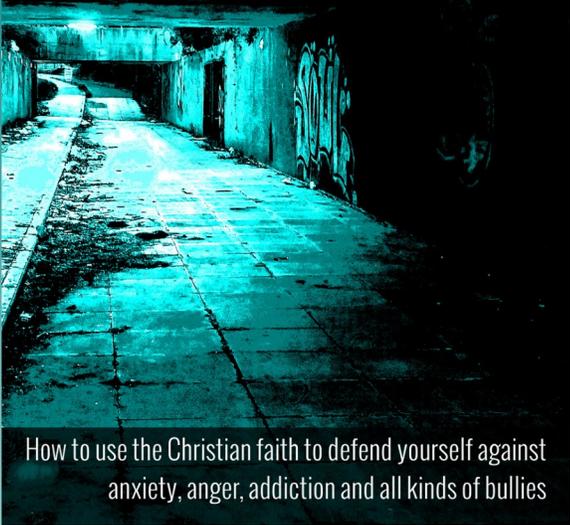


SPIRITUAL SELF DEFENSE

Dwight Clough



How to use the Christian faith to defend yourself against anxiety, anger, addiction and all kinds of bullies

Small Group Leader's Guide



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images by Leo Hidalgo and Brad Higham

Small Group Leader's Guide

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Help for Small Group Leaders

When leading your small group

Leading a small group is a beautiful and important ministry. Life transformation can and often does take place in small groups. But deep hurt can happen in a small group as well. This makes your role as a group leader critically important.

What ingredients go into a great small group? The same ingredients that go into any healthy relationship:

- respect,
- understanding,
- trust and
- love.

As a leader, you model these qualities with your life. Show respect. Seek to understand. Build and deserve trust. Love the members of the group, and show them you care.

People over pacing... The groups that have meant the most to me over the years are those groups where the members are both honest and caring—where we truly got to know one another. Creating a safe place and building friendships is far more important than plowing through “x” amount of content. The content will still be there next week. People matter more than content.

Some groups are toxic. I've been in those. These are groups where people were not respected, confidentiality was not honored, or hidden agendas muddied the water of relationship. Some groups are disappointing. For me, I've never enjoyed it when the leader tried to turn the group meeting into a mini church service.

I'm in a home group led by Jason Hoffman. I asked for his thoughts on small groups and received this insightful reply:

1. Be clear about what the purpose of the group is. Also be clear if the group is intended to be temporary or ongoing.
2. Be humble. Whatever you think the group will be it won't. The group will be what the people who come bring to it. Be open to that and don't force your will or expectation upon it.

3. Aim to facilitate more than lead.

Best book I can recommend is *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoffer.

I'm in men's group led by Dr. Joseph Towles, a university instructor. Joe is a master at building both learning and friendship at the same time in the same group. He comes to every meeting fully prepared with content summaries, break out session ideas, and discussion questions, but he's always flexible enough to discern when the meeting is taking a new and better direction. Like a surfer who knows which wave to catch, Joe knows which thread to pick up and follow so that everyone walks away feeling enriched.

Joe recommends the book, *Small Group Leader's Handbook: Developing Transformational Communities*, by J. Alex Kirk, Jay Anderson, Myron Crockett, Una Lucey-Lee, Janice McWilliams, Tina Teng, Sandra Van Opstal, Intervarsity Press, 2009 and the website, facultyfocus.com.

My friend [Pastor Craig Robertson](#) points to the importance of questions and stories to build engagement. He also writes, "If someone wants to think outside of the traditional box of small groups equals Bible study, Ted Haggard's book is still worth reading: *Dog Training, Fly Fishing, & Sharing Christ*."

[Pastor Dave Bechtold](#) writes, "A good small group facilitator should be open about his/her own needs, weaknesses, mistakes and shortcomings, which allows others to be honest in their discussions and responses. A good small group facilitator will not hesitate to redirect conversation traffic from someone who is monopolizing a discussion."

[Pastor Shannon Colwin](#), a friend with years of experience inspiring young people, writes: "I coach people to ask open-ended questions rather than questions that can be answered with yes/no.

- What causes you the most anxiety, and when do you notice it most?
- What jumps out to you in the passage that we read? What questions does it raise in you?

...I [also] coach people to get into the lives of the people in their group. I want to see them connect outside of the formal group time. I want them to show an interest in their lives. In students ministry, I tried to show up at students' events. Even if it's just asking how something went, I think that conveys that you care about their world, and it builds a platform of trust."

In his great article, "[10 Practices of a Great Small Group Facilitator](#),"¹ Rick Howerton includes such advice as: "Do ice-breakers that everyone participates in and that build individual trust and team unity...Affirm each person when they speak, especially early in the group's life...Draw everyone into the conversation. When there is a person who seems slow to jump into the discussion, graciously ask their opinion or request their input...When asking the group to speak of a sensitive life issue or situation, be the first to tell your story...Talk less than 30% of the time..." Great advice, and a powerful article.

At the end of the day, you want to build friendships among group members and help everyone connect with Jesus in a more meaningful way.²

1 <http://www.churchleaders.com/smallgroups/small-group-how-tos/162549-10-practices-of-a-great-small-group-facilitator.html>

2 See also <https://www.amazon.com/gp/richpub/listmania/fullview/R2LDECJSP919GG> for best books for small group leaders.

Spiritual Self Defense

As a group, explore and discover how to disable spiritual bullies in the real world including

- stress
- anxiety
- anger issues, road rage
- porn and other addictions
- a painful past
- money problems

and much, much more

We asked 678 people to tell us what they think...

