

## **CONTENTS**

Introduction		5
Week One	Road Trip: Identifying Your Feelings about Divorce	7
Week Two	Crimes and Misdemeanors: Exploring Reasons for Divorce	29
Week Three	Switching Drivers: Life Changes after Divorce	51
Week Four	Driver's Education: How to Effectively Communicate with Your Parents	71
Week Five	Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right: Choosing Forgiveness after a Divorce	89
Week Six	The End of the Road: Growing Closer to Christ	107
Notes		126

# INTRODUCTION

*Dealing with Divorce* is a Bible study designed just for you. Whether your parents divorced years ago or are currently divorcing. I understand that you're working through certain issues and feelings.

I also know that when your parents divorce, you reach a crossroads—a point in time when you must choose how you will live. Will you choose rebellion, self-destruction, and self-satisfaction? Or will you choose the peace and forgiveness found only in Christ Jesus? I pray that as you search the Scriptures and work through this study, you will find peace and trust in God's plan for your life.

So start your engines! The journey is about to begin. This Bible study is designed for you to use either as your personal daily devotional or as a group study with other students. Whether you take this journey alone or with others, remember to be honest with yourself, with others, and with God. Only then will you understand your own feelings and thoughts about divorce and ultimately, God's views on divorce.

I hope this is life-changing adventure as you seek God's best for you at the crossroads of life.



WEEK I

# **ROAD TRIP**

Identifying Your Feelings about Divorce

## **DAY 1—ROAD RAGE**

Have you ever been driving on a highway when another driver suddenly swerves into your lane, practically cutting off your car's front end? And then that driver has the nerve to honk at you, as if this near-accident were your fault.

Driving, especially in large cities, has become increasingly dangerous over the years. And not just because our country's population has increased—it's also because of people's attitudes on the road.

Have you noticed how drivers begrudgingly allow you to switch lanes? How they run red lights without any hesitation? How they yell at one another for the slightest offense? Road rage is dangerous and becoming more common in our society. Drivers don't realize their behavior on the road should mirror their behavior when they're outside of their vehicle. Would they act this way in the checkout line at Target? (Well . . . forget I asked.)

We all experience rage or anger in life. If your parents are divorcing, changes are you are angry. Angry at your mom, angry at your dad, angry at yourself, angry at God, angry at no one in particular—just angry. Today we'll explore this menace called anger and how we can deal with it in our lives.

Take a minute to think about situations in the past when your parents have done something to make you angry. Is your dad a workaholic? Does your mom monitor your phone calls? Does your dad miss your football games because he's with his "new family?"

1. Take some time to the list (in the space below) any situations or events that have made you angry with your parents.

That was probably easy for you, wasn't it? Holding on to memories that hurt us is often very easy to do. We tend to hold close our memories of betrayal or disappointment.

2. Instead of clutching our anger and never releasing it, what does the apostle Paul say we should do with our anger? Read Ephesians 4:26 and summarize it in your own words.

While our parents might make us angry, we owe them our honesty. Have you ever shared your feelings about your anger with your mom or dad? Have you ever told them about a specific event that really made you angry?

If you're never shared these feelings with your mom or dad, spend some time praying about whether God wants you to approach them. Ask God if your feelings are legitimate, or if you're searching for reasons to be angry with your parents. You might need to spend several days praying about this.

If God tells you to talk about your feelings with your parents, you need to obey God. But there's a specific way to approach them so they'll hear you.

First, schedule a time when you know your mom or dad can sit down with you and really listen. Schedule a meeting in their Blackberry or arrange a lunch or dinner date. They'll appreciate your effort and maturity, and they'll likely respond much more openly than if you were to shyly catch them off-guard.

Second, when you talk with your parents, remember Proverbs 15:1, which states, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Be calm. Explain your feelings. Use "I" statements, such as—

- "I was really angry when \_\_\_\_\_."
- "It really hurts my feelings when \_\_\_\_\_."

