

GROWTH & HEALING

SEVEN STEPS

A Weekly Guide For
Small Groups

by David Stiles

WEEK

1

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



A Note to Small Group Leaders

The following pages provide an outline for a small group discussion on the “*Seven Steps of Growth and Healing*” materials. (Week 1 is below. The remaining weeks can be found at www.dstiles.com)

My prayer is that you will find these *seven steps* not only a helpful resource for those in your group, but also for you personally. Each time I review these I find areas where I need to grow deeper in my understanding of God and His purposes.

A few notes on logistics...

When I have led small groups through this material, I have found it helpful to meet over seven consecutive weeks.

I have also found it helpful to wait to distribute the entire *Seven Steps* manual until the final week - as people may get distracted with all of the materials. Instead, I provide copies of the following pages for participants to use – distributing them one week at a time.

As noted, at the end of the seven weeks I distribute the entire manual for participants to read on their own for further spiritual growth. The entire manual is available at no cost, and can be found at: www.dstiles.com

Many Blessings,
-Dave

Step 1: Look for God's presence in your life

You may have heard others say,

- "God is not interested in me because I'm not perfect.
- "God is not interested in me because of the way I look.
- "God is not interested in me because of what I've done.
- "God is not interested in me because I'm not like another person.

Have you ever had those thoughts?

Lie #1
"God's not interested in me."

How would you complete the sentence,

"God is not interested in me because _____."

Why do we think this?

- Difficult circumstances
- Guilt
- Rejection from others

The Truth

The truth, however, is that God is very much interested in each one of us. Let's take a look at how the Bible describes this interest....

Week 1

God our Creator

In the Old Testament, God is described as the *creator* of the universe:

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1)
- "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6)
- "For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm." (Ps. 33:9)
- "Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created." (Ps. 148:5)

In the New Testament, we learn that:

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3)
- "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."
(Col. 1:15-16)
- "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe." (Heb. 1:2)
- "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." (Heb. 11:3)

As the theologian John Calvin once wrote,

- "You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness."

Here are two questions to consider about God's creation:

- What about God's creation do you find inspiring?
- Why do you find it inspiring?

Week 1

Not only did God make rocks and trees, He made each of us.

John Calvin gives this perspective,

- “How can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realizing immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him?”

God Our Sustainer

The Old Testament describes God as the *sustainer* of all of life.

- “I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.” (Psalm 3:5)
- “The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and widow...” (Ps. 146:9)
- The Lord said, “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and rescue you.” (Is. 46:3-5)
- “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.” (Is. 40: 28-29)

A God of Compassion

In the Old Testament the Lord is described as “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Psalm 103:8)

In the New Testament accounts of Jesus, we learn that Jesus had *compassion* on everyone who came to Him:

- “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” (Matthew 14:14)
- Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.’ (Matthew 15:32)
- “Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him.” (Matthew 20:34)
- When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” (Luke 7:13)

Week 1

Later in the New Testament we learn that,

- “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17)

So, in both the Old Testament and New Testament we can read about a loving and caring God who is the creator and sustainer of all of life.

Step One

The first step in our journey to spiritual growth and personal healing, is simply called, “Look for God’s presence in your life.”

Step #1:
Look for God’s presence in your life.

Remember

Throughout the Bible, God encourages His people to look to see His work. People are told to *remember* the things that He has done.

Even God’s name helped the people of Old Testament remember what He had done in the lives of their ancestors. In Exodus 3:5 and many other places throughout Scripture, God is called the,

- “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

What else does the Bible say about remembering our past?

- “Fathers tell their children about (God’s) faithfulness...”(Isaiah 38:19)
- “Remember the former things, those of long ago.” (Isaiah 46:9)
- “Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.” (I Chronicles 16:12)
- “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7)

Week 1

Just as the people of the Old and New Testament were called to examine their lives and remember God's presence and work, so should we stop to remember what God has done.

If you're stuck on this step:

If you find that you're having difficulty in this area, you might consider praying the following prayer as you seek to discover God's presence and work in your life.

Prayer

Lord, help me look back upon my life and see how You have been at work. I ask that you would help me to remember the times when you have blessed me and comforted me. Thank you for your incredible love and concern even when I did not recognize it. Amen.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Reflect for a moment on the phrase, "God's not interested in me." How much does it represent your feelings right now? Why?
 Not what I'm thinking
 Somewhat what I'm thinking
 Very much what I'm thinking
2. One author has said, "The question today is not 'Is there a God' but 'What kind of God is there'." What words come to mind as you think about God?
3. What things can you remember that God has done in your life?
4. What in your life has been miraculous?

