**Leader’s Guide for *Say Goodbye to Emotional Eating***

Dear Bible Study Leader,

I’m so glad you decided to lead a class with *Say Goodbye to Emotional Eating*. I’ve led lots of small groups for emotional eating studies and they’re fun groups to lead because it’s a topic that not only leads to a lot of discussion, but it also brings the class members closer to each other. Plus in my experience, it’s always been a fun group of people. (Maybe that’s because we all like to eat!) Before I get to plans for the individual lessons, I’ll share just a few odds and ends so you know what to expect if you lead a group.

Each class session will contain some (or all) of the following components:

1. **A short video to watch (5-10 min)** (Optional) Whenever I go to a Bible study, I want to get to know the people in my group. Because of that, I don’t have videos for every class and the ones I do have are usually short. That way you’ll have lots of time for discussion! If you don’t have the capacity to share the videos, you can lead the class without them and just share the links with class members so they can watch them on their own if they want. You can access all of these videos at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/56828t9e>. (They are YouTube videos so you’ll need Internet access, but again, they aren’t necessary to the class.)
2. **Main Topic Discussion Questions** **(20-40 min)** Each week, I focus on one of the five sections in the renewing section of the book. I also focus one session on the renewing of the mind. I’ll include discussion questions in each lesson to help class members discuss that topic. I would expect these discussions to be lively and class members will learn from each other as their minds are engaged in the discussion. If you have a large group and you find it’s too hard to discuss in the large groups, break into smaller groups for discussions. This will also be a way for class members to get to know each other. If you want you could come back to the large group and share their biggest takeaways.
3. **Renewing Exercises from the Book to Discuss (20-40 min):** Most weeks, I’ll suggest some renewing exercises from the book to discuss. You could break into small groups for this if you’d like.
4. **Sharing and accountability (15 min)** Because most of your class members will also be wanting to lose weight, I suggest having them break up into small groups of four at the end of class to share how they did following their boundaries during the week and also how they did renewing their mind. If you have a large group, you could divide these based on the boundaries class members are using. So for example, you could put the intuitive eaters together, the WW people together, etc. Group members can decide if they want to do any accountability (text each other each day or ask each week, etc.). I feel it’s more important to hold each other accountable to doing the renewing exercises rather than following the weight loss boundaries – but some may want to do both. I would make this optional and have it at the end of the class so that whoever wants to be involved can stay for it. I’d start it on Week 2. By then everyone should have chosen boundaries so you can divide the groups by boundaries if you’d like.
5. **Assignment** I’ve made a separate pdf with all of the assignments. Because this isn’t like a regular Bible study where you discuss every lesson, it will help to hand out a sheet at the beginning that has all the assignments listed. It won’t take long to read the material in the book and I’ve tried to keep the number of assignments low for those in the class who don’t feel they can invest much time in the class (or who want to invest the time but can’t make themselves do it). It’s a fine line to walk to make sure they don’t feel overwhelmed, but also to know that if they really want to break free it will take some time and effort in renewing. Just be sure to remember that class members are at different stages and be encouraging in however they decide to handle the assignments. For some this will just be an intro to the renewing of the mind (and that’s good!), and for others, they’ll put in a lot of effort and see some big changes (also good!).

