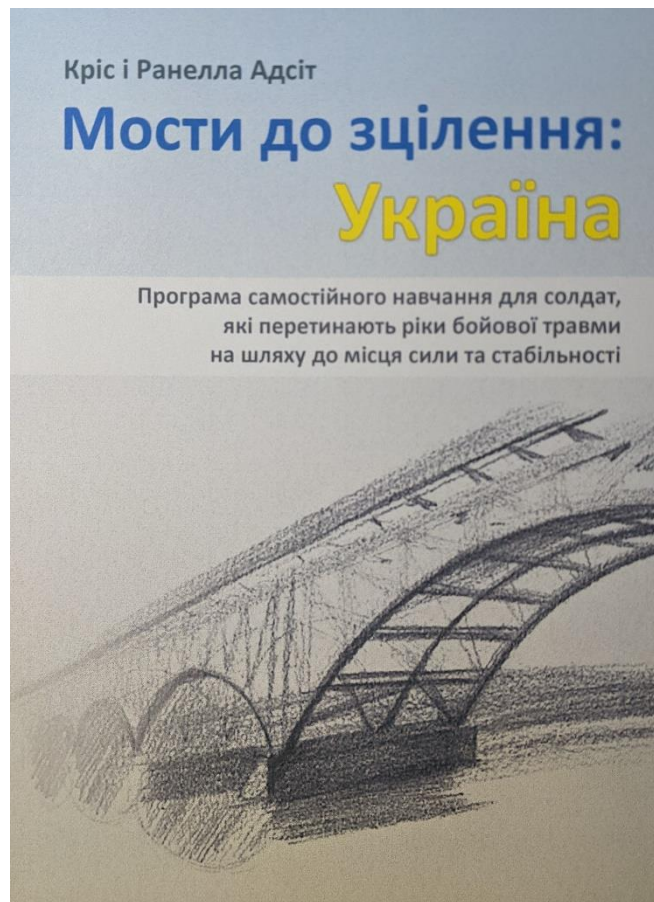


Group Leader's Guide

for

Bridges To Healing: Ukraine



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Overall Philosophy for these manuals

Even though the best environment in which to address trauma and to facilitate healing is in a small group situation, these manuals were originally written for a “solo” application. Since there is a war going on in Ukraine, we couldn't expect people to gather in small groups for multiple weeks when they are being bombed, fleeing the country, in combat, or experiencing electrical blackouts. Therefore, we wrote these so that people could work through them on their own as they had the opportunity. We made the manuals available in both print and electronically, so people could download them to their phones or computers. But we also know that it is possible for some Ukrainians to meet in small groups on a consistent basis. So this “Leaders Guide” is meant to aid those who would like to lead a small group through the manuals.

Who's doing the teaching?

You, as the group leader, are not the *only* source of wisdom and knowledge for the group! Keep in mind that there are five learning dynamics that we hope to see in a group study like this. Participants can learn...

1. From the manuals.
2. From the group leader.
3. From each other during discussion times.
4. From the Word of God as scripture is presented in the manuals.
5. From the direct action of the Spirit of God on the participants' hearts and minds.

There are hundreds of approaches to dealing with Post-traumatic Stress, and virtually every one of them involves “talk therapy,” that is, helping the trauma sufferer to remember their traumatic experiences, to not stuff them down, but instead to talk about them in an environment where they feel safe, unjudged, and understood. This is why we want our leaders to avoid taking up too much time “sermonizing,” and try to motivate the group members to talk. If they are talking, you're winning!

Most of the actual content that we hope to get to the participants is contained in the manual. Let the curriculum do the work! But we could go even further and point out that it is God and His Word which are actually going to do the healing and transforming. So count on the Word to do the true work! Any time the curriculum takes you to a place where you can get the participants to read and consider Scripture, be sure to do it! It's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness! (2 Timothy 3:16)

My job versus God's job

As it says in Exodus 15:26, “I, the LORD, am your Healer.” This should be a great relief to us as group leaders. The healing of the participants is not our responsibility. It's God's! He's the only one who can do it anyway! We're not The Healer, but we can be “bridges” to The Healer. Our job is to create an environment that will give God optimal access to the participants' body, mind, and soul for the purpose of healing. Then God does the healing.

Every chance you get, try to help them shift their hope and expectations to God – not to you, or to the group, or to the manuals, or to medicine, or to counselors. Sure, those things all help to

make a positive environment for healing. But help them see that God is the One who will make the biggest differences in their life.

An important note about discussion times

As was mentioned before, group members can teach each other and learn from each other. They have specific experiences and insights that can benefit other members of the group. This – and the fact that talking about their experiences is therapeutic – is why we put so much emphasis on the discussion times. Most of what you'll find in this Leaders Guide are questions that are designed to stimulate discussion. And whenever a group member shares something that others find beneficial and insightful, it helps to restore a sense of usefulness and honor in the one who shared – something that many traumatized people need - especially men.

When you notice group members starting to get involved in the discussion, and there is animated give and take between them, and you find yourself not having to say much to guide the discussion, again, you're winning!

But – there can be times when someone contributes something to the discussion that is a bit strange or even downright heretical. What then? That's when you will need to step in and – without criticizing the person or saying he or she is "wrong" (this could shut down future contributions from that person, and perhaps from other group members too) – steer the discussion back to solid ground by saying something like,

- That's a very interesting point of view...
- I hadn't thought of it in those terms before. I'll have to give that some more thought...
- I can see why a person might think that way (or come to that conclusion) ...
- [And then transition with...]
 - Here's something I've often heard about that subject... or
 - Let me share with you what the Bible has to say about that... or
 - Circling back to what we were talking about a minute ago... or
 - I would love to look deeper into that idea, but we need to get back on track here – could you and I talk about it some after the meeting?

Share your life

While we don't want the group leaders dominating the discussion times, we DO want you to share your life and the insights you've gained. We also encourage you to be a good example in terms of vulnerability. Be willing to share the difficulties you have experienced in the past – or are presently experiencing. Show them that it's OK to not be totally OK. God can do great things in and through a person despite their weaknesses. We are ALL in-process.

A few practical tips

- Pray for every member of your group every day. You'll be amazed at how their responsiveness to your teaching improves.
- Come early and welcome people in.
- Start and finish on time.
- Be the last one to leave, making time to talk with those who need to talk.
- Provide refreshments of some sort – even if it's only cookies and juice. But the more effort you make on this, the more the group members will appreciate it. After a few weeks, ask group members if they would volunteer to bring the refreshments.

