

# Renew Your Life

## Session 1: Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

### *The Renewable Energy of the Holy Spirit The Energy of Grace*



your life. Think of someone who you'd like to imagine through God's eyes. What would be a good reminder to you to see them that way?

*Conversely*, Laubach also asserts, "I must see God in them." What kinds of people do you have the hardest time seeing God's presence in? How could you learn more about them, perhaps so that you might better understand them?

5. What do you want to remember or continue to ponder from the conversation today?

### **Closing Question & Discerning Your Next Practice** (5 minutes)

*Explore how the chapter themes can make a difference in your life by considering these questions:*

- In your current life, what is draining or depletes your energy? Are there ways to release or re-think those activities/relationships?
- What faith practice would you like to try in the coming week or two? See pages 26, 34 and 47 for ideas from this session's chapters in the book.

### **Closing Prayer** (2-3 minutes)

Holy Spirit, you are the way we experience God's creative energy for renewal. Help us to release whatever drains our energy. Help us to release our striving. Open our hearts and minds and lives to be filled by you, the wellspring of God's energy. Until we gather next, give us grace to receive what you offer as you renew our lives and bless us to be a blessing in the world. Amen.

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This small group guide is designed to be used in conjunction with reading the book *Renew Your Life: Discovering the wellspring of God's energy* by Kai Mark Nilsen (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, ©2015). Most questions in this guide come from the book and are transcribed here for the convenience of small group discussion. This guide has been developed with permission from the author.

### **Opening Questions** (10-15 minutes)

*Introduce yourself and share your responses to one or more of these questions:*

- What is something you enjoy about the winter season, even though Minnesota winters can be tough?
- What is about the *Renew Your Life* theme or this small group experience that prompted you to step in?

### **Our Group Covenant** (5 minutes)

### **Group Prayer Practice** (5-10 minutes)

*Spend a few minutes in quiet as a group. With a calm, meditative voice, the leader will use these instructions to guide the group in this practice:*

- Sit in a way where you feel held by your chair as God holds you in life. Close your eyes, if that is helpful.
- Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Focus on your breath as it slows.
- If there are thoughts or responsibilities that are distracting you, set them aside or release them for this time. Focus on simply being present in this moment. After some silence, I will give you some prompts for reflection in the continuing quiet.

*Allow for a minute or two of quiet before continuing:*

- As you think about the past day or week, what did you experience that was life-giving? *Pause for time to reflect.*
- As you think about the past day or week, what has been energy depleting for you? *Pause for time to reflect.*

- Now, imagine yourself being held in the expansive energies of God’s love.

*Take a little more time to breathe deeply of God’s presence and peace and conclude by saying Amen.*

### Scripture Text

(2-3 minutes)

*Ephesians 2:8-10 (NRSV)*

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

### Reading Recap

(2-3 minutes)

In *Renew Your Life*, we follow Pastor Kai in his journey to restore the energy he once had but had lost along the way, an energy he desperately needed to revitalize his ministry and refresh his relationships. Several cultural challenges deplete energy for all of us: the pace of life, our quick fix mentality, the seduction of more, and comparison fatigue. But, through this journey, Pastor Kai discovered and shares seven renewable sources of energy that are embedded in the creation story of Genesis 1 & 2: grace, possibility, paradox, natural world, relationships, fruitful work, and rest. Perhaps the greatest energy and gift is grace.

### Essential Life Questions

(5 minutes)

*Read through the essential life questions. Pause for a few minutes of silent reflection on the questions. You may also write a few notes responding to the questions in the space below.*

- What is my image of God?
- How does my image of God affect the way I see the world, others and my own life?

### Questions for Discussion & Individual Reflection

(40 minutes)

*Start with these 3 questions, adding in other questions to supplement*

- What struck you about the opening stories? How do these stories connect with yours?
- What concepts in the chapters were life-giving for you to think about or integrate into your life?
- What concepts or stories were difficult or challenging for you to think about or integrate into your life?

### *The Renewable Energy of the Holy Spirit*

1. Which, if any, of the seven renewable, creative energies is most apparent in your life (pages 19-20)? How do you live out that energy? Which of the renewable, creative energies are you curious about or long for?
2. Where do you see evidence of the cultural distortions (pace of life, quick-fix mentality, seduction of more, comparison fatigue) in the world and in your life? What effect do they have on you?
3. Look at the “Is it possible” questions on page 31. In what area of your life is it easiest to acknowledge the Spirit’s presence? Where is it more difficult to acknowledge or imagine?

### *The Energy of Grace*

1. What pictures (if any) of God did you have in your mind when you were growing up? What phrases would you use to describe God today? What has caused you to re-examine your image of God?
2. If you were able to imagine a God of grace and love, how would that change how you see yourself, your life—imperfections and failures included?
3. When are you most likely to fall into “comparison fatigue”? What does that do to your sense of yourself or your life? Can you think about specific circumstances when you are more susceptible to the negative effects of comparisons?
4. Reflecting on Frank Laubach’s phrase: “They must see God in me,” how would you like others to see God’s presence in you and in your life? If you feel bold enough, ask a friend or family member to share how they see God’s presence in