**Other Tips**

1. **Differences** This class is a bit different than doing a regular Bible study because it’s not easy. With a normal Bible study, we come and discuss, have a little snack and go home. But in this class, we’ll be working on getting rid of a stronghold—and that’s hard! Because of that, I think it’s super helpful to have the little sharing and accountability groups at the end of the class for those who would like to join in. If you normally have ice breakers in your Bible studies, this little sharing group at the end can take the place of the ice breakers as it’s a way to get to know a small group of people deeply. It will also be a place for them to support each other and realize they’re not alone in the struggle.
2. **Discussion** If you’re used to doing more of a lengthy video Bible study, you may be intimidated to teach a class without a long video. Don’t worry though as this is a topic women love to discuss and I’ll be very surprised if you don’t have enough to talk about! If you’d feel better with a backup discussion topic, choose another exercise from the book, or just ask, “What did God teach you last week when you were renewing?” or “Did anyone have any big AHA moments or victories this week?” Or even “What truth do you want to remember this week as you work on following your boundaries and going to God for help with them?”
3. **Expectations** When I first began talking about the renewing of the mind, I was so excited to see the ladies in my Bible studies change and grow! But I realized quickly that not everyone was either willing or able to do the work at home that they needed to do to change and grow! It’s best to accept that at the beginning so you don’t get discouraged, but also know that this will be a life changing group for many and that is very exciting!
4. **Treats** One of the saddest parts about leading a group on emotional eating is that it’s better to skip the yummy desserts and treats at the meetings so you don’t tempt those in your group who are trying not to eat sugar. ☹
5. **Help and Feedback (Optional, but recommended)** Normally when I write a leader’s guide, I’ve already tried it out with local Bible studies. But this time I’m on the road (my husband is a travel physical therapist) so I haven’t been able to try this out with local groups. If you have any feedback for me in leading the group or how I need to change this leader’s guide, let me know!

I think that’s about it! I hope you have a wonderful group filled with camaraderie, good discussions, breaking free from emotional eating, and growing closer to God. I’m praying that this group will be a blessing to both you and your class members!

In Christ,

Barb

**Weekly Plans**

**Week 1: I’m Afraid to Start**

Goal: To help them grow more comfortable with each other and share their feelings about starting the class. Also share a little bit about what makes this class different than a regular Bible study.

**Introductions:** Ask them to introduce themselves and share what their go-to food is for emotional eating (ice cream, chips, etc.).

**Video:** An Intro to the Class by Barb (8 minutes) (Note: You can access all class videos at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/56828t9e> - they are YouTube videos so you’ll need Internet access.)

**Main Topic Discussion:**

1. How would you define emotional eating?
2. Why do you think it’s so hard to break free from emotional eating?
3. One of the reasons we want to break free from emotional eating is because we want to be healthy and/or lose weight. Let’s talk about weight loss for a minute. How do you usually feel when you start a new weight loss program?
4. How do you feel two weeks into the program?
5. What makes us want to quit new programs?
6. In Barb’s book, she says that the answer to losing weight and keeping it off is to renew your mind. What does Roman 12:2 say about renewing the mind?
7. Romans 12: 2 tells us we need to renew our minds if we want to be transformed. This takes time. Lots of time! Why do you think God didn’t just instantly transform us in the areas of our sins and weaknesses? Why all this renewing?
8. Do you think we’ll be able to break free from emotional eating without having lots of days of failure with our eating boundaries? Why or why not?
9. Often we condemn ourselves when we break our boundaries. What would be a better response to failure?
10. Now think of the next five weeks during the study. When will you be most tempted to give up and stop working on breaking free from emotional eating?
11. What could you do now to help you follow through when everything in you wants to quit?
12. What will you need to remember as you go through this class? (This will be things like: to take it one day at a time, that it’s a journey, it will require sacrifice, God will be my helper, I won’t be perfect, etc.)

**Transition (Optional):** In Barb’s book, she talks about how God changed her and set her free from the control of food through the renewing of the mind. She also says, though, that it’s really hard to start a renewing of the mind habit. That’s why she suggests having everyone do one of the renewing exercises in class during the first class session. Let’s do the exercise on page 95.

**Renewing Practice/Discussion (Optional):**

1. In class renewing: Have each class member do the exercise on page 95 **in class** (When You’re Afraid to Start). Again, make sure to allow enough time for the discussion. You can still start the discussion if everyone is not completely finished – just go until the majority is finished if you’re short on time.
2. Discussion: Either have everyone share their biggest takeaway, or go through the questions one at a time. This can either be done as a large group or break into small groups.

**Closing:**

Have everyone go around and share what they’d like to get out of the class.

**Assignment**

1. Read chapters 1-4.
2. Do worksheets on pages 35-37, 39.
3. Do the renewing exercises on page 82 (Do I Really Need Boundaries?) and 127 (A Close Walk with God versus a Close Walk with Food).

