

Cycle-Breaker

October 3, 2021

PREPARATION

▶ STUDY

Spend the week studying Psalm 25:4-5a, Psalm 139:1-12 and 23-24. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

▶ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

▶ LANDING POINT

To move forward I need to look back and reflect.

GROUP DISCUSSION

- ▶ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.
- ▶ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- ▶ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- ▶ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

We inherit a lot from our parents, whether it's genetics or personality and behaviors. Maybe someone has told you, "You are the spitting image of your mother" or "Your father was that way, too." Things get passed from one generation to the next. Some things are good and healthy while others can be unhealthy and sinful. There are also lots of people and places from the past that have impacted the way we relate to people and react to the world around us, whether it's our culture, childhood experiences, friendships, church upbringing, etc.

This week your group will discuss what it means to be a cycle-breaker and how to be someone who says, "This stops with me."

Q: *Name one positive thing that was passed down to you from your parents.*

DEEPER DIVE

THE ART OF SELF-REFLECTION

In our hustle-and-bustle world filled with busyness and plenty of distractions, few seem to find time for self-reflection. Not so with the psalmists. They often examined themselves and asked God to help them discover what's really happening under the surface.

Let's take a look at some key passages from the psalms and what they teach us about self-reflection and how God reveals the light of His truth in our lives.

Q: *Have volunteers read Psalm 25:4-5a, 139:1-12 and 23-24. What do these passages reveal about the character of God? What do they reveal about us?*

Q: *What benefits are there in taking time for self-reflection?*

Q: *Take a moment to pray your own version of the psalmist's prayer. Sit in silence and listen for anything the Lord wants to reveal to you.*

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

BECOMING A CYCLE-BREAKER

Sinful patterns and behaviors aren't easily uprooted because they have been deeply imbedded in us, often from a young age. However, if we can identify those patterns and turn to God for help, we have taken a huge step in stopping the cycle of sin in our lives.

In *The Deeply Formed Life* (WaterBrook: 2020) Rich Villodas identifies three important areas we must reflect on in order to understand how our past might be impacting our present:

1. *Patterns* – repeated behaviors, practices, habits or ways of thinking and acting that are passed from one generation to the next. When we can name these patterns in our lives, it puts us in reality and in a position to work with the truth, not illusions or deceptions.
2. *Trauma* – abuse, loss or tragedy that are suffered and can be scarring or triggering to those who experience it. While trauma can be things that happened to you, it can also be things that failed to happen.
3. *Scripts* – the messages that were given or roles we believed we had to play. Examples of roles include: protector, peace-keeper, second-mom, all-star, scholar, beauty queen.

Change is possible. Sinful patterns can be unlearned but self-reflection and God's supernatural help are required if we want to break free of the past in order to live joyfully with God in the present. We also need each other to discover more about who we are in Christ and the freedom He gives us in our lives.

Q: *Where would you like to experience more of God's freedom in your life?*

Q: *How could your group encourage and support one another in the cycle-breaking process?*

Q: *Commit to spending next week in prayer and self-reflection and consider the patterns, trauma or scripts that may be present in your life.*

Q: *How can the group be praying for you this week?*

COMMENTARY

SEARCH ME, O GOD! “In view of these reflections, the members of the congregation invite God to continue his work of “searching” and “knowing” their hearts. This will expose any grievous way (i.e., aspects of character that lead to grief) and will lead the faithful in the way everlasting (i.e., the way that God loves; cf. 1:6).”¹

OVERVIEW OF PSALM 139 “David finds himself in a world of ruthless enemies (vv. 19–24) and vv. 1–18 reveal how he deals with it. Ps 139 has four sections, six verses each: (1) David meditates on the Lord’s omniscience (vv. 1–6). (2) David reflects upon the Lord’s omnipresence (vv. 7–12). (3) David’s knowledge of the Lord as Creator derives from his awareness of the Lord’s omniscience and omnipresence (vv. 13–18). (4) What is at issue is those who oppose the Lord (vv. 19–24). The enemies in this psalm are the Lord’s enemies, not David’s enemies. They become David’s enemies only because they hate the Lord (vv. 21–22). The psalm concludes with a request (vv. 23–24) that resembles the opening verse: David desires that God know him so that David will walk with God.”²

PRAISING GOD “We are inclined to praise God for blessings we have received (which is right), but David praised God for who he is. Our praise will never be what it should be until we ascend to this level.”³

ENDNOTES:

1. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1117.
2. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 1041–1042.
3. Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 125–126.