

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

A Note To Bible Study Leaders and Ships:

Hi! Just a heads up on this new eight week series on My Heart Christ's Home! The Nursery has been added as part of the sermon series. This room you will NOT find in the book. Also, the living room, the workroom, and the bedroom have been omitted so that we can more closely follow the sermon material. However this does not mean that you cannot read this wonderful little book in its entirety, and discuss all the rooms spontaneously as a home group. This book has sold over 10,000,000 copies since it was first printed and has been used by thousands of churches around the globe. Enjoy!

THE INVITATION: (January 4)

Ice Breaker: Have you ever been invited to do something, and forgotten to RSVP?

Share your stories, if you have them. How was it for you to suddenly remember "O my gosh! I forgot to make that call." How might it have come across to the person inviting you?

Revelation says that Jesus stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20).

"I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

The sense about this verse is that Jesus is perpetually knocking until we actually do RSVP. Jesus doesn't knock once and give up. He stands there AND KEEPS knocking, even when we don't answer the door.

What might keep you from answering the door if you heard someone knocking? Or if you did answer what would keep you from letting the person come in?

Bob Munger in his book **My Heart Christ's Home**, identifies different rooms inside of our heart where it might be difficult for one reason or another to let Christ in. Be sure to read this book as a group for next time, if you haven't already. Or use the rest of this time to read it together.

Do you have a room in your house that you usually don't let guests see? Why is this?

Is there a place inside of you that is like that room? Discuss.

How would opening the door and letting Jesus into your heart, be different from letting a guest into your home?

What are the things you might look forward to, once you let Jesus in?

What are some things that you might not look forward to, or some fears you have that might make you hesitate?

APPLY! Think of some ways that we can RSVP to God, and let him know where we are with his invitation to us, to come in and renovate the way we live our lives.

GOING DEEPER: Teresa of Avila (a mystic) wrote a classic book called Interior Castles. It is a book about the many spaces inside of us, and the importance of letting Jesus fill them with his presence. Are you challenged by the metaphor of seeing your heart as a home with different rooms, or a castle with interior space? What spiritual disciplines might allow us to open the doors to rooms inside our heart that we may be reluctant to reveal? Some of the disciplines are prayer, fasting, solitude, meditation, being in community, simplicity, service.

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

THE NURSERY (January 11)

(This room is not in Munger's book. Don't worry. You didn't miss it!)

Ice Breaker: What was your first word? OR What is your earliest memory?

"You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mothers' womb ... I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139)

To think about the fact that God knit us together in our mother's womb, and remembers our earliest days – days that we don't even remember – is part of what we mean when we say that God knows us better than we know ourselves.

Sometimes, from the very start there are family dynamics that make it hard for a newborn to feel safe, and loved, and at peace. A child can be born into any number of difficult circumstances: poverty, divorce, addiction, violence, sickness, or being unplanned. All these factors have an effect on the young infant.

1. Describe the situation you were born into: your birth order, your parents, your economic situation, "the climate" that you believe surrounded you at that time.
2. If you could choose one thing about your early childhood experience that was good, what would you most want to celebrate?
3. If you could "undo" one thing about your early childhood experience what would it be?
4. Sometimes we need to be healed of the past, as well as to rejoice and be grateful for it. If you imagine Jesus walking into the nursery of your heart, what would he most want to renovate? What would bring him most delight?

The phrase "born again" has been thrown around so much that it feels like a bad cliché. But Jesus used this term in John 3:7 before anyone else ever did. He meant that when we open the door to our heart and let him in, we have a chance to start over. By the power of the Holy Spirit we become a new creation.

5. If you have asked Jesus to come in and take up residence in your heart, when, if ever, did it feel as if you were "new" in some way? For instance, did you have a new or different perspective on things? Did you experience new feelings of love for others? Was there a desire on your part to serve that was new?

APPLY! How can you become more aware of the new thing God is doing in your life every day?

GOING DEEPER: In John 3 Jesus talks about being born again, and at the same time he talks about his own death. He says this when he mentions “the serpent” (John 3:14) being lifted up just like “the Son of Man” (Jesus’ favorite designation for himself) must be lifted up. Jesus is referring to a story in Exodus where a poisonous serpent was biting and killing the people. God had Moses make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. Everyone looking at the bronze serpent was then healed. How does this story make sense as a foreshadowing of the crucifixion? Why a bronze *serpent* - why not something more pleasant for healing? What did Jesus become, in order to make renovation of our hearts possible? How does Jesus’ death bring us life, and allow us to “start over” or be “born again”?

