

LEADER'S DISCUSSION GUIDE

*MOVING
FORWARD*

AFTER

MESSING

UP

A New Future
with the God
of Second
Chances

DR. CHRIS RAPPAZINI

MOVING FORWARD AFTER MESSING UP: A NEW FUTURE WITH THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

Leader's Guide for Group Discussion

In *Moving Forward After Messing Up*, Dr. Chris Rappazini tackles life's messy challenges head-on. Whether people seek a second chance at marriage, family, career, overcoming addiction, or dealing with poor choices, the book explores why and how God gives people a chance and the steps to move forward into a new future.

As a seasoned professor and preacher, Dr. Rappazini unpacks biblical stories of second chances, connecting them to real-life issues we encounter today. What sets this book apart is its personal touch. Dr. Rappazini openly shares his own life, especially his journey with his brother, who is wrestling with jail, rehab, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

The book echoes the universal question everyone who has messed up has asked, "How could this have happened?" Yet, in the readings, you will find an even more powerful message: God is in the business of cleaning up messes and giving people a second chance. It's not just a book. It's a roadmap for the journey forward. This leader's guide will help facilitate group discussions, encouraging participants to reflect on their own experiences, connect with biblical narratives, and explore the possibilities of moving forward after messing up.

After reading and discussing *Moving Forward After Messing Up*, groups will...

- Have a better understanding of how and why God gives multiple chances.
- Cultivate an attitude of humility and forgiveness.
- Learn the tools to restore broken relationships.
- Develop a game plan and next steps for their future and to share their story with others.
- Be introduced to the Gospel message and encouraged to make a decision to surrender their life to Christ.


Target Audience of Groups:

To be used by ministry leaders of rehabilitation facilities, prison ministries, and groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, Divorce Care, Grief Share, Stephen's Ministry, Celebrate Recovery, and other recovery groups.

How to Use this Guide:

Moving Forward After Messing Up serves as an excellent resource for group study, and this guide equips you with the tools and flexibility to tailor the book to your group's specific needs. For each





chapter, the leader is provided with a brief opening comment overviewing the chapter and a one-sentence Big Idea. Furthermore, the leader will find reflection and discussion questions from the book and two additional group questions, closing remarks, and supplemental Bible verses.

When discussing the book, it's likely that participants will open up with personal details, which needs to be encouraged. To ensure a welcoming, supportive, and loving environment, consider laying down some ground rules during the initial gathering and remind everyone about them throughout your time together.

One important expectation is confidentiality within the group. Stress that whatever is shared should stay within the group. The goal is not judgment but rather encouragement and empathy. Establishing these guidelines helps maintain a safe and growing space for all participants.



CHAPTER 1: HOW DID IT GET TO THIS?

Big Idea: Moving forward is challenging, but the rewards are worth it.

(Opening Comments) Realizing there is a problem can be an overwhelming experience. Figuring out what to do next can be equally daunting. In addition to being introduced to the author's brother, Nick, we embark on the reality that moving forward after messing up is not easy, but it is essential. Sometimes, the most challenging part is knowing where and when to start. Oftentimes, the best place to start is being surrounded by other people and honestly reflecting on the question, "How did it get to this?"

Personal Reflection

1. Have you ever found yourself asking the questions presented at the beginning of the chapter during challenging moments in your life? What other questions came to your mind?
2. Consider the idea of second chances. Have you personally experienced or witnessed someone going through a challenging situation, and what does a second chance look like for you and those you love?

Group Discussion

1. *(Extra Question)* Explore the idea that life is not written with sidewalk chalk but with a permanent marker. How can this metaphor influence our approach to dealing with past mistakes and moving forward?
2. *(Extra Question)* Reflect on the stories shared in the text, both biblical and personal. How do these narratives challenge the common perception of flawless redemption stories, and why is it important to acknowledge the messy reality of second chances?
3. Explore the theme of God standing on the shoreline of one's life, ready to offer second chances. How does this perspective influence our understanding of God's grace and the continuous opportunity for a fresh start?
4. In the early stages of this second chance journey, discuss some obstacles and hurdles standing in your way or in the way of your loved one.
5. At the heart of second chances are relationships. Which of your relationships will benefit the most from seeking the God of Second Chances? How do you want that renewed relationship to look?

(Closing Remarks) You've conquered one of the toughest steps in moving forward by simply showing up. Thank you to everyone who shared. It can be intimidating to be vulnerable, but your voice is crucial to the group. Too much is at stake to stop now. So, if you are finally ready to truly move forward, in chapter 2, we will explore the possibilities of what's really going on.

