

DUMPSTER DIVING



MESSAGE FROM ETHAN

Welcome to a journey of hope, that starts in a dumpster. I know it is an odd place to start but it is the right place to begin - an experience of grace and hope and healing that all of us need.

We start in the dumpster, because no matter how nice our life may appear, everyone has a dumpster: that place where we try to hide the things that feel broken or bad. The place where we bury what hurts and what failed. The places in our lives where we are sorry or stuck. In fact, even some of our best strengths wind up in the dumpster because we use them for selfish, destructive or useless things.

But God has a different plan for those parts of our lives. God wants to go dumpster diving to redeem and reclaim what we consider the trash of our lives. God can heal broken things, rescue lost people, and restore those parts of our life that we never thought could be turned for good. And God wants you to be part of the journey.

In this life-changing series, we will partner together as a church and with a few friends to go dumpster diving with God. We know it won't always be pretty and some of what we might find will be smelly and old and tired and broken. Some of it might be nasty and rotten. But God promises that God is good enough to heal and redeem and reclaim and restore our whole lives so that what is garbage today can one day be eternally glorious.

I am ready to go dumpster diving with God and I hope you are ready to join me.

ETHAN MAGNESS



If you have any questions about the material or how to get connected in a group, please reach out to Andrea Hodges at ahodges@fcc-jc.org or 423-722-7220.



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DAILY DEVOTIONS

To go on this dumpster diving journey with God, we will need to go to God every day. We'll go to God by investing in prayer and the word of God. So set aside some time each day to quiet your spirit, open your Bible, and read the indicated passage. Use the devotion to focus your reflections and challenge you to bring your life before God. Then close your time in prayer. Trust that this discipline of study and prayer will be used by God to reclaim and redeem the things in your dumpster.

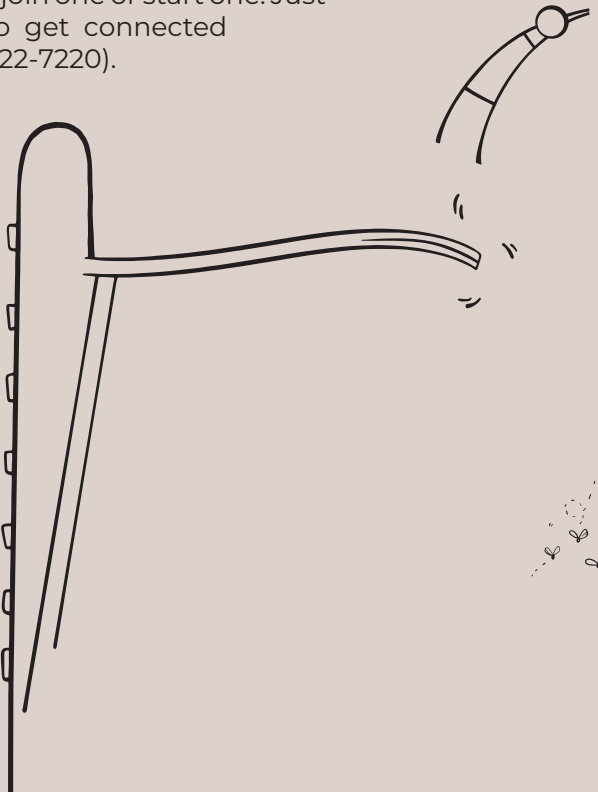
GROUP STUDY

If you go dumpster diving alone, it can be overwhelming and fruitless. The best way to go dumpster diving is with some friends. So don't do this study alone. Gather with a few others to study God's word together and inspire each other to see just what God can do with the dumpsters of our lives. If you don't have a group, you can join one or start one. Just contact Andrea Hodges to get connected (ahodges@fcc-jc.org, 423-722-7220).

Here is what you will find in each study:

PREPARE

Each section opens with questions to help you connect your lives and experiences to the topic for the week. Use this time to share as a group, to reflect on the devotions, and to focus on the topic for each session.



REFLECT

The opening questions are followed by a short video segment designed to briefly introduce the theme for the lesson. Each video is followed by questions for reflection. Don't feel bound to answer each one. The goal is to give each person a chance to respond to the material in the video. The questions are present to assist in that conversation.

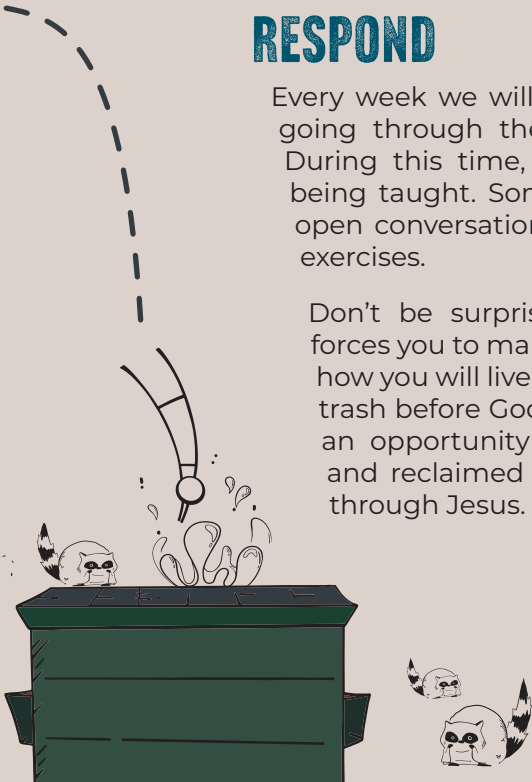
STUDY

This is the foundation of each lesson. Having gathered our attention to the topic, we turn to scripture to shape our thoughts and spur us to action. Invite many people to share in the reading of scripture. Do not pressure those who are not interested. Each reading is followed by questions to help your group understand the text. Don't be in a rush to apply the text. First focus on understanding the text.

RESPOND

Every week we will finish our time together by going through the Dumpster Diving process. During this time, you'll work to apply what's being taught. Some of the process will be for open conversation, but many will be personal exercises.

Don't be surprised if the Respond section forces you to make some tough choices about how you will live. Bringing your dumpster and trash before God can be scary. But it gives us an opportunity to see just how redeemed and reclaimed and healed our lives can be through Jesus.