**Week 2: I Don’t Feel Like Following My Boundaries**

Goal: To see the value of boundaries and the need for them, then to choose a set of primary boundaries.

**Main Topic Discussion**

1. In chapter 4, Barb talks about having lifelong boundaries. How would you define boundaries?
2. How do you feel when you hear the word boundaries? Why do you think you feel that way?
3. What did the family you grew up in believe about food boundaries? (Note: You could write these beliefs on the board and then if you have time later, go back to them and ask class members what they would write for the truth to each belief. It would be interesting to get 3 or 4 different truths for each one. It’s also just interesting to see how different families have different beliefs about boundaries.)
4. Why do you think we see boundaries with food as a bad thing?
5. Why are boundaries a good thing?
6. How can we change our mindset to see boundaries as a good thing?
7. What keeps us from committing to boundaries?
8. What will you have to sacrifice or accept to commit to boundaries?
9. What will you gain if you commit to boundaries?
10. What will you gain if you commit to boundaries and then renew your mind every time you feel like breaking them? (It would be nice to bring out the fact that committing to them is helpful, but it’s not the answer. We’ll need to renew when we feel like breaking them so we have both the desire and the strength to follow them.)

**Video: Week 2: How to Use Say Goodbye to Emotional Eating to Renew Your Mind.**

* I have a similar one on YouTube, but I made the one on the class playlist specifically for this class. I begin by saying something about boundaries, so it would best be played after the boundaries discussion.
* In the video Barb mentions that it can be hard to make yourself do the renewing exercises. Can anyone think of some practical things you could do at home or at work to make it easier to do the exercises?

**Renewing Exercises Discussion**

* Page 127 (A Close Walk with God versus a Close Walk with Food).

**If Extra time**

* You could go over the renewing exercise on page 82 that they were assigned and have them take turns volunteering advantages and disadvantages.

**Sharing and accountability (15 min)**

1. If you’ve decided to have small sharing/accountability groups at the end, ask who all would like to join them, and divide them up according to their boundaries. You could do that by having them go to a different section of the room based on their boundaries. Then divide those groups further so you end up with 3-6 per group. Have them meet for the first time today.

**Assignment**

* Read chapters 5-7
* Do 1-2 Scripture meditations or set of renewing questions a day to renew your mind. (We’ll discuss option charts and truth journaling next week.) If they already feel confident enough to try truth journaling or option charts, they can give that a try.

**Week 3: Renewing of the Mind**

**Goal:** To make sure class members know how to truth journal and do option charts. We’ll be doing the renewing exercises together in class today.

**Main Topic Discussion** (You may want to make this discussion a bit shorter to make sure you have time for the option chart section. You could also begin with that section if you think that might be easier.)

1. In the book, Barb calls truth the secret weight loss weapon and shares how God helped her break free from the control of food through renewing her mind. You all have one week (or more) of renewing under your belt. How did it impact you when you did it last week?
2. Barb has said that she would guess she truth journaled hundreds of times (probably 400+ she thinks) before she was able to consistently keep her weight off. Why do you think she had to renew so many times before she broke free from the control of food?
3. Do you think it’s excessive to spend that much time renewing? Why or why not?
4. The interesting thing is that Barb probably only averaged about 5 minutes a renewing session since she often just journaled one or two lies. 400 X 5 minutes is less than 40 hours – would you be willing to spend the equivalent of a 40 hour work week renewing if you knew it would help you break free from the control of food? (or less than 2 weeks if you spent 10 minutes each time)?
5. What makes it so hard to renew?
6. Can you think of some ways to make it easier?
7. What are the benefits of renewing in addition to weight loss?
8. What would your life look like one year from today if you were to start a consistent renewing habit?