Additional Scripture: Psalm 103:8-12; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Philippians 1:6



CHAPTER 2: FACING WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

Big Idea: God's answer outweighs the scale of my problem.

(Opening Comments) People believe their problem is alcohol, drugs, an ex-spouse, a terrible co-worker, and the list can go on and on. But the truth is, the main problem and reason so many people have made a mess of their lives is because of “the sin from within.” In this chapter, we learned that it is crucial to understand our internal condition of sin and how large of an issue denial plays in our lives.

Personal Reflection

1. How have your actions and choices affected your relationships with family, friends, and loved ones? Are there any specific instances that stand out to you?
2. In what ways have you attempted to cope with your internal turmoil caused by sin, and how have these coping mechanisms affected your journey toward recovery?

Group Discussion

1. *(Extra Question)* Are you truly satisfied with where you are in life right now? Are you content with your relationships, career, and overall well-being?
2. The chapter emphasizes the importance of recognizing our internal condition of sin. How do you understand the concept of sin in your life, and how has it contributed to your struggles?
3. *(Extra Question)* What's it like to hear that there is a difference between having a problem with straightforward solutions and having a chronic condition that needs consistent time and attention?
4. Denial is a common defense mechanism we use to handle harmful situations that threaten our sense of security, control, or comfort. Have you ever experienced denial in your journey forward? If so, what steps can you take to face the truth and seek help?
5. The chapter encourages making one small decision at a time to change your future. What small steps can you take in your journey to move toward the future God wants for you? How can a supportive community, such as a church recovery group, friends to hold you accountable, or rehab program, help in this process?

(Closing Remarks) It can seem uncomfortable, perhaps even difficult, to face what's really going on. But it is crucial to recognize that at the core of our discontentment is something bigger than our problem, it is the issue of sin. However, it's also important to remember that *God has an answer* no matter what we have done or how far we have strayed. We may have relationships that are broken, jobs that were lost, and marriages that are beyond repair, but *God has an answer*. You may be asking, “Okay. What exactly is the answer?” We will learn more about His answer in Chapter 3.

Additional Scripture: Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18; Mark 7:21-23; 1 John 1:8



CHAPTER 3: THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

Big Idea: Introduction to God 101: He's your God of Second Chances.

(Opening Comments) God gives second chances because it is part of what makes Him God. It is part of his DNA, his Divine Natural Attributes. Chapter three looks at the nature of God, how the Bible is a book of God's second chances, and answers the question, "How many second chances does He give us?" We learn that there are two things at the heart of God's second chances: His love and you.

Personal Reflection

1. Consider the analogy of God's DNA as revealed through the Scriptures. Are there specific Bible verses or stories that resonate with you and your journey, and why?
2. How has your understanding of God's love and second chances influenced the way you view yourself and others around you? How do you see the potential for second chances in your future?

Group Discussion

1. *(Extra Question)* How would you answer the very first sentence of this chapter, "When you think about "God," what comes to mind?"
2. Share with others if your perception of God has changed recently and why or why not. What factors contributed to these changes, and how have they impacted your journey?
3. Jesus made it clear to the Pharisee, Nicodemus, that God's love, not one's way of life, is the determining factor for second chances. Discuss the concept of unconditional love as demonstrated by God in giving second chances. How does this understanding affect the way you view yourself and others who may be struggling with moving forward?
4. *(Extra Question)* Explore the idea that Jesus came not only as a physical healer but also to provide second chances for people with God. How does this dual purpose of Jesus' mission impact your understanding of second chances?
5. Share your thoughts on the scene with the woman caught in adultery and Jesus' response. How does this story emphasize the value and worth that God places on every individual, regardless of their past?

(Closing Remarks) The answer to our internal condition of sin is not a gimmick but rather can be found by getting to know the God of Second Chances. Part of His nature is giving people like you and me another chance simply because we are the object of His affection. As we will see in the next chapter, it's very likely that because of His love, He has already given you second chances over and over again.

Additional Scripture: Psalm 86:15-16; Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 2:4-5



CHAPTER 4: FROM SETBACKS TO STEPPING STONES

Big Idea: Sometimes setbacks in life are opportunities for God to display His amazing grace.

(Opening Comments) Many people feel God only gives second chances to people who are famous or in the news. Some believe second chances are only in fiction novels or on the movie screen. But in this chapter, we learn that God has already given us second chances throughout our lifetime. We just have to pause and reflect on how our roadblocks were actually blessings in disguise.