Don't use an accusatory tone or "you" statements, such as—

- "You always \_\_\_\_\_."
- "You never \_\_\_\_\_."
- "You love \_\_\_\_\_ more than you love me."

Statements like these will put a wall between you and your parents. The goal of the conversation is to open your lines of communication.

You might be wondering, *What if my parents get angry when I bring up things from the past?* If your parents respond to anger, remember Ecclesiastes 10:4: "If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great offenses to rest." In other words, don't give up and remain calm.

No matter how your parents respond to you, your responsibility is to stand firm in your convictions as calmly as possible. If you feel angry because one parent had an extramarital affair, then you can be honest and tell that parent why this makes you angry. Your mom or dad might

be offended by your candor, but you're entitled to express your feelings—as long as you still treat your parents with respect.

Understand anger isn't necessarily wrong or sinful. It's a natural emotion we all—including God—feel. However, our response to this emotion can either be sinful or glorify God.

For the rest of your devotional time, take a look at some other verses associated with anger.

3. Exodus 34:6 states, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." What does it mean to be "slow to anger?"

4. How can you become "slow to anger" in your own life?

5. Why does God want us to control our anger? Write down what each verse tells you.

- Proverbs 14:29

- Proverbs 15:18

- James 1:19-20

6. Instead of negatively responding to our anger, how does God want us to respond? Write down what each verse tells you.

- Galatians 5:22-23

- Ephesians 4:31-32

When someone cuts you off or refuses to let you switch lanes, you have a choice: you reach a crossroads. You either brush off their rudeness, or you get angry and seek revenge.

***Life is no exception. You'll experience many trials in which you'll find yourself at a crossroads—a point in time when your attitude and actions will shape your character and your life. Dealing with divorce is a crossroads.***

When parents divorce, you have two choices: React in a number of negative ways (which we'll discuss over the next several weeks) or forgive. The easy road is paved with negativity, hurt, and rage. The more difficult road, however, is paved with soul-searching and forgiveness. Navigating your way along the more difficult road requires some help. And that help comes only from Jesus Christ.

Now let's take a few minutes to think about how God feels about divorce.

7. Read the following verses and fill in the blanks.

“I \_\_\_\_\_ says the Lord God of Israel, ‘and I \_\_\_\_\_ it when people \_\_\_\_\_ themselves with \_\_\_\_\_,” says the Lord Almighty. So \_\_\_\_\_, and do not be \_\_\_\_\_. (Malachi 2:16)

For this reason a man will leave his \_\_\_\_\_ and be united to his \_\_\_\_\_, and the two will become \_\_\_\_\_. So they are no longer \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore what God has \_\_\_\_\_ together, let no one \_\_\_\_\_. (Matthew 19:5-6)

Why does God hate divorce? Because God is a God of promises and covenants. God’s Word is true and everlasting. When God makes a promise to his children, he follows through. And God expects the same from his children. Marriage is a promise one person makes to another person—and to God. We often think of marriage as a bond between a husband and a wife, but it’s really a bond between a husband, a wife, and God. God would never divorce his children; therefore, he doesn’t want his children to divorce each other. Divorce is a sin against one’s spouse and a sign against God.

God also knows the pain that accompanies divorce. People often believe divorce will solve their problems. Unfortunately, divorce usually just creates new problems. Divorce leaves everyone involved emotionally wounded. God doesn’t want to see his children hurt themselves or each other.

“So is God angry at my parents because they divorced?” you might ask.

8. Read the following verses and then write down God’s responses to his children.

- Psalm 66:20

- Psalm 86:15

- Luke 15:2

We all sin, whether it's through divorce, cheating on a test, or lying to our parents. And we all need God's love. Fortunately, God loves us despite our sins. Nothing we do can remove God's love from us.

Let's close in a time of prayer.

