

Here are some ideas to get you started.

## LEADERS:

*Need some help? It's okay. We all do.*

A full walk-through of the study guide with notes on how to navigate each session is available at [groupleaders.org/startingover](http://groupleaders.org/startingover).

## VIDEOS:

The video sessions that complement this study can be found on the:

- **Anthology Mobile App** (free on the iTunes App Store and Google Play)
- **Starting Over DVD** (available on Amazon)

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## DURING A GROUP MEETING

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### 1. HANG OUT.

*(about 30 minutes)*

Our life moves so fast these days. Take some time to talk about what's going on in the life of those in your group. Asking about things like job interviews, the health of their kids, and how their weeks are going goes a long way in building community.

### 2. WATCH THE VIDEO AND DOODLE ALONG.

*(about 20 minutes)*

When we designed this study guide, we had note-taking in mind. So while you're watching the video, take advantage of the extra space and grid pages for notes and/or drawings, depending on your note-taking style.

### 3. DISCUSS AND COMPLETE THE ACTIVITIES

*(about 45 minutes)*

Depending on the session, your group will have Discussion Questions and scenarios to think through, as well as activities to do. Putting pen to paper can give you deeper insight into the content.

### 4. PRAYER

*(about 5 minutes)*

Keep this simple and real. Use the Bottom Line as your prayer, asking God to help you make it happen that week.

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# PART 1

## Three Myths

### VIDEO RECAP

#### STARTING OVER: HOW TO ENSURE NEXT TIME WON'T BE LIKE LAST TIME.

We **learn** from our mistakes in the areas that matter **least**.

We **repeat** our mistakes in the areas that matter **most**.

#### WHEN WE'RE FACED WITH STARTING OVER, THREE MYTHS CAUSE US TO REPEAT OUR MISTAKES:

- Myth:* **Experience** makes me wiser.  
*Truth:* **Evaluated** experience makes you wiser.
- Myth:* Since I **know** better, I'll **do** better.  
*Truth:* Know better  $\neq$  Ability to do better.
- Myth:* Time is **against** me.  
*Truth:* **Time** is your friend.

#### "STARTING OVER" STORIES IN THE BIBLE:

- \_\_\_\_\_ killed an Egyptian and returned to Egypt 40 years later to free Israel from slavery (Exodus 2-12)

- David went from shepherd boy to king. (1 Samuel 16)
- The apostle \_\_\_\_\_ went from persecutor of Christians to church planter. (Acts 9)

#### WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

Each person returned with divine \_\_\_\_\_ and an abiding \_\_\_\_\_.

\* *Destiny:* I know God has something for me. He will redeem my past—the pain and my failures.

\* *Humility:* I have confidence in God rather than in myself.

#### CONCLUSION:

You can't rush a start-over. Remember that time is your friend. And if you allow him, God will redeem the failure of last time, and next time will be better.

#### Answer Key for Blanks

Moses	destiny
Paul	humility

While your group watches the video (in group or out of group) use this VIDEO RECAP page to assist in note-taking.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Did you hear anything in the video that really stood out to you or that you may even disagree with?
- 2 In the scenarios below, which of the myths that Andy mentioned is at play, and how might you respond to a friend dealing with that situation?
  - *Experience Myth*: Experience makes me wiser.
  - *Knowledge Myth*: Since I know better, I'll do better.
  - *Time Myth*: Time is against me.

### SCENARIO #1

A friend's divorce was finalized about a month ago. She tells you she met someone she's interested in, but she isn't sure she should begin dating again.

### SCENARIO #2

You have a close friend who has struggled with alcoholism but has been sober for almost five years. He says he's stopped attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings because he knows what he needs to do to stay sober.

### SCENARIO #3

A friend lost a significant amount of money in an investment deal. He tells you about a risky new investment option that he thinks may help him make back the money he lost.

- 3 Does the idea of "redeeming" a piece of your past (making good come from it) give you hope, or would you rather leave it in your past? Explain.
- 4 Romans 8:28 reads: *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.* Explain how this verse makes you feel. Is it helpful to you? Is it difficult for you to believe?
- 5 Have you seen God use something painful in someone you know and turn it into something good?

### QUESTION 1

**This open-ended question allows your group members to respond in whatever way they want to the video they just watched. Be open to all answers, regardless of whether you share their perspectives.**

**Your goal is to be an active listener as they talk. How do their responses mesh with their stories and personalities? How might they connect with the questions to follow? It's also a good idea to ask clarifying questions, such as, "Can you tell me more about that?" or "Why do you think that came to your mind?"**

### QUESTION 2

The scenarios in this question allow you and your group members to do two things:

1. Connect the Three Myths with practical examples you might encounter in life.
2. Talk about the best ways to respond when you think another person is making poor decisions.

