

Leader's Guide

Strengthening the Family: *The Costume That No Longer Fits*

June 28, 2026

Pastor Ben Pippen

Goal of this week's conversation

The goal of this discussion is to help the people in your group recognize that spiritual maturity is revealed not when life is easy, but when life is difficult. As we learn to process our emotions in healthy ways, surrender our thoughts to Christ, and respond to others with grace instead of reacting out of hurt, God shapes us into people who reflect Jesus more clearly. By the end of the discussion, hopefully each person is able to identify at least one practical way they can intentionally respond more like Christ this week in situations that arise.

Question 1:

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:11-13

Maturity has been defined as, "*The ability to act like yourself when you get triggered.*" What do you think spiritual maturity looks like in everyday life? How is that different from just having a lot of biblical knowledge?

Teaching point:

Knowledge is important, but biblical maturity is measured by transformation. The Christian life isn't simply learning more information, it's becoming more like Jesus. Encourage your group to think about habits and character rather than accomplishments.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Who has modeled spiritual maturity for you?
- What qualities stand out about spiritually mature people?
- Why can someone know a great deal about Scripture and still struggle with spiritual maturity?
- Which fruit of the Spirit do you most want God to develop in you right now?

Additional Scriptures

- James 1:22
- Hebrews 5:14

- Galatians 5:22-23

Question 2:

Read: James 1:2-4

It's inevitable that there will be life events that produce stress. When those moments come and you find yourself getting triggered, what does it usually expose about your heart?

Teaching point

A point was made in the sermon that compared our hearts to a firecracker. The trigger doesn't create what's inside, but rather that it reveals it. This question isn't about making us feel guilt and shame for our reactions, but to become aware of what God may be inviting us to surrender to Him.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What situations tend to trigger you most often?
- When you're under pressure, do you tend to withdraw, become defensive, become angry, or seek control?
- Looking back, has God ever used a difficult season to expose something He wanted to heal?
- Why do you think God often uses trials to mature us?

Additional Scriptures

- Luke 6:45
- Psalm 139:23-24
- Romans 5:3-5

Question 3:

When challenges come, the VCR model encourages us to:

- Validate our feelings
- Comfort ourselves in healthy ways
- Recover with God's help

Which part of that process is most difficult for you, and why?

Teaching point

Validating feelings doesn't mean agreeing with every emotion or allowing emotions to control us. It simply means acknowledging what we're experiencing so we can invite God into it instead of pretending like everything is fine.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Which step of the VCR model comes most naturally to you?
- Which step do you usually skip?
- When you're hurting, where are you most tempted to seek comfort?
- Who are the safe people God has placed in your life that help you recover in healthy ways?
- How can our small group become a place where people feel safe to process life's difficulties?

Additional Scriptures

- Psalm 34:18
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
- 1 Peter 5:7
- Romans 12:15

Question 4:

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

As followers of Christ we are called to live by the Spirit, take our thoughts captive, see people through God's eyes, and forgive as Christ forgave. Which of these commands is hardest for you to follow in your everyday journey of faith?

Teaching point

These practices are all connected. Taking thoughts captive helps us see people more clearly. Seeing people through God's eyes makes forgiveness possible. Living by the Spirit is the only way any of it is possible.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Which command comes most naturally? Which is most challenging?
- Have you ever caught yourself believing something about another person that wasn't true?
- Why is it often easier to attack people than the real spiritual enemy?
- Is there someone God may be asking you to forgive or view differently?

Additional Scriptures

- Galatians 5:16
- Ephesians 4:31-32
- Ephesians 6:12
- Philippians 4:8

Question 5:

If you think about the week ahead and consider situations that might trigger a negative response, how might you prepare yourself to respond more like Christ?

Teaching point

Preparation is often more effective than reaction. Encourage participants to think proactively rather than waiting until emotions are already running high.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What situation are you anticipating?
- Which principle from today's discussion will help you most?
- What Scripture could you meditate on before entering that situation?
- Who could pray for you or hold you accountable this week?