03

DIGGING DEEPER

If you're a visual learner, over the next seven days (or however long you take between meeting together) read these five sections and reflect on the questions at the end. If you're an auditory learner or would prefer to listen on your commute or while you work on a project, we've provided the audio for each day at ***trueface.org/crazymakingstudy.***

You can do them all at once, but we suggest breaking the five sections over multiple days to give yourself more processing time. This week we will be looking at some of the origins of our cycles.

If you aren't able to go through the five sections before your next meeting, **that's okay.** Don't let it stop you from connecting with your community.

Passage for the week:

Psalm 34:4–5 (NIV)

"*I sought the Lord, and he answered me;*
he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame."

SECTION 1

You can find the audio file of this section at **trueface.org/crazymakingstudy.**

The beginning of this cycle is an old story, both for humanity and for us individually. Collectively, the roots of this cycle began thousands of years ago when the enemy first whispered, "Did God really say that?" He planted a seed of doubt, and we wondered if God was holding out on us, if he was truly good and loving. This is the first lie, the foundation of most of our crazy-making cycles. We don't trust that God really wants our best, that he can sustain and guide us, so we turn to our own solutions. "You're missing something," the enemy told us. "If you could just eat that apple, then you'd finally be complete."

We can hear the echoes of that lie down every generation and every life.

"If I could just get that promotion, I'd finally feel good about myself." "If I could just lose the weight, I'd finally feel happy." "Once I get married, I'll finally feel loved." "If I can just keep everyone happy, I'll finally feel peace." It's the same formula now as it was in the garden. "If I can just _____, I'll finally _____."

It's not just that sentence, though. We have deep patterns and stories that have shaped our beliefs. These lies are woven throughout the stories of our lives. We construct narratives that place us as the cursed hero, the perpetual victim, the brave rebel, the nurturing caregiver, and more. We frame ourselves and our relationships in this narrative.

Let's say you have a narrative that you must always care for others, both because your identity is found in taking care of others and because you believe that you *must* fulfill your caregiver role in order to be loved. You will put this filter over all your relationships and believe that you must play that role. You may even feel distress and discomfort when we encounter a relationship where you *don't* need to play that role. Studies have shown that we often prefer the comfort of the narrative we've repeated to ourselves—even if it's painful and hurtful—over the discomfort of reconsidering how we've framed our reality.

Unless our narrative is grounded in what Jesus says is our true story, our cycle will continue to create pain and suffering in our lives. Getting in touch with the stories we tell ourselves—the stories that started that day in the garden—is the first step to allowing God to rewrite them.

It's very important to note that all of our narratives have truth in them and usually make perfect sense once someone gets to know our life story. We may have needed to play a specific role in our family in order to receive affection, attention, or love—or, to avoid pain, humiliation, and neglect. We may have been deeply hurt and harmed by people that should have protected us. We may have experienced environments where if we didn't rise to the top, we were disregarded. Examining the stories we tell ourselves in no way discounts our experiences and pain. Instead, being willing to question our narratives separates *what happened* from *who we are*.

Exploring Your Story

With great gentleness and curiosity, spend some time today considering your own narratives. What do you repeat to yourself? Some helpful clues are to look for times when you think, "I'm always . . . " or "They always . . . ". It can also be helpful to picture several of your most important relationships. Where are you in relation to them? Are you less than them, greater than them, or equal? Are you leading them, cowering from them, teaching them, outdoing them, healing them, or something else? Use the space on the following pages to process what's coming up for you.

Exploring Your Story



SECTION 2

You can find the audio file of this section at **trueface.org/crazymakingstudy.**

As we process our stories, it can be helpful to dig into how sin works in the first place. Understanding sin's intricacies can help us recognize triggers as they come up in our lives and allow Jesus to address sin before it turns into a cycle, whether we're the ones that sin or someone sins against us.

We have been designed with two natural and automatic alarm systems when it comes to sin. When we sin, the alarm bell that goes off is called guilt. Guilt tells us that we've done something wrong, and that something needs to be addressed. If we are sinned against, the alarm bell that goes off is called hurt. Hurt tells us that something has wounded us and needs our attention. We don't have to work at these responses; they're as natural as the sting you feel when you leave your hand over the fire too long.

The healthiest and wisest response to sin is to address it when those warning bells go off. Ideally, we wholeheartedly repent for how we've sinned, or we seek reconciliation and offer forgiveness for how we've been wounded. We address sin in the moment to stop its destructive path and experience the relational healing that Jesus's grace makes possible.

Unfortunately, as most of us know, this doesn't usually happen. Instead, we try to throw a pillow over the alarm bell and muffle its noise. We pretend that what we did wasn't so bad and shove our guilt away. Sometimes we pretend that what happened didn't really bother us and ignore the hurt calling for our attention. When we ignore these involuntary responses of guilt and hurt, we experience the inevitable effect of sin: shame, in all its various forms. This can look like blame, control, insecurity, arrogance, inadequacy, denial, withdrawal, avoidance, isolation, anger, and much more. Left untreated, guilt and hurt mutate into kindling for our crazy-making cycles.

Thankfully, Jesus has given us a way to address guilt and hurt before they mutate, but we have to take him up on the offer.



Reflection Questions

What stops you from acknowledging when you have done something wrong and are experiencing guilt? What are your main barriers to addressing this immediately?

What stops you from acknowledging when you have been hurt? What do you tell yourself to convince yourself you don't need to address your hurt?

Can you trace any lines from guilt or hurt to some of the inevitable effects (blame, control, insecurity, arrogance, inadequacy, denial, withdrawal, avoidance, isolation, anger, and more)? How does your guilt or hurt manifest in your life?



