

"Fight the good fight of faith"

- 1 Timothy 6:12



Welcome to Fight Clubs!

"I'm tired of trying to get better, but feeling like I just keep getting worse." Men, we are in a fight. The problem is that we often don't know how to identify the enemy, and we don't know how to engage in the battle. The good news, though, is also two-fold. First, Jesus has taken care of everything. Second, he has placed the help you need right around you.

There is nothing you can do to change the fact that Jesus died for your sins according to the Scripture, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This is what Jesus has done to take care of everything. The great variable in our lives is how this truth is applied. Is it just a bit of info floating around out there or does it become the very center of our lives? This is where we need to call on the help that Jesus has given to us. You remember; the help we need that is right around us.

God has given us a lot of helps that can be used to know him more and to win the battle. This booklet highlights two of those helps: God's Word and God's Church. When we begin to learn how to handle that big book called the Bible, and we begin to do so in the company of other guys who are doing the same thing, we begin to see some pretty cool things happen. The enemy begins to be more clearly seen. Once this happens, we begin to learn just how to do battle.



There are no experts here. No professionals can give you the three steps to figuring it all out. Gurus need not apply. What we have in the church is a bunch of men who have a desire in them (even if that desire is faint and buried deeply) to connect to their God and have some sense made of their lives and this world. If you see yourself fitting this mold then would you allow me to introduce you to a little something called, “Fight Clubs?”

What is a Fight Club?

We get the name Fight Club from Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...”

Paul is urging Timothy to continue to hold on to his faith in the Lord Jesus and to strive to see the right implications of that faith come about in his life. This phrasing is synonymous with his next statement, “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.” Paul is not telling Timothy to get saved, but rather he is telling him to live life now in accordance with the eternal life that has been granted to him.

Fight Clubs are small, simple groups of two to three men who meet regularly to help one another beat up the flesh and believe the gospel of grace. This is done through time together in the word, constant encouragement in the gospel, and an effort to put sin to death.

Why Fight Clubs?

The fact that Paul had to give this instruction to Timothy is quite telling in and of itself. Taking hold of the eternal life to which we have been called is not an easy endeavor. It does not just happen. We don’t back into it. There are constant temptations and distractions that move us away from faith in Christ toward self-sufficiency, pride, fear, anger, etc.

God made us to be in community. And he did so by making us needy people. Even in the beginning, God made man to need someone other than self. He created Eve for Adam and Adam for Eve and both of them together for Him (Genesis 1, 2). This is a reminder to us that even before the Fall, humanity needed one another. We, as God’s redeemed people, are still in need of each other. God created his church in order to give us a community in which we can experience and exemplify love, service, faith, hope, etc.

We cannot be fully-functioning followers of Jesus apart from community. For this reason, we recognize the need for intentionality in building relationships that challenge us to fight for faith.



How do we do Fight Clubs?

Fight Clubs may be different than other small groups or accountability groups that you have been a part of in the past. Quite often accountability groups begin with all the right intentions, but devolve into one of two unintended ends.

First, accountability groups can produce a works-based sense of righteousness, or condemnation. Often accountability includes a list of agreed upon questions that touch on different areas of struggle or temptation in our lives. These can range from the words that we use to the things we watch to how we spend our money. You may be asked questions about the relationships in your life, how often you are reading your Bible, or how many people you have witnessed to this week. While these may be important issues for all of us, too many accountability groups have become a guilt-driven hour of our week in which all we can do is feel the weight of failure upon us. For some, the desire for righteous living does not come from a love for God and his gospel, but rather from the thought of having to “fess up” during an accountability group. We believe that this is not truly a godly grief that leads to repentance, but rather a non-gospel guilt that leaves us feeling condemned and defeated (2 Corinthians 7:10).

We may also feel a false sense of righteousness if we have checked off all of our boxes this week, or at least checked off more than we did last week. This is also insufficient for true growth in Christ.

Second, accountability groups often devolve into license. As we talk about our common struggles, too often we find ourselves not urging one another on to righteousness, but rather finding misery in company and ultimately accepting our sin as that which “we all deal with.” When this occurs the command to put to death that which is earthly in us is not being obeyed (Colossians 3:5-11).