Dear God,

Thank you for your love and mercy. Thank you for being slow to anger, for loving me when I'm difficult to love, and for being patient with me when I fail you. Please forgive me for the times when I let my anger control my thoughts, words, and actions. I pray you'll make it clear whether you want me to approach my mom or dad about things that have made me angry in the past. Help me to clearly understand your will and obey. Help me to control my anger so my words and actions are a reflection of you. Amen.

## **DAY 2—CAUTION WHEN WET**

Sadness is another emotion you might feel as a result of your parents' divorce. It's a loss in your life in the same way that it's a loss if you get cut from the basketball team, your best friend moves to another city, or your favorite aunt passes away. They're all losses, though we experience different levels of grief depending on the loss.

Divorce causes us to feel sad for many reasons:

- We want our parents to get back together.
- We hate all the fighting
- We believe the divorce is our fault
- We want things to go back to the way they used to be.
- We feel replaced when one parent finds a "new family."

1. All of these thoughts lead to sadness. What are some other things about divorce that make you sad?

But knowing we feel sad doesn't take away the sadness. We must also express our feelings. In the Old Testament, the Israelites expressed their sadness in several ways.

2. Look up the following verses and describe their reactions to grief.
  - 2 Samuel 1:11-12

- 2 Samuel 12:15-17

- Jeremiah 48:37

Wow! Those Israelites weren't afraid to express their feelings. In our Western society however, we're often taught to mask our feelings, to just "get over it." We're often even denied the right to be sad.

3. How do you express your sadness?

If you haven't yet found some constructive, healthy ways to deal with your feelings, here are some ideas:

- **Pray.** Let God know about your feelings. Confess everything to him. God already knows what's on your mind, so why not verbalize it to him? Second Corinthians 1:3

says, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.”

- **Write in a journal.** Journaling your thoughts and feelings is something both guys and girls can do. Some guys are wary of doing this, but rest assured there are many men all over the world who are discovering the power of writing down their thoughts and emotions. Don’t be afraid to put on paper what’s in your head and heart. This process will help you sort through your thoughts and feelings and make sense of your emotions.
- **Talk to a trusted friend or relative.** This can seem scary because you’re revealing yourself to someone. You’re becoming vulnerable—not a comfortable act for most people. However, finding one trustworthy person will free you from carrying these burdens by yourself.

Expressing sadness or hurt can be especially difficult for young men. Guys, you’re often taught that “boys don’t cry,” right? Well, that philosophy is wrong. The Bible tells us that men from the beginning of time have cried—even torn their clothes, shaved their heads, and fasted. And all as means of expressing their despair.

Our society also tells us to “pull ourselves up by the bootstraps.” Our culture deems grieving as inappropriate and a waste of time. However, ignoring your feelings won’t cause them to magically disappear. You must deal with your feelings.

One reason you should deal with your sadness is because sadness can lead to depression—a serious illness that affects one in 10 teenagers in the United States.<sup>1</sup> That’s 2.2 million people your age—and just in America!

Do you think you might be depressed? Do you know someone who’s depressed? Here are some signs that depression might be affecting you:<sup>2</sup>

- **Poor concentration**—Does your mind wander during class, when you study or in the middle of a conversation with someone?
- **Headaches, stomachaches, or other ailments**—Do you suddenly feel more run down or notice more frequent headaches?
- **Changes in sleeping behavior**—Do you stay up all night playing video games? Do you sleep in all day, sometimes even mission school because you can’t or don’t want to get out of bed?

- **Changes in eating behavior**—Has your appetite decreased Or is the opposite true—do you turn to food for comfort, sometimes eating when you aren't even hungry?
- **Feelings of guilt, hopelessness, worthlessness, or helplessness**
- **Fatigue**
- **Loss of interest in favorite activities or hobbies**
- **Thoughts of death or suicide**

If you recognize any of these behaviors in yourself or in a friend, please take action:

- **Pray!** The prophet Jeremiah says, “You who are my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me” (Jeremiah 8:18). Do you feel like this sometimes? Don't give up! God reassures us. “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18).
- **Talk to a trusted parent, friend, teacher, or relative.** Let this person know which of these feelings and behaviors you're experiencing.