“...crazy real...”

“I couldn’t imagine my life without it. It has changed the way I think, the way I pray, the way I relate to God and others. It’s something I can always turn to when life seems to go wrong.”

“...it opened me up to receive God in a way I never had before.”

Spiritual Self Defense is nothing new. It has been known and practiced for a long time under many different names. It is a gift Jesus gave His followers, and it’s found throughout the Bible. Unfortunately, it isn’t well understood by most people.

The spiritual formula for SSD is found in John 8:32: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”

Great verse, right?

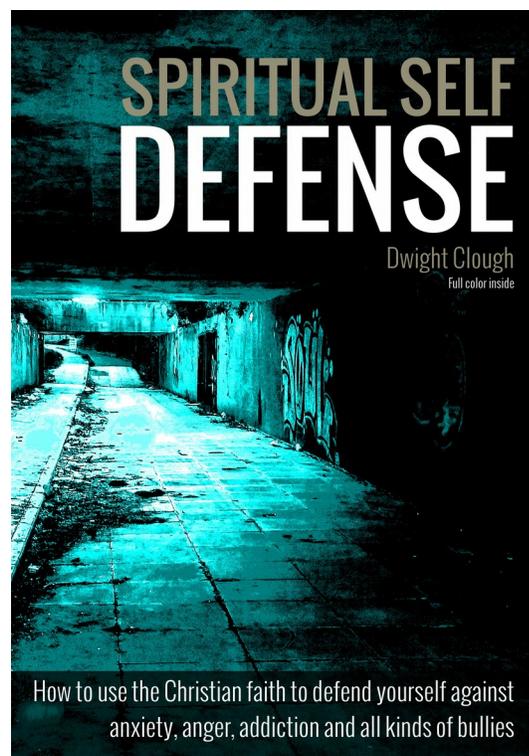
Here’s the problem: Many people know the truth, but are NOT free. They wrestle with anxiety, anger, addiction, and all kinds of problems. What went wrong? Where’s the disconnect?

Jesus fully understood that disconnect. If you carefully read the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), you’ll see that He is dealing with that disconnect all the time. In the Spiritual Self Defense course, we explain that disconnect, and give you step-by-step instructions for overcoming it. You’ll learn about the wall in your mind, the four kinds of lies we all believe, the two ways of receiving truth, the real link between truth and freedom, and much, much more.

Hi! My name is Dwight Clough.

On September 13, 2001, my life changed.

No, this wasn’t the day I started following Jesus—that happened much earlier in 1968—but this was the day I saw Jesus do something I never knew He could do.



We were desperate. (I think many people who discover Spiritual Self Defense start out that way.) My wife was suffering from disabling panic attacks.

What do you do when you're a devout Christian and you suffer from panic attacks?

Pray? Check.

Ask others to pray? Check.

Get Christian counseling? Check.

Go to the doctor? Check.

Get medication? Check.

Did it help? A little.

Years went by, and we had tried everything in our little bag of tricks. Nothing really worked.

So there we were in Steve's office two days after 9/11. To be honest, I spent most of the meeting grilling him with questions. We laugh about it now, but back then I was deadly serious. My wife had been through emotional purgatory, and I wasn't going to take a chance that someone would make it worse.

About two o'clock the afternoon of Thursday, September 13, 2001, I stepped out of the room for a few minutes. Steve prayed with my wife and applied some techniques I've since labeled Spiritual Self Defense. Kim's panic went from a 9 to a 1.

Permanently.

Yeah, yeah, I know. There are faith healers out there who do or seem to do amazing things in the name of Jesus.

But this isn't faith healing. This is a troubleshootable process that will work for almost anyone who is willing to invite Jesus in.

That brief visit launched Kim and me on a journey that changed everything for us. It transformed our marriage. It changed the way we experience God, how we see ourselves, how we experience life. The Bible has come alive to us in ways we never expected. And we've seen this process of Spiritual Self Defense empower people to overcome addiction, to recover from grief, to resist temptation, to overcome anger issues, and the list goes on and on.

“I could hardly believe my ears or what my eyes were seeing.”

(One of our 678 describes what it was like to witness Spiritual Self Defense for the first time.)

Your world will never look the same

When I was a kid, my parents bought some dining room chairs—typical 1970 styling: an abstract print on padded vinyl over a metal frame. Gaudy? Yes! But back then everybody liked that kind of thing. Anyway, I looked at this abstract print and saw flowers. For the next two years, every time I looked at those chairs, I saw flowers. But then one day I realized those weren't flowers at all. They were cows! From that point on, I never saw flowers on those chairs. I could only see cows.

I guarantee you this: Once you “get” Spiritual Self Defense, you will never look at your world the same ever again. I’ve had people say (and I’ve experienced this myself), “I feel a thousand pounds lighter. The colors are so much brighter.” Everything changes.

Everything.

Why? It’s simple, isn’t it? Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

When you get freedom from Jesus, I assure you, it will be like nothing you’ve ever experienced before.