5 ELEMENTS OF A DISCIPLING GROUP

Small groups gather for the purpose of discipleship. Discipleship happens in community. We hope that every group makes us more Christlike and provides an encouraging and supportive space.

Here are 5 elements that make up a discipling group.

INVITATION -

Discipleship always starts with an invitation. Great groups invite others to join, even after the series has started, and they welcome new participants by bringing them up to speed. Pray about who you need to invite into your group.

RELATIONSHIP -

Allow time for group members to get to know each other throughout the experience. Don't rush to interrupt someone when they're sharing. Conversations should include everyone, not just one or two of the loudest people. Respect the privacy of those in your group. Give them the freedom to share by promising to keep everything in the group.

CONTENT -

The Bible is the living word of God and it has the power to change our lives. Leave time for relationships to be formed, but don't neglect the study material. Let God work through these truths revealed in scripture. Commit to doing the weekly devotions as a way of submitting to God's work in your life.

CHALLENGE -

A great group doesn't just teach you something new - it changes you. Be open to how God might challenge you through this experience. As followers of Christ, we all have a next step in our walk with God. Notice what God is calling you to, and don't be afraid to share this with your group.

JOURNEY -


Discipleship happens when we journey through life together. Consider how you need to lift one another up and care for each other. Maybe this group is planning to meet for a short time. What's your plan for after this group concludes? Discipleship happens in community. Don't let this experience conclude without figuring out who you'll continue to go on this discipleship journey with. If you need help continuing your group or getting connected, reach out to Andrea Hodges.

GROUP ROSTER

Take a minute to share names and appropriate contact information. This allows for important things like sharing prayer requests and figuring out who is bringing brownies next week.

Name

Contact Info



**FAILURE
TO FRUIT**



MONDAY

JOHN 15:1-11

Most of us don't spend nearly as much time in vineyards as Jesus' first followers did. They would have known right away how important it is to cut back wild branches. And they would have known how rich it could be to pull a ripe grape off the vine and taste it. But let's try to go there with them: sit with this picture of God in the fields, walking the rows, examining our hearts and our words. Jesus promises that the gardening of God in our lives can make even fruitless branches fruitful again. That is the message of this study: the stuff in your dumpster can be reclaimed, restored and renewed. Take a minute today to pray in anticipation of that good news being real in your life.

TUESDAY

ROMANS 7:14-25

Paul does a good job here describing what it feels like to be a person. We want to want good things. But we get in our own way. We follow impulses we wish weren't ours. We willingly jump inside of trash cans (metaphorically speaking, mostly). Where in your life does this feel the most true? (Ask yourself this question knowing full well that Paul also says there is a way out of the dumpster.)

WEDNESDAY

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

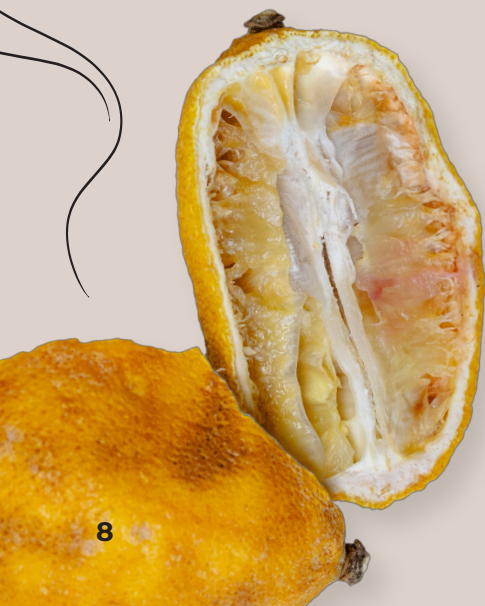
It was shocking to the Jews that their God would die on the cross. This was a humiliating, degrading way to die. It had seemed to Jesus' followers that he had failed. He failed to meet their hopes for a savior and their longing for a redeemed world. And yet, from this disgraceful death came resurrection. Not only was there a second chance at life, but there was fertile ground yielding hope and good news for everyone. If even the supposed failure of the cross can bear fruit, just think of how God can use your brokenness.

THURSDAY**COLOSSIANS 3:1-17**

All of us make choices when we get dressed in the morning. We think about the weather, who we might see, what kind of day is ahead of us, what fits our personality and the world around us, whether we are the kind of person who can pull off a hat or not. Paul says we ought to consider each day whether we clothe ourselves in the things of death or life. Look over these lists: What would you love to “take off”? Or “put on”?

FRIDAY**JOHN 21:15-19**

Imagine getting one more conversation with someone you love who has died. Peter gets to have this with Jesus. Peter faces the pain of turning his back on Jesus and then seeing him take what they thought were his last breaths. And now, Jesus is right in front of Peter, and where Peter might have expected rebuke, he finds a question and a calling: Is his love for Jesus real? Despite his failure, God had not given up on Peter. What purpose might God be asking you to pursue even though you have failed in the past?



PREPARE

WELCOME TO DUMPSTER DIVING!

If you have ever found yourself rummaging through the trash, there's a good chance you were doing it to find something valuable. Something got thrown away by accident. Or something useful was mistaken for something useless.

We believe that in the economy of God, nothing is wasted. Even the dumpsters of our lives can hold treasures. We believe this because it's all over the stories of God and people. And we believe we can see it in our lives if we just take a closer look.

If we're going to dumpster dive together, we'll need to build some trust and be willing to share what we find. So let's start with a twist on an old classic:

Did you ever play Truth or Dare when you were a kid? We're going to bring it back, but this time the choice is Failed or Forgiven.

Introduce yourself to the rest of the group and tell a simple and brief true story:

Either, tell a story about a time you failed OR tell a story about a time you were forgiven.



REFLECT

WATCH VIDEO #1: FCC-JC.ORG/DUMPSTER

The speaker explained how we all have a dumpster. We all have things that feel wasted, but God can redeem them all. Can you think of any specific ways that you have seen this happen in someone's life?

Peter weeps when he faces his failure (Matthew 26:75) and surely was afraid when he talks to Jesus one on one (John 21:15-19). What was the surprise for Peter in that conversation?

The speaker identifies four steps needed to partner with God in this work of Dumpster Diving. In your own words, what are these practices?



STUDY

READ MATTHEW 26:31-35, 69-75 AND JOHN 21:15-19

What do you think Peter may have felt when he heard that crow? When is it hard to recognize our failure?