Sadness can lead to depression, and depression can sometimes lead to suicide. In the year 2000, approximately 3 million adolescents, ages 12 to 17, either thought seriously about suicide or attempted suicide.<sup>3</sup> Don't let your sadness spin out of control. Please seek help so you can overcome your feelings and begin to experience the abundant blessings God has planned for you.

God's people have often felt overwhelmed by their sadness and grief. But God promises us he'll “turn their mourning into gladness” and “give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow” (Jeremiah 31:13).

Use the rest of your quiet time today to confess your feelings to God. If you're sad, tell him why you feel this way. Ask God to heal your broken heart. Trust that God has blessings prepared for you.

## **DAY 3—ABANDONED VEHICLE**

When I was about two years old, my mom and dad divorced. Without going into details, I can say my dad was an unhealthy person physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. He faded in and out of our lives for the next seven years, which created a distant and confusing father-daughter relationship. Finally, when I was about eight years old, my mom brother, and I moved across the country.

I don't know what separated my dad and me more: The vast geographical distance or the unsettling emotional distance. For whatever reason, my dad stopped calling, writing, and sending birthday cards. Various relatives would give us the latest news of his whereabouts, jobs, and so on. But eventually we stopped asking, and they stopped volunteering the information. By the time I turned 10 years old, my dad's absence in my life was official.

I really don't remember missing my dad or wishing he played a stronger role in my life because our relationship had always been inconsistent and uncomfortable. His absence had always been more reliable than his presence.

Once, when I was in college, a good friend of mine asked me if my dad was dead. I stood there, shocked . . . confused . . . speechless.

“Of course he's not dead. Why would you think that?” I asked.

“Because you never talk about him,” my friend said.

Hmmm . . . I'd never realized how little I thought or talked about my dad. I'd made a habit of ignoring the topic altogether, pretending everything was “normal” and convincing myself that most children of divorce don't have a relationship with one of their parents.

While some fathers abandon their children after divorce, many other dads continue to play an important role in their children's lives. Let's not forget those dads who sacrifice time, money, and energy to spend time with their children.

Don't worry: We aren't just picking on the dads. Unfortunately, some moms can't handle the stress of the divorce or the responsibility of raising children on their own and jump ship themselves. Will Smith's film *The Pursuit of Happyness* (Columbia Pictures, 2006) portrays a father trying to create a better life for himself and his son after his wife abandons them both. This movie, based on the true story of Chris Gardner, shows a father committed to his child. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Chris said his greatest accomplishment wasn't getting a better job or providing more material things for his son—his greatest accomplishment was breaking the cycle of child abandonment in his family.<sup>4</sup>

Parents abandon their children in many ways, including physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and financially. Has your mom or dad abandoned your family? Does she show up only at her convenience? Does he refuse to pay child support or help with financial obligations like school, extracurricular activities, and clothes?

1. Do you feel deserted by a parent? If so, how does that make you feel? Look at the choices below and check all the feelings that apply to you.

- I feel worthless.
- I feel unloved and unlovable.
- I feel like I'm not important.
- I don't feel good-looking enough, smart enough, athletic enough, \_\_\_\_\_ enough.

2. How has your parent's absence affected you?

- I struggle with fear.
- I struggle with self-worth (accepting myself as I am).
- I struggle with self-esteem (realizing my positive qualities and all that I have to offer).
- I'm afraid to depend on other people.
- I avoid making close friendships and opening up to people about my feelings.
- I'm angry and bitter.
- I'm sad most of the time.
- I worry about the future.
- I'm indifferent.
- I'm happy my parents have found happiness, even if it's a result of their divorce.