In Fight Clubs we want to take the idea of traditional accountability groups and refocus it with the proactive work of the gospel.

Fight Clubs contain three critical elements: (1) Hearing from God, (2) Applying the gospel, and (3) Fighting against Sin. Each element will be explored below.

Hearing from God. We acknowledge that the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). Left to ourselves we are vulnerable to deception, even when that deception comes from our own hearts. This is why David asked God to search his heart (Psalm 139:23, 24). He knew that he could not adequately search it himself, so he needed God to do so from the outside looking in. As we begin each meeting time we need to hear from God.

Each club meeting will begin with a time in Scripture. Fight Club participants will read through a book of the Bible together. Just a chapter a week is fine. Read through that chapter several times during the week. Make note of what is being said. What is



the main point of the passage? Are there any commands that are to be obeyed? Are there any promises you need to hold on to? When you meet together take some time to discuss God's word. Share how God spoke to you through his word. Start off by hearing from God.

See Appendix 1 for Bible study helps.

Applying the gospel. This may be a new concept for some. For others it may seem rather ambiguous. How do you sit in a Starbucks and apply the gospel to a person sitting across from you? To help you learn how to do this, read through a gospel-saturated book together. A discussion of what you are reading will teach you how, and give you the experience of, applying the gospel to each other.

Each Fight Club should start with the book, *Disciple*, by Bill Clem. Clem looks at the person of Christ in order to see what it truly means to be someone who finds their identity fully in God. He then challenges us to reflect on our own lives and discover where we have been finding our identity. Clem brings us back time and time again to the power of the gospel in our lives. You don't have to agree with everything an author writes, but working through a gospel-centered book is a great way to begin thinking gospel-centered thoughts.

See Appendix 2 for a list of suggested gospel-centered books.

After you have read *Disciple*, choose another book and begin reading. Just as with your Bible reading, a chapter a week will give you plenty to think about, pray about, and apply.

See Appendix 3 for some ideas on how to read and discuss a book in a small group format.

Fight against sin. Taking hold of the eternal life to which we have been called means that our lives begin to correspond more closely with our true identity. In other words, we start looking more and more like the children of God that we are. When we sin, we fail to look like God's children. Discipleship means that we start looking more and more like God's children because we look more and more like Jesus.

In order to truly take hold of this eternal life, and fight the fight of faith, we must fight against sin. There are no two ways about it. Your Fight Club is a great place for that battle to happen.

See Appendix 4 for some help in figuring out how to fight against your sin.

The Nuts and Bolts of Fight Clubs

You may be saying, "This is all great, but tell me the specifics." Here is a suggested framework for how your Fight Club can work. As your group develops it may take



on a personality of its own. That is okay, but remember to work to keep that personality within the constraints of (1) Hear from God, (2) Apply the gospel, and (3) Fight sin.

First, find your Fight Club partner(s). The optimal size is two or three people in a Fight Club. If yours gets any bigger than this, be clear that the new members will join you for a time to experience how it works, and then they will multiply by starting a new club with others. Pray about whom to ask, and then ask!

Commit to meet. If you are stepping into this fight, you know just how important it is for you train regularly. Determine your meeting schedule with your fellow fighter(s). Some groups will decide to meet weekly while others may go biweekly. Remember that if you go too long in between gatherings that you will have a hard time developing the strength needed to be most effective in your battle. Try training once a month in order to run a marathon. It doesn't work. While it is recommended that groups meet at least biweekly, each group needs to make that determination for itself. You might miss a week here and there. That's okay. Regularity over the long haul is the key.

Meet at a coffee shop, in a living room, or at the library. Plan on an hour to an hour-and-a-half for each meeting. Each member of the Fight Club should read this booklet and commit to his fellow members to seek to apply these principles during their meetings. Regularly remind each other that you are in this club in order to fight the fight of faith and apply the gospel to one another's lives.

The actual Fight Club meeting: After a few minutes of small talk and catching up, start in the Scripture. Spend the first twenty to thirty minutes sharing the truths that God has taught you from your Bible reading. Be specific about what you have learned and how God applied it to your life since your last meeting. As you share these insights, your Fight Club partner(s) will understand how they can be praying for you more effectively.

