

SURFACE TENSIONS



GROUP GUIDE
4th Quarter, 2023

SURFACE TENSIONS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Series Introduction3
Group Guidelines4
Sample Meeting Outline5

Week	Study Title	Page
1	Cutting the Tension	5
2	Tension #1: Misplaced Loyalty	6
3	Tension #2: What If?	7
4	Tension #3: Not Right Now	8
5	Tension #4: Disqualified	9

ABOUT

The Enemy is actively looking for opportunities to DESTROY God’s people. If you call yourself a Christian you will absolutely experience moments in which you will either have to stand up to the schemes of the greatest liar of all time, or accept the presence of a killer in your life. These “STRONGHOLDS” as Paul calls them in 2 Corinthians need to be addressed and destroyed so that every follower of Jesus can thrive as kingdom workers.

This month, we’ll be addressing Surface Tensions. These tensions are the lies that sit on the surface of our life and shape our identity. We know God has something great for us, we know that He has great plans for us, but when we look at the waters of God’s goodness all of these things stare back at us and we struggle to see past them. How do you get to the goodness that God has for you that’s waiting right below the surface? You break through them.

Ground Rules

Here are some guidelines for your gatherings.

Confidentiality

If the group is going to move towards authenticity, then what's shared in the group should stay in the group (note: for situations that you are not qualified to speak into, use a referral to Cornerstone Counseling).

Don't Rescue and Don't Fix

Let people openly share without trying to solve their problems. Only give advice if they request it.

No Crosstalk

People feel valued when we listen. The opposite is true as well: people will feel devalued if they are constantly interrupted. If someone has the floor, no other conversations should be happening.

Give Everyone a Chance to Share

Everyone has something to contribute and everyone should feel heard. Don't be too quick to provide all of the answers. Give others space to share.

Use Humor Responsibly

Our conversation should build up rather than tear down. Humor can be a great thing provided it is not used as the expense of others.

Use 'I' Statements

Groups are an opportunity for self-reflection. We should be quick to reflect on how what we are studying should shape us personally, and slow to tell others how it should shape them.

Fight for the Relationship

Real relationships only thrive when we commit to 'fight' for the relationship. We will not hide from conflict or disagreement, but will instead discuss them in an open and healthy way.

Leader Guidelines

Thank you for taking the time to invest in others by leading a group. As a leader, your task is to create an environment where real relationships can thrive. Here are some things to keep in mind as you do that:

Multiply.

The mission of the church is to multiply disciples. Groups are one of the environments where this occurs. You are involved in the discipleship of each person in your group. We ask that each of our group leaders has someone who they are equipping to be a disciple-maker.

Create a safe environment.

When we say 'safe', we mean an environment where participants can freely share without feeling belittled or that what they share will get spread beyond the group. When we say 'safe', we also mean a group where participants can encounter Jesus and His plan for their life.

Recognize that your group is unique.

This booklet is designed to be a general guide, but every group is unique. So when you're planning, take into account what does and doesn't work for your group and shape the session to their personalities and needs.

Review the ground rules.

Periodically, remind your group about the ground rules for the group.

Ask lots of questions.

Engaging leaders draw participants into the discussion. Ask many questions and lead your group into self-discovery. Follow the 70/30 rule: your goal should be to talk for less than 30% of the time. If you're going over that, then people in your group are going to feel limited in their ability to engage!

Get feedback.

Improve your group by asking others for feedback.

Seek wise council.

There are some questions you won't be able to answer and some situations you aren't trained to handle. That's OK! Know who your wise council is (whether a coach, minister, or another disciple-maker) and turn to them in your time of need.

For more on this topic, check out *Servant-Leadership Training* and the *CCW Group Leader Training 2.0* resource on RightNow Media.

Before the Session

Prepare for the Session: As a group leader, it's essential to be prepared. Before the group session:

1. **Pray.** God is the one doing the transformation.
2. **Take time to read over the Bible passage.** Write down questions and observations.
3. **Preview the session guide.** Highlight important questions to ask and add your own.
4. **Tap into study resources.** Check outside sources to expand your understanding of the topic. Some recommended resources include: The BibleProject, RightNow Media, and the CCW Resource Center.

During the Session

Share: Take time to review the content from last week. Use this time to check on:

- **Prayer Requests:** Follow up on any prayer requests that were made the previous session.
- **Application and Challenges:** Take time to provide accountability for any goals that the group set the previous week ('This week, I would like to...').

Transition: Introduce the topic (we give you an example each session).

Read It: Read through the Scripture passage. If it's a larger section of scripture, break it into smaller sections and ask questions throughout.

Talk About It: Make sure the passage is understood by:

1. *Retelling* the story in your own words.
2. *Asking review questions.*
3. *Seeking additional questions.* Check to see if your group has additional questions about the passage.

Apply It: The apply it section may have both (a) application questions and (b) challenges. Challenges are real-life ways to put Biblical Truth into effect this week.

