

# The Exchange

TIRED OF LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ON YOUR OWN?

We all crave relationships. Both Christians and non-Christians desire to belong to a group—a family of friends they can trust with the truth about who they are. As a leader, you have the opportunity to foster something powerful—biblical community. You strategically invite your group to experience authentic friendships the way God intended. This means doing life together, encouraging one another in Christ, and loving one another through both happy and difficult times. Biblical community is the glue that will bind your group together and propel you corporately into everything the Lord has for you.

Before Jesus ever asked anyone to change their behavior, he loved them and offered them a sense of belonging. Likewise, before young adults change their worldviews, practice spiritual disciplines, or memorize Scripture, they have to belong. As you spend time with your group, pray with them and serve them in unexpected ways. You can give them the security they need to take risks in their faith. When you lay that foundation of trust and belonging, you enable God to transform the lives of your group members. No longer is Bible study just an isolated hour of teacher-student study; it goes deeper, building lasting community that influences our lives and the very threads of who we are.

**Note:** Before reading any further, take a few minutes to read the article “What Did I Sign Up For?” in your leader tools section of this CD-ROM. It gives several helpful tips for planning and carrying out your group study sessions. Then continue reading through this leader guide.

**Disclaimer:** The suggestions, ideas, and questions provided in this leader guide serve as just that—a guide. Every group is different, and you will need to adapt this content to the specific needs of your unique group. Always include hangout time during your session. Play music and provide light snacks. No one likes a set pattern, so feel free to mix it up to keep the experience fresh each session. You may discover that a session provides more content than you can cover in one group meeting, especially if the discussion is rich. Consider carrying that topic over to the next time you meet.

## BEFORE YOUR FIRST MEETING

- Preview all printed and multi-media features available for this six-session study. Multi-media options are listed and explained below.
- Display promotional posters (available in the leader tools menu of this CD-ROM) around your church and/or community announcing the start of this study.
- Consider posting information on your church’s Web site or your personal blog or MySpace.
- Distribute member books to study participants and encourage them to read and work through the first session before your first meeting time.
- Send the audio file “What is the essence of Christianity?” (see multi-media features below) to those in your group. (Or consider sending this to several young adults in your church or community to spark interest and encourage participation in the study.) Remember to use the customized Exchange email header for this (and all other) email communication with your group.
- Listen to the music available on the CD-ROM (see Music & Playlist below) and download the remaining songs on the playlist via iTunes at [www.threadsmedia.com/media](http://www.threadsmedia.com/media).

## MULTI-MEDIA FEATURES

### Video Segments

Show the video segments (located on the DVD) at the designated times during your group meeting to spark discussion.

#### Session 1: Exchanging Perspective

“The bottom line from Dr. Frank” (4:09)

#### Session 4: Exchanging Failure

“From SanFran to O-o-o-o-klahoma” (9:45)

#### Session 5: Exchanging Effort

“New man on campus” (6:45)

**Music & Playlist**

A playlist of music that complements the topic and themes of the study is available in the leader tools section of this CD-ROM. Six songs from the playlist come with your leader kit and are located in the music & emailable audio files section of this CD-ROM. They are for you, the leader, and are playable on a CD player and a computer. Encourage group members to visit [www.threadsmedia.com/media](http://www.threadsmedia.com/media) and download these songs via iTunes. You can also send your group members the playlist in the leader tools section of this CD-ROM.

**Track 1. “You Are Good” by Matt Papa (*You Are Good*)**

**Track 2. “Shadow of Your Cross” by Joel Engle (*Made for Worship*)**

**Track 3. “You Are the Holy One” by Joel Engle (*I Believe in You*)**

**Track 4. “Unto the One” by Matt Papa (*You Are Good*)**

**Track 5. “Into Your Arms” by Matt Papa (*You Are Good*)**

**Track 6. “Nothing Left of Me” by Joel Engle (*I Believe in You*)**

**Emailable Audio Files**

Email these audio files (located in the music & emailable audio files section of this CD-ROM) to your group between meeting times to provide an additional way to connect with the topic of the study. Participants can listen to them on their computer and/or download them to an MP3 player to listen as they go. You can preview them on your computer/MP3 player as well. The files are of honest and straightforward discussions among 20- and 30-somethings about the “exchanged” life. Encourage your group to keep the discussion going with each other, friends, and coworkers after they’ve listened to keep the dialogue going between group gatherings.

**Session 1: Exchanging Perspective**

“What is the essence of Christianity?”

**Session 2: Exchanging Slavery**

“Depending on God in an independent society”

**Session 3: Exchanging the Law**

“Behavior modification vs. knowing God”

**Session 4: Exchanging Failure**

“When life needs a ‘do-over’”

**Session 5: Exchanging Effort**

“Thirsting after God”

**Bonus: “Amanda’s Story”**

(Appropriate for use anytime throughout the study.)