People respond to their own failure in lots of different ways. What are some of the ways that Peter might have responded?

What does Jesus mean when he asks Peter to feed his sheep? If you happen to know more of the story of Peter's life, what do we know about how Peter responds to this invitation?

For groups that want to study this pattern more, you could look at the lives of Moses (Exodus), or Paul (Galatians 1:11-24) or the woman at the well (John 4:1-42) for more examples of how God can use someone's failure as the foundation of future fruitfulness.

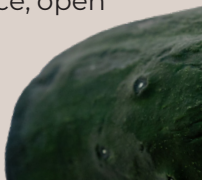
RESPOND

Every week, we'll take time to go through the Dumpster Diving Process. Read the appendix on page 46 to learn more about the process. For this section, break into smaller groups of 3-4. This will give us each space and time to share.

RECOGNIZE:

The first step in our partnership with God is recognition. Until we acknowledge that we have full dumpsters, we cannot begin to seek the restoration that God provides. You may need an experience of awareness like Peter had when the rooster crowed. You may need a conversation with Jesus and hear him ask if you still love him more than anything else.

Take a few moments to silently reflect. What things in your life would you consider failures? Be especially attentive to patterns of failure that feel like they are part of your life. Write them down and acknowledge them before God. The first step to getting out of the dumpster is seeing what's in it. After a time of silence, open a tender space for those who want to share.



WEEK 1: FAILURE TO FRUIT



PATTERNS OF FAILURE

REPLACE:

The second step in our partnership with God is the work of pruning and replacing. Paul gives us the image of someone exchanging soiled clothes for clean in Colossians 3. This is the kind of work that God wants to do in your life. God is not content to simply identify the trash in our lives; God desires to give us restoration and health in its place.

Jesus does not just forgive Peter; he replaces his pattern of failure with a call to fruitful service. That is what Jesus wants to do in your life. Think about the failure and forgiveness stories we shared at the beginning. Has one of them perhaps become the foundation for a pattern of fruitfulness? If you have such a story, consider sharing it as an encouragement to the group.

Now look at the patterns of failure you identified in the previous action step. Can you imagine that through the grace of Jesus those patterns could be transformed into patterns of fruitfulness? In the space below, take some notes of what those patterns might be.

PATTERNS OF FRUITFULNESS


If you are feeling bold, please share with your group one pattern of failure that you believe could be transformed by God into a pattern of fruitfulness.



REACH OUT:

The third step of our partnership with God is to reach out to godly people for help. Most of us cannot break embedded patterns of failure without help from God and from godly people. This is how God made us. And when we refuse help from allies and experts it usually means that we will persist in those patterns.

For some of us, this will be a very new skill. Lots of us aren't very good at asking for help. To help us get started with this skill consider these three questions:

- 
- Who can help you understand and admit your failures?
 - Is there someone you need to reach out to for help?
 - How can this group be an ally for you?

Share any idea you have about how to answer these questions.


In the coming weeks, the challenge will increase as we seek the allies and experts we need to experience the fruitfulness that God has planned for each of us. If you're doing this study in a group, you're already doing this step. Celebrate that you're reaching out simply by interacting with this concept together.

Commit to attending this group every week as a way of Reaching Out in this journey.

RESURRECT:

The fourth step of our partnership with God in this dumpster diving work is called resurrection. In this step we recognize that the true reclaiming power is the power of God. We must surrender our lives over to God's grace and power to experience the complete redemption of our failures.

We believe the kind of living and active restoration we see in the life of Simon Peter is available to us. Post-resurrection conversations can happen in our living rooms, or on our front porches, or in the middle of the night. All of us need a conversation with Jesus where we can acknowledge our failure and be invited into fruitfulness.



WEEK 1: FAILURE TO FRUIT



This week, use the following prayer practice to invite the resurrection power of God into your areas of failure.

PRAYER PRACTICE:

Every day, set aside a space and time to pray Psalm 51. Go slow. Leave some quiet space along the way.

Notice how David, like Peter, looks for a way for his failure to become fruitful. He wants to show other sinners a way forward. Echo his hope in your prayer. Through this prayer, we give our failures over to God and trust that by his power, we can experience fruitfulness.

CLOSING:

We have jumped into the deep end this week because there is important and exciting work to be done in the dumpsters of our lives. Instead of hauling away trash, this is where God wants to redeem and reclaim what we thought was lost. Before we close in prayer, think about the next few weeks you have together as a group.

How do you hope God transforms you on this dumpster diving journey?

Now close your time together using a portion of the prayer exercise for this week.

PSALM 51:1-2,10-12

*Have mercy on us, O God,
according to your unfailing
love;*

*according to your great
compassion
blot out our
transgressions.*

*Wash away all our
iniquity
and cleanse us from our
sin...*

*Create in us a pure heart, O
God,*

*and renew a steadfast spirit
within us.*

*Do not cast us from your
presence
or take your Holy Spirit from us.
Restore to us the joy of your
salvation*

*and grant us a willing spirit,
to sustain us.*



A top-down photograph of a broken computer keyboard. The keyboard is white with grey keys. Several keys are missing, and the orange plastic casing is shattered into many pieces. Several incandescent light bulbs are scattered around the keyboard, some broken and some intact. In the center of the keyboard, a simple black stick figure is standing on a key. The figure has its arms raised and is holding a small object, possibly a pen or pencil, near its head. The text "SUFFERING TO COMFORT" is printed in large, bold, black letters across the middle of the keyboard, partially overlapping the stick figure.

**SUFFERING
TO COMFORT**



MONDAY

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

Paul floats a big idea to his friends in Corinth: the consolation we feel in our suffering is not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others. Every difficult thing we endure can become a gift we give away. Consider this idea today: when has someone else offered you comfort or consolation? How did they know what you needed? Can you trace what they offered to you back to a source of pain? Look for a trail of God's comfort that made its way to you. Is there someone else who needs the comfort given to you?

TUESDAY

REVELATION 21:1-6

John's vision on Patmos allows him to see the possibility of a world without suffering, a world where every headline has been edited to good news. Let yourself imagine this for a while with him today. How would we live together in a world like this? How would we move around? How would we sing?

Bonus Exercise: Prayerfully, write down a list of the ways you see suffering in your life and in the world. Reread Revelation 21:1-6 and as you read, tear the paper to remind you that God will one day heal the suffering we experience.