Pray Together: Find creative ways to engage your group in prayer.

After the Session

Follow Up: Be present with group members throughout the week by: (1) Reminding them of their application/challenge commitments, (2) Checking in on needs and prayer requests and (3) Finding opportunities to do life together.

Input Group Attendance: Fill out your Group attendance in the ChurchTeams email that you receive.

CUTTING THE TENSION

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- What types of situations create the most tension in your life?

Transition

Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

Last month, we talked about both the importance of Truth and how to evaluate our Source for truth. This month, we'll continue that conversation by looking at specific lies that we buy into. These lies become a source of tension in our lives - but it's time to break that tension.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Romans 8:28 - 39**

Talk About It

Review:

- (28) According to Paul, what can we know about God?
- (29 - 30) What is the ultimate purpose of being called by God? What does it mean to be 'conformed to the likeness' of Jesus?
- (31 - 32) For what reason can we trust that God will give us what we need?
- (33 - 34) What job does God take upon Himself? What job does Jesus have? What does it mean to be 'justified'?
- (35 - 39) What are some of the obstacles that Paul foresees in our relationship to God? According to Paul, do any of these factors have a chance at separating us

from the love of God?

Reflect:

- How challenging do you find it to trust that God is working for your good in every situation?
- Where do you fail to be conformed to Jesus' likeness?
- How might knowing that God and Jesus hold the power to justify/condemn give you the ability to persevere in the midst of challenging circumstances?
- What things have you feared might separate you from the love of God?
- What does it mean to be a 'conqueror' when facing the trials of this life?

React:

- What words in this passage cut through the tension of the lies in your life? Which remind you of your true identity in Jesus?
- What needs to change in your heart and mind to approach life as a 'conqueror'?

Pray Together

MISPLACED LOYALTY

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- When has following someone gotten you into trouble?

Transition

Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

This week in Surface Tension, we navigated the lie of misplaced loyalty...that we can somehow find our identity in something other than Jesus. We're going to continue that conversation by looking at where our loyalty should truly be rooted.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Philippians 3:4b - 21**

Talk About It

Review:

- (4 - 6) What are some of the reasons Paul gives for his own ability to have confidence in his 'flesh'?
- (7 - 9) Why does Paul consider those things he once placed confidence in 'rubbish'?
- (10 - 11) What is Paul's hope?
- (12 - 14) Does Paul believe that he has already attained this hope? What does he believe he has accomplished?
- (15 - 18) For what reason should we search out those who are following the pattern of Paul (who is following the pattern of Jesus)?

- What is the destiny of those who practice loyalty to earthly things? What are some of the earth things that Paul names?
- (20 - 21) Where is our citizenship? What is the result of being a citizen of heaven?

Reflect:

- What are some things that you have chosen to place your confidence in outside of Jesus Christ? How have these misplaced loyalties shaped your path in life?
- What misplaced loyalty are you holding onto that you know is leading you off course?
- How might someone shift from having a loyalty to the wrong things to considering those same things 'rubbish'?
- What do you think a 'citizen of heaven' might look and act like?
- Why is important to be committed to having rightly placed loyalties as we go about our life?

React:

- How confident are you in being able to say that your 'citizenship' is in heaven? What stands in the way of that loyalty?

Pray Together

WHAT IF...?

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- What

Transition

Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

This week in Surface Tension, we talked about the lies of fear. Fears, anxieties and worries can be paralyzing, causing us to miss out the True Life that Jesus offers.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Philippians 4:6 - 7;**
Matthew 6:25 - 34

Talk About It

Review:

- In the Philippians passage, what does Scripture tell us that we should do with our worries? What is the promise for those who take this step?
- (Matthew 6:25) What question does Jesus ask to address the reason we shouldn't worry?
- (26 - 27) What is the first example Jesus uses for why we shouldn't allow fear to have a foothold? What does God do for the birds?
- (28 - 30) What is the second example Jesus uses for why we shouldn't worry? What does God do for the flowers?
- (31 - 32) According to Jesus, who stresses about food, drinks, and clothes? Why

should we not be like these people?

- (33) What should we be seeking first and foremost?
- (34) Jesus gives a final reason for avoiding worry. What does He mean with these words?

Reflect:

- Why are human beings so inclined to stress about things like food and clothes? What other worries do you see commonly interrupting peoples lives?
- How does focusing on the wrong things (food and clothes) produce fear?
- Which of Jesus' arguments against worry do you find most compelling?
- What does it look like to seek God's Kingdom?

React:

- What are the worries that you are struggling to let go of?
- How do you see the lie of fear shaping your life?
- How can you make God's Kingdom the focus of your pursuit?

Pray Together

NOT RIGHT NOW

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- What's something that you've always wanted to do but have never gotten around to?

Transition

Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

This week in the Surface Tension series, we're addressing the lie of 'not right now'. Comfort, security, a lack of time - all of these things become barriers to a full life following Jesus.