- Schedule appointments between meetings for those who need extra attention.
- Meet with your leadership team every two or three weeks for review, troubleshooting, improvement, and prayer.
- Contact each member of your group once a week between meetings, either by phone, text, email, or a visit. Those mid-week “touches” make a big difference!
- Consider doing at least one event with your group during the weeks you are meeting. It may be a recreational event, a service project, having a special dinner, movie night, a hike, etc. Be creative!

Share the “Participation Rules”

Consider copying these rules on a separate piece of paper and giving one to each member, then go over them together. It’s important that everyone understands and agrees with what they can expect, and what is expected of them.

- 1. Confidentiality** – Anything said in our group stays in our group. Trust takes time to build but only moments to destroy. DO NOT talk to non-group members about who else is in the group or anything that was said.
- 2. Zero rank** – Out there, you might be a big deal or a nobody. In this group, we are all equals, working toward a common goal, helping each other out.
- 3. Faith** – While we don’t hide that we are a Christ-centered organization, we are not affiliated with any specific church or denomination. People of any faith or no faith are welcome here. We will respect each other’s faith convictions.
- 4. No comparisons** – Each person experiences stress and trauma differently. What is traumatic for one person is just another day on the job for someone else. We are all wired differently and have unique life experiences. Comparing trauma experiences to decide if mine was better or worse than yours is unproductive and even harmful. Focus on what God’s doing in your life.
- 5. Share your mind** – Have the courage to share what’s on your mind or what you’re feeling – it’s part of your healing process. The more you share, the safer you and everyone else will feel here, and the sooner you will experience healing.
- 6. Share the air** – But moderate your sharing. Make an effort not to dominate discussion times; let others in. Avoid long, detailed descriptions of your experiences. Get in, make your point, get out.
- 7. Listen** – Actively, deeply, honoring and affirming all contributions.
- 8. Don’t criticize** – Show grace and mercy to other group members – just as God has shown you.
- 9. Don’t interrupt** – You may have a valuable pearl of wisdom to share, but wait your turn.
- 10. Honor** – Look for opportunities to honor and affirm each other during and between meetings.

Bridge 1: Understanding What Happened

Crossing the River of Confusion, Pain, and Doubt

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members begin to identify their trauma, soul wounds, and their symptoms; to realize that PTSD is a common reaction to trauma; to understand that talking about their traumatic experiences is therapeutic; to gain the conviction that God has not caused their trauma – it has to do with men abusing the free will God has given them – and that God is working to heal them from their trauma.

Why am I like this? *[Just read the narrative about Oleg.]*

What had Oleg done to prepare himself for his time in combat?

Is there anything else he could have done? *[Best answer: Not really.]*

Describe the multiple traumas Oleg experienced.

What are some of the psychological symptoms Oleg experienced as a result of his trauma?

It says that Oleg felt guilty. Why should he feel guilty about anything? *[He shouldn't. It is "false guilt" which we will talk about later.]*

War related trauma" describes a progression of symptoms...

Consider the five indexes in the spectrum of War-related trauma. Where would you put yourself on that spectrum? *[If you have access to a white board, you might draw out the spectrum as a horizontal line, writing the five indexes on the line.]*

Several symptoms are mentioned in this spectrum. If you are experiencing any of them, which one or two bother you the most?

Have you heard the term "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder" before? What are your thoughts concerning the use of the term "Post-traumatic Stress Injury" instead?

What do you think about the fact that the condition of PTSD has been described in literature for centuries? How does it make you feel regarding your own trauma responses?

If you are struggling with war-related trauma or PTSD...

Which of the seven statements in this section surprises you the most?

Are any of them a new idea to you?

Which statement do you feel a strong, positive reaction to? Why?

What do you think of the idea in the sixth statement that PTSD is a "wound of the soul?"

Do you think it's possible for a person's soul to be wounded?

What would this look like?

How would it compare to a physical wound, or a psychological wound?

What causes PTSD?

Here we see a list of nine general experiences that can cause PTSD. Let's go through them one at a time and by show of hands, let me ask if any of you have ever experienced any of them? You may raise your hand multiple times. You don't have to say anything or give any details about it.

Why do you think a person's symptoms would be worse if he or she had experienced multiple types of trauma?

A God-designed defense mechanism.

Without looking back at your manuals, what are some of the things that God has designed for your brain and body to do whenever you encounter a threatening situation? How will these responses help you to stay alive?

Why do you think it's important for our brains to scream at us, "*Less thinking, more action!*"?

Last paragraph: what do you think can happen when we come to "live-or-die" time? What sort of actions might a person do at this point to try to stay alive?

But no matter who you are, it's important to know two things:

In your own words, what is the first thing that you need to know?

And what is the second thing?

How should knowing these two things help a person to stop feeling embarrassed or cowardly because of their response to a traumatic situation?

Discussion questions in the manual...

- Can you remember having one (or more) of these "automatic" reactions while you were in a traumatic, life-threatening situation? On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very mild and 10 very severe, how bad was it?
- Have you had any of these reactions since you got home or to a safe area in the form of a flashback? [*You might need to explain briefly what a flashback is.*] If so, how severe was it? How often has it happened?

Getting stuck in crisis-alert mode.

What are some of the "sensory triggers" that you experience, which cause you anxiety?

Do any of you feel like you are "stuck" in that crisis alert mode?

[One of the main ways we can get "un-stuck" is to first of all not stuff it down, and try to pretend it didn't happen, or that it wasn't a big deal. Even though it can be painful and anxiety-producing, and even though we don't want to think about the traumatic event at all, it's helpful if we let the memories come back up and talk about them. Rather than to try to keep those memories in the past, bring them into the present, confront them, rob them of their power, fully realize that the threat has passed, and clear the way for a less stressful future.]

PTSD symptoms [*Just read the list of symptoms in the four categories.*]

[Have four different group members read through the list of symptoms in the four categories out loud. Ask the group members to put a check mark next to any symptom that they have experienced in the past or are currently experiencing.]

Take a minute and look over the list and put a special mark next to the three symptoms that bother you the most. [*You won't have to share them with the group at this time.*]

[Now read the last two paragraphs of this section, after the symptoms.]

There is going to come a time when the war is over and Ukraine is once again at peace. How do you see your traumatic experiences being transformed and useful to others around you? In what positive ways may it change you?

But where was God?

What do you think about people who go through a traumatic event and question the existence of God, or question His interest or ability to love us and take care of us?