**Online Features**

You’ll find topical articles, additional leader helps, blogs from Threads staff and authors, and lots more at [www.threadsmedia.com](http://www.threadsmedia.com). At [www.lifeway.com/bible](http://www.lifeway.com/bible) you’ll find different Bible translations, commentaries, word studies, and other resources to supplement your preparation.

**QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION**

You may use the questions in the member book, those provided in the leader guide, or a combination of both. There are most likely more questions than you need, so pick and choose what best suits your group. Three types of questions are provided in this leader guide for each session:

**Break the Ice**

Fun, introductory questions that everyone can answer easily. These help to get the conversation started.

**Encounter**

Engage God’s Word and each other. They ask what the Bible text says or means about a particular topic.

**Apply**

Ask “So what?” These questions help identify how truth applies directly to our lives.

**Take Away**

Ways to stay connected with the topic and each other between sessions



## Exchanging Perspective

Getting Started (opening activity) ... Bring pictures (from a local newspaper, magazines, or the Web) of controversial issues such as evolution, stem-celled research, prayer in schools, homosexuality, politics, etc. As you hold up each picture, have the group voice one or two words that represent their feelings on the subject. Finally, hold up a picture of Jesus.

### Break the Ice

Why is Jesus the most controversial, yet influential, man in history?

How does failing reveal the true basis of your relationship with Christ?

How is it tempting to compare your life to others?  
Do you normally compare your spiritual life to those who are stronger or more immature than you?  
Why are both temptations dangerous?



### Show "The bottom line from Dr. Frank" (on DVD).

When have you felt like Joel in your own relationship with Christ?

### Encounter

Somewhere along the way, we have reduced salvation to being exclusively about our eternal destination. But Jesus wants us to broaden our understanding and see clearly that salvation is not just about exchanging eternity; it's about exchanging your identity.

(Referencing Romans 4:7-8) How does this passage express the finality of our salvation?

(Romans 6:1-4) How does the "death and burial" imagery change how we typically see our salvation?

How does Romans 6:5-7 redefine our relationship to sin?

Why wouldn't Satan want us to grasp this truth?

### Apply

Because of what happened at the cross, we are now "in Christ." Our union with Jesus is now the definition of who we are and the starting point for all of our day to day decisions.

Do you live like you believe you have a new identity?

What ways have you seen Satan try to deceive you about your identity?

What freedoms would you claim if you knew your life was absolutely hidden in Christ?

(In closing) What is one habit, choice, or situation you need to exchange in order to conform to the identity of your new nature?

### Pray

As the leader, voice the prayer for the group. (For creative ideas, see "What Did I Sign Up For?" in the leader tools section of this CD-ROM.)

### Take Away (between this session and the next)

- Contact each member of your group to see if they have questions about the study. Emphasize the importance of personal prayer throughout this study and encourage them to talk and hang out with each other between group gatherings.



### Send the audio file

"Depending on God in an independent society" to your group.

# Exchanging Slavery

Getting started . . . Bring a giant poster board or a dry erase board. On opposite sides, write down the areas of tension in the Christian faith: grace vs. works, spirit/emotion vs. truth and reason, identity vs. choice, love vs. discipline, faith vs. obedience. Ask your group to think about where they see themselves in each area. Discuss what happens when the pendulum swings too far in one direction.

## Break the Ice

How do you keep spiritual balance in your life?

Why do we naturally lean toward different extremes?

How does biblical freedom differ from what the world defines as freedom?

How do you see the world prizing independence and autonomy?

## Encounter

We live in a “success” driven society. Perhaps—much like the idea of freedom and slavery—real success in life looks different than what we have been taught by our culture.

(Romans 6:17-18) Explain how God wants to change your idea of what a “successful” life really is.

How do you react to Paul’s pride in his slavery as found in Romans 1:1?

What holds you back from embracing your role as a “slave” as explained in Romans 6:11-14?

## Apply

For us who hold so dearly to our independence, joyfully giving ourselves to the will of another is a difficult proposition. Day by day, God gives us grace to choose His life over our own.

What are small ways you notice your will being swallowed in the will of God?

Would people say your life is successful by worldly standards?

Do you live in a way that makes sense in the eyes of the world?

Think about this quote from Martin Luther: “I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.”

How does this quote illustrate a reaction against “mechanical Christianity”?

(In closing) What are some ways you can stop trying harder to be holy and start abiding in Christ?



Play the song “Dead Man (Carry Me)” by Jars of Clay. How does this song illustrate the exchange in our lives?

## Pray

Ask two or three from your group to voice your prayer.

## Take Away

- Spend some time this week journaling about your thoughts on living an “exchanged” life.