People often ask me if I'm angry with my father for abandoning my brother and me. Honestly I harbor no bitterness, anger, or blame. I know there's more involved in my situation than one man's inability to be a father. I believe God has protected me in many different stages and areas of my life, and the absence of my father is a crucial example of God's protection.

As I said, my father was unhealthy in many ways. While I don't remember much about my dad, the memories I carry with me aren't positive. I truly believe God used my father's absence to protect me from further physical, emotional, and mental harm.

But many of you may not feel so blessed by your parent's absence. If you struggle with feelings of abandonment, please know that God cares for you. Throughout the Bible, God addresses the issue of those who've been abandoned by their fathers. Take some time right now to read the following passages and answer the questions.

3. According to the following verses, what's God's promise to abandoned children?

- Psalm 10:17-18

- Psalm 27:10

- John 14:18

Even when we feel abandoned and forgotten by our earthly parents, God will never leave us. God loves us and cares for our every need. Psalm 68:5 promises, “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.”

Let’s close in prayer today.

Dear God,

Thank you for promising me you’ll never leave me. Thank you for assuring me you’ll always provide for me. While I feel abandoned by \_\_\_\_\_. I know you’ll never leave me. Help me to forgive \_\_\_\_\_. I pray I’ll take comfort in knowing you’ll never leave me. Amen.

## **DAY 4—STUCK ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD**

My parents divorced when I was very young, and my mom remarried when I was in middle school. When I was about 13 years old, my brother and I drove to our family’s lake house. My mom and stepdad had driven down earlier in the day, so my brother and I left town after school that Friday afternoon. The sun set as we drove, and eventually we were traveling down the highway in darkness. Suddenly we heard a pop. The entire Jeep shook. We pulled over to the side of the road as cars zipped past us, and we discovered a nail stuck in the back right tire.

I shouldn’t have worried; my brother is very capable in these sorts of situations. But I still bit my lip to keep from crying. Believe it or not, this event occurred back in the day before everyone had cell phones, text messaging, and rollover minutes. Yes, there was such a time. (And I’m not even that old.) We were stuck on the side of the highway, in the dark, with no way to call anyone, and no one to rescue us.

My brother immediately took action. He kept a spare tire in the back of the Jeep, so he started changing the tire. My only responsibility was to hold the flashlight. But I was so nervous about the hundreds of cars speeding past us that I couldn’t concentrate. Then I stepped into a huge ant hill, causing ants to scurry all over us. Needless to say, my brother wasn’t too happy with me.

He eventually got the tire changed and we got back in the car. But I was still worried. What if we got another flat tire? What if the car broke down altogether? What if no one ever heard from us again? I sat in fear and silence during the rest of the drive until we finally reached the lake house.

What do you think of when you hear the word *fear*? Do you think of that scary slasher movie you watched at your best friend’s house? Or of telling your parents you got a D on your report card? If your parents divorce, fear becomes something much more paralyzing.

The term *worry*, as you know, involves an *anticipation* of danger—you spend time thinking about something that hasn’t yet occurred and may not occur. Worry also evokes a sense of anxious concern. Our thoughts are preoccupied, and this preoccupation causes some anxiety. I was definitely worried, anxious, concerned, and preoccupied the night I stood on the side of the road after our Jeep got a flat tire.

1. When you think of your parents’ divorce, do you feel anxious, concerned, or afraid? Use the space below to describe your feelings of fear or worry.

Worry involves spending time, energy, and emotions thinking about things that haven't even occurred. In the wake of divorce, we often worry about—

- **Money**—Will my mom be able to find a job that can support us? Will one parent have to pay child support?
  - **Relationships**—Will Mom keep in touch with me when I go live with Dad? Will Dad still come to my soccer games? Will my parents remarry?
  - **Moving**—Will we have to move to a different house? A new city?
2. Do any of these things worry you? List the things you're afraid of or worry about concerning your parents' divorce.

Now read Matthew 6:25-34.