Take the next twenty to thirty minutes to discuss the chapter from your gospel-centered book. Use some of the tools from Appendix 3 to help work through what you have learned. Again, the key here is to work at application of the gospel. As you learn concepts and truths, help one another see how these things apply to life. What needs to be changed? How will you be changed? What are you learning about Jesus? What lies are being replaced by truths?

See Appendix 5 for a list of example questions that can be asked in your discussions in order for you to continually stay gospel-centered.

Finish by sharing specific ways you can be praying for each other. Your previous discussion may have brought needs to light, but use this time to explicitly mention those things you would like your brother to be lifting up to the Lord. Finally, pray for each other. Take these things to the Lord for one another.



Fight Club...between rounds: In boxing a corner man receives the fighter back in his designated corner of the ring between each round. This is the guy that gives the fighter what he needs to recover from the previous round and to get ready for the next. Remember that our Fight Club members need us in their corner throughout the week, not just for an hour or so every Monday morning.

Take time during the week to pray for your fellow-fighter. Send an email of encouragement. Shoot him a quick text message. Call. Check in with him on a Sunday morning after the service. Be a good “corner man” for the glory of God!

Keep on Fighting

1 Timothy 6 is not the only place where we read about fighting the fight of faith. Paul uses this imagery again in 2 Timothy 4:7. Paul simply writes, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” In 1 Timothy, Paul was encouraging young Timothy to fight for faith. Now, right before his death, Paul, again in writing to Timothy, says, “I did it.”

This is a fight that will last a lifetime. There are no quick fixes. No shortcuts have been found. This is a knock-down, drag-out battle. The great news for us is that the ultimate battle has already been won, and our Great Victor is the One who empowers us to fight those battles before us every day.

None of knows when we will find ourselves at the end of our lives. If we are actively fighting against sin, fighting for faith, then no matter when our moment to depart comes, we will be able to join Paul in saying, “I have fought the fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Join the fight! Trust in Christ! Love your Savior!



Appendix 1 Practical Tips For Studying The Bible

O.I.A Method

O.I.A. stands for “Observation, Interpretation, and Application.” These three steps help the Bible reader understand what God is saying through his word.

Observation: This is the first, and probably the most critical, step. You cannot answer the question, “What does this verse mean to me?” until you answer the question, “What does this verse mean?” Observation allows us to answer the second question well.

The easiest way to approach this step is to ask those famous “W” questions: Who, What, When, Where, and Why.

- Who is writing?
- Who is the recipient of this writing?
- Who is present in the story?
- Who is this text about (God, Jesus, Israel, the church, etc.)?
- What is happening?
- What are the events surrounding this text?
- What are the circumstances behind the words (This is especially helpful when reading New Testament letters)?
- What truths are communicated?
- What commands are given?
- When do the events recorded take place (Are they before or after the cross, before or after Pentecost, etc.)?
- Are there any markers of time in the text?
- Is there any movement from one place to another in the story?
- Are there any geographical locations or other settings described as part of the text?
- Why would the author give this particular information?
- Why might the author leave information out (Especially helpful when reading the gospels)?
- Does the text tell us any “Whys” about our lives or our world (Why we are the way we are or why the world is the way it is)?



Interpretation: This is where we step into the realm of meaning. What does this text mean? The key question that helps us drive toward proper interpretation is: “What was the author’s original intent in writing these words?” In other words, “What did the author want his readers to learn, know, do, trust, treasure, etc.”

We believe that God inspired the writers of the books of the Bible so that they wrote exactly what God wanted them to write. In so doing, he used their personalities, styles, and contexts to get what was in his heart to their pens. With that in mind, we understand that John thought about what he wanted his readers to read. Paul had the Philippians in mind as he wrote his letter. Jeremiah’s own heart was broken for the people of Jerusalem as he wrote his words of lament. Because of this, we can say that God’s intended meaning for a particular verse, chapter, or book was the original writer’s intent as well. So if we can discover what the writer was trying to convey by including what he included, then we can know what God was intending to communicate to his people.