**Give your group members the space to answer both parts of the scenario. But then ask them what they think are the most effective ways to influence someone making wise choices. What kinds of questions might they ask the person in the scenario?**

### QUESTION 3

**This question is designed to give you and your group members the opportunity to think and talk about the potential costs of allowing your stories to be used for the benefit of others. Be supportive. Don't try to explain away others' concerns. Allow them to wrestle with the challenges of opening up about their past failures.**

### QUESTION 4

**Romans 8:28 is often misinterpreted as a promise from God that believers won't experience lasting hardships. Give group members the space to respond to the verse . . . even if they respond in anger. If a group member struggles with the verse, good follow-up questions for the entire group are, "What do you think it means for God to 'work for the good of those who love him'? What do you think that doesn't mean?"**

### QUESTION 5

**This question challenges you and your group members to connect theology with a real-life experience you've witnessed. Give group members time to think and respond. Be ready to be comfortable sitting in a little silence as people figure out what they want to say.**

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

In what area of your life do you hope *next time* is different than *last time*?

How do you need God to help you?

## PRAYER

God, help me know how to plan for my next time to be better than my last time.

# STARTING OVER: how to ensure NEXT TIME *won't* be like LAST TIME.

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As your group is wrapping up, feel free to read the **THINK ABOUT** section aloud. It's a challenge for the following week.

Enjoy some fun artwork around the main idea for this section of the study. If you or someone in your group posts it online using these instructions, your next group study just might be gifted to you.

# PART 2

*Own It*

## VIDEO RECAP

### INTRODUCTION

One reason history repeats itself in our lives is that we don't own our parts in those histories. Instead, we convince ourselves there is nothing for us to own. We decide it was all the other person's fault.

When something important ends, you have to look back in order to move ahead.

### WE ARE NATURAL-BORN \_\_\_\_\_.

*Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

(Genesis 3:8-13)

After disobeying God, Adam and Eve didn't own it. They hid.

Adam blamed Eve and God.

Eve blamed the serpent.

### YOU CAN'T BLAME \_\_\_\_\_ INTO A BETTER \_\_\_\_\_. (MATTHEW 5:8)

Blame enables us to **smuggle** our issues into our futures.

Blame sets us up for a **repeat** performance.

Blessed are the **pure** in heart, for they will **see** God. (Matthew 5:8)

### CONCLUSION

If you want to take all of you into the future, you have to come out of hiding. And even though coming out of hiding can be painful and shameful, it's also beneficial.

You make **peace** with your past by owning your **piece** of the past.

#### Answer Key for Blanks

blamers      future  
your way

Use the VIDEO RECAP to think through how you want to guide the discussion.

The INTRODUCTION is especially helpful in identifying the big ideas in the video.

Encourage your group members to fill in the blanks in the outline

(have pens or pencils available for them).

It will help them absorb the information in the video and hone in on the big ideas.

Reading the CONCLUSION aloud is a great way to transition into group discussion.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

**1** What are some excuses people use to blame others when something goes wrong? Think about what you might tell your boss or what your child says when he or she is caught.

**2** Read Genesis 3:8-13 and answer the question that follows the verse.

*Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" [The man] answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

Why do you think failure makes people hide or blame others instead of owning it?

**3** Think about a time when a choice someone else made caused you to suffer a setback. What did it cost you? How did you respond?

**4** Take a few minutes to complete the following activity individually and then continue the conversation.

A. Identify an **area** of your life in which you **hope next time will be different** than last time. **Write it in the margin.**

B. Using the circle, draw a slice or wedge that represents the **percentage** of the situation you are willing to own. (It could be the entire circle, 50, 25, or even 2 percent.)



C. In the margin, write some details about what's in your slice of the pie—some pieces of the situation you are willing to own.

**5** If you feel comfortable sharing, walk the group through your answers to the previous activity.

### QUESTION 1

This question is an icebreaker, but a challenging one. It allows your group members to express how they've seen others use blame to avoid responsibility, while also inviting them to use themselves as examples if they're comfortable doing so. Encourage transparency by being transparent.

### QUESTION 2

Read the verse aloud or ask someone in the group to read it. Be ready, if necessary, to help your group members connect the dots between how Adam and Eve tried to hide from God in the story and how we try to hide our sins from God and other people.