## Send the audio file

“Behavior modification vs. knowing God” to your group. Listen to it yourself as well to spur ideas for the upcoming session’s discussion.

- Plan a hangout time with the group. Go out to dinner or plan a game night.

## Exchanging the Law

Getting started . . . Consider bringing pictures or symbols of discipline. Some examples include an electric chair, prison, belt, speeding ticket, hand cuffs, time out chair, yard stick, or fly swatter. Discuss the emotions they evoke, even from childhood. Discuss how we sometimes see God as the “doler” of spiritual discipline.

### Break the Ice

Describe a time you were punished at home or school.  
Describe a time when you tried to achieve something, but you kept failing.

**Do you think modern Christianity is based primarily on the law or on grace?**

### Encounter

Throughout redemptive history, humanity has consistently misunderstood the purpose of the law. That misunderstanding has led to a hybrid of true Christianity whereby we might acknowledge we are saved by grace, but we live our lives dominated by the law.

**Read Galatians 3:10: Why would God create a law if we are cursed by trying to follow it?**

**What is—and has always been—the purpose of the law? Read Romans 7:1-4. How does Paul’s marriage illustration reveal God’s intentions toward us?**

### Apply

Part of embracing the exchange is embracing the role God intended the law to play in your life. The law was never meant to be a spiritual stepping-stone to God, but a tool to lead us to the end of our own effort.

**How does the law reveal weaknesses in your life?**

**Describe a time when you got “burned out” trying to be good.**

**Why do you think God is most glorified when we find our joy in Him?**

**Have you ever tried to be holy by changing your behavior?**

**How did your efforts fail you?**



**Play the song “Simple” by Anadara.**

Discuss the temptation to try to jump through hoops to get to God when He only wants us to surrender.

### Pray

**Have everyone who feels comfortable pray a one-sentence prayer of praise or thanks.**

### Take Away

- Carve out time this week to pray specifically for each group member. Email them ahead of time to ask about specific needs.



**Send the audio file**

“When life needs a ‘do-over’” to your group.  
As you listen yourself, jot down ideas for the upcoming session’s discussion.

## Exchanging Failure

Getting started . . . Cut out pictures or print off words that represent good news in our society. Words might be: Christmas, vacation, salary raise, cure discovered, true love, sale at the mall, gas prices dropping, etc. Have the class put the events in order of their favorites. Discuss how certain things psychologically affect our moods in a positive way.

### Break the Ice

Share a time you experienced great news in your life. Like the Jews and the law, sometimes we get stuck in a particular way of thinking. Name a time when it was hard for you to surrender your old opinion of something, even though you knew it was wrong.

Why is it tempting to measure our spirituality by how we keep the law?



Watch "From SanFran to O-o-o-o-klahoma" (on DVD).

### Encounter

Part of appreciating the gospel as "good news" is allowing the law to do its real work. God's law unflinchingly brings us to the end of ourselves. At that end, we find Christ waiting.

How did the law shatter Paul spiritually (Romans 7:7-11)?

How can you identify with Paul's honest statement in Romans 7:14-15?

How does "fruit" differ from "works"?

### Apply

In any life there are many battles. Some of those battles are victories; some are defeats. It's pretty apparent from Paul's words this week that he experienced his share of losses as well as wins. Thankfully, we can look past the battles to the end of the war and see Christ standing as victor.

Describe a time where the more you tried to be good, the more you saw yourself as sinful.

Why can't we "train" ourselves to stop sinning?

How does the exchanged life meet the requirements of the law?

### Pray

Divide into groups of two to three to pray. Pray A.W. Tozer's prayer (found on pg. 80 of the member book) aloud together.

If time remains, follow with these questions:

How does longing for God translate into worship of God?

How can you begin to develop thirst for God in your life?

Pray that God would enable you to delight in him this week.

### Take Away



Send the audio file "Thirsting after God" to your group. Think about the meaning of Psalm 63:1 in your life.

- Ask group members to search for best-seller self-help books when they're online or at Borders this week. Have them bring information on their findings to the next group gathering.

## Exchanging Effort

Getting started . . . To demonstrate the culture's obsession with self-reliance, ask group members to share their findings of self-help books. How many promote independence and self-reliance as a way to combat unhappiness? Discuss ways the culture values autonomy and "finding yourself."



Play the song "The Answer" by Shane & Shane.

Discuss the simplicity of the "answer" found in the song. How is loving God the only way to make sense of life? How does loving God help us overcome our old "dry" selves?

### Break the Ice

What are our society's biggest sources of insecurity?

Describe a time when you struggled over the validity of your salvation.

Why would God want you to have eternal security?



Watch "New man on campus" (on DVD).

### Encounter

Many Christians find it difficult to balance the relationship between Christ's work on our behalf and our own. The complete and total holiness Jesus gives to us does not excuse our personal conduct; rather, it empowers it.