SECTION 3

You can find the audio file of this section at **trueface.org/crazymakingstudy.**

Nothing in us was designed or equipped to deal with sin. We can try to ignore it, cover it up, or willpower our way through, but at the end of the day we're really just moving it around to different corners or our hearts. We need help to deal with sin. We need a Savior.

God alone can deal with our sin and the shame that comes from it. When we sin, we are sinning against God, ourselves, and sometimes another person. He alone can restore us and heal us when we've gotten tangled up and wounded. We can try and try to get ourselves out, but we just get more stuck. If we let him, God can lovingly untangle us, set us back on our feet, and remind us of who we really are.

When we sin and feel that stab of guilt, this is the exact moment to turn to God. *He* is your resource for processing guilt and sin without it spiraling into shame. Jesus will put his arm around you, looking out at the sin that he knew you'd commit before you even did, making sure you know that he hasn't moved an inch. Then the two of you will work through it together, asking questions like, "What was happening?" "Where did that come from?" "How can you let my love, grace, and truth pour into the wound that sin came out of?" Let him remind you that even while you are looking at this sin together you are Christ-in-you, a beloved saint, a delighted-in child. Allow the experience of his forgiveness to wash over your soul.

After you and Jesus have processed this together, you need to go to whomever else was involved in your sin, and you need to apologize. Because you have experienced the forgiveness of Jesus, you have greater freedom to own the effects of your sin on the other person. You don't need to be defensive or minimize what happened. You can fully enter in, seeking their forgiveness.

On the other side, if you feel that sting of hurt, this is also the exact moment to turn to God. He alone can fully experience your pain with you and can see the whole story of what happened. Bring this hurt to him, trusting that he can handle it. If you hold on to your hurt and make yourself judge and jury of the other person, it will eventually morph into shame and other ugly outcomes. Trust that Jesus will ensure perfect justice, because he loves unendingly both you and the person who hurt you. Between you and Jesus, forgive the other person, releasing them and the situation into Jesus's care.

When the other person is ready to acknowledge how they hurt you, you can freely offer them forgiveness. You no longer need them to prove how much they mean it or do penance, nor do you need to pretend it didn't hurt you or bother you. You have experienced healing with Jesus, and now you get to extend that healing and freedom to the other person.

You do not have to be stuck with guilt and hurt. Do not allow them to fester, adding fuel to your crazy-making cycles. Bring your guilt and hurt to Jesus, allowing him to offer you healing and restoration *now*.

Reflection Questions

What is it like to look at your sin with Jesus's arm around you? Does it feel strange, comforting, awkward, or something else?

When you imagine trusting your hurt to Jesus's care, what emotions do you feel? What thoughts go through your mind?

SECTION 4

You can find the audio file of this section at **trueface.org/crazymakingstudy.**

Our unhealthy thoughts and the shame they are laced with are like rocket fuel for our crazy-making cycles. Being able to replace these false stories with what God says is true about us is a powerful practice. It can be an incredibly helpful tool when we find ourselves in the middle of a cycle.

On the following page are some common unhealthy self-thoughts and a few places in scripture that counter those lies. Choose a few that you connect with and look up the verses, or add verses of your own. Write out the truth about who you are in Christ. For example:

I am enough. "You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." Psalm 139:13–14.

If there are any shame lies that aren't on this list, write them at the bottom and spend some time looking up scripture that reminds you of what Jesus says is true.

Unhealthy self-thought	Scripture	What is true about me
I am not enough.	Psalm 139:13–14 2 Corinthians 3:5	
I am not loved.	1 John 3:1 1 Thessalonians 1:4	
I am a failure.	Ephesians 1:3 John 16:33	
I have to take care of myself.	Matthew 6:25–34 Psalm 139:7–12	
I'm useless.	Ephesians 2:10	
I'll never be free of this.	Galatians 5:1	
I'm alone.	Hebrews 13:5	
I have to hide.	1 Peter 2:9	

Unhealthy self-thought	Scripture	What is true about me
God doesn't want my best.	Romans 8:28	
God is disgusted with me.	Zephaniah 3:17	
I am fundamentally messed up.	2 Timothy 1:7	



SECTION 5

You can find the audio file of this section at **trueface.org/crazymakingstudy.**

Each of us carries around a story about who we are, why we're that way, and how it fits into the larger world. This is the backdrop to the crazy-making cycles we've been unpacking in this study.

We naturally create these stories based on our experiences and the narratives of people around us, especially at critical moments in our lives. Unfortunately, because of the brokenness of our world, we often are telling a story about ourselves, others, and the world that has been warped by sin and shame. We have to play certain roles or wear certain masks in order to receive love, security, and purpose. Sadly, many of the places that should have protected us against these lies are the very ones that enforced them the most: our families, friendships, romantic partners, churches, and more. In particular, the ways our faith communities may have sent warped messages is deeply damaging, because it ties up what God and humans think into a knot that's hard to untangle.

That isn't God's story for us. He has loved us from the beginning, watching our first steps to our recent stumbles. He created us for beauty, for purpose, for sacrifice, and for joy. He created us for deep, meaningful relationships and genuine, heartfelt service. He created us for love.

Today, we want you to spend some time on an exercise that might feel foreign at first. Spend time allowing God to rewrite your story. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you and tell you God's story of who you are. It may be helpful to revisit pages 79-81 where you processed earlier what your false narrative is, and then ask God to rewrite it for you.

God's Story For Me

God's Story For Me