What do you think about the fact that even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had His moment of doubt and feared that God had abandoned Him?

Does it make any difference to you to know that – even though you have gone through great trauma – that God loves you with a love that has eternity in mind?

Free will

What characteristic has God given every person on earth? *[Free will.]*

And how does God hope that we will use that free will? *[To choose to love Him back.]*

And what does this love look like? *[Obedience. John 14:21.]*

How has mankind abused the free will that God has given them?

What role has man's abuse of free will led specifically to the current situation in Ukraine?

While God has not caused the trauma you have (or are) experiencing, how has He helped you through this time of great difficulty? How has He been your ally?

Knowing your enemies, knowing your allies

Discussion question in the manual...

- In which direction are you running right now – toward God or away from Him? Why?
[Or: Why do you think a person might want to run away from God?]

Conclusions:

How ready are you to go through the hard work of “processing” your traumatic memories? Is there anything that makes you hesitant about this?

Which statement best describes your opinion right now, and be ready to share with the group:

“I feel that God is my ally, not the cause of my trauma, and is working to help me through the effects of my trauma.”

Not at all / I have my doubts / I think it could be true / I definitely believe it.

Bridge 2: Connecting With the Healer

Crossing the River of Separation From Your Creator

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand what the Bible says regarding having a relationship with God; how to be sure that Christ is in them and they have eternal life; to understand the correlation between God's presence in our lives and healing from trauma.

The Healer *[Just read the story about Dimitriy]*

How many of you have been physically wounded or injured during the war with Russia?

How many of you can identify with what Dimitriy said about having his heart broken?

What does that look like in you? How has your "broken heart" affected you?

How do you think a strong relationship with God might fix your broken heart (or soul, or spirit)?

Making sure your heart is firmly connected to The Healer

[I realize that there are probably many different faith convictions represented here in this group, and we're not trying to push "our" convictions upon you. But the principles in this book are widely held by hundreds of millions of people around the world – and they are the ones we feel most qualified to present. But if they are at odds with what you believe, we just ask that you prayerfully consider them, take for yourself what parts of it we share that will be helpful, and leave the rest behind.]

How would you describe your relationship with God today?

1. God loves you, and created you to know Him personally.

What do you think about that statement? Do you think that God truly loves you? Why or why not?

How would you say God shows His love for you?

In the second verse, Jesus said that "knowing" God was the way to eternal life. What do you think He meant by that? *["Faith" is the thing that saves us (Eph 2:8,9) – at least from our side of the equation (it connects with "Grace" that comes from God). If we "know" Him – believe that He exists and wants to have a relationship with us – this is equivalent to having faith in Him.]*

2. Man is sinful and separated from God...

How would you define the word "sin?" *["Sin" was originally a Greek archery term that described the distance between where an arrow hits the target and the bullseye. It points out that we have "missed the mark" of God's perfect righteousness, even though we may have been trying to hit it. Sin is manifested in our life by either our active rebellion or passive indifference.]*

How does the current invasion of Russia paint a picture of the sinfulness that exists in all people's hearts?

What are some of the ways that people try (and fail) to bridge the gap that exists between them and God?

3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin...

While mankind has been trying to work its way UP to God, God sent DOWN His Son to provide that bridge over the separation between us and Him. How do these three verses show that Jesus Christ provided the way to bridge the gap, know God, and gain eternal life?

4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord...

What is the relationship that exists between "receiving" Christ and "believing" in Him? *[See the first verse – John 1:12. They are used interchangeably in this verse.]*

Why do you think it may not be enough just to agree about the first three points in this section? *[Since it's by an act of our will that we originally became separated from God, it is by an act of our will that we once again become reunited with Him.]*

Discussion questions in the manual...

- Which circle best represents your life
- Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

You can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer

Have any of you ever prayed a prayer like this before? If so, wouldn't you say that the second circle best represents your life?

Discussion questions in the manual...

- Does this prayer express the desire of your heart?
- If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

[Give them the opportunity to pray the prayer and receive Christ right now. You could have them pray the prayer silently to themselves, pray it audibly, or have them pray it after you, line-by-line. Stress that it's not the words of this prayer that have any power – it's not a magical incantation – but it's the attitude of their hearts that God is looking for. Hopefully, this prayer simply gives words to their heart attitude and desire.]

How to know that Christ is in your life

What are your thoughts about whether or not Christ is in fact in your life right now?

If you feel He is there, how do you know this?

The Bible promises eternal life to all who receive Christ

The Bible promises eternal life to us. What do you think about the possibility that our "eternal life" could be taken from us for some reason? *[This would be impossible, because eternal life, by its very definition, is eternal. One cannot have "temporary eternal life." That would be like a "round square." You need never fear that you might lose the eternal life God has given you.]*

Do not depend on feelings.

What are some "feelings" that might make you think that Christ is not in you, and that you do not have eternal life?

What might bring about these feelings?

What should we do when we have those kinds of feelings?

Now that you have entered into a personal relationship with Christ...

[If you have time, you might consider looking up and having someone read each of the verses presented in these 5 points.]

Are there any of these 5 points that you have questions about?

Conclusions

How do you feel about the last Conclusion in this list? Do you feel disappointed that God is not going to make your life “easy and problem-free?” Why do you think He doesn’t do this? *[We grow through adversity. Like the Arab proverb: “All sunshine – desert.” Strength and growth only come when we experience stress.]*

Bridge 3: Filling of the Holy Spirit

Crossing the River of Powerlessness

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help participants understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives and how this knowledge relates to their healing; to give participants an opportunity to be filled by the Holy Spirit; to learn how and why to keep the Holy Spirit on the throne of their lives; to understand how confessing, yielding, and intentionally asking makes a huge difference in the power and abundance of their lives.

When you need strength beyond your own... [Just read the story about Vladimir and the three paragraphs after it.]

Have you ever been in a situation where you needed strength beyond your own – whether physical, psychological, or spiritual? Would anyone like to share their experience?

What did you do about it?

How does this story give us a picture of how God and His power can help us during times that are more than we think we can endure?

What do you think the front-end loader represents?

What do you think the petrol represents?

Who is the Holy Spirit?

[If you think there is time and group members have access to a Bible, assign people to read each of the Bible verses in this section out loud just after you share each characteristic of the Holy Spirit.]

Are any of these characteristics of the Holy Spirit new to you? Did you find any of them surprising or strange?

What would you say is the difference between being “indwelt” and “filled” with the Holy Spirit?

