

THE CLEANER DISCUSSION KIT

A guide for talking about addiction, recovery and hope in your church

CONTENTS

1. ABOUT *THE CLEANER*

2. THE DISCUSSION KIT

3. SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

a. Begin...

- i. Option 1: Icebreaker Questions
- ii. Option 2: Self Evaluation
- iii. Option 3: Creative Brainstorming Activity

b. On your own...

c. Discover...

- i. Learning Point 1: Take off the mask
- ii. Learning Point 2: Love with all you've got
- iii. Learning Point 3: Say it

d. Take action...

e. Optional closing activity

4. OTHER MINISTRY IDEAS

a. A Sermon Illustration on "Stumbling Blocks"

b. One-on-One Mentoring or Accountability

c. Minister to Addicts' Spouses

5. RESOURCES

ABOUT THE CLEANER

Each week, *The Cleaner* on A&E follows Benjamin Bratt as William Banks, a recovering addict who helps others get clean by any means necessary as he struggles with his own personal life. With every success and every failure, William wrestles with his own demons through an unusual relationship with God. He's a man caught between an unwavering commitment to his work, deep love for his family, and the ghosts of his own addictions.

THE CLEANER DISCUSSION KIT

The Cleaner Discussion Kit was created by RELEVANT media for *The Cleaner* on A&E to help pastors develop meaningful worship services, group gatherings and classes utilizing themes and footage from *The Cleaner*. In addition to clips and discussion questions, the Kit also provides tips and all of the tools necessary for promoting any kind of event you are able to host.

A complete Discussion Kit includes:

- DVD with exclusive clips from the premiere episode of Season 2 of *The Cleaner* on A&E
 - Introduction
 - Crisis
 - Crack in the Façade
 - Bulletproof
 - Sacrifices
 - Confessions
- A flash drive containing digital promotional tools for church use including:
 - Introductory teaser clip
 - Customizable email template
 - Customizable flier and poster
- Discussion Guide for Small Group and other Ministry Ideas
- Recap survey for you to complete to let us know what you did and how you promoted it, how many people you reached and what influence you think the program had within your congregation.*
- Resources

**All eligible recap forms received will be entered into a contest for your church win a three-day, two-night trip for four to New York City in September to take part in the National Recovery Month Celebration, The Recovery Rally. Leaders of the winning church may designate their pastor, minister or congregants for the trip. For more information about the Recovery Rally go to www.therecoveryproject.com. For details about the contest and complete Official Rules, visit www.thecleanerdiscussionkit.com from 6/8/09 through 7/1/09. No purchase necessary.*

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TUESDAYS 10/9C
SEASON PREMIERE JUNE 23

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BE BROKEN

KEY TRUTH

Choose to live a powerfully authentic life rather than projecting the typical “my-life-is-perfect” Christian façade.

A small group
Bible study from
RELEVANT using
The Cleaner
on A&E

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OPTION 1: ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

Share your answers to these questions:

- What’s been the high point of your past week? Why?
- What’s been the low point of your past week? Why?

OPTION 2: SELF EVALUATION

Jot down your answers to these questions:

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “completely and utterly peaceful and relaxing” and 10 being “maximum stress or anxiety”), how stressful was your day today?

- Reflect over the past week, then rate the entire week using the same scale:

- How about the last six months? On the whole, how stressful or painful has your life been?

- Now evaluate how you feel right now. How much stress, anxiety or pain are you dealing with right now?

When everyone’s done writing your answers, talk about these questions:

- What are some of the causes of stress or anxiety in your life?
- On the other hand, what activities or experiences bring peace to your life?
- If you feel comfortable, share the degree of stress you’ve been experiencing the past week and the causes of that stress.

OPTION 3: CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY

For this activity, you'll need **pens** and **10 to 15 index cards** for every participant.

First, brainstorm some of the most common causes of stress, anxiety or pain in people's lives. Think about things you experience, stuff friends of yours may be going through, or other causes of stress and anxiety you know of. Write down each stressor on an index card, aiming to each create five cards.

As a group, spread out all the stressor cards you created on the floor and look at them, placing similar cards together.