**Option charts:**

1. Since option charts are often a little harder to learn, I would suggest watching this video as a class: [How to Do an Option Chart](https://youtu.be/tfaWT1mSl_Y)– 13:38
   1. If you want, you could also ask a question after the video, “What was your biggest takeaway from Barb’s option chart on the video?”
2. Practice doing an option chart: Have everyone fill out the following option chart on their own in class: Things Aren’t Going Well – page 162
3. Discuss option chart – 10-15 min
   1. Ask how everyone did. Did they understand how to do it? Could ask if they wrote little comments in the box.
   2. Either a) Go through it line by line and ask if anyone added any little notes to the boxes, or b) Ask, “What was your biggest takeaway from doing the chart?”

**Truth Journaling:**

1. Practice truth journaling by having each class member fill out the truths for “I Would Be Crazy Not to Eat This!” on page 133 on their own in class.
2. After they’ve finished filling page 133 out, discuss what they wrote.
   1. Have them take turns for sharing truths for each lie. This will help those who are having a hard time coming up with a truth think of truths and also help them realize there’s no perfect truth – we all will come up with different truths!
   2. Optional: Ask, “What was your biggest takeaway from doing this renewing exercise?” at the end.

**Other Resources**

This is another resource you could share with those who are having a hard time with truth journaling and option charts. I originally made this video for a church who wanted a seminar on the renewing of the mind: [Renew Your Mind for Life Change Seminar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxfP8kpV994&list=PL-HUegeqUl__i4IrZl6hapJ7qXz_7Xjz_&index=4) - https://tinyurl.com/4xw9jfua

**Assignment**

1. Read intro to renewing exercises (pages 73-77)
2. Renew 1-2 x a day this week. Also tell them Barb thinks you have to develop a habit of renewing every time you feeling like breaking your boundaries to truly break free from the control of food. So if they want an extra challenge, try to renew every time they feel like breaking them.
3. Do the renewing exercises on page 223 (Discouraged About Weight Loss), 235 (I’ll Never Get Over This), and 254 (This is Too Hard!).

**Week 4: I’ll Never Lose This Weight**

**Goal:** To give them hope and encourage them to persevere in renewing their mind and trying to follow their boundaries even after they break them. It may also encourage them to read one of my journal entries which you can see in #3 below.

**Discussion** Today’s discussion will be like a regular Bible study where you just discuss the exercises in the book. Discuss as many of the following as will fit into your class time!

1. I’ll Never Get Over This - page 235
   1. Go through the lies one by one and have class members share what they wrote for the truth. If you’d like you could also share what I wrote for the truth for each one. You can see my 4/21/2008 journal entry on the next page.
2. This Is Too Hard! – page 254
   1. Many in the class will be having a hard time making themselves renew so this will be helpful to discuss.
3. Discouraged About Weight Loss - page 223
   1. On question 3, it would be interesting to see what different people say as I feel there are a lot of lessons God can teach us through this struggle! In fact to me, this is one of the redeeming factors of trials—that God wants to use them to help us grow.
   2. After question 6, you could ask if anyone has tips to make themselves renew throughout the day if you didn’t already cover this in last week’s class. If you did cover it in last week’s class, you could ask if anyone had success this week in making themselves renew.

**Sharing and accountability (15 min)** Have them break into their small groups at the end to share how they did with both renewing and their boundaries.

**Assignment**

1. Try to renew 2 times a day this week
2. Renewing exercises on page 178 and 185.

**Barb’s journal entry from 4/21/08:**

**Note:** Each of the truths below corresponds to the same number in the belief section. So the truth for the first belief (I will gain my weight back) is “Only if I keep doing it in my own strength which is what I’ve been doing” – and so forth.

**Beliefs**: 1. I will gain back my weight. 2. I will keep going and gain a bunch. 3. I can’t control my eating. 4. I can’t lose weight and keep it off. 5. I have no will power.

**Truths:** 1. Only if I keep trying to do it in my own strength which is what I’ve been doing. 2. Only if I don’t bring my thoughts captive to the truth. 3. Very true!! This is a stronghold!! Only God can control it. The truth must set me free. I’ve been running from God by not journaling each time I break my boundaries. Food is in danger of becoming an idol. So is the Internet. I need to have limits on that. How about 5 min surf in the am for news and 15 min at night max? (Note: the 2022 Barb almost never looks at the news in the morning as she doesn’t want to get stressed and depressed and probably only spends 5-10 minutes a day on the news.) 5. I actually have more than I had a year ago. But it’s not willpower that stops a stronghold. It’s truth.