Which of them describes a permanent situation that will never change for the believer?

Which of them describes a conditional situation, and is dependent on the desire and obedience of the Christian?

A reason why we may need to take action to be “re-filled” with the Holy Spirit is because “We leak.” What do you think is the cause of this “leakage?”

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

How would you say getting drunk is similar to allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you? *[Both cause you to do things you might not normally do – with alcohol leading to bad actions, the Holy Spirit leading to good actions.]*

The Bible talks about three kinds of people

[Even though you read about two of these people in Bridge 1, here we’re going to learn about a third kind of person...]

What similarities do you see between the first circle and the third circle?

What difference do you see between the first circle and the third circle?

Discussion questions in the manual...

- Which circle would you say currently represents your life?
- Which one would you like to have represent your life?

[The rest of this Bridge will talk about how to make Circle #2 representative of your life.]

Five Steps to receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit...

[Have various group members read each of the five step verses and paragraphs one at a time, but not the discussion questions that accompany Steps 1 and 4. Read those next and wait for responses. Following are discussion questions for Steps 2, 3 & 5.]

Step 2. Confess

What are some things that might “quench” the Holy Spirit in your life?

Ordinarily, how often should we confess our sins to God? *[Any time He brings them to mind.]*

Step 3. Present or Yield

What is it like for a person to be a slave to “impurity and lawlessness?” *[If time, have someone read Romans 7:15-25 – Paul’s fight with his own impurity and tendency toward lawlessness, due to being a human being. If the great Apostle Paul struggled with these issues, do you think we won’t?]*

How do you think it could actually be beneficial for a person to be a slave to God’s righteousness? What would this look like?

Step 5. Thank Him in Faith

Why do you think it might be a good idea to thank God after you have requested to be filled by the Holy Spirit?

Asking to be filled

Discussion question in the manual...

- Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? Would you like to pray it right now?

[I suggest that you lead the group through this prayer – either all praying out loud simultaneously, or one line at a time after you. Again, stress that the words are not “magical” – it’s the expression of their heart’s desire that is important. Even if a person thinks they are already filled by the Holy Spirit, they can consider it a renewal of their commitment to Him, and submission to His authority in their life.]

How do I know the Holy Spirit has filled me?

As we learned in Bridge 2, we don’t depend on “feelings” to validate our faith. We put our faith in *facts*, not in *feelings*. What facts from the Bible can we rely on to know for sure that if we ask the Holy Spirit to fill us, He will? *[His promise and His command. He said that if we ask anything according to His will, we have it, and we know that being filled with His Spirit is always His will because He has commanded it.]*

Spiritual Breathing

What are the two phases of taking a spiritual breath?

How often should we engage in spiritual breathing? Once a week? Once a day? Hourly? Once a minute? What happens when we don’t?

Conclusions:

What can you do to keep Jesus Christ on the throne of your life?

Bridge 4: Forgiving – Received and Given

Crossing the River of Anger and Revenge

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help participants understand how important the issue of forgiveness is, and how forgiving those who have harmed them will actually benefit them the most; to give them practical ways to seek forgiveness from God, from those they have hurt, and to forgive those who have hurt them.

*[Note: you may want to share with your group that this will probably be the hardest Bridge to cross. We will be addressing some of the experiences that are at the very heart of their trauma. But if they can cross it, there will be great benefits to their own sense of personal peace and healing. **Also note:** there is so much in this Step, you may need to take two sessions to cover it all – but it is THAT important!]*

[Note 2: be sure to bring with you at least three pieces of paper for each person in your group for the “Memorial Project,” the exercise in the “Seeking forgiveness” section, and the “Forgiving those who have hurt you” section.]

The root of bitterness *[Just read the story about Khalid and the four paragraphs after it.]*

[I recognize that many of you have had traumatic experiences that are very hard to talk about, and very personal. In the “fog of war,” some of you may have even committed traumatic atrocities. No one here is going to force you to talk about them. But recognizing the therapeutic nature of talking about your trauma in a group of people who have had similar experiences, who support you, and won’t judge you, we want to at least give you the opportunity to do so today. Everyone should keep in mind the commitment we have all made to confidentiality. Anything said in this group stays in this group.]

Without sharing anything about it, how many of you here would say – by a show of hands – that you experienced trauma that involved the death of a friend or loved one?

How many were in a situation where you were seriously concerned that you might not live through it?

How many of you would say that you may have done something traumatic to another person?

How many would say that you struggle a lot with a strong desire for vengeance against those who have traumatized you?

[OK. Those are the issues we will be addressing here today.]

1. Seeking forgiveness from God

False Guilt

[Have someone or several people read the opening paragraph and the eight types of False Guilt. As they are being read, have participants check off any of the examples that they see in themselves. Don’t have them read the last two paragraphs yet.]

Have some of you recognized this “False Guilt” in yourself? Would a few of you please share what you experienced that led to this False Guilt?

[Now have someone read the final two paragraphs in this section.]

Do we need to seek forgiveness from God when we are being burdened by these “False-Guilt-Producing” events? *[No! We did nothing wrong.]*

What do we need to do instead? *[Ask Him to remove the burden of the False Guilt.]*

Let's take a few moments of silence, and give you a chance to talk with God about this False Guilt, and ask Him to remove it from you.

Real Guilt

How do the "two bits of good news" listed in this section affect you? Do you believe them?

On what basis can our sins be forgiven?

Are there any sins that we have committed that cannot be forgiven? *[Note: no need to get into "the unforgiveable sin" that Jesus talked about because there is some disagreement about what it actually is, except to say that almost all Bible scholars are sure that a believer cannot commit it.]*

1. Confess

So, when we "say the same thing" as God concerning a sin (or sins) we have committed, what does the Bible say He will do with those sins?

Memorial Project

[Pass out a piece of paper to each participant. Have someone read this section. You may or may not have the "supplies" to do this project as outlined, but after the section is read, you could do something similar to it. Explain to the group that you are going to make an alteration or two, due to lack of jars. For instance: have each person write down their sins and false guilt issues on a piece of paper, write 1 John 1:9 on it, and then destroy the paper some other way: burn it (in a safe place), put it through a shredder, rip up the paper into tiny pieces, ball it up and throw it in a nearby river (don't put your name on it!), etc.]

2. Repent

How is "repentance" different from "confession?" Is it enough to simply confess our sins to God, or is He looking for more? What is a true indication to God that we actually recognize that a certain action we have done is wrong?

How does confession and repentance compliment the idea of Spiritual Breathing we learned about in Bridge 3?