You’ll find peace.

“It is a tool that helps me find peace in this chaotic world.”

“I am more at peace with myself and others (mostly family but friends, too). I have a better sense of God’s love for me, too.”

“...the results were so peaceful—a beautiful vision! I had never heard from the Lord like that ever before.”

Things will look and feel different.

“It’s an everyday change of how I view myself, God ’n others.”

“...it changed the way I think, react, see myself and most importantly, how I am in relationship with God.”

It helps you grow.

“God showed me that this would help me grow, learn about Him and myself.”

“Mr. Clough takes us into the heart of a seasoned spiritual leader and shares with us his secret to spiritual victory...a must read book...” Dr. Dwight A. Perry, Regional President/Executive Minister, Converge Great Lakes (speaking of the Spiritual Self Defense textbook)

It opens up a new relationship with God.

“I’m allowed to bring my entire self to God.”

“I’m a better friend of Jesus...His truth is setting me free to love myself better, God more, others more.”

You’ll find freedom.

“...an easy to understand path to freedom... Once I started reading I couldn’t put the book down and really recommend reading this with a friend or group to get the full effect...” Jennifer Thorn, Anything is Possible Inspirational Blog, JennThorn.blogspot.com

Can you guess that we’re a little bit excited about this?

“Its life-changing truth and freedom has me wanting everyone to experience Him in that way...”

So... Why don’t more people know about and practice Spiritual Self Defense? Here’s one person’s take on that:

“Many are in denial of their need, like me back then thinking I had forgiven and dealt with my anger! (Ha!)”

Hmm...

Let me put it in different words: Not everyone is ready for this.

“[It] can be scary! ...Trusting God is vital and most of us have been given a view of God that is intimidating.”

“It can be really scary, looking at what has happened in the past and what I believe about myself as a result.”

So, what motivates people to overcome those fears and step into this beautiful life God has for them? I get all kinds of answers.

“Living in the light is scary because it’s foreign. But living in the light is where God wants me...”

“I knew something had to change, going around the same mountain one too many times.”

“I thought I could put the past behind me and deal with it, I came to the end and realized I couldn’t.”

Questions people are afraid to ask #16

Q / If I stop running and turn around and look at myself [and at Jesus], will I discover some awful truth about myself?

A / My experience has been the opposite. I never knew how much Jesus liked me. Truth—instead of being scary and demeaning—has been deeply comforting and encouraging.

The reality is this: We all stay in our comfort zone EVEN if it’s uncomfortable. Many people would much rather put up with their problems than break through to the other side because, “Hey, they’re my problems.” They’re familiar. They may bring pain, but it’s what we’re used to.

If that’s you, then you’ll need to find the courage to break out of your comfort zone. Jesus will grant you the courage you need if you ask Him.

I should probably let you in on a little secret, however.

Jesus doesn’t leave people in their comfort zones. Sooner or later, He will make sure your boat gets rocked.

Does He do that to you because He doesn’t like you? Does He rock your boat because He’s angry with you?

Quite the opposite! He likes you a great deal. And He—above any other—knows what’s really inside you, what good you’re capable of if only you find what He has for you.

One person put it this way: “The only thing that helped me move forward was hating the life I was in...”

What gets people to try this? One respondent said, “[It was] first presented as a ministry that might help you if you have besetting sin, or emotional problems that just don’t go away.”

Let’s use that word, “might.” It “might” help you.

Question #3

Q / Will it work for me?

A / That depends on you. Spiritual Self Defense requires the courage to look honestly at yourself and to take a journey that your friends might not be ready to take with you. Somebody in your world needs to be first, and that somebody might need to be you.

“It’s difficult at every point and worth every minute.”

“... it’s hard and it takes a lot of courage.”

“[You] just gotta be ready.”

“...it’s easier to hang on to what we know. The familiar can be comfortable even if it is negative & chaotic.”

“It’s not a new formula. It’s not a weird cult... Not a new technique or trick.”

The Spiritual Self Defense textbook is available now. The DVD will be available soon.

In Spiritual Self Defense, I take everything that I hint at in all my other writings and spell it out in clear, unambiguous detail. If you want to know, step-by-step, how to experience the transformation Jesus offers, this book is for you.

Find inner strength and unexplainable peace. Overcome a painful past. Melt away anger and anxiety. Forgive others easily. Become addiction resistant and stress free. Walk away from Try Hard Christianity into a beautiful friendship with Jesus. On September 13, 2001 our lives changed. Yours can too. This book will show you how.

How to purchase

Textbook (full color inside)

For paperback visit kim51.com/9868 (This link sometimes loads slowly—sorry!)

Kindle version (for USA customers) visit kim51.com/7331

Kindle version (if you live outside USA) visit kim51.com/9292

Same textbook (black and white inside)

Paperback visit kim51.com/7326 (Page sometimes loads slowly—sorry!)

DVD to be released fall 2016

Contains links that will be activated fall 2016

Here's what people are saying about the textbook.