How does Christ give us the ability to stop sinning?

What evidence of the exchanged heart as described in Romans 8:1-4 have you seen in your own life?

How is the world's mind hostile to the things of God (Romans 8:5-8)?

What is significant to you about calling God "Abba," as Paul encourages in Romans 8:15?

### Apply

Most believers live in a constant state of fear because of their inability to live up to the demands of the law. Since Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf, we can move past those emotional responses and live in the "higher ground" of the Holy Spirit.

How can we saturate our minds with thoughts of God yet stay fully relevant to the culture around us?

How does Satan launch attacks on our minds?

How can you become less independent in your spiritual walk and more dependent on Christ?

Instead of trying harder, we must work at *dying* harder. How does this "work" differ from the work of the flesh?

### Pray

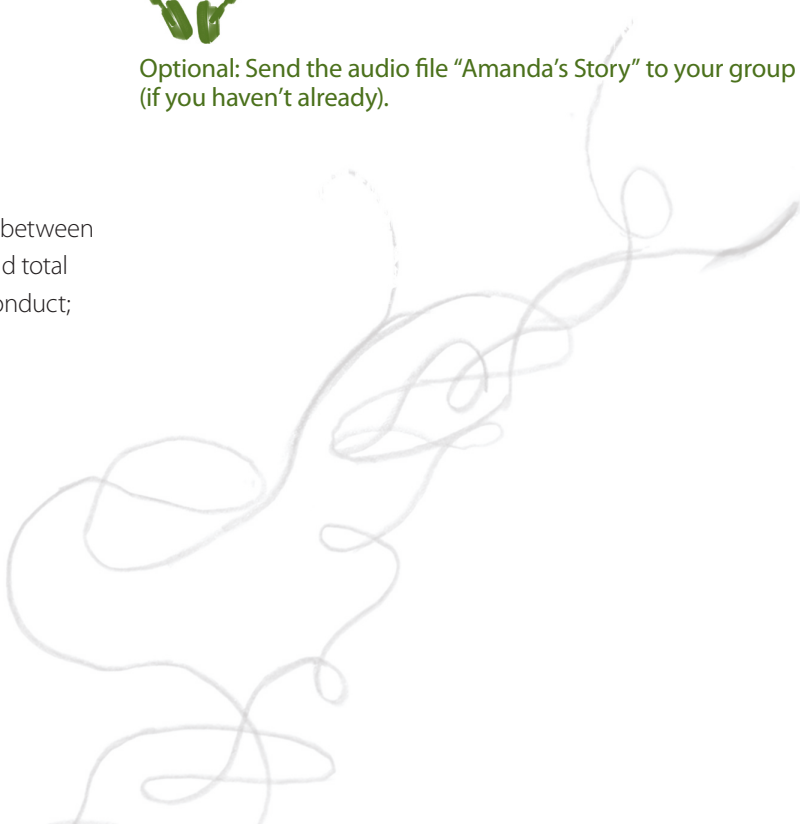
Encourage a time of individual prayer. Have your group journal a prayer or pray silently for several minutes.

### Take Away

- Search for other prayers penned by historical or current theologians and share your findings with the group.



Optional: Send the audio file "Amanda's Story" to your group (if you haven't already).



## Exchanging Eternity

Getting started . . . Read Saint Francis of Assisi's prayer aloud to the group. Which words strike you most? How does it inspire encouragement?

### Break the Ice

What are the popular ideas concerning heaven?

How do you feel about those pictures of the afterlife?

### Encounter

Circumstances in the world threaten to make us forget who we are. Each day we are confronted with war, natural disasters, and disease, not to mention our own personal failures. Amazingly, those circumstances and even our behavior change nothing about our identity in Christ.

When you read you are "co-heirs with Christ" in Romans 8:17-21, how does that reveal God's estimation of you? How does this knowledge impact your identity?

How does suffering for Christ as described in Romans 8:18-21 offer more joy than success in this world?

How are you encouraged to learn that our high priest sympathizes with our weakness (Hebrews 4:15-16)?

How does this impact how you approach God with sin?

### Apply

Belief is bigger than emotion. Despite what we might experience and even feel, we can choose to believe in everything God has made us to be and has stored up for us. With the Holy Spirit empowering us and even praying for us, we are armed to make a difference in this world and eternity.

What ways do you see creation groaning for a savior?

How do your current trials gain new meaning in light of eternity?

What "all things" do you long for Christ to work out for the good in your life?

How does Satan try to accuse you of past sin? How are you encouraged to know that God cannot hear his accusations?

### Pray

Encourage group members to voice one thing this experience has changed in them. Don't forget to share yours. Voice a prayer of thanks for God's activity in all of your lives.

### Take Away

- Send "thank you" e-mails to group members, voicing your appreciation for their participation.