WEDNESDAY

JOEL 2:23-32

The comfort will outmatch the suffering. This is the promise Joel speaks from God. It's the promise Peter echoes in Acts 2: there is a future possible where the powerless will feel empowered. The restoration will cover everything as small as the summer lost to bug invasions and as wide as the hunger of all of humanity. We want to fast forward to this restoration but since we can't, let's sit today with something lost, knowing it will be found.

THURSDAY

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-12

It is true we suffer. It is true we feel like we're in a dumpster on fire. It is true we sometimes feel crushed under the weight of difficult things. It is true even Jesus had the life beaten out of him. But it is also true his life was restored. And so it can be true that we don't stay crushed. It can be true that suffering will not have the last word. Maybe you have already learned this before and just need to remember it with Paul today. Where have you seen resurrection stronger than suffering? Where do you want to see it today? Pray for all you've seen and hope to see.

FRIDAY

LAMENTATIONS 3:16-26

This chapter from the prophets makes a dramatic turn. One minute he feels like his teeth are being crushed in the driveway and the next minute he's singing about the faithfulness of God. Scripture is not afraid to describe the darkness. Or the mercy of a brand new morning. Copy Lamentations 3:22-24 on a piece of paper and keep it with you today. Throughout the day as you acknowledge the struggles of our lives, take it out and read to remember that God's hope is greater.

PREPARE

In the world right now, the image of a dumpster fire is used all the time to describe how life feels. There are memes of dumpster fires all over the internet. Why do you think this is how so many people see the world these days? (Don't get lost in your lament of the world. Just notice and move forward.)



Tell a story about a time you received comfort. How were you suffering? What did other people offer you? Maybe you were a kid and someone brought you comic books. Or maybe you were grieving and someone listened to you. Think about how the comfort kept you going.



REFLECT

WATCH VIDEO #2: [FCC-JC.ORG/DUMPSTER](https://www.fcc-jc.org/dumpster)

The speaker reminded us that suffering is real, but the comfort of God will have the final word. When in your life have you needed to remember that promise? Think about areas in your life where you have seen this proven true. What are other areas where you are still hoping for God to accomplish a work of comfort to match the reality of the suffering?

The speaker taught, "If you know suffering, and you will, and then you know comforting, and you will, you have something to give away." How have you experienced this? What have you given away?

By the grace of God, our suffering can become a spiritual resource. How comfortable are you with this idea? Have you seen it happen? What would God need to do in your life for you to experience your suffering as a treasure that you could use to serve and help others?

STUDY

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18.



Paul is frank about the reality of suffering. This makes sense considering his story of imprisonment, persecution, harassment, false arrest and various other struggles. But he argues that our experience of suffering and weakness makes the power of God more obvious in his life. How do you see that still be true today?

In verses 17 and 18 of the chapter, Paul describes a strategy for facing suffering. What is that strategy?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Verse 4 contains a wonderful promise of how God will treat us when we suffer and a calling about how we can then serve others.

What is that promise?

What is the calling?

How does this invitation coupled with the promise make sure that our suffering is not wasted but is instead turned from trash to treasure?

RESPOND

Last week we introduced the process of dumpster diving. Consult the appendix on page 46 for more information about how this process will work. Break into groups of 3-4 to go through this process together.





RECOGNIZE:

The first step in our partnership with God is recognition. As we bring our suffering before God today, take a moment to acknowledge the hardships you have faced. What still weighs on you today? It may be painful to recognize these sufferings. Give yourself grace. Go slow as you notice these areas of pain.

REPLACE:

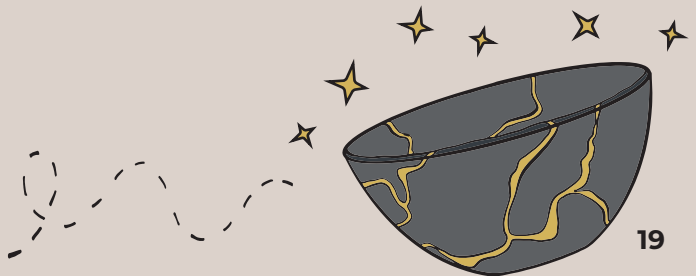
The second step in our partnership with God is the work of replacing. God meets us in our suffering by bringing us comfort.

We want to steward our suffering and share the comfort we have received with others. Look at your answers in the Recognize section. How did you receive comfort in those circumstances?

If you are ready, how could you share that comfort with others?

Is there a particular type of suffering in the world that gets your attention—something that makes you cry? Or something where you know the pain?

Is there someone who may need encouragement right now? (Hint: they do.)



REACH OUT:

When it comes to suffering, we all need help figuring out how to get through it. Who do you need to reach out to? You may need an expert like a counselor or pastor. We all need allies. You can find allies in support groups like Grief Journey and AA, or in small groups and other communities.

At FCC, you can always reach out to our staff counselor Lisa Blankenship to figure out the next step to take (lblankenship@fcc-jc.org, 423-232-5703).

Who are some allies or experts who have helped you through suffering in the past? What allies or experts do you need to reach out to today?

Remember that one way you can “reach out” is by staying committed to this group. Continue prioritizing this group as a way of staying connected to others through this journey of dumpster diving.

Sometimes we assume that comforting other people is a gift we either have or don't have. We don't always think about it as a skill we can learn and develop. Who do you know who is particularly good at offering comfort? What do you see in their lives?



WEEK 2: SUFFERING TO COMFORT



RESURRECT:

The fourth step of our partnership with God is resurrection. In this step, we remember that God is the originator of all comfort. We are only able to offer comfort to others, because of the hope we hold in the promises of God.

Consider two lists for prayer. (These might repeat from your earlier lists.)

Where do you need the comfort of God right now?

Where have you been comforted in a way that you can share?

This week take these to God in prayer every day. Ask God to comfort you and to create opportunities for you to comfort others as you have been comforted.

CLOSING:

This week is an opportunity for you to go dumpster diving; to see what you imagine is only trash turned into treasure as you bring comfort to others with comfort you have received. If you have a specific work of comfort that you are ready to do, share that with the group.

Prayer: Look back at your lists from above. If you are ready, share one item from each list as a prayer request to the group. Spend a moment praying for one another to receive and share the comfort of God.