Next, take a moment to individually reflect on the different ways people react to stressors like these. How do you most often respond to pain, anxiety or pressure? What about in the culture at large? What behaviors or activities do people often turn to when they're faced with stress or pain? Each person should write down 5 to 10 common reactions (each on their own index card). Feel free to include both positive and negative responses to anxiety or pain.

As you finish writing your second set of cards, place each new card by a stressor. For example, you might place "spending too much time at work" by "marriage problems" or you might put "overeating" by "financial difficulties." Work as a group to surround each stressor card with a few common responses to stress.

When you're done, step back and review what you've created together, then talk about these questions:

- Are there any other common causes of stress or pain in our culture that we didn't cover here? If so, what are they?
- Did we miss any other common reactions to stress and pain? If so, what are they?
- Which of these reactions to stress and pain do you think is most common in our culture? Why?

After your selected opener, continue by watching and discussing these clips:



Watch the “Intro” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E.

During this study, you’ll watch several clips from *The Cleaner* on A&E, a drama starring Benjamin Bratt as William Banks, a recovering addict who now uses unconventional and often radical means to assist others in breaking free from addiction and beginning the process of recovery.



In this episode, Michelle Durham asks William to help her husband, Davis, because she suspects he has begun using drugs again after decades of sobriety. In this scene, William reconnects with his old friend Davis, a TV news anchor, and discovers there’s more to the story than Michelle told him.

Watch the “Crisis” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then talk about these questions:

- Ever been there? Have you ever faced a moment when, like Davis, you felt as if your “whole world just got knocked off its axis”? Or have you ever known of someone facing this degree of pain, turmoil and stress? Share your reaction to this scene.
- This is more than just a minor cause of stress—this kind of news can be life-shattering. How do people most often react to this extreme level of pain and stress? Share examples.

Gather back together as a group and discuss these questions.

LEARNING POINT #1: TAKE OFF THE MASK

- Think about a specific time of stress and inner struggle in your own life. Did other people know what was really going on in your life at the time? Why or why not?



In order to see if his old friend Davis Durham is in fact using drugs and alcohol again, William has secretly taken a urine sample (from a broken toilet) and is having it tested. In this scene, William attends a support group with Davis in celebration of Davis' 21 years of sobriety.

Watch the “Crack in the Façade” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then talk about these questions:

- In this clip, Davis says all the right things to prop up the illusion that he's clean, masking his inner struggle with a public face of success. What do you think are the reasons that Davis has chosen to keep his struggle private and deceive others? Brainstorm several causes together.
- Read **1 John 1:8 and 10** together. Though few of us would ever verbally claim to be without sin, we can nonetheless present ourselves to the world in a way that says “my life is perfect.” Do you think it's deceitful to keep inner pain or struggles with sin completely private? Why or why not?
- What degree of “privacy” in regards to sin or pain is healthy and OK? On the flip-side, how can “privacy” be dangerous—even crippling—to a Christian? Share examples.

KEY IDEA

When we're struggling with hidden sin or deep pain, we need to have the guts to be real about it with others.

LEARNING POINT #2: LOVE WITH ALL YOU'VE GOT

- Think about a specific time of stress and inner struggle in your own life. Did other people know what was really going on in your life at the time? Why or why not?



Once William got confirmation that his friend Davis was using drugs and alcohol again, he and his team “kidnapped” Davis and brought him to a cabin for a time of intervention and detox. In this scene, Davis is high and his wife Michelle confronts him.

Watch the “Bulletproof” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then talk about these questions:

- Though Davis thinks he’s got it all together and sees himself as “bulletproof,” Michelle has the guts to say it like it is: “I love you, baby, but you’re all messed up.” Have you ever had to confront a friend or loved one about sin or a problem in their life? Or have you ever been on the receiving end of a loving confrontation? Without sharing confidential details, describe how that experience felt and what effect it had on you.
- Jesus said that one of the most distinguishing marks of His followers should be our radical love for one another (John 13:34-35). When friends are hurting as a result of emotional pain or a struggle with sin, God calls us to take action. Read the following passages, then share your reactions to each one:
 - God calls us to *confront* friends and loved ones about sin; read **Proverbs 27:5-6**.
 - God calls us to *comfort* our friends and loved ones who are hurting; read **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**.
 - God calls us to *sacrifice* our own needs and wants for our friends and loved ones; read **John 15:12-13**.