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

THE DINING ROOM (January 18)

Ice Breaker: What is one of the most delicious, satisfying meals you ever remember having?

John 2: 17 tells us "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

Why do you think Munger made the dining room be such a large room?

What kinds of desires does our culture feed and promote as necessary? Are they all necessary? Why or why not?

Have you ever tried to simplify your life? If so, how did you do it, and what was the outcome?

Notice that Jesus did not eat the meal set before him in Munger's book.

How might this relate to the discipline of simplicity? Why do you think "simplicity" is considered to be one of the spiritual disciplines (discipline meaning a "practice" that bring us into closer fellowship with God)?

Did you ever engage in a ministry, or service for other people, that made you feel fulfilled, deep down inside? How was this feeling different than the feeling you may have gotten after acquiring something for yourself?

Jesus' food is to do God's will, not his own will. Doing God's will is satisfying, and full of flavor.

When, if ever, have you been consciously aware of doing God's will, and not your own?

APPLY! How can you become more conscious of doing God's will and simplifying your own life to make this possible?

GOING DEEPER: Jesus says "My food, is to do the will of him who sent me." in John 4:34. The context of this verse is that he has just finished talking with a Samaritan (people despised by the Jews) woman (unheard of to speak to a woman – especially not one who was a Samaritan). This interaction with the woman got her so excited that she brought the whole town out to see Jesus. "Many of the Samaritans believed in him ..." the scripture tells us "because of the woman's testimony." This is what Jesus lived for, and it is what gave Jesus life (his food!) - to bring others' into a deep personal relationship with him, and reveal who God was. Jesus died to give us the gift of friendship with God.

Martin Luther King said that "If we don't have anything worth dying for, we don't have anything worth living for."

How does this kind of passion, when centered on Jesus, move aside every other desire? What is it that you consider worth dying for? How might you live to see it accomplished?

Might this be your call from God; the food that will nourish your soul?

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

THE STUDY (January 25)

Ice Breaker: Name 5 things that you would expect to find in any “study”.

“Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about these things.” Philippians 4:8

A study is a place where we use our mind. Sometimes the mind can think great thoughts. Other times it can be a place where thoughts come in that should not be there, and they contaminate our thinking.

In Munger’s book, what does the author find “embarrassing” when he brings Jesus into the study?

How does Jesus respond when asked if he would change the study to the way “it ought to be”? Does Jesus seem embarrassed?

What does Jesus give the author to hang on his wall? How is this helpful to him? What ways have you found to “keep your eyes on Jesus” when the day gets hectic and crammed full of activity? Or when you begin to think thoughts that do not build you up?

How does knowing Scripture help to focus the mind? Have you ever had a Scripture pop into your mind at just the right moment, right when you needed it? Did the Scripture help you to focus on Jesus?

There is a desire on the part of many to aspire to a deeper spiritual life. The problem is that many people who want this also don’t want to change. These two things are incompatible. In order to grow deeper spiritually, we must be open to change.

APPLY! What little changes might you put into practice in the next week that would help your thoughts be further conformed to the mind of Christ?

GOING DEEPER: Read Romans 12:2. *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* In this Scripture, the word *transformed* indicates that it is a continual ongoing process. Gradually, over time it seems, we acquire more and more of a Christ-likeness in our thinking. If we define the mind as “intent” and “will” what makes the mind so important to God? Why might the mind be more important, in some ways, than our actions? If you could list 10 adjectives that would describe the mind of Christ, what would they be? See Philippians 2:5 and following for hints. The NIV replaces the word “attitude” for “mind” used in the NRSV but these can be used interchangeably.

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

THE HALL CLOSET (February 1)

Ice Breaker: Have you ever wondered what you might find in your hall closet if you cleaned it out? Share a time when you found something weird in the closet, under the bed, in the garage, or in any place you weren't expecting!

Jesus said "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." Matthew 10:26

This is an interesting section. Munger actually gets mad at Jesus. Why is this?

Have you ever gotten angry at God? For what reason?

Why do you think there was such a desire on the part of Munger to keep the smelly rotten stuff that was in the closet? Is it unfair that Jesus would demand access to every part of the house, even the little tiny closet?

Have you ever clung to something that you knew was not good for you, but you just couldn't give it up? If you can, share this experience with the group.

The closet isn't very big – it is dark and small – but still able to harbor an enormous stink. Small areas of our lives can be just as putrid, though well hidden, as big huge displays of evil. Sometimes the small things are worse by virtue of the fact that they are hidden.