This text focuses on the people's preoccupation with accumulating material possessions, but the application stretches far beyond our material needs. While we do worry about material things, we also worry about things such as making the basketball team, getting the lead in the school play, passing our driver's test, meeting our mom's new boyfriend, taking care of our dad, and many other situations.

First, Jesus assures the people that God already knows their needs. Note that Jesus says "needs," not "wants." We need food, shelter, clothing, love, and safety. We don't need the newest Xbox, a trendy pair of jeans, or a week at summer camp. Those are all "wants." Sure, they might have been a part of your life when your parents were married, but economic changes often accompany divorce.

Next, Jesus tells the people that God will give them all they need "from day to day." As a self-professed type-A personality, I'm naturally bent toward impatience. I often use the

microwave because I don't want to wait more than 10 minutes for my food to cook. I fast-forward through commercials on my TiVo because I don't have the patience or interest to watch them.

Obviously I'm not going to win the "most patient" award anytime soon. God, however, is patient beyond compare. God doesn't promise he'll fulfill our needs all at once, a month in advance, or with ample notice. No, God promises he'll take care of us "from day to day."

3. Why would God choose to provide for us in this way?

God teaches us many things by giving us just what we need right when we need it. First of all, God teaches us patience (my personal favorite). We receive God's blessings and must wait for more without feelings of entitlement. Second, God also teaches us humility as we realize he alone can provide for our needs. While God loves us, he doesn't need us to accomplish his will. That's a big shock to such an ego-centered culture like ours. Finally, God teaches us thankfulness. When we spend time living without certain things, we experience a greater appreciation once we receive them.

So what does it mean to live for God? It means to devote our thoughts and actions to eternally significant things.

4. List some eternally significant things in which we should invest our time and energy.

While this answer will differ for everyone, all answers have a common bond. Things of eternal significance include that which is important to Jesus Christ. What's important to Jesus Christ? Worshiping God and loving people. If your answer involves these two things, rest assured you understand what's eternally significant.

If you have any worries or fears, confess those to God in the following space. Ask God to forgive you for not trusting him to fulfill your needs. Ask God to help you trust him and rely on him in the future.

## **DAY 5—IT WAS MY FAULT**

When my mom remarried, we relocated from a big city to a small town. Moving there proved more difficult than I expected. Cliques ruled the school. Our own *Mean Girls* entourage made me their target—I guess it was my initiation as the new girl. But after a couple of years, I adjusted and actually enjoyed my new life in a small town.

During my high school years, just as I was feeling more comfortable at school, my mom and stepdad divorced. My stepdad and I had always clashed, although most times I didn't even know why he was mad at me. He and my mom fought a lot, and many times the fights centered on me. But when they divorced, he revealed the deep-seated truth that had driven a wedge between us all those years.

I was of no use to him. He had two older daughters from a previous marriage and didn't need another one. He was jealous of the time I spent with my mom and the attention I received from her. I'd never understood. It didn't make sense. Until then.

At that moment I stood at a crossroads in life. I could respond in two ways. Internalize his words, carry around the (false) guilt of breaking up a marriage, and believe I was no use to anyone by quitting the tennis team and cheerleading and letting my grades drop.

Or I could take the other path and believe I was valuable, important, and worthy of love.

You see, while my stepdad blamed me for many things. I knew the truth. Whatever his issues were with me, they were his issues. I refused to let him make me feel guilty or accept responsibility for his divorce. I remained involved in my extracurricular activities and maintained good grades because I knew I was of great worth in God's eyes, and I refused to believe such destructive lies.

1. Think about your own parents' divorce for a minute. Do you feel guilty for any reason? If so, write down your thoughts and feelings.

If you feel guilty—as if you contributed to your parents' divorce some how—examine why you feel this way. Then talk to a trusted friend or adult. That person can help you sort through your feelings. Chances are good that you're not responsible for your parents' troubles.