### QUESTION 3

This question explores the relational cost of sin by allowing group members to share a time when they suffered because of someone else's choices. Make sure to give your group members time to think about their answers.

### QUESTION 4

Encourage group members to be as honest and realistic as they can be when completing this exercise. Remind them that they won't have to share their answers if they aren't comfortable doing so.

### QUESTION 5

Don't push group members to share. Be supportive of those who do.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

If the other person refuses to own his or her part, do you think it's possible to own your part of the past? Why or why not?

## PRAYER

God, help me make peace with my past. Help me realize the parts of my past that I need to own.

**YOU MAKE**  
*peace*  
**WITH YOUR PAST BY**  
*owning your*  
**PIECE OF THE**  
*past.*

You might want to read the **THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT** questions aloud. Ask your group members to spend a few minutes every day this week reflecting on them.

If you remember nothing else, remember this phrase.

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Don't forget—potential free stuff!

# PART 3

*Rethink It*

## VIDEO RECAP

### THINKING YOUR WAY TO A BETTER FUTURE

Therefore, I urge you in view of God's **mercy** to offer your **bodies** as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your **true and proper worship**. Do not **conform to the pattern** of this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing** of your **mind**.

(Romans 12:1-2)

Renew = **Restore**

### CONFORMED VS. \_\_\_\_\_

- **Conformed** just happens.
- **Transformed** takes time and effort.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU PUT ON THE \_\_\_\_\_ BEFORE TAKING OFF THE \_\_\_\_\_?

The new **peels** off.

- **Renewal** takes time.
- **Time** is your friend.

### \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ ARE NOT ENOUGH.

If you **think** the way you used to think, you'll **do** the things you used to do.

### SEVEN LETHAL \_\_\_\_\_:

"If I can find the **right** person, everything will be all right."

"My situation is **unique**."

"It's not **right**, but it makes me **happy**. God wants me to be happy."

"If only I had \_\_\_\_\_, then I would be **satisfied**."

"I **owe**" is better than "I **want**."

"My secret is **safe** with me."

"**Sex** will solve it."

### CONCLUSION

It's not enough to *ask* the question: "What was I thinking?" You have to *answer* it. That way, next time will look much different than last time.

Next time **can** be better than last time through the **renewing** of your mind.

#### Answer Key for Blanks

transformed	old	resolve
new	regret	assumptions

Heads-up: The idea of "thinking your way to a better future" may sound far-fetched to some of your group members. Be ready to hash it out.

Depending on where your group members are in their spiritual walk some of the language in this section may be new or unfamiliar to them. Be prepared to help them define what these words mean.

Encourage your group members to fill in the blank spaces in the outline in order to follow along more closely.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Did you hear anything in the video that you disagreed with or that stands out to you?
- 2 Do you have a personal example of when time allowed you to renew your mind?
- 3 Andy addressed seven statements and labeled them “lethal assumptions.” Discuss situations when people justify their behavior with these assumptions.

“If I can find the right person, everything will be all right.”

“My situation is unique.”

“It’s not right, but it makes me happy. God wants me to be happy.”

“If only I had \_\_\_\_\_, then I would be satisfied.”

“I owe” is better than “I want.”

“My secret is safe with me.”

“Sex will solve it.”

- 4 What might be the cost of a person still living with the mindset of these lethal assumptions instead of rethinking them?
- 5 Which of the seven assumptions is your most common excuse or justification for your actions?

### QUESTION 1

This isn’t a rhetorical question. Give group members the freedom to disagree. Being open and gracious to their responses makes them feel safe to be transparent.

### QUESTION 2

Be comfortable with silence as group members think of their answers. If they need help, try rephrasing the question like, “Do you now have a point of view that’s significantly different than your view in the past?”

### QUESTION 3

In this question, you’ll begin to make the concepts discussed in the video more concrete and personal. Allow group members to share freely. You don’t have to come up with examples for each of the lethal assumptions.

### QUESTION 4

This question is designed to allow group members to reflect on the costs associated with the lethal assumptions from the relative safety of how they affect other people.

### QUESTION 5

This final question gets personal. Be supportive. Don’t judge.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

1. Is there an area in your life where you would benefit from renewing your mind or changing the way you think?
2. Which of these practical methods for renewing your mind can you commit to do this week?
  - Read Scripture.
  - Attend church on Sunday.
  - Meet with a mentor.
  - Pray.
  - Share your situation with a small group.
  - Read a book about the topic.

## PRAYER

God, help me realize the thought patterns that have led to past failures. Please give me the courage to think differently this week and in the days ahead.