DOOM-SCROLLING OF DIFFERENCE- MAKING



MONDAY

MARK 5:1-20

He spent every day in a place without life, beauty, or company. Of course he forgot who he really was. And if we're not careful, the same could happen to us if we lose ourselves in an endless spiral of social media, facebook updates and national news. Some call this cycle doom-scrolling because we just keep swiping our phones hoping for something good to show up on the screens. What gets your time and attention? What shapes how you see the world? It's telling that the disciples are not frightened by the man running wild in the tombs: they are frightened when they see that same man at peace. Maybe they too had forgotten how to hope.

TUESDAY

MATTHEW 4:18-20

Peter and Andrew had probably been told to hold onto those nets their whole life. They knew those nets meant food for them and for their neighbors. If they let go, their whole future would drift out to sea. But something about this invitation from Jesus loosened their grip and they set the nets down. Jesus had other uses for their keen eyes and strong hands. What are you holding that might be useful in new ways? Name a specific strength that God could move from making a living to making a difference.

WEDNESDAY

1 CORINTHIANS 12

Think of something your body is able to do that you never even notice —something like breathing or recovering from a cut. How does Paul's great metaphor come to life for you right now? What does someone else do that you need to appreciate more? When do you feel like you are helping the church stand or move or work? Claim the promise of 1 Corinthians 12:7: You are gifted by God's Spirit for the good of God's people.

THURSDAY

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

We were designed to do good work. Whatever else our lives have been, this is the dream God has for us. However broken or dead our lives are today, in Christ they can be made whole and alive. This is what's possible for us through the mercy of Christ Jesus. What would it look like for you today if you knew for sure that you could be God's masterpiece, created to do good works? What would you put behind you? What would be ahead of you?

FRIDAY

EXODUS 1:8-22

The king of Egypt thought he had power and the Hebrew midwives didn't. He didn't see how the way they spent their lives, serving and assisting the birth of new life, gave them a front row seat to the true power of God. Shiphrah and Puah had a lot of practice at making something brand new. They could have sat around bemoaning the injustice of Pharaoh, but instead they found a way to use their gifts to make a difference. It didn't look glamorous for them to change the world, but they showed up even in the mundane. Where do you need to show up today, knowing God can use your gifts to make a difference?



PREPARE

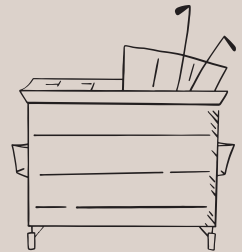
Let's share our party tricks! What's your secret skill that you hardly ever get to show off? Can you bend your elbow in a way you're not supposed to? Can you mimic the call of the Laughing Kookaburra? If possible, let's see a demonstration! The more ridiculous the better.

In addition to the brilliance you all just demonstrated, you have other skills. When have you surprisingly found yourself in the right place at the right time with the right information or skill? Tell that story.



REFLECT

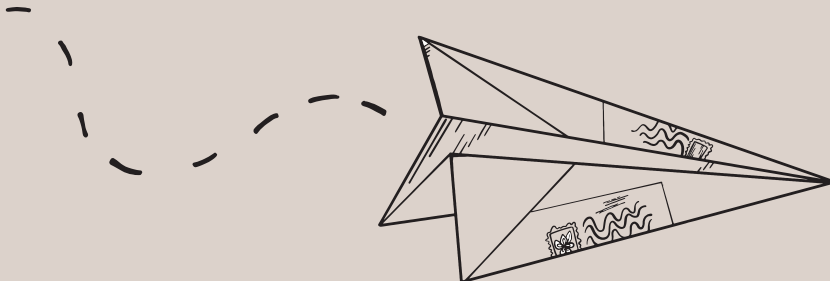
WATCH VIDEO #3: [FCC-JC.ORG/DUMPSTER](https://www.fcc-jc.org/dumpster)



The speaker referred to patterns of uselessness that are common in our world today. How do these same patterns affect you? Where do you see this in your community?

Shiphrah and Puah are remembered thousands of years later because their simple obedience to God made a huge difference. How do you see that principle still at work today?

What are some of the temptations of evil or idleness that you see tempt you and others to throw away their potential to make a positive difference in the world?





GROUP STUDY

STUDY

Paul talks about being dead in transgressions. What does that look like? What behaviors are demonstrations of this death?

According to the text, what does God do for us?

The text says that we're made new in Jesus for a purpose. What is that purpose?

RESPOND

Break into groups of 3-4 to go through the Dumpster Diving process together. Consult the appendix on page 46 for more details about this process.

RECOGNIZE:

What gets your time and attention? What patterns of idleness or uselessness are you trapped in?

In the Ephesians text, Paul writes that they once belonged to the things of death. What could that look like in our lives? Where do you see the deadly forces of evil or idleness at work in your life?

REPLACE:

The midwives get to play a giant part in God's story by using skills they've developed over the years and probably thought of as routine. What are some abilities you have that could further the story of God in the world? Say them out loud!

What practice or habit do you currently have that is a consistent waste of your time, talents or treasures that could be replaced with a practice that uses those same gifts to make a difference in the world?

REACH OUT:

Who can help you replace your patterns of idleness? Is there something your group can do together? Brainstorm how you can help each other.

Remember, you're already making progress in this area by showing up to this group. In small groups, you can team up to make a difference in the world. At FCC, our hope for small groups is that you would encourage one another to follow Jesus and to use your gifts to serve the kingdom of God. You can even serve together!



GROUP STUDY

- Has someone made a difference in your life in a way that might have seemed small to them but was giant to you? Is there a way you could keep that gift going?
- Where do you see someone living like a God-written poem described in Ephesians 2? Could you let them know you see it?
- Draw a line between something you know how to do and a felt need for other people.

RESURRECT:

We have dealt this week with the temptation to doom-scroll, either as a literal practice on our phone, or as a filter we put over the world, or ourselves. We sometimes look around the world and only see the forces of death instead of the forces of life.

Let's start a different practice together:

What if we scroll-prayed instead? What if we picked a feed, a Facebook feed, or a newsfeed filled with headlines and we prayed through it together?

We can look for pain and ask God to show up in it.

We can look for cause for praise and share it together.

Pray through this week's headlines. Look for ways God might be working or for places where we need to get to work. Let prayer be your filter.