This section says that confession and repentance doesn't mean that we are released from all responsibility attached to our sin. Is there anyone here brave enough to share with the group a time when they needed to make **restitution** for a sin they committed – maybe something they did as a child? Or maybe restitution that you feel you need to make in the near future? *[Facilitator: you may want to reflect a little ahead of time and think of an example in your own life that you could share. This could motivate some of the group members to share too.]*

"But you don't know what I've done..."

Do any of you struggle with this idea that you have committed sins so terrible that God could not forgive you? How do you feel about what is written in this section, asking if you feel "tough enough" to say to God, "You can't forgive MY sins."?

If this describes you, I would like to suggest that you go before God, tell Him what you have been feeling and thinking, and then go through the process of confessing your sin (agreeing with God), and repenting of it. You may start to feel the heaviness of the guilt you're carrying start to lift.

2. Seeking forgiveness from those you have hurt

[Have someone read the first paragraph and verse – Matthew 5:23,24.]

How important do you think Jesus felt it was that there not be any unforgiveness between people?

Six steps to take in seeking forgiveness from another

[Pass out another piece of paper to each participant. Have someone read each step, and after each one ask the discussion question.]

1. Ask God to show you who you have hurt.

Discussion question in the manual: Has God brought one or more people to your mind? Write their name(s) down on a piece of paper.

2. Ask God to forgive you for the pain you caused.

Let's spend a few moments of silence, and let you talk with God silently about this.

3. Pray for the one you hurt.

Let's go to God in silent prayer again. Read through the paragraph again about some of the things you should pray for the person or persons you have hurt.

4. Take the initiative and go to the one you hurt.

Discussion question in the manual: Write down when you plan to take steps to contact each person whose name you wrote down.

It is possible that you are not going to be able to reach some of those you are seeking forgiveness from. You may have lost track of where they live, they don't want to talk with you, or they may have died. What thoughts does the group have about what you could do about it then?

5. In humility, recount to the person what you did and ask for forgiveness.

How difficult do you think doing this will be? Do you still think it's important enough to go through with it?

6. Work on rebuilding trust with that person.

What are some creative ways that we could try to rebuild trust with someone we have hurt?

Forgiving those who have wounded you. *[Have someone read the first paragraph.]*

Can anyone answer that question? Should anyone even consider forgiving the Russians for what they have done? Why?

Fight fire with fire! *[Have someone read up to the **Note.**]*

How can doing good more effectively overcome evil than doing evil? Can you think of an example of this?

Note...

How is the issue of forgiveness during a "hot war" compared to forgiving after peace has broken out, and hostilities have ended?

Why should I forgive them? Three reasons...

1. For your own good. *[Do you have poison oak – or something like it – around here?]*

Could someone summarize this section? How is unforgiveness like a poison oak root?

Do you know anyone who has let bitterness poison their personality, and people just don't want to be around them? Tell us a little about them, not using their names or anything that might identify them.

Take a few minutes in silence and follow the prayer direction in the last paragraph.

2. It's a God-like characteristic. *[Have someone read up to the question.]*

Discussion Question in manual: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = "I am absolutely sure God can do this" and 10 = "Absolutely no way ever" what is your level of confidence that God can perform a miracle in your heart and enable you to forgive your attacker(s)?

*[Have someone read **Prayer Assignment.**]*

3. It allows God to bring perfect justice.

How difficult will it be for you to do this – to release your rightful desire for justice and vengeance, step aside, and let God handle the situation? *[Note: remember – we're not saying that to forgive someone releases them from the civil consequences of their actions. Anyone who has hurt another or committed atrocities should be held accountable. But we are cutting the emotional bonds that may be holding us to them, which allows them to continue to torment us in our minds. Instead we expect God or the civil authorities to bring judgement.]*

Forgiving those who have hurt you. Three steps...

[Have someone read all three Steps at once, and then give them a few minutes to write their list of people who caused their trauma (Step 2)]

[Two options here, based on the size of the group, available time, how ready you feel the group members are to actually forgive those who hurt them, and how open you think the group is to praying out loud in front of each other...]

Option 1: Ask each person to choose one person that they need to forgive and pray the forgiveness prayer out loud that is written in Step 3. They can pray the forgiveness prayer for the rest of the people on their list later by themselves.

Option 2: Encourage the group to take the list home with them and pray the written forgiveness prayer for each person on their list. Of course, they don't have to pray the written prayer word-for-word. It simply gives them a good pattern to follow.

Conclusions:

One of the main reasons presented as to why we should forgive those who have hurt us is because of how it will positively affect us. It's not easy, it may not help us feel better right away, but eventually it will make a strong difference in us and help us to heal from our trauma. Pulling out that root of bitterness, and not allowing our attackers to continue to assault us in our minds opens the door for God to work on our hearts. By a show of hands, how many of you feel you have come to a place in your mind where you can forgive those who have hurt you now, or in the near future?

[If there were some who didn't raise their hand...] I notice a few of you didn't raise your hand – and that's OK! – I understand that you're just not there yet. But I'd be interested to know what you feel is holding you back from forgiving them?

Bridge 5: Building a house of healing

Crossing the River of Spiritual Poverty

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand the necessity of being intentional about four vital spiritual disciplines ordained by God that will help them heal from their trauma; to give them motivation and practical ways to engage in the four healing disciplines of prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship, and talking about their trauma.

Building a proper house *[Just read Vika's story, stopping before the final 2 paragraphs.]*

What were some of the misconceptions Vika had when he designed and began to build his new house? What do you think is going to happen to Vika's house? How much do you think his family is going to like it?

If you were building a house, what would you say are some of the important elements of a *good* house that you would want to be sure to include?

[Have someone read the last 2 paragraph and the list of four elements of a healing house.]

Before we get into the "meat" of this lesson, look at those four elements of a good house of healing. Why do you think each of them might be an important part of your healing environment?

1. Prayer: vital communication with your divine commander

Discussion question in the manual: Here's something for you to ponder. Why do you think the majority of Christians don't pray very much? How about you? Do you think you pray *too much*, or not enough? *[Or, for a little humor, ask, "Let's do a little survey. How many of you think that you pray too much? You're thinking you need to cut back a bit?" Most will chuckle, and nobody will raise their hand. Then ask, "How many think you don't spend enough time in prayer?" Probably everyone's hand will go up, and yours too!]*

[Before you read the next section, ask this:] Why do you think that most people spend less time in prayer than they really want to? What do you think the purpose of prayer is?