“...practical tactics and strategies for dealing with temptation and suffering...Dwight challenged my own notions about how to address spiritual issues...” Dr. Joseph Towles, University of Wisconsin–Madison

“...a winning strategy that will take you to a whole new level in your relationship with God and bring peace and joy into your life.” Tom E. Smith, Author, Captured by Sacred Love, ChristAdventures.com

“...easy to follow...a work long needed in the life of the Church... You'll instantly feel like Dwight is a friend...” Rev. Steve Freitag, Director, CrossCounsel International Ministries, CrossCounsel.com

“Jesus shows up in these pages. ...Dwight makes complex ideas approachable, understandable and fun.” David Schrank, Nurse, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

“...a fresh perspective to the greatest spiritual self defense of all. ...Spiritual Self Defense changes everything...” J.P. Olson, Journey Into the Word with J.P. Olson, TheWordwithJP Olson.com

“If you are...too honest with yourself to settle for fluffy inauthenticity, this book is for you. ...easy-to-read articulation of deep concepts...” Ryan Roling, Instructor, Madison College

Features:

- 100+ learning aids including diagrams, illustrations, tables, sidebars, memes
- 125+ discussion questions, 30 journal prompts
- 90 comprehension questions with answer key
- glossary, index & detailed table of contents
- 10 decision maps
- 130+ photos
- 7×10, paperback, 290 pages

Free downloads:

- [Table of contents \(pdf\)](#)
- [Chapter 1 \(pdf\)](#)

Some people are held back by money. That surprises me, really. Not that this costs that much—it really doesn't. In fact, I probably set the price way, way too low.

Sorry about that.

Anyway, it just surprises me because I've been about as broke as you can be and still survive in America. But somehow, I always found a way to pay for what God wants to do in my life. I just figure my wife is worth it; I'm worth it; Jesus is worth it.

But I can't tell you what kind of value to put on yourself. You have to do that.

On September 13, 2001 our lives changed. Yours can too. This book will show you how.

How to purchase

While books usually arrive in 10 days to two weeks, I strongly recommend ordering your books four to five weeks in advance of your study to ensure they will be available. Choose between full color interior or black and white.³

Textbook (full color inside)

For paperback visit kim51.com/9868 (This link sometimes loads slowly—sorry!)

Kindle version (for USA customers) visit kim51.com/7331

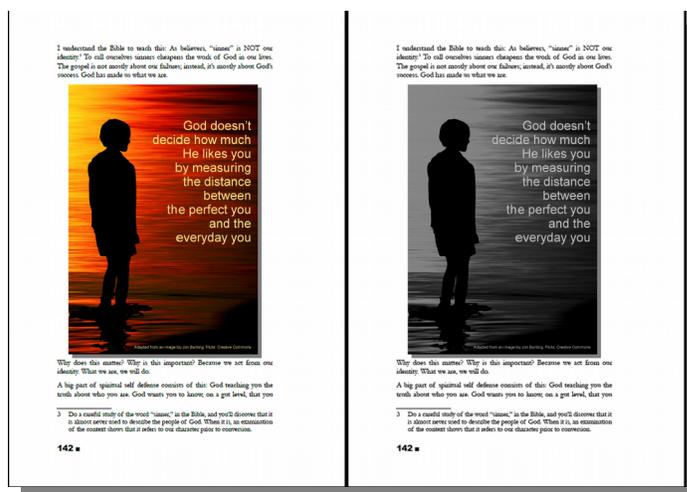
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DVD to be released fall 2016

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³ Image on the page is from a Flickr Creative Commons image by Jon Bunting.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 1: Spiritual Self Defense changes everything

Spiritual Self Defense (SSD) gives you the power to experience life the way Jesus does. This is very different from try-hard Christianity because it gives you a defense against spiritual bullies and returns you to your God-intended state of peace and joy.

Chapter 2: Lies give bullies their power

In this chapter we look at the fundamentals behind Spiritual Self Defense, specifically how lies give spiritual bullies their power. We examine the wall in our minds and see how our two belief systems create dramatic implications for dealing with spiritual bullies. We introduce the concept of a truth experience, and look at the four kinds of lies we all believe. We learn how our emotions give us valuable information that will help us defend ourselves from spiritual bullies. We also discuss little-known dynamics behind sin.

Chapter 3: Avoid becoming an easy target: Verify truth

Since truth is your #1 defense, how do you know what is true? In this chapter, we explore different ways of verifying truth. We look at the character of God, two major worldview lies, and why it makes sense to choose Jesus. We discuss why it is both impossible and very easy to prove the existence of God, how to hear the voice of God, tactics for verifying truth, and techniques for understanding the Bible.

Chapter 4: High ground: Your connection with Jesus

In this chapter we discuss our connection with Jesus. We look at how and why our conversion (or salvation experience or decision to follow Christ) should change the trajectory of our lives. We discuss the gospel and what it really means to be born again. I introduce what I call “spiritual math.” We look at how faith grows as we grow. Then we take a close look at the new identity God grants us, and how that relates to issues surrounding Spiritual Self Defense.

Chapter 5: Truth experience from Jesus neutralizes every bully

In this chapter we focus on the core tactics of Spiritual Self Defense: how to obtain a truth experience from Jesus. We explore how to make the best use of emotion, memory and belief to experience supernatural transformation directly from Jesus. We learn how to troubleshoot this process if it doesn't work or if you run into a wall. We demonstrate how this approach can be used against nearly any spiritual bully including, but not limited to, anxiety, abuse, anger, sadness, guilt, temptation, addiction and much more. We learn the surprising truth about repentance and little known techniques for forgiving others.