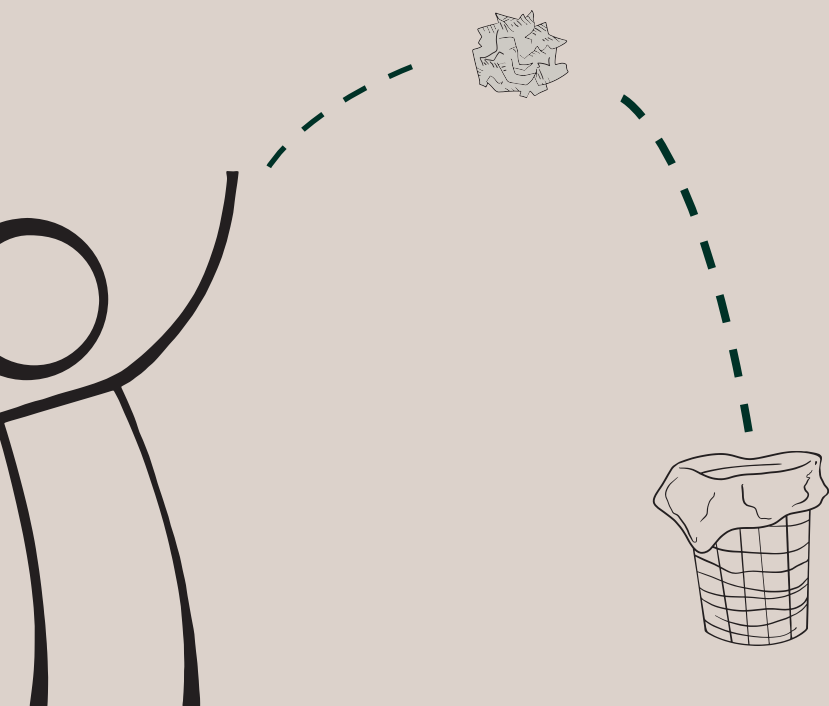
CLOSING:

Make a decision to confront the practices of idleness that prevent you from the difference-making life that God has for you. Maybe it will be scroll praying or maybe some other change. But share with the group one way you want to move toward difference-making this week.

As a blessing on each other, close your time with this prayer from Hebrews 13. Notice that it is a prayer that God will equip us to do the work of God with our lives.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Note for next week: Next week we'll start out with a brief time of show and tell. Bring an object that looks like trash to other people, or at least looks like it's not very valuable, but it is a treasure to you. Be ready to share why that thing is important.



A top-down view of a cluttered desk. The desk is covered with various electronic devices and cables. In the top left, there is a power strip with several outlets, some of which are plugged with black power cables. Next to it is a black telephone keypad. To the right, there are several colorful cables (red, yellow, blue) plugged into a device. In the center, there is a black smartphone with a cracked screen. To its left is a green printed circuit board (PCB) with various components. Below the smartphone is a silver digital camera. In the bottom left, there is a green keyboard. In the bottom right, there is a black Dell keyboard. A silver power supply unit is visible on the right side. Several CD-ROMs are scattered across the desk. The overall scene is one of digital clutter and obsolescence.

Organized
**FLEETING
TO FOREVER**

MONDAY

PHILIPPIANS 3:4-11

This passage contains one of the best uses of trash in the Bible! Are there things about yourself that are the first thing you want people to know? Paul has a list like that too. But Paul believed even some of the very best things about him looked like garbage when they were held up next to a life in Christ. Of course, if we look at his whole story, all those parts of Paul were crucial when they were used in service to Christ. He used the fleeting things in his life to serve Jesus' eternal mission. Consider your own boasting list: what could Jesus do with it, if you were willing to give it up for him?

TUESDAY

LUKE 19:1-10

Something about the presence of Jesus in his home made Zacchaeus reconsider all of his decisions. It changed all of his math and his calculations. Imagine Jesus sitting with you in a place that is home to you. Maybe he's looking through your pictures, your bookshelves. Maybe he sneaks a look inside your hall closets or your "batteries/junk/pens that don't work" drawer. He's in your space. Would you see your space differently? If so, how? How would you respond to this renewed look on your space?

WEDNESDAY

LUKE 12:13-21

This story had to cause some backlash when Jesus told it. If they had social media back then, they would have posted their hot takes. Jesus is being #unrealistic. #Irresponsible. Or is he being #wise? So many of his stories are sneaky. Why do we think he tells this one? Is there something you are sure you could never have enough of?

THURSDAY

ACTS 9:36-43

Imagine being so known for your generosity and compassion that people rearrange the rules of death to try and keep you alive. This is Tabitha's story. A whole host of "saints and widows" celebrated her life and wanted it to keep going. They are only clothed because she used her gifts to take care of them. Those are the kinds of stories people tell forever.

Whose legacies are important to you? What makes these legacies worth remembering? What would it look like for you to invest your life in things that will last beyond your lifetime?

FRIDAY

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10, 17-19

This passage presents us with bold promises and humbling reminders. We're promised that we can take hold of the life that is truly life. And we're promised access to a treasure that will last forever. At the same time, we're reminded that we don't get to bring anything out of this world. Our wealth is fleeting and can even lead us into evil. These teachings carry eternal weight. What does 1 Timothy teach us to do with the resources we have? What treasures in your life are fleeting? What treasures are forever?



PREPARE

Is there something in your life that looks like trash to other people, or at least looks like it's not very valuable, but it is a treasure to you? Tell the story of why that thing is important.

If you don't have an item, talk about it or show a picture.

How do we decide what's meaningful or valuable in our lives? Is there something you used to think had high or low value, but you've changed your mind?



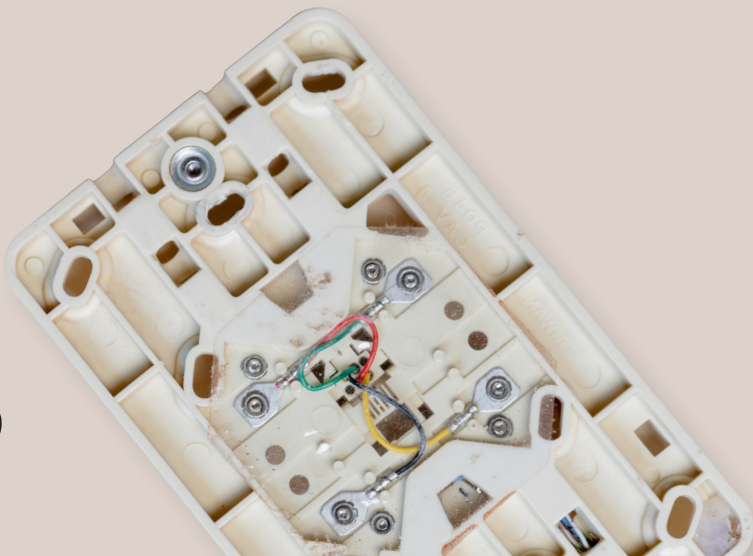
REFLECT

WATCH VIDEO #4: FCC-JC.ORG/DUMPSTER

The speaker said, "Life requires accessories. But if we're not careful the accessories can become our lives." What things in our lives should be categorized as accessories?