Here is a hint. Try to keep the interpretation step in the past tense. What does that mean? Take Romans 8:38-39, for instance. “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” After doing your observation work you might say something like, “Paul wanted the folks in the church of Rome to find strength in the fact that it was impossible for them to ever be separated from God’s love.”

Notice that this phrasing keeps us tied to the original intent of the text. “Paul wanted...” That is past tense. Don’t short-circuit this process. It is an important habit to get in so that we don’t jump to application too quickly. Remember, we cannot figure out what a verse means to us before we know what it means, and we can’t know what it means unless we know what it meant. Force it into the past tense.

Application: This is the step we all want to get to. If you have “O-ed” well and “I-ed” well, then this step should be thrilling. Now we ask the question, “What does this mean for me?” If we have done our Bible study like we should, we come to this point with the confidence that we have a word from God for our lives.

While “Observation” may be the most critical step for Bible study, “Application” is the most critical step for life. Once we know what God wants of us, we can begin to live in discipleship...or disobedience.

A helpful acrostic to use in the application process is “SPEKA”.

- S- is there a SIN to confess?
- P- is there a PROMISE to claim?
- E- is there some ENCOURAGEMENT for your soul?
- K- is there some KNOWLEDGE to gain?
- A- is there some other APPLICATION for your life?



Another helpful tip for the application process is to remember that all direct applications may not be intended for you. When Isaiah wrote, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:4, 5),” he was not primarily speaking about you and me. The primary application for these verses is for Jesus. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, etc. So first and foremost this is a text about Jesus. When we think of application we want to understand some truths and some commands were first intended for others. Now we can certainly glean encouragement and joy from a text like Isaiah 53, but that is a secondary application.

So now you have “O-ed”, “I-ed”, and “A-ed”. You can come away from your time in a Bible text and say, “God said...” That is an incredibly bold and life-changing statement. As you and your fellow Fight Clubbers share what God has spoken to you through his word, and you show each other how you came to those conclusions through study, your time together will be headed in the right direction.

Asking the Right Questions

There are some basic questions you can ask of any Bible story or text that will help you navigate through the meaning.

- 1) What did you like?
- 2) What did you not like/not understand/have questions about?
- 3) What does this text teach you about God?
- 4) What does this text teach you about man?
- 5) What does God want me to do as a result of this text?
- 6) How am I going to remember the truth of this text?
- 7) Who can I share this truth with?

These questions are easily memorized and will prove useful for your study and conversation. Also, notice how question 5 emphasizes obedience, question 6 on meditation, and question 7 on multiplication.



Appendix 2 A Sample of Gospel-Centered Books

Obviously this list is not exhaustive. Nor are any of these books perfect. They are, however, several books that have tried to base their teaching on the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel. As stated in the body of this booklet, it is recommended that you begin by reading, *Disciple*, by Bill Clem. After that, feel free to choose from any other book from this list. After you read a few of these books you will begin to “get the feel” for what gospel-centeredness is. Of course, you can choose a book that is not on the list, but make sure it is going to move your heart toward the gospel. (Hint: Missionary biographies are always a great choice.)

Clem, Bill. *Disciple: Getting Your Identity from Jesus*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011, 236 pgs.

Brown, Steve. *Three Free Sins: God's Not Mad at You*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2012, 256 pgs.

Chan, Francis. *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012, 336 pgs.

Chandler, Matt. *Creature of the Word: The Jesus-Centered Church*. Nashville: Broadman and Holdman, 2012, 256 pgs.

_____. *The Explicit Gospel*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, 240 pgs.

Dodson, Jonathan. *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, 176 pgs.

Gilbert, Greg. *What is the Gospel*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010, 128 pgs.

Kauflin, Bob. *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008, 304 pgs.

Mahaney, CJ. *The Cross-Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2002, 96 pgs.

Platt, David. *Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013, 267 pgs.



Piper, John. *God is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011, 192 pgs.

Ripkin, Nik. *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected*. Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2013, 384 pgs.

Tchividjian, Tullian. *Surprised by Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit of Rebels*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010, 192 pgs.

Wilson, Jared. *Gospel Deeps: Reveling in the Excellencies of Jesus*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, 208 pgs

_____. *Gospel Wakefulness*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011, 224 pgs.

Vincent, Milton. *The Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning to See the Glories of God's Love*. Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2008, 97 pgs.