Chapter 6: Streetwise defense tactics

In this chapter, we discuss supplemental Spiritual Self Defense tactics —particularly as they relate to temptations. We look at the importance of God's work in us, examine some simple but powerful prayers, and consider the safety that comes from being connected with other Christians. We look at techniques for processing temptation and how to rebuild your life after a fall.

Chapter 7: Defenses against suffering

In this chapter we look at trials and suffering, specifically examining questions like: Does God care? Is God fair? Why do we suffer? Why do innocent people suffer? What strategies can we employ to fight back against suffering?

Spiritual Self Defense: super easy to use in a small group setting

- User-friendly
- Easy-to-understand
- Full-color textbook
- Accompanying DVD

Three study plans: Choose the one that best fits your group. (Most groups will go with Option #1, Framework Track.)

When leading a group study on Spiritual Self Defense

Many of the concepts covered in Spiritual Self Defense are going to be new for your group members. It takes time to wrap our minds around new paradigms. The light bulb will go on for different people at different times. That's okay. Some people learn by pushing back. That's also okay. It helps them to clarify ideas. Some people are external processors—they need to talk through their thought processes as they are making sense of something new.

The process of Spiritual Self Defense can involve a great deal of self disclosure—more than some people are comfortable making, even in the context of a loving small group. It is so important that you respect those boundaries and allow people to participate at the level where they are comfortable. Some people will be ready to pioneer with this process; others will hold back until they feel a level of comfort that allows them to move forward. Again, it's so important that you respect that.

If your group is new, or there's less that strong mutual trust and friendship established, or if the book and concepts around Spiritual Self Defense are new to you or your group members, I recommend you go through the Framework track with your group, take a break and have a conversation before thinking about diving into the Process track (or Combined track).

The tracks contained in this guide will show you what to read and how to prepare for each meeting. In addition to the material provided, you may wish to go through the “Check your understanding” questions for the pages you will be studying. An answer key starts on page 278.

Remember, the suggested pacing is just that—a suggestion. Go through this material at the speed that makes sense for your group. Feel free to skip questions, or add questions of your own.

Spiritual Self Defense Group Study Option #1 (Basic) Framework track⁴ (11 weeks)

Who this is for

This is for people who are new to the concepts behind Spiritual Self Defense, and want to learn about what it is and how and why it works. In this track, we explore the changes in perspective required to practice Spiritual Self Defense. **If you're new to this book and these concepts, you want this track!**

Week #1

What Spiritual Self Defense is and why it helps

This week we explore the concept of Spiritual Self Defense and look at topics such as freedom vs. performance, spiritual leverage, neutralizing a painful past, spiritual bullies, who this is for, how Spiritual Self Defense provides an alternative to Try Hard Christianity.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 13-28, all of Chapter 1 |
| DVD: | “It takes courage...” “Spiritual Self Defense: What it does and what it is,” “How to get the most from this course,” “Introduction to your textbook” |
| Group discussion : | page 30 |

Week #2

Our two belief systems

Content for this week includes the wall in your mind, the empty glass challenge, the connection between emotions and belief, the role of feelings in faith.

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 33-46, Chapter 2, Section 2.1. |
| DVD: | “The wall in our minds” |
| Group discussion : | pages 47-48 |

Week #3

Four types of lies

This week we look at pain lies, solution lies, worldview lies, and avoidance lies, and the enormous impact these lies have on our lives. We also examine the connection between these lies, and see how we can believe lies even when we know they aren't true.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 49-60, Chapter 2, Section 2.2. |
| DVD: | “Four types of lies we all believe” |
| Group discussion: | page 62 |

⁴ NOTE: While we touch on the process of Spiritual Self Defense, we don't go into that process in depth. We leave out most of Section 5.5. and 5.7. in Chapter 5. We also leave out the “Demonstration,” “Debrief,” and “Troubleshooting the process” on the DVD. You may optionally include that material in your study if you prefer.

Week #4

Deception, life-controlling issues, the past and more

This week we look at the connection between sin, life-controlling issues, and deception, as well as the role of the past, anger, sadness, guilt, and spiritual bullies.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 63-78, Chapter 2, Sections 2.3.–2.6. |
| DVD: | “Deception and life-controlling issues” |
| Group discussion: | pages 80-81 |

Week #5

A framework for truth

This week we step back and look at the question of truth, particularly addressing questions such as: Is God good? Does choosing Jesus make sense? Is Jesus just another option? What does it mean to fear God?

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 83-101, Chapter 3, Sections 3.1.–3.4. |
| DVD: | “Four things we need to know about God” |
| Group discussion: | pages 103-104 |

Week #6

Where do we find truth?

This week we continue our exploration of truth, addressing questions such as: How do you deal with things you don't like about God? How do you tell who is telling the truth? How do you hear the voice of God? How does one read and understand the Bible?