Have you ever confused your stuff with your self? What things can we be tempted to place our identity in? What makes these things so enticing?

Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus led to tangible life change. What do you think made Zacchaeus change that day?



STUDY

READ LUKE 12:13-21.

What does it mean to be rich toward God?

What do you think the rich man should have done with his abundance? How could he turn what was fleeting into something with eternal significance?

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-12, 17-19

This passage describes the dangers of loving money and riches. What does it warn can happen when we chase those things?

What happens when we put our hope in God?

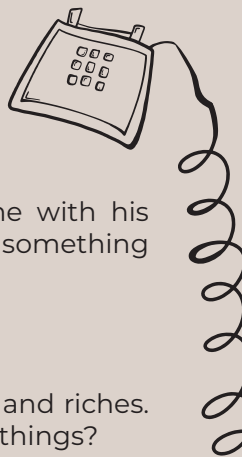
According to this text, what things are fleeting? What lasts forever?

RESPOND

Break into groups of 3-4 to go through the Dumpster Diving process together. Consult the appendix on page 46 for more details about this process.

RECOGNIZE:

Think about how you invest your life - where do you spend the most time? What do you spend the most money or energy on? List these things below.



Which of these are making a purely temporary impact? Which are accessories that make the present life more pleasant but will have no eternal significance?

Consider what areas you may be idolizing. Are any of these at risk of becoming identity markers for you? What things on this list are fleeting?

REPLACE:

If you had to make a list of what you have in your life that will matter forever, what would be on that list?

Is there anything in your life that is just a fleeting resource but it could potentially matter forever if you used it differently?



REACH OUT:

Do you know a Zacchaeus? Do you know someone who is faithful with the way they use their resources? Call this expert and ask what they've learned about the faithfulness of God.

What partners do you need to turn your fleeting treasures into forever treasures?

RESURRECT:

This is an area where many of us feel some degree of shame or guilt. We may also experience fear. We keep stuff close sometimes because it makes us feel more secure. We worry about our retirement funds and taking care of our families. This is serious business. And so is generosity.



WEEK 4: FLEETING TO FOREVER

Make this a matter of prayer together.

If you need a model, use the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13.

**Our Father who is in heaven, holy is your name,
your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we have forgiven our debtors.
Do not lead us into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.**

CLOSING:

This part of the Dumpster Diving journey can be hard to accept. We've learned today that some of the things we value most will actually go in the dumpster someday. Those things are fleeting. What is one next step you can take this week to invest your life in things that will last rather than in what is fleeting?



MONDAY

ROMANS 8:38-39

Paul claims here that nothing in your past or present can prevent what God intends to do in your future. Think of what threatens your trust in the love of God. Consider what puts distance between you and that faithful love. Recognize those possible futures that cause you fear. Paul promises that none of that is more powerful than the unstoppable love of God for you. All that is your past is merely the prologue to what God wants to do in your future.

TUESDAY

1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

Paul writes about the power of grace and mercy with great confidence. He knows in his own bones how grace can change a person. He has felt his violent impulses turn to love. Is there an area of your own life or someone else's story who helps you hold onto this truth?

WEDNESDAY

JOHN 8:1-11

This woman finds herself in what many of us would consider a nightmare: she's in the center of a circle and the crowds are filling it up with her shame. They are telling her that she is defined by her past. If you have the stomach for it, put yourself in her place for a minute. Where do you hear voices like that today? Consider how different is the voice of Jesus who tells her and everyone listening that we do not need to be trapped and condemned for our past mistakes.



THURSDAY

LUKE 5:27-32

Jesus says it in a thousand ways: He is here to call “sinners to repentance.” In this story, he says it to people who are in the middle of a party, but he directs his words toward the ones in the crowd who are mad about the party. Since repentance essentially means “turning around,” Jesus is offering them a chance to go in a new direction - for their lives to take a new shape or direction. A chance for a new beginning. Make a list of all the shapes/directions repentance could take.

FRIDAY

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

Through Jesus, you are a new creation. Throughout this study we have learned that God can take our failures, our sufferings, our temporary treasures, and our past, and turn it into something good. At the feet of Jesus, everything is redeemed. We are reconciled to God, and set free to live a new life, while reconciling others to God. How will you live as Christ's ambassador? As we conclude this journey, jot down how God is prompting you today. Don't get back in the dumpster and waste this journey. Reach out to someone today and make a plan for living out the message of reconciliation.



PREPARE

We're going to be thinking about our stories this week and the kind of stories God tells. If we really think about it, most of us hope we are living inside of a story, one that makes sense and is going to come to a good ending.

Think about the stories you've loved. They might be movies or tv shows or books. If you could live inside one story for the rest of your life, which story would you choose? Why would you choose that one?

What's a favorite story you find yourself telling often? It could be about you, or your family, or something you saw happen. Why do you think you repeat this particular story?



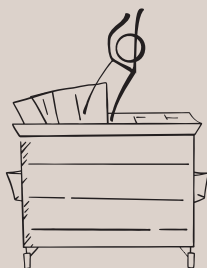
REFLECT

WATCH VIDEO #5: FCC-JC.ORG/DUMPSTER

We have all seen this happen in the lives of others. Who is someone that inspires you who has taken a difficult past and turned it into the prologue for a powerful and purposeful work for God?

The speaker said, "Your past is not a prison. It is the prologue to the good work that God has prepared for you." Do you believe this? Are you trusting God to accomplish this? Do you treat others like the same is true of them?

What is one area of your redeemed past that you have already seen God use as a prologue for present and future ministry?



STUDY

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17 TOGETHER.