NOTE: See Matthew 18:15-17 to further explore God’s guidelines for how we should confront ongoing sin in the life of a Christian friend or loved one.



Watch the “Sacrifices” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then discuss these questions:

- What’s your gut reaction to Michelle’s decision not to take painkillers? Do you think you’d make the same choice if you were in her place? Why or why not?
- What about less extreme situations such as those you face in your everyday life with friends and family? What things might God call you to sacrifice in order to love someone who is hurting or struggling with sin? Brainstorm several ideas together.

NOTE: See Romans 14:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 8:4-13, 10:23-33 for a more in-depth discussion on how we can avoid putting “stumbling blocks” in the way of others by our lifestyle choices. The principles in these passages are especially important in how we relate to friends and loved ones with very serious struggles such as addictions. Ask yourself, “Am I willing to sacrifice some of my own lifestyle choices to help my loved one heal and live a whole and vibrant life?”

KEY IDEA

When people we care about are hurting or harboring secret sins, we must dare to love them radically.

LEARNING POINT #3: SAY IT.

Watch the “Confessions” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E. Discuss these questions after the clip:

- Why did William make Davis “say it” rather than just nod? Why do you think it is so important for addicts to come clean verbally?
- Read another confession: **Psalm 51**, David’s prayer of repentance after committing adultery with Bathsheba and arranging to have her husband killed. What stands out to you most from David’s prayer? Why?
- James teaches that it’s not enough to just confess to God; he urges believers to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other” (James 5:16). Why is it important for Christians to come clean *with each other* about their struggles?
- What effect does *not* confessing sins and struggles to others have on a Christian’s life? On the other hand, what power can regularly practicing the discipline of confession have in a Christian’s life? When have you experienced this?

KEY IDEA

We must develop the courage to regularly confess our specific sins and our struggles to God and to Christian friends.

BE BROKEN.

Davis Durham's journey from addiction to recovery asks us many compelling questions. Do we turn to unhealthy behaviors or habits when we're faced with pain or stress, rather than turning to God? Do we live with a "perfect, successful life" façade in front of others, masking our real hurts and struggles? Do we love others in a way that acknowledges their hurt and brokenness—and are we willing to go to great lengths because of our love? And do we have the courage to take that freeing step and verbalizing the specifics of our own struggles to God and to others?

Ultimately, Davis' story challenges the very self we each project to the world. Do we see and know ourselves as we really are: broken, imperfect people who are wholly dependent upon God? And are we willing to show that authentic, broken self to the others in our lives?

Re-read **Psalm 51:16-17** in your Bible, then reflect on this modern-day paraphrase of it from *The Message*:

"Going through the motions doesn't please you,
a flawless performance is nothing to you.
I learned God-worship
when my pride was shattered.
Heart-shattered lives ready for love
don't for a moment escape God's notice."

- Why is brokenness such a meaningful offering to God? How does this passage challenge you personally?
- Read what Scripture says about living out our broken humanity before others in **2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-7**. What stands out to you most from this passage? Why?
- How can letting others see the cracks in our lives draw them to Jesus? When have you seen this truth in action?

Form pairs and find a spot in your meeting area where you can talk privately. Take some time to each share one area of need in your life, be it a private struggle with sin, an inner pain or something else. You don't need to share anything that's intensely private if you don't feel comfortable, but *do share something*. Then take some time to pray specifically for your partner, asking God to help you each live blessed, broken lives.

NOTE: If you are struggling with something serious and you don't feel comfortable sharing it in this setting, commit to talk to your pastor, small group leader or a Christian friend about it this week.

OPTIONAL CLOSING ACTIVITY

You'll need several **terracotta flower pots** and **black permanent markers**.