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 105-123, Chapter 3, Sections 3.5.–3.8 |
| DVD: | “Trust but verify” |
| Group discussion: | page 125 |

Week #7

The transformative gospel

In Week #7 we take a fresh look at the gospel to see how and why choosing Jesus not only changes the trajectory of our lives but our core identities as well. This study includes “spiritual math,” “What I believe about you,” and more.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 127-146, all of Chapter 4 |
| DVD: | “What it really means to be born again” |
| Group discussion: | page 148 |

Week #8

What it means to win

In this week’s study, we explore the surprising truth about repentance, the alternative to performance, why you are designed to overcome spiritual bullies, what to do about sin and life-controlling issues, how to deal with guilt and sadness.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 151-160, 197-200, Chapter 5, Sections 5.1.–5.4., 5.5.H.–5.5.J. |
| DVD: | “Getting ready for a truth experience” |
| Group discussion: | pages 174-175, #1-8; page 234, #14-17 |

Week #9

Forgiving and transformation

In this week, we explore little known tactics for forgiving those who have wronged us. We also discuss the outcomes of Spiritual Self Defense. We conclude with an overview of spiritual bullies to see how Spiritual Self Defense gives you techniques for overcoming each one.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 201-211, 221-230, Chapter 5, Sections 5.6., 5.8., 5.9. |
| DVD: | “Forgiving and celebrating” |
| Group discussion: | pages 234-235, #19-28 (note: In early versions of the textbook, #28 incorrectly references Section 5.7. The correct reference is Section 5.9.) |

Week #10

More tools for your tool belt

In Week #10, we explore additional tactics to help you overcome sin and temptation. These tactics include simple but powerful prayers, techniques for transforming ungodly desires, how to rebuild your life after a fall, and what to do when Christian leaders disappoint.

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 237-252, all of Chapter 6 |
| DVD: | “Questions for your journey” |
| Group discussion: | pages 253-254 |

Week #11

Defenses against suffering

All of us will suffer, but little coaching is available to show us how to go through suffering and emerge triumphant. This study is jam packed with information and encouragement to help you when trouble strikes.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 255-274, all of Chapter 7 |
| DVD: | “Suffering and the goodness of God” |
| Group discussion: | pages 253-254 |

Spiritual Self Defense Group Study Option #2 (Advanced) Process track⁵ (12 weeks)⁶

Who this is for

This is for experienced Christians who feel well at home with the concepts behind Spiritual Self Defense, and want to focus on developing and honing their skills in the process itself. This track includes an accelerated review of the framework behind of Spiritual Self Defense. Most people need to go through the Framework track before moving into this track.

IMPORTANT:

- Before starting, review cautions on pages 163-164 with every member of your group. Every participant needs to be FULLY on board with these cautions.
- It's critically important that all group members have a high level of respect for one another. Group members will be trusting one another with sensitive information, and that trust needs to be deserved.
- We've seen this work well with mixed-gender groups, although in some cases women may prefer to meet with women, and men with men.

Week #1*

Review of the Spiritual Self Defense framework

Here we look at our two belief systems, truth experiences, the connection between emotion and gut-level belief, the role of feelings (emotion) in faith, the four types of lies, why non-gullible people believe lies, the connection between deception and life-controlling issues, the role of memory and the past, negative emotions that originate in truth including sadness, anger and guilt, the connection between deception and spiritual bullies.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 11, 33-46, 49-60, 63-78 (includes all sections in Chapter 2) |
| DVD: | “The wall in our minds,” “ The four types of lies we all believe,” “Deception and life-controlling issues” |
| Group discussion: | pages 47-48 (esp. #2, 3, 5), page 62 (esp #1, 4, 5, 6), pages 80-81 (esp. #1, 3, 4, 10) |

*There's a lot of material here. Depending on the group, you may need to break this into two weeks.

Week #2*

Identity review / Suffering and the goodness of God

Week #2 includes a review of the gospel and how it shapes our identity, our experiences, and our behavior. We also look at our responses to suffering with a view toward approaching suffering from a position of strength in Christ.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 127-146, 255-274, all of Chapters 4 & 7 |
| DVD: | “What it really means to be born again,” “Suffering and the goodness of God” |
| Group discussion: | page 148 (esp. #2, 3, 10), page 276 (esp #1, 3) |

*There's a lot of material here. Depending on the group, you may need to break this into two weeks.

⁵ In the Process Track, we skip Chapters 1, 3 & 6. You may optionally cover any or all of that material if you desire.

⁶ The number of weeks is flexible; 12 is merely a recommendation.

Week #3

Preparing for a truth experience

In Week #3 we discuss performance, behavior modification, and true repentance. We also examine the requirements for going after a truth experience with Jesus using Spiritual Self Defense.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 151-172, Chapter 5, Sections 5.1.–5.5.C. |
| DVD: | “Getting ready for a truth experience” |
| Group discussion: | pages 174-175 |

Week #4

Going after a truth experience

Here we examine the process of going after a truth experience with Jesus, giving close attention to the components of emotion, memory and belief, along with transitions, techniques for getting safely past avoidance walls.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 176-196, 5.5.D.–5.5.G. |
| DVD: | “Demonstration,” “Debrief” |
| Group discussion: | pages 233-234, #1-13 |

Week #5

Adapting the process for other spiritual bullies

We use a slightly different approach to adapt the Spiritual Self Defense process to negative desires and to negative emotions that may originate in truth. This week we address using the process with sin, temptation, addiction, life-controlling issues, guilt, sadness, and anger. We go into specifics on how to forgive others.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 197-211, Sections 5.5.H., 5.5.I., 5.5.J., 5.6. |
| DVD: | “Forgiving and celebrating” |
| Group discussion: | pages 233-235, #9, 14, 16, 17, 19–26 |