Read the THINK ABOUT questions aloud and challenge your group members to reflect on them throughout the week.

**IF YOU *continue* TO  
THINK THE WAY YOU USED  
*to think*, HISTORY  
WILL REPEAT *itself*.**

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PICTURE OF  
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POST A PICTURE.  
You're good-looking people.

# PART 4

*Release It*

## VIDEO RECAP

### TWO KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How far into your \_\_\_\_\_ do you intend to carry the **angst** created in your \_\_\_\_\_?
2. How long do you plan to allow the people who **mistreated** you to **influence** you?

### THEY DECIDED.

When you hear stories about people with shocking pasts who aren't living with anger and resentment, 100 percent of the time they **decided**: My past will **remind** me, not **define** me.

*"I **decided** there was enough pain in life. I wasn't going to drag that along with me the rest of my life. It wasn't worth it."*

**TO BE SURE THAT \_\_\_\_\_ TIME IS BETTER THAN LAST TIME, \_\_\_\_\_ THE PAST SO THE PAST CAN RELEASE YOU.**

Forgiveness allows you to carry the lessons of the past while leaving the baggage in the past.

*"In your **anger** do not sin": **Do not** let the sun go down while you are still angry, and **do not give the devil a foothold**... **Get rid of** all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with **every** form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving** each other, **just as** in Christ God **forgave** you.*

(Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32)

**PARDON AS YOU HAVE BEEN \_\_\_\_\_.**

- **Go first** so you can go on.
- Make a **list** of what they **owe** you.

### CONCLUSION

Decide how far into your future you intend to carry the angst created in your past. If you release the past, the past can release you.

### Answer Key for Blanks

future   next   pardoned  
past   release

As always, encourage your group members to fill in the blanks of the VIDEO RECAP as they follow along. It helps to remember what has been heard.

This last part of the study is all about finding the best way to move forward.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

**1** In the message, Andy gave an example of a friend who lives with such peace that you would never guess her past is so complicated. Do you know anyone like this?

**2** Talk about a time when you decided to forgive someone. Did the decision affect how you thought or felt toward that person?

**3** Below is a list of some areas in which people commonly believe they are owed. Check off the “costs” from the list that resonate with you.

### You cost me my...

- Ability to have children
- Best years
- Career
- Childhood
- Finances/money
- Future employment options
- Future plans
- Happy childhood
- Health
- Hope for a certain kind of father
- Hope for a certain kind of mother
- House
- Marriage
- Peace
- Plan for how things should have worked out
- Purity
- Relationships with my children
- Relationships with my friends
- Relationship with my parents
- Reputation
- Safety and security
- Success
- Time
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTION 1

This is an icebreaker. Your group members don't need to dive deep here.

### QUESTION 2

Group members may share great answers. They may share answers that cause you to question if they understand what forgiveness is. Either way, it's okay. Be respectful. Be patient. Resist the urge to correct errors, and let the conversation proceed.

### QUESTION 3

Don't rush your group members through this exercise. Allowing them 3–5 minutes to reflect and answer will inform the discussion that follows.

More questions next page.

- 4 From the list on the previous page, which ones do you think people have the hardest time “releasing”?
- 5 If you feel comfortable, share a personal example from a box you checked.
- 6 Do you think it’s possible to forgive someone without the other person seeking forgiveness from you first?

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

- 1. Have you carried any angst created in your past into your present? Which relationship(s) in your life is being affected?
- 2. What is your plan to begin forgiving the person who has wronged you?

## PRAYER

God, help me have the courage to forgive those who caused pain in my past. I want my future to be free of the angst that I’ve been carrying.

**DECIDE HOW far into your future YOU INTEND TO carry the ANGST created IN YOUR past.**

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### QUESTION 4

Keep in mind: When your group members share their lists of the costs “people” have difficulty releasing, they’re probably sharing the costs they have difficulty releasing.

### QUESTION 5

Don’t push group members to share. Many who are reluctant may join in once others begin to open up. If push comes to shove, be the first to offer an example. Be vulnerable.

### QUESTION 6

The correct answer to this question is yes. But give your group members the freedom to disagree. If you find yourself needing to redirect the conversation, a good follow-up question might be, “Think of someone you’ve forgiven. Did your forgiveness help him or her, help you, or help both of you?”

Use the THINK ABOUT questions to bring the discussion into the present and to challenge your group members to take action.

LAST CHANCE on the picture thing. Come on, you can do it (or do it again, if you’ve already done it)!