

**CONFESSIONS
OF A PASTOR!**

Can you believe it? The summer is almost over. This week is the final week of summer Growth Groups! That's right, we will have next week off as everyone starts getting back in town and the grade-school folks get back into the groove of the school year. Then, we will wrap up the *Confessions of a Pastor* series the week of August 12-18, which will be our kick-off for the fall semester of Growth Groups.

Over the past two weeks, Eric has begun the *Confessions of a Pastor* series with: *I struggle with the same sins over and over* (July 22) and *Sometimes I want to quit* (July 29). The purpose of this series is to help us realize that all of us share the same struggles (even pastors), but God is powerful enough and wise enough to give us strength and wisdom to overcome even the simplest of everyday struggles.

- **Have you ever quit something, but later looked back and realized that if you had seen it through it would have turned into a great opportunity? Tell us your story.**

- **What situations have you found yourself in that were so overwhelming that you just wanted to quit and walk away? (i.e. - job, family, friendships, etc.)**

- **Read Romans 15:1-6.** This passage teaches us several things about not quitting:
 - ◆ God gives us people of strength to help us when we fail (vs1-2). One of the key lessons Eric taught us is that confession brings healing (James 5:16). **What struggles have you dealt with in the past that overwhelmed you until you talked to somebody about it, and it just seemed easier after you shared it?**

 - ◆ The Bible is given to us to encourage us to endure (v4, see also *Hebrews 11:1-12:2*).
 - ▶ **When you face struggles, what stories in the Bible come to mind that encourage you and give you strength?**

 - ▶ **What stories come to mind that might encourage someone else in your group?**

 - ◆ When we endure, God can show up and demonstrate His power and glory (v5-6). This is an encouragement for us to remember what Eric said: perseverance brings blessing (Galatians 6:9). **What struggles have you endured in your past that pushing through led to a big God moment?**

- **Are there any struggles you are dealing with right now that you want to share with your group for strength, encouragement, and prayer?**



Growth Groups
Leaders' Travel Guide
Week of July 29-August 4, 2007

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Growth Group Leaders:

Our official kick-off for the Fall is only 2 weeks away! Less than two weeks after that, we will begin Connection Group meetings after the service on Sundays to help get new people involved in Growth Groups. Our biggest need to make this happen effectively is Group Leaders. Eric and I have been talking about some potential group leaders, but if there is someone you have in mind that we should talk to, let us know. Can you believe we are talking about multiplication again? Momentum is building at Journey Church!

I need some help from you to get ready for new groups. We want to put together a video of clip featuring folks that are involved in Growth Groups and why the groups are important to them. Honestly, I want to have a little clip from almost everybody in the groups so I can pull a few little points from several and put together a good "advertisement." I need your help getting people on video . . . don't be surprised if Eric or I barge into your group with a camera to get some footage in the next few weeks.

Also, I have been promising you some Growth Group Leaders' training and some helps in organizing your groups effectively. Eric and I are finishing up the information and will be organizing some leader training soon . . . probably between the Fall launch and the Connection Group meetings.

Please be sure to follow up with the new folks in your groups so they don't slip through the cracks. As we build momentum for the fall, try to contact each of your group members at least once during the week to help them get fired up.

Thanks again for all you do!

Andrew

Many of the following questions are fairly self-explanatory, but I have inserted some comments under some of them to help you get the ball rolling, or for you to use as filler if nobody in your group is ready to share. I encourage you to start on time, to keep the discussion time to about 45 minutes, and to use the last question to bridge into a prayer time in your group.

Over the past two weeks, Eric has begun the *Confessions of a Pastor* series with: *I struggle with the same sins over and over* (July 22) and *Sometimes I want to quit* (July 29). The purpose of this series is to help us realize that all of us share the same struggles (even pastors), but God is powerful enough and wise enough to give us strength and wisdom to overcome even the simplest of everyday struggles.

- **Have you ever quit something, but later looked back and realized that if you had seen it through it would have turned into a great opportunity? Tell us your story.**

Personally, I was 3 months away from turning 18, the deadline for reaching the rank of Eagle Scout. I could have pushed through and finished, but I had other things I wanted to focus on, so I quit. I always used the excuse that the other things were more important to me, which they were, but I honestly could have done them just as well and still made Eagle. In some ways it's not a big deal . . . but there is still some level of prestige that comes with being able to say you are an Eagle Scout . . . a prestige I walked away from just a couple steps shy of the finish line.

This is the kind of story we're looking for here . . . If nobody has anything, that's OK, feel free to share my story, or just move on.

What situations have you found yourself in that were so overwhelming that you just wanted to quit and walk away? (i.e. - job, family, friendships, etc.)

If you get some good response, you may want to insert a follow-up question: “What kept you from quitting?”

- **Read Romans 15:1-6.** This passage teaches us several things about not quitting:
 - ◆ God gives us people of strength to help us when we fail (vs1-2). One of the key lessons Eric taught us is that confession brings healing (James 5:16). **What struggles have you dealt with in the past that overwhelmed you until you talked to somebody about it, and it just seemed easier after you shared it?**

One key point we can pull out of verse one is that we shouldn't kick each other while we're down. So often, we want to shake our heads in disgust when we see a young believer continue to make bad decisions. Or, sometimes worse, we want to run to them every time and try to rescue them from their own struggles. “Bearing with the failings of the weak” means putting up with their failures . . . not necessarily rescuing them from their failures, or telling them everything we know about how to avoid them. We need to be careful to build each other up, not tear down, make to feel guilty, stupid, or like a failure.

I wouldn't share this rant with your group, but I share it with you to help you direct the discussion of your group. Encourage people to share, and allow people to help each other . . . but be ready to move your group on if a discussion starts trying to solve everyone's problems on-the-spot. *The key to this lesson is ENDURANCE in struggles, not a quick-fix.*

- ◆ The Bible is given to us to encourage us to endure (v4, see also *Hebrews 11:1-12:2*).
 - ▶ **When you face struggles, what stories in the Bible come to mind that encourage you and give you strength?**

Some examples here may be:

- David knowing he would be king, but having to work diligently and waiting for God to open the door
- All the ups and downs that Joseph faced from being sold into slavery to being just under Pharaoh, and being reunited with his family
- Moses and all his “excuses” why he could do what God said, but God pulled him through . . .
- Peter's denial, but being restored and becoming the primary leader of the early church.
- Whatever else you might think of . . .

- ▶ **What stories come to mind that might encourage someone else in your group?**

- ◆ When we endure, God can show up and demonstrate His power and glory (v5-6). This is an encouragement for us to remember what Eric said: perseverance brings blessing (*Galatians 6:9*). **What struggles have you endured in your past that pushing through led to a big God moment?**

One quote that sticks out to me in Eric's notes is “We tend to give up before God shows up.” You may want to share this with your group to help move into this question. Another big leadership quote that I have heard many times is “Don't overestimate what you can do in one year, but don't underestimate what you can do in five years.” The point of this quote is that sometimes we are impatient and expect too much early on, and it keeps us from persevering and seeing great and amazing things done over a longer period of time.

- **Are there any struggles you are dealing with right now that you want to share with your group for strength, encouragement, and prayer?**

Remember my little rant above as you move into your prayer time . . .