Week #6

Troubleshooting and outcomes

This week we introduce ten decision maps (process charts) for helping you know where you are in the process. Troubleshooting tools are built into these decision maps. We also explore outcomes from the process, and how the process tackles different types of spiritual bullies.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 212-230, Sections 5.7., 5.8., 5.9. |
| DVD: | “Troubleshooting the process” |
| Group discussion: | pages 233-235, #6-13, 17, 26-28 (note: In early versions of the textbook, #28 incorrectly references Section 5.7. The correct reference is Section 5.9.) |

Choose a volunteer and a helper for next week’s process practice (someone to go after the truth experience and the person to help/facilitate)

Weeks #7–12

Process practice

In these process practice weeks, you will typically spend 30-60 minutes practicing the process, and the remaining 30-60 minutes discussing (debriefing) what happened. Volunteers may experience profound, life-changing truth experiences some weeks, and very little other weeks. Both experiences are important; both strengthen your Spiritual Self Defense skills.

Begin by reviewing as a group the cautions on pages 163-164.

Process practice

Participants:

- Volunteer—the person going after the truth experience
- Helper—the person helping the volunteer stay with the process
- Mentor—a more experienced helper who can coach the helper (some groups won't have a mentor)
- Other group members

Silence please!

The ONLY people who should be talking during the process is the Volunteer and the Helper. (Please avoid whispering or other activities that could distract the volunteer.) The ONLY exception to that rule is if the Helper gets stuck and the Mentor needs to step in and help, or if the Helper gets stuck and asks the other group members for help.

Most Volunteers find it helpful to close their eyes during the process as a way of shutting out distractions.

Remember to give the Volunteer time to process both before and after receiving a truth experience from Jesus.

Debrief

Be kind to one another. This is a learning environment, and all participants are developing skills. Excellence with this—as with anything—is a result of practice and helpful feedback.

Here are some questions to guide you in the debriefing process:

#1 How would you summarize what just happened?

#2 In this exchange, what did we learn about processing
...presenting circumstances?

...emotion?

...memory?

...beliefs? What did we learn about assumptions vs. core lies?

#3 Were there avoidance walls or dead ends? What did we learn about the process of moving beyond those roadblocks?

#4 Did the volunteer receive a truth experience from Jesus? What did we learn about validating that truth experience(s) both in the memory and in the current presenting circumstances?

#5 What else did we learn about the process?

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | Review decision maps, pages 212-220, Chapter 5, Section 5.7., as well as pages 182-196, Sections 5.5.F. & 5.5.G. or any other portions of Chapter 5 or other portions of the textbook that may be helpful. |
| DVD: | None |
| Group discussion: | page 234, #18. |

Did any group member do this process on their own during the week? If possible, make time to discuss that member's experience if that member so desires. Remember to choose a Volunteer and a Helper for next week's process practice.

Spiritual Self Defense Group Study Option #3 (Committed) Combined track (20 weeks)

Who this is for

This is for people who may or may not be new are new to Spiritual Self Defense, but want to gain a solid understanding of the framework and develop skills in the process.

Week #1

What Spiritual Self Defense is and why it helps

This week we explore the concept of Spiritual Self Defense and look at topics such as freedom vs. performance, spiritual leverage, neutralizing a painful past, spiritual bullies, who this if for, how Spiritual Self Defense provides an alternative to Try Hard Christianity.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 13-28, all of Chapter 1 |
| DVD: | “It takes courage...” “Spiritual Self Defense: What it does and what it is,” “How to get the most from this course,” “Introduction to your textbook” |
| Group discussion: | page 30 |

Week #2

Our two belief systems

Content for this week includes the wall in your mind, the empty glass challenge faced by Christian ministry, the connection between emotions and belief, the role of feelings in faith.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 33-46, Chapter 2, Section 2.1. |
| DVD: | “The wall in our minds” |
| Group discussion: | pages 47-48 |

Week #3

Four types of lies

This week we look at four different types of lies: (1) pain lies, (2) solution lies, (3) worldview lies, (4) avoidance lies. We also examine the connection between these lies, and see how we can believe lies even when we know they aren't true.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 49-60, Chapter 2, Section 2.2. |
| DVD: | “Four types of lies we all believe” |
| Group discussion: | page 62 |

Week #4

Deception, life-controlling issues, the past and more

This week we look at the connection between sin, life-controlling issues, and deception, as well as the role of the past, anger, sadness, guilt, and spiritual bullies.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 63-78, Chapter 2, Sections 2.3.–2.6. |
| DVD: | “Deception and life-controlling issues” |
| Group discussion: | pages 80-81 |

Week #5

A framework for truth

This week we step back and look at the question of truth, particularly addressing questions such as: Is God good? Does choosing Jesus make sense? Is Jesus just another option? What does it mean to fear God?

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 83-101, Chapter 3, Sections 3.1.–3.4. |
| DVD: | “Four things we need to know about God” |
| Group discussion: | pages 103-104 |

Week #6

Where do we find truth?

This week we continue our exploration of truth, addressing questions such as: How do you deal with things you don’t like about God? How do you tell who is telling the truth? How do you hear the voice of God? How does one read and understand the Bible?

