

## Close to Home Study Guide

### Dealing with Alcoholism

#### 1. Opening (1 minute)\*

*Gracious, loving God, we often do not know how to pray or what to do. Sometimes we feel weighed down or even trapped, unable to see a way out of our problems. Yet, we know your love surrounds us always. Help us to believe. Set us free from all that binds us. Give us courage, strength and wisdom to understand your love, accept your grace and extend your love and grace to those around us. Amen.*

#### 2. Story-telling (7 minutes)

Summarize Paul's story. When did he begin drinking and why? How did it affect him and those around him? What was helpful to him in finding release?

Alternatively, if someone in the group has struggled with alcoholism and is willing to share, invite them to tell their story.

#### 3. Review of pamphlet (12 minutes)

- Look at the definition of alcoholism on page 4. What is the difference between alcohol abuse and alcoholism? What are some effects of excessive alcohol use?
- Discuss the factors which contribute to alcoholism. What would the group add or remove?
- Review the facts about alcoholism given on page 5 and under "Youth and alcohol" on page 6. If you have additional information from your community or region, share this as well. What is surprising or disturbing about these facts?
- Invite each person to review the list of signs of alcoholism on page 7 and note which stand out to them. Are there any which they question, or would like to research further? Acknowledge the fact that this might be a difficult thing to do, and anyone is free to leave if they need to. Arrange beforehand to have someone in the group ready to accompany anyone who leaves, in case they would like to talk further.

#### 4. Reading of Scripture text (12 minutes)

- Ask several people to read aloud "Alcohol, the Bible and the Christian Story" on pages 8-9. What stands out to the group? Are there any questions which arise?
- Highlight the paragraph near the top of page 9 about Jesus' ability to "bring liberty to the captives." This emphasizes the way in which Jesus' life, death and resurrection frees us from sin and its power over us. The resurrection especially demonstrates God's ability to bring life out of the most hopeless and desperate situations. How have people experienced Jesus bringing liberty to those held captive by sin? How does this apply to those struggling with alcoholism?
- Why is healing from alcohol (or other addictions) often a long process and not an instant cure? Underscore Paul's own experience here; even though a significant leader in Christianity, he struggled in an ongoing way with the power of sin in his life.

---

\*The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

- Note the last paragraph in this section, about the importance of having accurate information and people who will walk with you. Why is this important?
- Look at the last paragraph on page 3, especially the statement, “But I have found that the Christian life is not so much about rules as about being touched with God’s healing and forgiveness.” To what extent does the group agree or disagree? Why?

### 5. Steps toward healing (12 minutes)

- Provide information on local resources, therapists and support groups which assist in dealing with alcoholism.
- If someone in the group has had experience with alcoholism, either personally or with a loved one, invite them to share what has been most helpful and most unhelpful? What are some do’s and don’ts? What advice or suggestions do they have for others in a similar situation?
- Discuss the “Steps toward healing” on pages 10-11. Also point out the information about Alcoholics Anonymous on page 6. The twelve steps can be found at <http://www.aa.org/lang/en/catalog.cfm?origpage=198&product=4> in a pamphlet titled “This is A.A.—An Introduction to the A.A. Recovery Program.”
- Share information about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder from the MCC website, as well as information on local resources. If someone in the group has experience with FASD, encourage them to share their perspectives or expertise.
- Note the box at the bottom of page 9, about finding a way to intervene with someone who is struggling with alcohol. Stress the importance of seeking counsel and support on this journey.
- Pray together for all those struggling with alcoholism, as well as their family members and friends, that all would find release and healing.

### 6. Closing (1 minute)

Read the version of the Lord’s Prayer given in *Hymnal Worship Book # 699* or read these words of assurance from Romans 8:1-2: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”



This study guide is written by Linda Gehman Peachey, Director for Women’s Advocacy in the Peace and Justice Ministries section of Mennonite Central Committee US. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from the Mennonite Publishing Network of the Mennonite Church (see [www.mpn.net/closetohome](http://www.mpn.net/closetohome)) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions ([www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome](http://www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome)).