[Then read the rest of this section after the question: Could it be that people simply don't have a clear idea...]

What does God want you to pray about?

[After reading through the list, ask this:] Were some of these reasons to pray new to you? Can you think of any other reasons we should pray besides what were listed here?

"I want answers!" *[Have someone read down through the three examples of No, Wait, and Yes answers.]*

Can you think of a time when God answered "No" to a prayer request you had? What happened?

Can you think of a time when God answered "Wait" to prayer request you had? What happened?

Can you think of a time when God answered "Yes!" to a prayer request you had? What happened?

[It would be good for you to spend some time before the class to think of one of your own No, Wait, Yes answers to prayer to share and get each discussion started, if necessary.]

[If you have time, have someone read one or more of the Biblical examples given in the text.]

*[Read the rest of the section: **Obviously, we would like to increase...**]*

Are you able to put a “post script” on each of your prayers like Jesus did: “Not as I will, but as You will.”? Why do you think this might be important?

Personal commitment

Let’s take a couple minutes of silence and let you consider making a prayer commitment to God. If you can, fill in the blanks in your manuals.

2. The Word of God – your divine food and weapon

There are several ways of taking in God’s divine food. Here are five: hear it, read it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it.

What are some ways that you are currently taking in a steady diet of God’s Word?

Benefits of reading, studying and applying the Bible:

Someone read each of the five Bible passages one at a time, and after each has been read, let’s hear from any of you who want to share what you think the verse is saying will be a benefit of Bible intake.

Which of the benefits listed seems most attractive to you?

Taking the sword *[Read up to the Personal Commitment.]*

Those of you with military experience – how would you say the Word of God is like a weapon?

[If time, have someone read the section in Matthew 4:1-11 about Jesus’ temptation, and how He used God’s Word to battle with Satan.]

Personal Commitment

Let’s take a couple minutes of silence and let you consider making a commitment to God regarding taking in His Word. If you can, fill in the blanks in your manuals.

3. The Christian Community – Divine Base Camp *[Read up to the paragraph before the five verses.]*

Many of you are presently in situations where you can’t attend or lead your church. What creative ways have you come up with to stay connected to “the Body of Christ?”

[Have someone read the paragraph before the five verses, and then others read each of the five Bible passages one at a time.] After each has been read, let’s hear from any of you who want to share what you think the verse is saying will be a benefit of connecting with a strong community of believers wherever you are.

PTSI, self-isolation and church

Do any of you feel this reluctance to be with other people, and have a tendency to self-isolate? How have you dealt with it to this point? Do you have any plans to be more intentional in the future about getting together with other Christians?

4. Talking about your trauma

How many of you have experienced some sort of trauma that you have never told anybody about? We’re not going to make you talk about them here and now, but I’m just interested in getting an idea of how many of us are stuffing down traumatic experiences that need to be processed.

Getting the secrets out *[Read through the end of Dr. Matsakis' quote.]*

What do you think? Can one part of your mind try to keep a secret from another part? Have any of you ever sensed this in yourself? This is the essence of what psychologists call "living in denial."

The second paragraph describes an exercise by which you can bring the memories of your past trauma into the present and experience them vividly by not only remembering the event, but also remembering the sensory and emotional details of your experience. This is NOT easy, and is almost always upsetting to a person who does it for the first time. Have any of you ever been with a counselor who had you go through an exercise like this? What was it like for you?

But as Dr. Matsakis wrote, your trauma needs to be "reworked not only on the mental level, but on the emotional level as well." Consider engaging in this exercise (multiple times) either by yourself, with your spouse, a counselor, or with a close friend at hand to keep you steady and encouraged.

*[Have someone read the final two paragraphs of this section: **Researchers have learned that...**]*

How many of you have actually had a "debriefing" offered to you – someone in authority who called you in and asked you to talk about your traumatic event? *[Probably very few or none will say they have.]* What does this tell you about how we need to change the way we address the needs of those who have experienced trauma?

Conclusions:

What changes are you going to bring into your life as a result of this Bridge? What specifically are you going to do?

Bridge 6: Grieving your loss

Crossing the River of Dark Sadness

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand what it means to grieve our losses and why it is so important; to share some practical advice on how to grieve and how not to grieve; to help participants feel more free and comfortable about grief and mourning.

[Bring a piece of paper for each participant to use in the “Name your loss” exercise.]

Denying Grief

[Have someone read the story about Ivan and Grandfather Yaroslav.]

How many of you can identify with what Ivan was feeling, and how he was acting?

I’m sure that several of you have lost dear friends in the war. I’d like to hear about them. Would a few of you tell us about a friend that you lost? *[If no one volunteers at first, share your memory of a loved one you have lost, hopefully to motivate some participants to share.]*

[After a few have shared..] Remembering your friends who have died like this is part of what is known as “grieving.” This is one of the reasons we have funerals – to bring back memories of our lost loved ones, to honor them, and to tell others the good things we know about them (or to hear the same from others).

What do you think about what Ivan said, “We can’t make a big deal about it every time one of our comrades is killed.”?

Understanding Grief – a “sacred sorrow”

Can you imagine the grief you feel as a “sacred sorrow?” What do you think that attitude would do to our normal tendency to avoid grieving, and to simply not think about the people or things we have lost?

Name your loss

[Have someone read this paragraph, and then have the group do the exercise outlined in it.]

The Purpose of Grief

*[Have someone read this section, including the six points under **When we grieve.**]*

Look over this list again. I’m sure several of the ideas expressed are new to you, and maybe surprising. Would anyone be willing share your thoughts on one of the items that stands out to you the most, and why? *[Give them a couple of minutes of silence to read over the list.]*

*[Have someone read the four points under **When we refuse to grieve.**]*

Let’s look over this list again too. Would anyone share your thoughts on one of the items that stands out to you the most, and why? Can you see why it is so important to grieve our losses?

How **NOT TO** grieve

[Have someone read the first paragraph and the 17 points under it (or break the list up and have several people read it). Don’t read the final two paragraphs in this section yet.]

As we read through this list, put a checkmark after each coping action that you do from time to time. Afterwards, I'd like to have a few of you share which ones you have to deal with the most – so we can recognize that these behaviors are pretty common to us all!

[Have someone read the last two paragraphs of this section.]

How **TO** grieve

[Have someone read this section, including the seven stages of grief.]

Discussion question in the manual:

As you think about the trauma you have experienced, and the grief you feel now over your loss, which of the above stages best describes your current state of mind?