Personal Reflection

1. Reflect on a time when you faced setbacks, failures, or difficult situations. How did you respond to those moments, and did they lead to growth, healing, or positive changes in your life?
2. How does the story of Joseph's life resonate with your own journey of overcoming your mess-ups? What lessons can you draw from his story about recognizing God's second chances and stepping stones in your life?

Group Discussion

1. *(Extra Question)* Jesus chose the least likely people to follow Him and be His disciples, ranging from fishermen to fieldworkers and accountants to zealots and anyone in between. What does His choice of followers communicate about his willingness to give us a second chance?
2. Share a personal experience of a small second chance you received that helped you move forward. How can we actively recognize the second chances God has already given us in our lives, even in the smallest ways?
3. *(Extra question)* Oftentimes, what we need the most before moving forward is for someone else to speak the truth into our lives, whether it be a family member, friend, boss, or judge. Has anyone attempted to speak the truth to you? What was that like, and how did you receive their words?
4. Think about the labels that others have placed on you or that even you have placed on yourself due to your past mistakes. How does knowing that God sees you as valuable and worthy challenge these negative perceptions?
5. Explore the story of the Samaritan woman at the well and how Jesus offered her a second chance. How can this story inspire us to approach others in need of a fresh start with compassion and understanding?

(Closing Remarks) Changing our mindset of people who move forward after messing up is a necessary step for walking in the right direction. While some individuals tend to point fingers at the world, others, rather than viewing their past as a failure, see it as a chance to learn lessons from their mistakes and recognize God's guidance and grace. So, if you are able to learn from your past and are ready to transform a setback into a comeback, the following two chapters will guide you through the process.

Additional Scripture: James 1:2-4; Romans 8:28; Psalm 34:17-18; Jeremiah 29:11; 1 Peter 5:10



CHAPTER 5: RISING THROUGH HUMILITY

Big Idea: Before you rise, one must first bow, that is the essence of true humility.

(Opening Comments) If we are really going to admit that God gives us second chances, we will have to humble ourselves and adopt a Christ-like attitude. In this chapter, we explored what true humility is and why it is essential to accepting who we are and where God wants to take us.

Personal Reflection

1. Think about a time when you experienced the consequences of pride or a lack of humility. How did that experience shape your perspective on the importance of humility in your journey of overcoming your challenges?
2. How has your past affected your ability to embrace humility and move forward? Are there any specific incidents or regrets that you struggle to let go of, and how might humility play a role in healing and growth?

Group Discussion

1. *(Extra Question)* Scripture teaches us, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6). As you listen to this sentence, what resonates with you? From your experience, do you agree or disagree with this statement?
2. Reflect on the characteristics of true humility, such as recognizing limitations, practicing selflessness, showing genuine compassion, expressing gratitude, and being willing to learn. Which of these aspects do you find most challenging to embody, and why? Share examples from your life where you have experienced or witnessed these aspects of humility in action.
3. Discuss the reasons people might struggle with humility, as outlined in the chapter. Have you personally faced any of these challenges in embracing humility, and how have you dealt with them? How might your group members support each other in overcoming these obstacles?
4. *(Extra Question)* Sometimes, the best way to learn humility is by witnessing it in those around us. Who do you know that exemplifies having a humble attitude and how can you learn from them?
5. How can you cultivate a growth mindset and a willingness to learn from your mistakes in your journey of recovery or personal growth? Share specific strategies or practices that have helped you, or will help you, adopt a more humble and open attitude toward your own growth and development.

(Closing Remarks) One of the first steps in moving forward is getting down to our “humility studs” by tearing out the old walls of selfishness, bitterness, hate, and ego. Once we are able to recognize and remove them, we can start building the life God always intended for us. We must get down before we can get up. After we have learned the importance humility plays in moving forward, we have to put humility into action. And we will learn how to do just that in Chapter 6.

Additional Scripture: 1 Peter 5:5-9; Philippians 2:3-8; Proverbs 11:2; Psalm 25:8-11



CHAPTER 6: FORGIVENESS IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING YOUR FUTURE

Big Idea: Forgiveness is “for giving it” over to God.

(Opening Comments) Asking for forgiveness is an admission that we were wrong. In this chapter, we examined why asking for forgiveness is crucial to our second chances in life and why asking God and others for forgiveness is so difficult.

Personal Reflection

1. In what ways have you struggled to forgive yourself for past mistakes and shortcomings? How have these struggles affected your journey to move forward?
2. In what ways can you identify with Nick in seeking forgiveness from loved ones? How might his journey inspire you to seek forgiveness and reconciliation in your own life?