Appendix 3

How to Read a Book in Small Group

I am sure you have read a book sometime in your past. You may have even been part of a group that would gather regularly to discuss that one book you read long ago. Have you ever found yourself coming to the end of a book wondering, “What was that?” How about that small group? Have you ever found yourself sitting around a table trying to fill an hour of time talking about a chapter that you read (or maybe you didn’t) five days ago? “Hmmm, I know the author talked about God, and I thought that was a good point.”

I want to give you a couple of principles that might help you in your reading as well as a very simple method for organizing your thoughts so that you can have a better discussion when you meet with your Fight Clubbers.

First, here are a couple of principles:

1. The book you are reading is not the Bible.
 - When we read the Bible we know that it is God’s word. What he says goes. As we read books other than the Bible, we stand next to the author as contemporaries within the human race. We can interact. We can assess. We can even critique. Ultimately, we want to ask, “Does this author’s point coincide with the truth of the Bible?” Let the Bible drive your interpretation and critique of the book you are reading.
2. Consider the author to be another guy sitting around the table.
 - How would you respond to the guy sitting across from you if he said something true? How would you respond if he said something not so true? It is often easy for us to deify or vilify an author. Try to interact with the author’s work in the way you would either encourage or redirect a brother in Christ sharing some morning coffee from the same pot.
3. Don’t let a disagreement spoil the book.
 - Per the first two principles, the author isn’t God and he probably won’t get everything right. Even if he comes close, you probably won’t agree with everything he writes. Take whatever good that you can find in a book, even if the author rubs you the wrong the way at times.



4. Don't let a great point cloud your vision the other way.
 - We tend to deify our favorite authors or accept everything an author writes as truth if he tends to make good points. Our best ally is discernment. We need to take each argument, each chapter, and each point as its own. Certainly an author could base his whole book on a certain point that is fallacious and mess the whole thing up. More times than not, though, you can take some and leave some. Any author who claims perfection should probably be avoided.
5. Reading 10 minutes a day can get you through the biggest of books.
 - Sometimes just the act of reading a book can be intimidating. If you take just a few minutes each evening before bed to read, you will get through a lot more reading than you ever thought possible.

How should you approach each club meeting? Some authors are really sweet and will include a study guide or discussion questions at the end of their chapters. You and your fellow fighters could simply agree to answer these questions and discuss your answers when you meet.

Unfortunately, some authors are mean-spirited. They're probably not that bad, but they fail to include any help to a bunch of guys who want to discuss their reading. When you don't have preprinted discussion questions you can use this easy method to move your conversation along. It is called the **3-2-1 method**.

As you read each chapter try to identify **three observations, two questions, and one application**. Your observations are just that; points or statements that you notice and desire to bring to light. You don't have to agree or disagree. The point of sharing these observations is to help you retrace the steps of the chapter and to get your conversation going. Often, sharing observations will spur on other conversation as others in the group respond.

Next, find your questions. This is where you are doing a little bit of critique. It might be an observation that you disagree with. It might be a point that the author didn't fully develop. Whatever it is, if it causes you to question, make note of it. In your group you can then share your questions, which really help to move discussion along.

Finally, find an application. Look for one thing that you need to change. Maybe the chapter showed you that a particular way of thinking that you had was wrong and the application you found was to change your mind. Maybe you feel prompted to do something you haven't been doing or to stop something you have been doing. Maybe an application might be to burn the book you're reading (I hope not). Try to find something of value in the chapter you are reading.

As you read each week, make note of your three observations, two questions, and one application. I try to write these down at the end of the chapter or underline and



write in the margins as I go. This way, when I meet, the info I want to share is easily accessible. When you meet, you can simply go back and forth sharing your observations, questions, and applications.



Appendix 4 Tips for Battling Your Sin

(The following is taken nearly verbatim from “Gospel-Centered Discipleship,” by Jonathan Dodson.)

