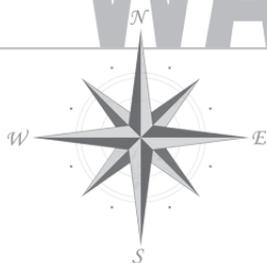


# FINDING

5 Awakenings  
to Your New Life

# YOUR

# WAY BACK



# TO GOD

DAVE FERGUSON &  
JON FERGUSON



MULTNOMAH  
BOOKS

**SESSION 3**

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FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO GOD PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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## Session 3



# AWAKENING TO HELP

**“I can’t do this on my own.”**

## Session 3 Big Idea:

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Until we admit that we are powerless on our own to find fulfillment in this life, we will never truly find our way back to God. But once we recognize our need for help, we have already made the turn that leads us home to our heavenly Father. If you're like every other person, you'll try to go it on your own many times in the years to come. You'll even try to please and serve God on your own—and that won't work either. You and I can't do it on our own, and that is very good to know. Let your awakening to your need for help continue to shape your choices in the years ahead. Help has a name. His name is Jesus. And he will never leave you. Every time you turn away from self-centeredness and pride, he will be there to rescue, strengthen, and guide you on your journey with him.

If possible, please read chapters 9–11 of *Finding Your Way Back to God* before participating in session 3.

### OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER

Share a funny story about a time when you got into a jam and needed help. This could be a story about your car getting stuck in the snow, getting a bracelet caught in your hair, or something like that.

### OPENING THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

Tell about a time when you tried to make a fresh start of some kind in your life—a new job, a new relationship, break a bad habit, or improve yourself—and failed. Looking back, why do you think it didn't work?



## BIBLE DISCUSSION

Read Luke 15:14–20. This part of Jesus's story shows how the son humbled himself and went looking for the help he needed to start over again.

<sup>14</sup>After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup>I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." <sup>20</sup>So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

4. When the son realized he needed some help, who did he think of, and why?

5. What kind of reaction did the young man expect from his father? What kind of reaction did he actually get?

6. What does the reaction by this father (representing God) teach you about having the confidence to return to God?



## OPTIONAL PERSONAL DECISION TIME

It's time to “come to your senses” and realize you need help to get out of the cycle of longing, disappointment, and regret. You don't have enough willpower to change on your own. Instead, you must surrender to the One who wants more for your life than you could ever imagine. Help has a name—*Jesus*.

Do one of two things:

(a) If you have never turned your life over to Jesus, do that now. In prayer, simply surrender to him, request forgiveness for your sins, and ask him to be your Leader forever.

OR

(b) If you are already a follower of Jesus, but have become estranged from him in some way, tell him that you want to recommit your life to him. Ask for his help to put you back on the path of walking with him through life.

## EXPANDED BIBLE DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 11:28–30, where Jesus issues an invitation to the “weary and burdened”—people for whom the life they have pursued on their own is proving harder and more disappointing than they anticipated.

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and



Read Romans 7:21–8:4. Here the apostle Paul talks about what finally cut through the knot of his spiritual frustration.

<sup>21</sup>I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup>For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup>but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. <sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

3. What is Paul frustrated about in verses 21–24? How do you relate to this frustration?

4. Although Paul failed to earn the acceptance of the heavenly Father through trying hard to obey religious rules, what finally worked for him?

## AFTER THE SESSION

Sometime after participating in session 3, find some quiet time to spend alone in a peaceful place with Scripture, your own thoughts, and prayer.

Read the following Scripture passage (John 3:16–21):

<sup>16</sup>God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. <sup>19</sup>This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Underline one or more lines in the above passage that mean the most to you.

Think about these questions: *Why do I need a Savior to rescue me out of my separation from God? Am I at a place where I am ready to trust in Jesus, the Son of God, to bring me into the light of God's presence?*

Pray the following prayer:

**God, if you are real,  
make yourself real to me.  
Awaken in me the willingness  
to turn toward you for help.** 

As you continue to pray, tell God about your desires to move beyond the failures of your past and to begin a new life with him.

## Session 3

# Awakening to Help

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*Objective:* To help participants realize they need to admit they are powerless on their own to find fulfillment in life and they need to go to Jesus for help.

What you need for this session:

- At least one copy of the book *Finding Your Way Back to God* to refer to if needed
- The *Finding Your Way Back to God* DVD
- A DVD player and a screen on which the whole group can watch video 3
- Bibles for yourself and the other participants

## OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER

If you choose to use this week's icebreaker, let the participants know that the theme of this session is the need for help.

## OPENING THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

*Question 1:* Some group members may want to talk about fairly inconsequential attempts to make a fresh start, such as losing weight by going on a diet. That's okay. But try to elicit at least one example of a more serious need to start over in life, such as moving past an addiction or recovering from a divorce.

## VIDEO DISCUSSION

*Questions 2 and 3:* After playing the video, use these questions to help group members react to what they saw.

## BIBLE DISCUSSION

*Questions 4 to 6:* The son recognized that he needed help, and so he went home to his father. Likewise, we must turn to God when we need a fresh start in life. And just as the father in the story was immediately welcoming to the son, so we can trust that God will receive us with open arms when we return to him.

## LIFE APPLICATION DISCUSSION

*Questions 7 and 8:* Try to help the group members be honest with themselves about their need for help from God. After all, the awakening to help is *the* turning point on the path back to God! Either your fellow group members will pass successfully through this turning point and find their way to the Father who loves them or they will turn back into useless regret and disappointment.

## OPTIONAL PERSONAL DECISION TIME

Use this as a concluding activity if you have time and want the group members to make a personal response to the discussion you've been having.

Invite the group members to scatter to different spots in your meeting area to do business with God individually. If you believe that some members of the group need to put their faith in Jesus for the first time, offer to pray with them. Or pair them with other mature followers of Christ. Encourage all others to recommit themselves to following Jesus. Offer to provide further help and guidance after the session to anyone who might want it.

## EXPANDED BIBLE DISCUSSION

If you have time in the session to discuss more of the Bible, use one or both of the passages in this expanded material. (You may wish to insert these questions following the discussion of Luke 15:17–20 in questions four to six above.)

*Expanded questions 1 and 2:* Help the group members see themselves as those who are “weary and burdened” with regrets. Jesus calls us to him and is eager to lift our burdens from us.

*Expanded questions 3 and 4:* The theology here is pretty heavy, so you may want to get out your Bible and read the context surrounding the quoted verses. But the key point is straightforward: As much as we may try to do what’s right in our own strength, we are ultimately incapable of acting in a way that’s perfectly correct. Yet we are not hopelessly trapped in condemnation because of our failure. We can be freed by the grace available in Christ. Thanks be to God!

## CLOSING PRAYER

Invite group members to contribute prayers of thanks and praise to God for providing help for us through his Son, Jesus.

## PREVIEW OF THE NEXT SESSION

Tell the group members something like this: “God loves us! That’s so amazing that it can be hard for us to accept. So session 4 is all about learning to live out our new identity as God’s beloved sons and daughters.”