Group Discussion

1. Share a personal experience of forgiveness that has had a significant impact on your life. How did that act of forgiveness transform your relationships and perspective?
2. Discuss the challenges and barriers individuals face when seeking to forgive themselves.
3. *(Extra Question)* Who do you need to forgive, and who do you need to ask for forgiveness from? What can you do about it this week?
4. How does the concept of “giving it over” to God and others resonate with you? How can this principle be practically applied in your daily life to promote forgiveness and healing?
5. *(Extra Question)* Is anybody ready to surrender their life to Jesus, give over their past mess-ups to God, and start a new life with Him today?

(Closing Remarks) Forgiveness is messy. It oftentimes brings up the past, which can revive strong emotions. But in order to move forward into the life God intended for us, forgiveness is necessary. Thankfully, forgiveness can be given and received because of Christ’s work on the cross, victory over the grave, and the power that comes from the Holy Spirit. This week, ask the Lord to bring more forgiveness into your life and the lives of those around you.

Additional Scripture: 1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:10-12; Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:13; Matthew 18:21-22



CHAPTER 7: “DADDY, I KEEP FALLING!”

Big Idea: Your Heavenly Father’s love is evident in His eagerness to assist you in standing tall again.

(Opening Comments) What happens when you get a second chance, show signs of progress, but then fall flat on your face again? In this chapter, we identify issues that result in a minor slip-up or full-blown relapse. We are given suggestions to avoid potential pitfalls but are reassured that God continually offers grace when we fall.

Personal Reflection

1. Have you identified your personal Delilah, the trigger or temptation that exerts power over you? What steps can you take to establish boundaries and protect yourself from its influence?
2. Take some time to create three contingency plans for the next time you could potentially face an unfavorable situation. What could you specifically do to avoid falling again?

Group Discussion

1. How do you view the concept of God as our heavenly Daddy, who loves and supports us unconditionally? How can this perspective be a source of comfort and motivation during times of struggle?
2. Share a personal experience of overcoming a trigger or high-risk situation that could have led to relapse. What strategies did you use to avoid falling into old patterns, and how did this experience strengthen your resolve?
3. *(Extra Question)* What are the major red flags or triggers you have identified, and how will you avoid them in the future? What are your contingency plans?
4. Discuss the importance of self-reflection in identifying triggers and understanding the “why” behind our cravings or urges. How can this deeper understanding help us in the journey of recovery?
5. *(Extra Question)* Like the father of the prodigal son who ran away, why do you think God continually takes us back with open arms, and what does that mean for our future mistakes?

(Closing Remarks) Let’s face it, our world is broken, sin is still rampant, and we are still growing in our spiritual maturity. Slip-ups happen. But if we don’t learn and grow from our mistakes, then we will find ourselves right back in the pit of despair. Let’s learn from our mess-ups and the mistakes of others and keep walking the road to spiritual maturity.

Additional Scripture: Psalm 37:23-24; Psalm 145:14; Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 40:2

CHAPTER 8: FOUR STEPS TO MOVING FORWARD

Big Idea: Practice doesn't make perfect, practice makes permanent.

(Opening Comments) Now that we understand the significance of second chances and the importance of giving them to others, what's our initial step? In this chapter, we explored concrete actions to become individuals who embrace and offer second chances.

Personal Reflection

1. Reflect on a trial you've recently faced or are currently experiencing. What lessons do you think this trial is teaching you about yourself and your relationship with God?
2. How can you apply the concept of "practice makes permanent" to your personal development plan and recovery journey?

Group Discussion

1. Discuss the significance of building a support network during the recovery process. How can the group encourage and support one another in times of trial?
2. Share personal goals you have set for yourself during your recovery journey. How do you plan to achieve these goals, and how can the group support you in your efforts?
3. *(Extra Question)* What relationships have been restored through humility and forgiveness? What was the most challenging part of rebuilding that relationship? Which relationships still need to be repaired?
4. Talk about how you can use your own journey of recovery to empower others. How can you share your story in a way that brings hope and healing to those who may be struggling?
5. *(Extra Question)* What has been your greatest victory since being a part of this group, and what will you do to continually move forward?

(Closing Remarks) Completing the book doesn't mark the end of our journey. Pause and reflect on our progress: we acknowledged the internal struggle of "sin" but found a solution in God's second chance through Jesus. Humility, honesty, seeking forgiveness, and reconciliation became vital. Despite falls, our Heavenly Father lifts us, placing us back on the path. The journey ahead might not be easy, but with the God of Second Chances, we step into a new future, and we will be guided every step of the way.

Additional Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:13-14; Philippians 4:13

