum argues, God will even bring blessing out of personal sin. Do you think this is right?

Has God ever blessed you, or disciplined you in a way that caused growth, through your personal sin? Think of an example in your life, if there are any.

*After discussing this in the area of sins of commission, ask the group about sins of omission.*

On *Walking in Victory* page 180, we have a list of three reasons to avoid sin under the grace paradigm. Can you think of any more?

**Condition 3: No Illegitimate Pain Reducers**

Make a list of potentially illegitimate pain reducers. Include things that may not be sinful in themselves, but could become illegitimate under certain conditions.

When is it right to flee a situation rather than stay and suffer? McCallum claims there is no exact way to know. But what are some principles people might use in making this decision?

**Condition 4: A Position-Oriented Perspective**

Paul repeatedly talks about setting his eyes on the things above, or on the unseen things. McCallum claims this includes even looking away from the breaking process itself. He says, "If we constantly take our spiritual temperature, we become like spiritual hypochondriacs." A hypochondriac is one who worries constantly about his health, even when there are no symptoms suggesting illness. Studies have shown that hypochondriacs actually worsen their own health through their worry and fussing. Can you think of times in your life where this has happened on a spiritual plane? Has worry about your own growth ever drawn your attention away from Christ himself?

McCallum says, "Only those who know where they are headed eternally can be expected to welcome suffering." How can reflecting on our future with God give us courage to face trial?

**Chapter 20:  
How It All Adds Up**

**Do not skip this chapter!** The things we have been discussing have been too abstract for good assimilation into the average person's daily life. We need a living example of how the principles in this book work together.

No better example could be imagined than the author of our passages in Romans. Read this chapter (somewhat longer than most) section by section, stopping to talk as needed. Do you agree with the conclusions McCallum draws from the biographical profile of Paul near the end of his life? Do you find it exciting to contemplate some of these features manifesting themselves more and more in your own life?