What are some of the experiences you have had in this stage?

A few words about the process

[Have someone read this whole section.]

This is a very important thing to understand: how each of us grieves can be unique. I cannot compare my grief process with yours. Just because you seem to “get over” your trauma faster or slower than I do is irrelevant. How many of you can understand that the grief process isn't a nice, neat “cycle,” but rather a “scribble?”

There are two important points brought out in the second-to-last and last paragraphs (Bible verse) in this section that describe two positive things that can come out of our trauma and grief. Can you identify them?

[1. The grief we feel can be like a memorial to the depth of the love and value we place on what (or who) we have lost.

2. God can use the affliction we have experienced and grown from to help others who have experienced trauma.]

How to mourn well

[Have someone read the opening paragraph of this section.]

Remember where God is

[Have someone read this section.]

I'd like for us to take a couple of minutes, close our eyes, and do what is described here.

[After they have closed their eyes, quietly read the last paragraph out loud, a phrase at a time: “Ask Jesus to enter your pain with you... Feel Him coming up behind you, wrapping His big arms around you and holding on tight... Let Him pull the pain out of your body, soul, and spirit into His...” Close with prayer, thanking God for the peace He can bring to those who grieve.]

What did you feel during that?

Aim steadily at faith's target

[Have someone read this whole section.]

So, what's the difference between “faith goals” and the “object of or faith?”

What's the danger of turning a specific experience or outcome into the object of our faith?

What's the danger of turning that experience or outcome into a validation (or non-validation) of our faith?

What should be our attitude instead?

[Make it clear that we are certainly not saying that we should not pray for specific needs we have or outcomes we desire. The point is that we need to always remember what we learned in Bridge 5 about prayer – “Not as I will, but as YOU will, God.” We leave the results to God. He is the one we look to and trust to bring about the best outcome.]

Don't try to do it alone

[Have someone read this section.]

This is difficult, isn't it? Most of us don't want to admit we have any weaknesses, or that we're struggling, or that we might need some help or someone to lean on. Think about it for a minute. Who do you know that you could talk to and tell them about the difficulties you are experiencing without jeopardizing your personal sense of honor? Someone you know understands you, and wouldn't judge you?

Do something with your anger

[Have someone read this section.]

What do you do when you feel anger rising in you? How do you keep it from boiling over?

Go with the flow (of tears)

*[Have someone read this section up to **Make a Grief Memorial.**]*

Why do you think it is difficult for men to engage their emotions when grieving?

Is this only an “in public” thing, and we tend to allow our emotions to flow when alone?

Make a Grief Memorial

[Have someone read this section.]

What ideas come to your mind about building a Grief Memorial? What can you produce or build that would honor who or what you lost, and remind you of your connection?

Signs that your mourning is working

*[Have someone read this section including the **Discussion Question** in the manual.]*

What were (or are) some of the “Why” questions you've asked? *[Have them write them down – we'll be doing something with what they wrote in a minute.]*

*[Have someone read the rest of the section including the **Discussion Question**. Ask them to take the “Why” question(s) they wrote down, and turn them into a “How” question.]*

Would anyone care to share their “Why” questions and how they turned them into “How” questions?

Conclusions:

[Have someone read the two conclusions.]

What have you learned in this Bridge that is going to make a difference in how you grieve the losses you have experienced?

Bridge 7: Defending yourself spiritually

Crossing the River of Spiritual Vulnerability

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand that Satan is a *real* enemy, and that we can withstand his attacks much better if we understand his tactics; to teach group members the simple, practical truths about Doorways and Footholds, and how to identify and eliminate them; to make participants aware of the armor and weapons God has given them.

Resistance = Victory

[Have someone read the story about Misha and his temptation.]

I'm sure all of us have found ourselves in a situation like Misha's. It may not have involved money and potential theft, but we have all wrestled with the idea of doing something we knew was wrong. Sometimes we successfully resisted that idea, as Misha did in this story, but sometimes we went along with it. Would any of you be willing to share an experience you had when you struggled with a big temptation, and how it turned out (positively or negatively)? *[Leader: before the class, think of an example from your own life that you could share, to help participants feel more comfortable about sharing.]*

Eugene Peterson once wrote: "Satan disguises every temptation as an opportunity for improvement." How was Satan trying to "improve" Misha's life? Was he convincing Misha?

Know your enemy

*[Have someone read the first two paragraphs, up to **His tactics**.]*

Sun Tzu and the Apostle Paul strongly advocated that we need to know as much as we can about our enemy. Let's spend a couple of minutes sharing what you already know about Satan – anything at all that you know about him: his origin, his tactics, what he hates, what he loves, how he can be defeated, etc.

His tactics

[Have someone read the opening paragraph of this section, then we'll go through the list of tactics one point at a time.]

Turn back to the opening story of this Bridge and let's see if we can find an example of some of these tactics there. For instance – first tactic – how did Satan appeal to Misha's pride to try to get him to sin? *[Note: not every tactic in this list can be found in the story – the last one, for instance.]*

[If you have time, have someone read each verse that is attached to each tactic.]

Satan's primary tactic – Doorways and Footholds

Doorways

[Have someone read this section. If you have time, read Genesis 4:1-12 before reading the section.]

From this section, we read that there are two possible beings standing at the door of our lives, wanting to get in. Who are the two? *[Satan and Jesus.]* What does the door represent? *[Our will.]*

What do you think each of these beings want to do for you?

Footholds

[Have someone read this section.]

Thinking about the opening story about Misha's temptation, what do you think might have been some of the early, small "footholds" that Misha gave to Satan?

Satan almost got Misha to give him that BIG foothold of stealing his friend's money. And he was setting him up for an even BIGGER foothold if he was discovered. What was it?

But at the last minute, Misha realized what was happening. What did he do?

Defending our areas of weakness

*[Have someone read this section, including the **Discussion Question** – which isn't really a question, it's an exercise they'll do.]*

Let's spend a few minutes right now and ask the Lord to reveal to you where your areas of vulnerability might be. Where are your areas of frequent defeat? Which temptations are difficult for you to handle? Where have you fallen before?

As God speaks to you about them, you may write them in your book, or keep them in your mind – but don't forget them! Don't worry – we won't ask you to share them in this group!

Possible Doorways and Footholds

[Have someone read the first paragraph, and then give the group several minutes of silence to go through the list on their own and put a check mark next to any possible doorways that they may have opened (or been opened for them) in the past.]