Close your time together with a prayerful act of commitment to live openly broken lives. Go outside and break the pots into several large pieces by banging them on the ground (or dropping them). Each group member should take a piece to symbolize your own brokenness. Use a marker to write a word or phrase on your piece of terracotta that best symbolizes how God has personally challenged you through this study. When you go home, put your broken piece of terracotta near your bed and use it to prompt your prayers throughout the week as you seek to live an authentic, open life.

THIS WEEK

Spend some time this week reading, contemplating and praying about these passages of Scripture:

- **Psalm 51:16-17**
- **2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-7**
- **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**
- **1 John 1:8-10**

Journal your thoughts, delve more deeply into their meaning using study tools and seek to integrate their truth into your life.

OTHER MINISTRY IDEAS

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In addition to using the small group session, consider using clips from *The Cleaner* in the following ways.

→ A SERMON ILLUSTRATION ON “STUMBLING BLOCKS”

Romans 14:12-21 and **1 Corinthians 8:4-13, 10:23-33** are key passages in Scripture that discuss the tension between our own freedom in Christ regarding lifestyle choices and the importance of living in such a way that does not cause a weaker Christian brother or sister to fall into sin. Within their cultural context, these passages deal specifically with laws about eating food: Should a first-century Christian who is no longer bound by “the Law” eat meat that does not line up with Old Testament dietary rules? Or is that Christian free to eat whatever he or she wants? And what if that person’s choice to eat that formerly forbidden meat causes another Christian to become confused or even to sin?

NOTE: You could also use the idea outlined here in an adult Sunday School class or a small group discussion.

In today’s culture, these passages provide principles for the lifestyle choices that present themselves to us daily. For example...

- Is it OK for a Christian to drink alcohol? What about how that might affect recovering alcoholics in the church?
- Is it OK for a Christian to smoke? What about the impact that might have on people struggling to overcome nicotine addiction?
- Is it OK for a Christian to go to R-rated movies with sex scenes in them? What if there are recovering porn addicts in the church—does that change matters?
- It can even go so far as the matter of food: Is it OK for a Christian to enjoy junk food? What about how that could hurt people struggling with serious weight problems?

Each of these examples reveals that constant tension in which we are called to live. In Christ’s grace, we’re not to live legalistically, but instead should freely make our lifestyle choices according to our own conscience, based on personal study of Scripture, and in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, though, our deep love for others and our desire to see them grow in faith should motivate us to consider others’ weaknesses in the choices we make. We should always be willing to sacrifice our own freedoms if our choices would hurt another.

In your sermon, show the following clips, explaining the premise of *The Cleaner* and what is going on in each clip.

First, explain that *The Cleaner* is about William Banks (played by Benjamin Bratt). He is a former addict who now makes it his life's purpose to help others break free from addiction and begin the process of recovery. In this episode, he has been contacted by Michelle. She is dying of cancer; the emotional shock of her illness has caused her husband Davis to begin using drugs and alcohol again. In this scene, Davis is high and has been “captured” by William (with Michelle’s permission).



Watch the “Bulletproof” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E. Next, explain that Michelle loves her husband so much she is willing to go to the extreme to help him overcome his struggle.



Watch the “Sacrifices” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E. Summarize the clip after you’ve shown it, emphasizing that this woman prefers to endure the intense physical pain of terminal cancer rather than take painkillers because she knows how dangerous it will be for her addict husband to see her taking prescription drugs.

Use these scenes to emphasize the underlying motivation that should drive each of us when we consider our lifestyle choices: love. When necessary, we should be willing to make significant sacrifices—like Michelle did—because we love others *that much*. Our desire to help others in their weaknesses should compel us to love as Christ did, sacrificing everything (John 15:12-13).

→ ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING OR ACCOUNTABILITY

If you're in a one-on-one mentoring or accountability relationship, consider using the following two clips to deepen your friendship and pave the way for deeper, more honest sharing.

1. Explain the premise of *The Cleaner* and let your friend know that at this point in the story, William is trying to determine if his old friend Davis is in fact using drugs again. William has secretly taken a urine sample (from a broken toilet) and is having it tested. In this scene, William attends a support group with Davis in celebration of Davis' twenty-one years of sobriety.