In fact, kids are almost *never* responsible for their parents' divorce. So why would parents believe the kids were at least partly to blame? Well, because kids need a lot from their parents. Time, money, energy, and attention—just to name a few.

***But what many parents forget is that children are a privilege, not a burden. You are valuable, special, and worthy of love.***

While kids aren't responsible for their parents' divorce, sometimes they do contribute to the stress in the marriage. Sometimes kids purposefully try to sabotage their parents' relationship, especially in stepfamilies. Think about your relationship with your own parents. Have you ever manipulated them to get what you want? Have you lied to them? Have you used one parent against the other? While these things may not have broken up the marriage, they do create stress in the family.

2. If you recognize these or any other behaviors, confess them to God. Psalm 51:9-10 says, "Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Search your heart and ask God for forgiveness.

We need to confess our feelings because if we feel guilty, then we're unable to fully receive God's love. Confession is the foundation of salvation. Guilt creates a barrier between us and God. When we feel guilty, we must confess to God the things we've done wrong; and if you're not already a Christian, you can tell God that you want a better way to live and ask Jesus to come into our heart to be your Lord and Savior.

When Jesus becomes our Lord, this means he becomes our boss. Jesus tells us what to do and how to do it. If we have a question about how we should do something, then we can go to him. If we have trouble with a friend, a family member, or a general situation, we take our concerns to Jesus.

He's also our Savior. Jesus helps us navigate through life so we might live it more abundantly. Without Jesus we can never experience true joy or peace.

Having Jesus as our Savior also means only he can rescue us from eternal death. Have you ever thought about what would happen to you if you died tomorrow? It's a scary thought for some people because they don't know their fate. If you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you can be confident you'll be in heaven with Jesus.

"But I'm a good person," you might say, "I don't lie, drink, or steal. I make good grades. I'm a pretty good kid. Surely God will let me into heaven."

3. To see what Scripture says, look up the following verses and copy them into the spaces provided.

- Romans 3:23

- Ephesians 2:8-9

Every time we gossip, we turn away from God. Every time we watch something on TV that's not glorifying to God, we turn away from God. Every time we drink at a party, we turn away from God.

But despite all of our mistakes, we can always turn back toward God. In Romans the apostle Paul assures us, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9)

Take the time right now to examine your own life. Do you feel consumed by guilt? Are you overwhelmed with life? Have you ever asked Jesus to be your personal Lord and Savior? Confess your sins to God.

If you aren't a Christian, ask God to give you the strength and wisdom you need to be a positive witness for him. If you aren't a Christian, then ask God to cleanse you of your sins, to reign in your heart, and to be your personal Lord and Savior.

If you just prayed this prayer for the first time, please talk to someone about it—a trusted friend or family member, a counselor, or your youth pastor. Tell someone about your decision to accept Christ and ask that person to pray for you during this exciting time of your life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Powerhouse Ministry, “Depression and Teens,” battlecry.com, [http://powerhouse-ministry.org/battlecry\\_depression.aspx](http://powerhouse-ministry.org/battlecry_depression.aspx) (accessed August 1, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> List adapted from Powerhouse Ministry, “Depression and Teens,” battlecry.com, [http://powerhouse-ministry.org/battlecry\\_depression.aspx](http://powerhouse-ministry.org/battlecry_depression.aspx), and “National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), “What are the symptoms of depression?” Depression booklet (Washington DC. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007), <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/nimhdepression.pdf> (accessed August 1, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Judy Shepps Battle, “Teenagers and Suicide,” About Teen Depression Web site (2002), <http://www.about-teen-depression.com/teen-suicide.html> (accessed August 1, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> “The Pursuit of Happiness,” *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, (first aired November 22, 2006), “Homeless to Hollywood: Will Smith and the Real Chris Gardner,” [http://www.oprah.com/dated/oprahshow/oprahshow\\_20061122](http://www.oprah.com/dated/oprahshow/oprahshow_20061122) (accessed August 1, 2008).