Know your sin. We can know our sin by asking three questions: What, When, and Why? Before we can fight our sin, we must know *what* sins are currently present in our lives. An unknown opponent is difficult to defeat. Begin by prayerfully reflecting on your life. God loves you enough to reveal your sin to you. Ask him to show you what those sins are. You can also ask your Fight Club partner(s) about your sin. A loving community can help us by holding up a mirror of God’s Word so that we can see ourselves more clearly. Make sure you are ministering to one another through God’s word and not merely opinion.

When are you tempted to sin? If we don’t think about the “when”, sin will sneak up on us. Consider the circumstances that surround your sin, where and when you find yourself tempted. Identify your sins and the circumstances of temptation. For instance:

- Do you find yourself tempted to vanity or self-pity when spending time on Facebook?
- Does sexual lust or despair creep in on late, lonely nights watching television?
- Are you easily angered in traffic or when you are working around the house?

In order to overcome sin, we have to know what it is and when it creeps up on us. Consider the circumstances of your temptations to know when you sin.

The “*why*” question is important because it gets to the motivation behind our sin; it addresses the heart. No one ever sins out of duty. We all sin because we want to, because our hearts long for something. If we don’t address the motivational issues behind our sin, we will only treat it superficially, adjusting our behavior, not our hearts. God wants affectionate obedience, not behavioral adjustment.

To uncover your motivation, ask yourself why you gravitate to certain sins. What do you believe they will do for you? What is your heart longing for? What are you desiring or valuing most when you sin in a particular area?



Think about some of the lies we may believe that lead us to sin:

- *Vanity*: If you are more beautiful or handsome, then you have worth in this world.
- *Lust*: If you find sexual intimacy through what you see on television or the internet, then you won't be lonely or stressed.
- *Anger*: If you get angry, you will be sure to get your way.

Many of our sins can be traced back to a deep belief in a lie. Once we understand why we sin, the false promise we believe, we can replace it with a better “why”, a better promise. If we don't address the why, we will inevitably become religious or rebellious disciples who just try harder or give up trying altogether. We need a better motivation; a gospel-motivation. This is what will empower us to fight sin well.

Fight your sin. Let's remember that the ultimate battle against sin has already been won in and through the person of Jesus Christ. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us. Therefore, the battles we fight against sin take place within a larger war that has already been won.

Paul writes in Romans 6:6ff, “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we should no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*”

The power of sin has been rendered powerless, as we are no longer enslaved to it, but to Christ! However, disciples continue to battle sin until the day of our reunion with Christ. This is why Paul exhorts us to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive in Jesus. The fight of faith is a fight to be our new, authentic selves in Christ, free from sin and alive to God in righteousness. Knowing our sin, we fight against it by fighting to be who we already are in Christ.

Fighting sin is a tenacity to put it to death, which arises from our life in Christ. Unfortunately, many disciples do not walk in their newness of life but in old patterns of sin. Perhaps our indifference to fighting sin springs from a false belief that God accepts us just as we are. Whoa. I thought he did accept us just as we are. While he certainly loves even the rebellious world (John 3:16), he accepts us only based on who we are in Christ. And if we are accepted, not as we are but as we are in Christ, we have every reason to fight—from our new identity. We want our present lives to become more like who we have been declared to be in Christ.

Fight your sin means a habitual weakening of the flesh through constant fighting and contending in the Spirit for sweet victory over sin. It should be regular and



progressive, not occasional and instant. Fighting is not an end in itself or a way to make us more presentable to God. We fight because we have been made presentable in Christ. We fight for belief in his gospel, the truest and best news on earth—that Jesus has defeated our sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection, and is making all things new, even us.

Trust your savior. This is the best part of discipleship. Trusting our Savior makes discipleship personal. Discipleship isn't a program or a one-on-one meeting. It is fundamentally a trusting relationship with Jesus based on the gospel of grace. When we trust in his promises, we cut through religious performance and spiritual license, leading to soul-sweetening obedience. When we trust Jesus, we displace rules from the center of our discipleship and replace it with his gospel. *(This ends the borrowed material from Dodson.)*

You will not measure up to the perfect standard of Jesus. Remember that this is why Jesus died for you, because you were unrighteous. And this is why he was raised for you, so you could find your life in his. As you continually see your sin and understand when and how you sin, and seek to fight your sin, to fight against it because of who you already are in Christ, you will still stumble and fall. Hopefully, these moments of stumbling will reduce over time, but they will still be there for sure. Every time you fail, fall back into the gospel. Every time you come up short, trust what Christ has done for you. Every time you hate sin, love Jesus. Remember that all of your work does not eradicate the power of sin. It is the work of Christ that has done this. And in this work, he has come to you and taken you to himself. He tells you now, "Live in this victory."