Note: If you’d like you can share with them a 6th belief and truth I wrote in my journal that day that I didn’t put in the book.

Belief #6: How will I be able to sell my book if it doesn’t work in my own life?

Truth #6: God allowed me to stumble and He can help me back again. It does work but you have to do what the Bible study says and I haven’t been doing that. Plan: I’ll go back to my boundaries and journal each time I eat outside of them.

You could also mention that back in 2008 Barb had to write the truth and believe it even though she didn’t know the future. 2023 Barb has experience∂ those truths in real life because she’s kept her weight off for 15+ years now, but 2008 Barb was just relying on what she read in Scripture and practical truth.

**Week 5: I Need Chocolate**

**Goal:** To help them understand that life is better when we live by design not desire and to understand how unrealistic expectations for life can cause us to give into emotional eating.

**Main Topic Discussion**

1. Do you think people struggled with emotional eating 1500 years ago? What’s different about our modern culture that makes us feel like emotional eating?
2. Often we think that if our life were easier, we wouldn’t give in to emotional eating. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
3. Sometimes life is super hard, but other times life is normal and we just think it’s super hard because we have unrealistic expectations for life. (I speak from experience here!) What are some examples of unrealistic expectations we might have in the area of weight loss, daily life, and life in general?
4. How do these unrealistic expectations cause us to give into emotional eating, and how can we stop that trend?
5. In the book, Barb talks about living by design vs. living by desire. What does she mean when she talks about living by design?
6. In some ways living by design goes against our current culture’s thinking of listening to our heart and doing what we feel or desire to do. Can you see any dangers in living by our feelings and emotions?
7. What are the advantages of living by design in the area of eating (choosing food boundaries in a rational moment and following them even when life is hard), rather than catering to our emotions and desires in the area of eating?
8. What can you do to improve your chances of living by design rather than desire?

**Renewing Exercise Discussion**

1. Discuss Scripture Meditation on page 185 (Turning to Food for Comfort)
2. Share truths for page 178 (I Need a Little Excitement in My Life!)
3. If you have extra time, you could brainstorm fun but non-addictive ways to create a little excitement in our lives!

**Sharing and accountability (15 min)** Have them break into their small groups at the end to share how they did with both renewing and their boundaries.

**Assignment**

1. Renewing exercise on pages 207 and 209
2. Renew twice a day.

**Week 6: I Have to Be Skinny**

Goal: To help them let go of the idea that they have to be skinny to be acceptable and embrace their body in its as-is condition. Also to understand how the idols of skinny and food oppose each other, and learn how to pursue health (which often includes trying to lose weight) without making an idol of skinny.

**Main Topic Discussion**

1. Our obsession with both food and skinny often gets its start in watching TV commercials and movies and looking at social media and advertisements. What messages about food are common in the media you consume (either now or in the past)?
2. What messages about body image are common in the media you consume (either now or in the past)?
3. Do you think past generations felt like they had to be skinny? Why or why not?
4. How can we unlearn the unhealthy messages we learned about food and body image from the media we consume?
5. Why do you think it’s so hard to unlearn these messages?

**Video (5 min) (optional)** - Letting Go of the Idolatry of Food and Skinny (This is a video on my YouTube channel, but a lot of people wrote to say how helpful it was so I think this would be a good one to watch in class.)

* After the video, ask what their biggest takeaway from the video was.

**Renewing Discussion**

* When You Feel Like Others are Judging You for Your Weight – page 207
* If Only I Were Thin – page 209

**Sharing and accountability (15 min)**

Large group sharing: Could share as a group – what did you get out of the class? Or what was your biggest takeaways from the class?

Small group sharing – some of these little groups may want to keep meeting. You could tell them they could consider that.