It is significant that even though Munger gives Jesus the keys to the closet, he then acknowledges that he just does not have the energy to clean it out. Why might this be?

How does Jesus respond? Does it take very long for transformation to occur?

Have you ever experienced Jesus "cleaning out a closet" in your life? (eg. perhaps it was someone you needed to forgive and the resentment was rotting, or a calling you had stashed away that was going "bad" because it wasn't being used ... etc.)

GOING DEEPER: There is another way to use a closet. Jesus talked about it.

"When you pray, go into your closet and close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:6

How might we replace the things we hold onto in the secret places of our hearts that might not be good for us, with secret times with God that promote our healing and wholeness?

What is it about "the secret place of prayer" that tends to clean out "the secret closets of sin?"

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

THE LIVING ROOM (February 8)

Ice Breaker: Find out who has a Living Room, and what their favorite game is. (Rec Room is probably a synonym.)

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."
John 15:11

Who is the most joyful person you know?

What, most often, steals your joy? What, most often, gives you joy?

When you think of Christians, is the image that comes to mind one of particularly joyful people? Who do you think have more fun, Christians or Others?

How does Munger deal with compartmentalizing our lives, allowing Jesus into only some areas, and leaving him out of other areas? How does Munger feel when he goes out to have "fun" and leaves Jesus behind?

What happens when we allow Jesus to determine how and with whom we enjoy ourselves? Is the upshot a dismal, dreary, prudish experience?

Do you think God really ultimately cares about how we spend our FREE time? Does God want us to have fun?

If you are a Christian, do you recall forming new friendships based upon your new friendship with Jesus? Did you find these friendships more or less satisfying than the old?

C.S. Lewis tells us that "Joy is the serious business of heaven." Based upon this, and John 15:11 (above) and John 17:13 (below), how might we more regularly practice joy in our day to day lives? Is joy something we can nurture, or is it just spontaneous?

GOING DEEPER: Jesus' prayer in John 17:13 is that he wants us to have "the full measure of my joy within them." Do you normally think of Jesus as joyful? Is joyful a different concept than happy? What do you imagine Jesus doing when he came out of the tomb? Shouting? Laughing? Singing? Where else in Scripture might Jesus have been full of joy? (There are a lot of places! Hint: One place is Luke 10:21)

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME CURRICULUM GUIDE

TRANSFERRING THE TITLE (February 15)

Ice Breaker: Talk about the difference between renting a vacation home, or any home – and owning it yourself. If you don't own a home, use any possession as an example and discuss the difference between borrowing and owning. What are the good things about owning or renting/borrowing? The bad?

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.” Romans 12:1

Our bodies, our lives, our minds, our spirits are all gifts from God. Why must we give them back to God? Why doesn't He just barge in and take over?

Munger makes a distinction between Jesus being a guest in our lives, and Jesus actually owning the whole house. How does this play out in real life? For instance, if Jesus is a guest perhaps He hasn't been given access to every room, etc.

It is a great relief to Munger when Jesus declares that he will keep the house clean, once given the title. Is there any need for relief in your own Christian life? Have you been trying really hard in one area or another to do things on your own, forgetting that Jesus is there to do it for you?

“It is not by power, or by might but by my Spirit,” says the Lord. (Zechariah 4:6)

The big difference between Christianity and other religions is that Christianity is **not** about what **we** do; it is all about what Jesus does through us. All He needs is our surrender to his will and presence.

How might handing over the title, with the acknowledgment that we can't handle what needs to be done, be difficult?

On the other hand, how does handing over the title allow us to trust God more completely and enjoy life more fully?

Is it easy to take back the title after we give ourselves over to God? How might you have noticed this happening in your own life?

Munger talks about peace; about “settling down” with Jesus as owner. Are we good at settling down? Is it possible to operate in this life, in these days, with a deep centered peace?

As a group, join together in silent prayer, asking Jesus to come in and clean out any area of your life that has not been surrendered to him completely. Then ask him to fill that place inside of you with his wonderful presence.

IN CONCLUSION:

Jesus is the Master of the fixer-upper. He loves messy houses, and **wants** the dilapidated, paint chipped, wood rotted thing we may call our lives. What is in this for God?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

What's in it for God is US. That may not seem like much of a reward to you, but God thought YOU were worth it. Realize that Jesus is right with you, today, ready to take over as much of your life as you will allow. Lean into Him. Trust Him. Let Jesus make your heart his home.