Practically, trusting our Savior is pretty simple. We trust his word. We fight to believe in what God has promised to us in Christ. This is where community is so important. Many times you will need someone else to preach the gospel to you. You will need your Fight Club partner to remind you of what God has said to you and about you. You will need to be encouraged to believe the promises God has made to you in Christ. This is why we begin our Fight Clubs in H\his word. We desperately need it.

Trust that God's Spirit has been given to you in order to glorify Christ in your life (John 16:14). As you seek to become more like Jesus, and you desire to beat up the flesh and wage war against sin, know that the Spirit in you is committed to seeing this work through to the end. Ask him to continually empower you to believe the gospel and fight sin.



Appendix 5

Questions to Help You Stay Focused on the Gospel

Questions can be asked in such a way as to really open up conversation and pull issues from the heart. At the same time, we can ask questions in a way that just shut the conversation down. The following is a taken from Jonathan Dodson's, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. I think these are the kinds of questions that can do the work of opening doors and moving conversation along.

1. What do you desire more than anything else?
2. What do you find yourself daydreaming about?
3. What lies do you subtly believe that undermine the truth of the gospel?
4. Are you astonished with the gospel?
5. Where have you made much of yourself and little of God?
6. Is technology interrupting your communion with God?
7. Is work a source of significance? How?
8. Where do your thoughts drift when you enter a social setting?
9. What fears keep you from resting in Christ?
10. What consumes your thoughts when you have alone time?
11. When people see how you spend money, do they conclude that God is a priceless treasure, exceedingly valuable above all worldly goods?
12. When people observe your relationships with others, are they alerted to the power of Christ's forgiveness of you that alone accounts for your forgiveness of them?
13. If you are complimented for some accomplishment, does the way you receive it drive onlookers to give thanks to the Lord?
14. Is your use of leisure time or devotion to a hobby or how you speak of your spouse the sort that persuades others that your heart is content with what God is for you in Christ?
15. Does your reaction to bad news produce in you doubt or fear, or does it inspire confidence to trust in God's providence?



Appendix 6 Fight Club Training Agreement

I cannot do this on my own. I have tried, and it hasn't worked out that well. I need a coach, a trainer, a sparring partner, and a corner man. In other words, I need another follower of Jesus to help me fight the fight of faith.

With this in mind I am willing to join with the following brothers so that together we might all be spurred on toward love and good deeds.

1. _____
2. _____

Our mutual desire is to hear from God, to apply the gospel to each other's lives, and to fight sin with every ounce of strength that God graciously gives to us. In doing so, we commit to being honest with each other, knowing that what we share will remain in confidence between the members of our Fight Club and Jesus.

This process may be painful, but we know that the sharpening of iron requires friction (Proverbs 27:17). This process may feel risky, but we trust that our brothers are committed to walking with us to the end (Proverbs 17:17). We may stumble and fail, but we know that Jesus will never forsake us (Proverbs 18:24).

For the sake of finding my joy in Christ; of being a man of sacrifice in my home; of spreading the fragrance of Christ wherever I may go; of learning to rest in the finished work of Jesus; I will fight the good fight of faith...but I will not fight it alone.

O LORD, I bless thee that the issue of the battle between thyself and Satan has never been uncertain, and will end in victory. Calvary broke the dragon's head, and I contend with a vanquished foe, who with all his subtlety and strength has already been overcome. When I feel the serpent at my heel may I remember him whose heel was bruised, but who, when bruised, broke the devil's head... Then shall my hand never weaken, my feet never stumble, my sword never rest, my shield never rust, my helmet never shatter, my breastplate never fall, as my strength rests in the power of thy might.

(Taken from, *The Valley of Vision*, pg 179)