What does Paul's story teach us about the grace of God? How does God treat "the worst of sinners"?

What is Paul's "before" story? How did he treat others before his transformation?

Describe Paul's ministry. How did God use his life? What changes in Paul's life would others see?

How does Paul describe God? What attributes describe who God is?

RESPOND

Break into groups of 3-4 to go through the Dumpster Diving process together. Consult the appendix on page 46 for more details about this process.



RECOGNIZE:

Recognize the things in your past that feel like they're holding you back. Is there a pattern or trait of yours that feels like it's held you captive?

Is there a piece of your past that currently feels like a prison that you would ask God to turn into a prologue of future ministry and fruitfulness and blessing to others? Try to write a few specific examples down.

REPLACE:

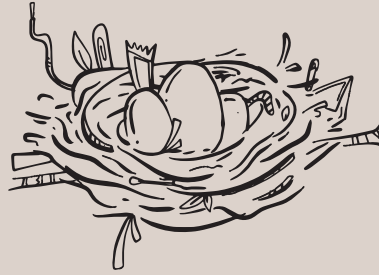
An important step in moving from past to prologue is repentance. Repentance simply means turning around. Going in a new direction. As you look at the pieces of your past and present, what direction do you need to travel in to turn around? To repent? List next steps that would turn you around and move you in a new direction. This can be anything from creating a new schedule to attend church to not drinking or to ending a bad habit.

REACH OUT:

We sometimes think of Paul as a solitary figure, but the Bible points out a whole community of people who were around him, not just in one moment but over the course of his whole life.

Name the people who are a part of your own story: Who encouraged you? Who taught you? Who are you currently encouraging or teaching?

Your past that you want to turn into a prologue depends on having people around you. As we wrap up this study, make a plan for how you'll stay connected. Will your group continue? If not, will you join another group? Jesus calls us to follow him in community. How will you obey Jesus and stay connected to a Christian community? Consult page 48 together as you discuss the future of your group.



RESURRECT:

As we reach the conclusion of Dumpster Diving, we remember that this journey is only possible through the grace of God.

Pray Ephesians 3:14-21 together, celebrating that God's power is always at work in us and that God's love dwells in us.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

CLOSING:

As we finish this study together, use this time to call out and celebrate what you've seen together.

- What did you learn from someone else?
- What did you gain from the text?
- What did you gain from this season of Dumpster Diving? What looks different to you today?

Name something you hope to keep up with after this time is over.

Pray together with these answers in mind. Thank God for what's behind you, what's within you, and what's ahead.

THE DUMPSTER DIVING PROCESS

Dumpster diving can be overwhelming if we do it without any guidance. Throughout this study, we'll be using this dumpster diving process to help us bring our dumpsters before God and work together to see how God can redeem our trash. Each week, during your group study, you'll go through this process together.

RECOGNIZE:

The first step in the process of dumpster diving with God is recognition. We begin by being honest that we all have a dumpster - places where we feel broken or bad, hurt or stuck. We notice and become aware of these places. This step will involve confession and truth telling before God as well as transparency with others.

REPLACE:

The second step in our partnership with God is the work of replacing. Paul gives us the image of someone exchanging soiled clothes for clean ones in Colossians 3. This is the kind of work that God wants to do in your life. God is not content to simply identify the trash in our lives; God desires to give us restoration and health in its place. This step will direct us to consider how we can replace wasteful patterns with life-giving ones.



REACH OUT:

The third step of our partnership with God is to reach out to godly people for help. In our dumpster diving we need allies and experts. Experts are specialists like pastors and counselors who can give us wisdom about the reclaiming work God wants to do in our lives. Allies are the essential spiritual friends who will wade through the trash in our lives because they know that God is at work.

One of the ways we can find allies is by joining a small group. If you're not doing this study in a group, reach out to Andrea Hodges (423-722-7220, ahodges@fcc-jc.org) to get connected to one. Commit to attending a group every week as a way of reaching out in partnership with God.

If you're in need of an expert and not sure where to get started, reach out to Lisa Blankenship, our staff counselor at 423-232-5703 or lblankenship@fcc-jc.org.

Most of us cannot break free from our dumpsters without help from God and from godly people. This is how God made us. And when we refuse help from allies and experts it usually means that we will persist in those patterns.

RESURRECT:

The fourth step of our partnership with God in this dumpster diving work is called resurrection. In this step we recognize that the true reclaiming power is the power of God. All the other steps matter, but the power of our healing and new life is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. (Ephesians 1). We must surrender our lives over to God's grace and power to experience the complete redemption God offers. We will close every week by turning our attention toward God's redemptive work in our lives. Only God is good enough to heal and redeem and reclaim and restore our whole lives so that what is garbage to us today can one day be eternally glorious.

NEXT STEPS

Don't let the journey stop here! God's redemptive work is just beginning, and we want to continue partnering with God as we see just how healed and redeemed and reclaimed this world and our lives can be.

Consider continuing your group after finishing this study. Groups give us all allies in discipleship, as we learn and grow to be more like Jesus. Here are 4 studies you could try next:

- **Jesus in our Generation by Ben Stuart**
- **How to Read your Bible by Jenni Allen**
- **The Gospel of Mark by Francis Chan**
- **Philippians by Jo Saxton**

If you want to continue your group, the FCC Groups team would love to help you make that possible!

Reach out to Andrea Hodges for help with the following:

- Help reserving space at the church
- Access to RightNow Media for access to the studies above and hundreds more
- Resources on leading a small group from good icebreaker questions to ways you can serve the community together

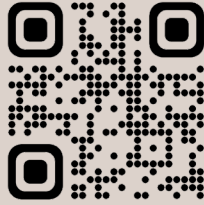
Be sure to think about new people you can invite to join you.



Need an expert?

Perhaps this journey revealed that it's time for you to bring an expert into your life. For counseling help, a list of support and recovery groups and more, contact Lisa Blankenship (lblankenship@fcc-jc.org, 423-232-5703). Our care team can help you discern where to get started.

For more ideas on next steps, scan the QR code below.



THANK YOU

Thank you for going through the Dumpster Diving process with us! We hope and pray this experience transforms you to live the life God has for you.

What next steps do you need to take? Unsure about what to do? Have questions? Contact Andrea Hodges

(423-722-7220 or ahodges@fcc-jc.org).





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