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 105-123, Chapter 3, Sections 3.5.–3.8 |
| DVD: | “Trust but verify” |
| Group discussion: | page 125 |

Week #7

The transformative gospel

In Week #7 we take a fresh look at the gospel to see how and why choosing Jesus not only changes the trajectory of our lives but our core identities as well. This study includes “spiritual math,” “What I believe about you,” and more.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Reading: | pages 127-146, all of Chapter 4 |
| DVD: | “What it really means to be born again” |
| Group discussion: | page 148 |

Week #8

Preparing for a truth experience

In Week #3 we discuss performance, behavior modification, and true repentance. We also examine the requirements for going after a truth experience with Jesus using Spiritual Self Defense.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 151-172, Chapter 5, Sections 5.1.–5.5.C. |
| DVD: | “Getting ready for a truth experience” |
| Group discussion: | pages 174-175 |

Week #9

Going after a truth experience

Here we examine the process of going after a truth experience with Jesus, giving close attention to the components of emotion, memory and belief, along with transitions and techniques for getting safely past avoidance walls.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 176-196, 5.5.D.–5.5.G. |
| DVD: | “Demonstration,” “Debrief” |
| Group discussion: | pages 233-234, #1-13 |

Week #10

Adapting the process for other spiritual bullies

We use a slightly different approach to adapt the Spiritual Self Defense process to negative desires and to negative emotions that may originate in truth. This week we address using the process with sin, temptation, addiction, life-controlling issues, guilt, sadness, and anger. We go into specifics on how to forgive others.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 197-211, Sections 5.5.H., 5.5.I., 5.5.J., 5.6. |
| DVD: | “Forgiving and celebrating” |
| Group discussion: | pages 233-235, #9, 14, 16, 17, 19–26 |

Week #11

Troubleshooting and outcomes

This week we introduce ten decision maps (process charts) for helping you know where you are in the process. Troubleshooting tools are built into these decision maps. We also explore outcomes from the process, and how the process tackles different types of spiritual bullies.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | pages 212-230, Sections 5.7., 5.8., 5.9. |
| DVD: | “Troubleshooting the process” |
| Group discussion: | pages 233-235, #6-13, 17, 26-28 (note: In early versions of the textbook, #28 incorrectly references Section 5.7. The correct reference is Section 5.9.) |

Week #12

More tools for your tool belt

In Week #10, we explore additional tactics to help you overcome sin and temptation. These tactics include simple but powerful prayers, techniques for transforming ungodly desires, how to rebuild your life after a fall, and what to do when Christian leaders disappoint.

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 237-252, all of Chapter 6 |
| DVD: | “Questions for your journey” |
| Group discussion: | pages 253-254 |

Week #13

Defenses against suffering

All of us will suffer, but little coaching is available to show us how to go through suffering and emerge triumphant. This study is jam packed with information and encouragement to help you when trouble strikes.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Reading: | pages 255-274, all of Chapter 7 |
| DVD: | “Suffering and the goodness of God” |
| Group discussion: | pages 253-254 |

Choose a volunteer and a helper for next week’s process practice (someone to go after the truth experience and the person to help/facilitate)

NOTE: Participation in the following weeks is optional for group members

IMPORTANT:

- Before starting, review cautions on pages 163-164 with every member of your group. Every participant needs to be FULLY on board with these cautions.
- It’s critically important that all group members have a high level of respect for one another. Group members will be trusting one another with sensitive information, and that trust needs to be deserved.
- We’ve seen this work well with mixed-gender groups, although in some cases women may prefer to meet with women, and men with men.

Weeks #14-20

Process practice

In these process practice weeks, you will typically spend 30-60 minutes practicing the process, and the remaining 30-60 minutes discussing (debriefing) what happened. Volunteers may experience profound, life-changing truth experiences some weeks, and very little other weeks. Both experiences are important; both strengthen your Spiritual Self Defense skills.

Begin by reviewing as a group the cautions on pages 163-164.

Process practice

Participants:

- Volunteer—the person going after the truth experience
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- Other group members

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Remember to give the Volunteer time to process both before and after receiving a truth experience from Jesus.

Debrief

Be kind to one another. This is a learning environment, and all participants are developing skills. Excellence with this—as with anything—is a result of practice and helpful feedback.

Here are some questions to guide you in the debriefing process:

#1 How would you summarize what just happened?

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...presenting circumstances?

...emotion?

...memory?

...beliefs? What did we learn about assumptions vs. core lies?

#3 Were there avoidance walls or dead ends? What did we learn about the process of moving beyond those roadblocks?

#4 Did the volunteer receive a truth experience from Jesus? What did we learn about validating that truth experience(s) both in the memory and in the current presenting circumstances?

#5 What else did we learn about the process?

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Reading: | Review decision maps, pages 212-220, Chapter 5, Section 5.7., as well as pages 182-196, Sections 5.5.F. & 5.5.G. or any other portions of Chapter 5 or other portions of the textbook that may be helpful. |
| DVD: | None |
| Group discussion: | page 234, #18. |

Did any group member do this process on their own during the week? If possible, make time to discuss that member's experience if that member so desires. Remember to choose a Volunteer and a Helper for next week's process practice.