Watch the “Crack in the Façade” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then discuss Davis' false front of “success” that he is presenting to the group. What makes this even more poignant is that this is his *recovery group*; this is the one place he is supposed to be completely free and honest about his struggles. Further, he is also deceiving his sponsor (played by Whoopi Goldberg)—the one person he should be brutally open with.

Use this clip to talk about the importance of being raw and honest with each other in your mentoring or accountability relationship. When we give in to the temptation to always put on a “my-life-is-perfect” front, we render our accountability relationships completely powerless. Share ideas together about how you can help each other feel safe to be real and authentic about your struggles.

2. Share the background of this episode of *The Cleaner*, explaining that this scene toward the end reveals the first critical step of Davis' recovery.



Show the “Confessions” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then talk about the discipline of confession. What role can confession—honest sharing about sins and private struggles—play in your mentoring or accountability relationship? Talk about each of your experiences (or lack thereof) with confessing sins and struggles to another person. Read **James 5:16** and **1 John 1:8-10** together and talk about how you can help each other live out this principle during your times together.

→ MINISTER TO ADDICTS’ SPOUSES

Spouses of addicts often feel the pain of their loved one’s addiction more than anyone else. If your church has a ministry to addicts and recovering addicts, consider holding a separate small-group pastoral counseling session just for their spouses. Make it a time of honest sharing and community building, enabling the spouses to experience encouragement and support among others who’ve had similar experiences. (Or, if you prefer, meet one-on-one with a spouse of a recovering addict to talk together.)

During your time together, use the following clips to prompt meaningful discussion.

Explain the premise of *The Cleaner*, letting the group know that Michelle, who is dying of cancer, has contacted William to get help for her husband, Davis, who is addicted to amphetamines and alcohol.



Show the group the “Bulletproof” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then talk about what it’s like to see a loved one’s addiction even when he or she can’t see it. When have these spouses had to confront their loved one about their addiction? What is it like to deeply love someone who’s “all messed up”?

Explain that the next clip reveals the depth of Michelle's love for her husband, Davis: Though she is in intense pain because of her terminal cancer, she refuses to take pain medication because she doesn't want to worsen her husband's addiction.



Show the group the “Sacrifices” clip from *The Cleaner* on A&E, then invite the group to share what kinds of sacrifices—both big and small—they've had to make because of their loved one's addiction. Invite them to share honestly what it is like to live as an addict's wife or husband. What kind of suffering have they taken on in their own life because of the love they have for their spouse? What specific choices have they made to not enable further dependency in their spouse's life?

Let the conversation take its natural course, then at the end of your time together, spend some time praying specifically for the spouses, asking God to give them courage and strength as they continue to love their husband and wife through the recovery process.

RESOURCES

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A&E created “The Recovery Project” (TRP) as a multi-year campaign designed to generate widespread awareness that addiction is a treatable disease and recovery is possible. The campaign seeks to help erase the stigma of addiction.

Addiction is America’s number one chronic public health problem. More than 22 million Americans struggle with addiction to alcohol and other drugs, yet fewer than 10% percent receive the treatment they need because of stigma, lack of awareness or because it is not cost accessible. Their inability to get help yields an enormous and unnecessary cost: the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates the annual cost of drug and alcohol addiction at \$260 billion in lost productivity, healthcare costs and drug-related crime.

The Recovery Project is composed of various elements, including:

- » National partnerships with leading non-profits and government agencies
- » The largest Recovery Month Celebration, the Recovery Rally in New York City where thousands of participants join annually to form a symbolic “human bridge” of recovery on the Brooklyn Bridge
- » Sponsorship of 90+ community events nationwide throughout National Recovery Month in September
- » National PSA campaign produced and aired by A&E with celebrities including Whoopi Goldberg, Benjamin Bratt, Russell Simmons and MC Hammer
- » Recovery Delegate program that honors leaders in recovery from the 50 States and District of Columbia
- » Series of “Intervention” public town hall meetings across the country
- » A website that offers resources to leading organizations and ways to get involved in the recovery community

The Recovery Project was created in partnership with Partnership for a Drug-Free America, National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, Inc., Faces and Voices of Recovery and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US Dept. of HHS).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit www.therecoveryproject.com.