Closing Doorways

[Tell the group that we're not going to go through the process of closing doorways right now, but that you strongly suggest that they spend some time thinking about any issues that God has brought up and dealing with them on your own or with a trusted friend. Have someone read each of the three steps listed in this section, including the prayer. You may want to stop the reader after each step and ask, "Does anyone have any questions about this part?"]

[After you go through the prayer, urge them not to be passive about this. It's very important that they take action, and SOON! Satan will try to snatch this good seed out of their hearts (like in the Parable of the Sower), so they shouldn't delay!]

Our Weapons

Weapon #1: Authority

[Have someone read this section up to the verse, Ephesians 1:19-23.]

Do you see this idea of "exousia" or authority in the military? How?

How do you see it in warfare? Can you think of examples of Ukraine's exousia being greater than Russia's exousia? *[The weapons given to Ukraine by many western countries and the positive attitude of Ukrainian soldiers are like superior authority which enables them to be successful in their fight against the Russians. But then again, there are the nuclear missiles...]*

In this section, we learn that the authority God gives us – the weapons, the strength, the resilience, the insight, and God's back-up – is far greater than Satan's resources. But sometimes we don't use this authority. Why do you think that is?

*[Have someone read the rest of this section, including **Your place of warring.**]*

So Jesus Christ owns this infinitely powerful authority, and He has given it to you and to me. Obviously, there is a patchwork of other authorities on this earth – civil authority, political authority, family authority, financial authority, etc. So we can't just do anything and everything we want to do. I don't know about you, but I can't be trusted with THAT level of authority! But when it comes to spiritual warfare with Satan – how much authority do we have?

Weapon #2: Our Spiritual Armor

[Have someone read this section, including the six elements of the armor of God.]

No one goes into battle without armor – at least, not if they're smart. It's the same thing with going into spiritual battle. God has provided us with armor that will keep us safe from the enemy's attacks. The important thing is to *put it on*, just as it says at the beginning of the verse we just read. Some of these pieces of armor were put on us upon our salvation (for instance, the Breastplate of Righteousness). Other pieces require that we intentionally put them on new every day. How do we go about "putting on" the armor of God?

[You may only get confused looks at this question – it's a tricky one! The answer is pretty simple: we pray and ask God to do it! Each morning, spend a few minutes asking God to strap on each piece of His armor so that you will be protected from the spiritual bullets, arrows, spears, land mines, and bombs of our enemy Satan.]

Weapon #3: The Word of God

[Have someone read the opening paragraph (not reading all the Bible references), and then ask three or four people to read three or four of the verses to give people an idea of how the Bible shows spiritual work getting done by the spoken word.]

[Have someone read the rest of this section. Then, go back and read the last three paragraphs in Misha's story. Ask the group to point out each of the five principles listed here.]

Conclusions:

[Have someone read the three points and the closing paragraph.]

What is at least one new thing you have learned from this Bridge that will help you in your spiritual warfare with Satan?

Bridge 8: Seeing who you really are

Crossing the River of Self-Hatred

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members recognize how trauma can open the door to a negative, destructive self-perception through the agencies of Satan, the world system surrounding us, and our own negative self-talk; to counter Satan's lies with the truth of God found in His Word;

Forgetting the truth

Do you know anybody like Dima? Tell us a little about him/her. What were they like before the war? What are they like now?

What do you think causes a person to become like this?

What do you think Dima meant when he said, "I'm going to remind you of who you are."? (Did he mean to say, "Who you *were*," or "Who you *are*"?)

Combat Trauma and self-hatred

[Have someone read this section.]

Has war-related trauma changed your self-perception? In what ways?

Were they positive changes (which is entirely possible) or negative changes? Both?

Self-perception Assessment – How you see yourself

[Have someone read the first paragraph of this section – not the list of self-perceptions yet.]

Let's take a minute and do this Assessment. As the directions say, put an "X" on the line between the matched pairs that best describes your current opinion of yourself.

At the end of this Bridge, we're going to re-visit this Assessment and see how it has changed.

[After they've done the exercise, have someone read the rest of this section.]

Why do we tend to believe the lies of our enemy? Why don't we naturally recognize them and reject them?

Why is it so destructive to hang on to these lies? What can happen to us if we continue to believe them?

Let's take a look at each of these eight lies from Satan, and see how the truth of God's Word counters each one of them...

Deception #1: Not Respected

*[Have someone read this section, up to **Your TRUE Identity...**]*

Have any of you ever heard any of those five lies from the enemy? If so, why did you think they were the truth?

Think about one of the times you heard and believed one of those lies. We just read that every lie must have an element of truth in order to be effective. What was the element of truth that convinced you to believe that lie? *[Leader: before the class, think about a time when this happened to you, and be prepared to share it if the participants need a little prompting.]*

Your TRUE Identity: Respected

Let's read each of these scripture verses and answer the questions one at a time. And let's write our answers down in the blanks provided. Who will read the first one?

[Finish this section by having someone read the final paragraph.]

For the remaining seven Deceptions and Truths...

[For each one, have someone read the list of the lies of the enemy, and then have someone read the scripture verses and let the group members spontaneously speak out their answers. Encourage them to write the answers in the blanks provided. As God brings any follow-up questions to your mind after each Deception/Truth section, feel free to ask them! Then have someone read the concluding paragraph, if there is one.]

After the last set of Deceptions and Truths...

*[Have someone read the two paragraphs just before **This Is Who I Am**]*

This Is Who I Am

I'd like for us to all share this Proclamation together, out loud. Can I get a Ukrainian volunteer to lead us in this?

I'd like to strongly recommend that you read this Proclamation and even say it out loud every day for the next month. I think you'll notice a BIG change in how positively you see yourself.

Now I'd like you to turn back to the Self-Perception Assessment you took a little while ago on page _____. Look where you put your "X" on each line. Has that assessment changed? If you feel differently about yourself now, just put a straight up-and-down line on the continuum where you think you are now.

Would some of you who changed your assessment on one or more of these characteristics share with us why you changed it? What's different now?

Follow-up

Take a minute and put today's date in the blank. As I mentioned before, read and even proclaim out loud these truths about who you are every day for one month. Then retake the Self-Perception Assessment again. I can almost guarantee you that you will feel very differently about yourself! And you don't have to stop after a month. Renew these truths in your mind and heart regularly.

Conclusions:

[Have someone read the three Conclusions here.]

What is at least one new thing you have learned from this Bridge that will counter the negative self-perception that trauma has brought into your life?