Read It

Scripture reference: **Romans 13:8 - 14**

Talk About It

Review:

- (8) What debt should we have towards our fellow human beings?
- (8 - 10) How does 'love' fulfill the commandments that are found in the Law?
- (11) What reason does Paul give for waking up from our 'slumber'? What is the salvation that he is referring to?
- (12 - 13) Paul uses several word-pictures, referring to both night/day and darkness/light. What are the actions that he associates with the 'night/darkness'?
- (14) What are we called to clothe ourselves with? When 'wearing' Jesus, how does our thinking change?

Reflect:

- What reasons does Paul give for not putting off the call to love others?
- How should knowing that the 'day is almost here' shape how we live our lives right now?
- What have you seen act as an impediment to people living fully for God?
- What warning would you give for those who are saying 'not right now' to God?

React:

- Which do you find is the biggest obstacle for you to say 'yes' to God: comfort, security, a lack of time, talent or resources?
- What Kingdom activity have you been saying 'Not right now' to? What is holding you back?
- What will you do this week to confront the barrier of 'not right now' and begin living for Jesus RIGHT NOW?

Pray Together

DISQUALIFIED

Icebreaker

Spend some time opening conversation with this question:

- When have you tried out for or applied to something only to be rejected?

Transition

Transition your group into the study by saying something like:

As we wrap up the Surface Tension series, we're looking at one more lie that acts as a barrier in the Christ-life: 'I'm not enough'. Shame can have devastating consequences when we choose to allow it to act as our compass.

Read It

Scripture reference: **1 Corinthians 1:17 - 31**

Talk About It

Review:

- (17 - 18) What does the message of the cross look like to unbelievers? To those being saved?
- (19 - 20) What has God done to the wisdom of the world?
- (21) What did the wisdom of this world not know? Why did God use the foolishness of this world instead?
- (22 - 24) What does the writer say that Jews and Greeks look for? What does the message of a crucified Christ become to those seeking wisdom and signs?
- (25) How is God's wisdom compared to man's wisdom?

- (26 - 29) Why did God choose the foolish things of this world? The 'weak' things? The 'lowly and despised' things?
- (30 - 31) How is it that we are able to have a relationship with God: our own power or His?

Reflect:

- What stories from Scripture do you recall in which God used the unexpected underdog?
- What does it mean to you to know that God uses the 'foolish, weak, and lowly' for His divine purpose?
- What does it mean for us to 'boast in the Lord' instead of in our own ability?
- How can shame act as a barrier to living fully for God?
- How have you seen God use broken people to accomplish His purpose?

React:

- What reason do you give to God for why you can't accomplish His will and purpose? How does that 'reason' fall short based on what we learned in this session?

Pray Together

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

- **Don't Let the Enemy Have a Seat at Your Table** (Louie Giglio)

RIGHTNOW MEDIA

Get a free RightNow Media account to get access to thousands of study resources. Some potential resources include:

- **Get Out of Your Head** (Jennie Allen): Are your thoughts holding you captive? Jennie Allen knows what it's like to swirl in a spiral of destructive thoughts, such as I'll never be good enough. Other people have better lives than I do. God couldn't really love me. But Jennie also knows we don't have to stay stuck in toxic thinking patterns. As she discovered, God built a way for us to escape that downward spiral. Freedom comes when we refuse to be victims to our thoughts and realize we have already been equipped with power from God to fight and win the war for our minds.
- **Twisting the Truth** (Andy Stanley): In six insight-packed sessions, Andy Stanley exposes four destructive and all-too-prevalent lies about authority, pain, sex, and sin. They're deceptions powerful enough to ruin our relationships, our lives, even our eternities—but only if we let them. Twisting the Truth untwists the lies that can drag us down. With his gift for straight, to-the-heart communication, Andy Stanley helps us exchange falsehoods for truths that can turn our lives completely around.
- **Truth** (Mark Moore): In this 3-part series we will wrestle with truth. The truth of Jesus living a perfect life, dying on a cross, and resurrecting so that our sins will forever be wiped clean. Mark Moore weaves personal antidotes and scriptural truth together to tell a story of what living an evangelistic life is all about. How does one live a life defined by the truth of the gospel in a world where truth is relative? Well you have to be willing to step into the ring and find out.
- **Finding Truth** (Francis Chan): Christians today face all kinds of challenges when it comes to understanding who they are and what they're meant to do. There's no shortage of options that claim to offer "truth." If we're not careful, we can find ourselves chasing after popular opinion, celebrity opinions, or the tug of our emotions all the while neglecting the unchanging truth found in Scripture. In this four-session series, pastor and author Francis Chan invites students into the power and confidence that comes from anchoring their identity, purpose, and relationships in the truth of Scripture. Students will walk away with practical steps toward building their lives on the firm foundation of the Bible.

THE BIBLE PROJECT (www.thebibleproject.com)

The Bible Project offers a variety of amazing resources. These videos expand on many of the ideas that we have touched on in this series.