



04.LIVING UNFILTERED

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

GOAL:

The goal of this lesson is twofold:

1. *This small group lesson is designed to help you and your students go deeper into what it looks like to live with no filters.* Students will explore the dangers of living filtered lives through the stories of con artists. They will also discover the truth that combats many of the filters they're tempted toward. Once we discover the freedom of unfiltered life that God offers, we'll want to invite others to stop hiding behind their filters, too.
2. *It is also designed to make it easy for you to facilitate and teach students that seeing clearly leads to living a life free of filters.* That is why the Small Group Leader Guide is packed with easy-to-use instructions, timeframes, and questions that promote thinking and draw out real responses.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- A copy of the Small Group Leader Guide for you and any other facilitators.
- A Student Book for each participant.
- Be sure to check out the Live It Out section ahead of time to prepare. You'll need:
 - a big mirror (for a very large group, use multiple mirrors)
 - dry-erase markers
 - paper towels

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Don't forget to take a minute and watch the teacher prep video found in your DNow Studies account. It's a short video that will take you through some of the need-to-knows before you dive into this lesson with students.

WHAT'S INCLUDED: Small Group Leader Guide or Student Book

This table outlines the parts of each lesson and provides an approximate timeframe that you can adapt to meet the needs of your group.

Lesson Elements (and brief description)	Included in Small Group Leader Guide	Included in Student Book	Approximate Timeframe
LARGE GROUP TALK REVIEW W/OPENING QUESTIONS Recap the teaching. Get discussion going by sharing answers from the end of the Large Group Talk.	✓	✓	3–5 minutes
A SECOND LOOK A look at living unfiltered in current, everyday life—followed by discussion questions.	✓	✓	10–15 minutes
A LITTLE DEEPER Dig into Bible passages that were not in the Large Group Talk. See what else Scripture says about this topic.	✓	✓	10–15 minutes
LIVE IT OUT An experiential activity to help students reinforce and internalize the lesson—followed by discussion questions.	✓		15–20 minutes
APPLY IT A practical application for students to do this week.	✓	✓	2–3 minutes
STUDENT DEVOTIONAL A short devotional for students to do on their own.		✓	

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SMALL GROUP SESSION FOUR: LIVING UNFILTERED

LARGE GROUP TALK REVIEW

Take a minute to review what students just learned in the Large Group Talk. Have them pull out their notes, and ask them to share what their answers were for the two questions found on **page 28** of the Student Book (see below). Consider having students share their answers with a partner, and then ask for two or three volunteers who might want to share with the whole group.

Question 1: Which character in the Luke 7 passage do you most closely relate to and why?

Question 2: In what situations do you find yourself filtering your behaviors the most, and why (e.g., at school, at home, at youth group, at church)?

A SECOND LOOK

*Read this story together and answer the following questions, found on **page 30** of the Student Book.*

You don't have to look far to find stories of con artists. There's something oddly fascinating about people who pretend to be something they're not. In fact, real-life stories about con artists are turned into award-winning movies and TV shows, like *Catch Me If You Can*, the story of Frank Abagnale, Jr. who posed as a commercial airline pilot, doctor, and lawyer between the ages of 15 and 21.¹ Or the story of "The SoHo Grifter" Anna Sorokin (aka fake heiress Anna Delvey) who scammed luxury hotels, exclusive restaurants, and the New York City social elite out of a quarter-million dollars.² Maybe we're drawn to the idea that you could actually get away with pulling a huge con and live the high life, even if just for a little while. More likely, it's the relief that comes from knowing that even people who look really confident and successful probably struggle with imposter syndrome³ just like us! We're told by the world to put our best foot forward and fake it until we make it, and if we're honest, aren't we all pulling our own mini "cons" on a daily basis with social media and by filtering or changing our behavior depending on who's watching?

Discuss:

- Each famous con artist mentioned above ended up serving jail time. What other outcomes does living a filtered life bring?
- When in your life have you "bent the truth" and pretended to be someone you really weren't?
- What are practical steps you can take this week to practice living an unfiltered life?

A LITTLE DEEPER

We've explored what not to do (live a filtered life focused on self) and what to do (live an unfiltered life focused on Christ's grace) based on the story in Luke 7. And once we live unfiltered lives, trusting in Jesus' ability to forgive us, we will be able to invite others to live the same as we do. Now let's dig a little deeper into what that life actually looks like.

Read each Bible passage and answer the questions, found in the Student Book on pages 31 and 32:

MATTHEW 6:1

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

Background Note: This verse is from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), a collection of his most basic teachings. Our heart motivations can be tricky, and it may be hard to discern if your goal is to please God or others. If you're not sure, ask the Lord for clarity and discernment as you think about it. Praying out loud in a group of people, lifting hands in worship, and serving every Sunday at church are all wonderful things—just make sure you're aiming for a reward from God, not others!

Discuss:

- When are you tempted to “practice your righteousness” in front of others?
- How can you guard against living for the approval of others around you?
- What do you think Jesus meant by having no reward from God the Father?

JOHN 15:4–5

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Background Note: We are literally helpless without Christ when it comes to bearing spiritual fruit. We cannot possess the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22–25) without being intentional in abiding in him! If we aren't consistent in seeking God through Scripture, prayer, and service, we will become more and more shriveled spiritually as we disconnect from the True Vine.

Discuss:

- Why do you think Jesus compares our relationship with him to a vine and branches?
- What does “abide” mean? If you're not sure, feel free to look up the definition on your phone.
- What does abiding in Christ practically look like?
- What fruit is Jesus talking about?

1 PETER 2:9

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Background Note: God could easily proclaim himself to the whole world without our help—but he chooses to use us in his work! We have been transformed, following God out of the darkness of sin and into the light. We now belong to God, and as his chosen people, we have the privilege and duty of proclaiming God's “excellencies” to those around us.

Discuss:

- If you are a child of God, what does it mean to you that God himself chose you?
- According to this verse, what is our role as the chosen people of God?
- What is a practical way you can proclaim how great God is to someone this week?

LIVE IT OUT: Erasing Our Filters

What you'll need: a big mirror (for a very large group, use multiple mirrors), dry-erase markers, paper towels

Say Something Like: In order to visualize what happens when we choose to wear filters on our lives, we're going to exercise our artistic skills. Hopefully by the end, you will understand why living with filters on blocks people's view of our true selves and of Christ. We must aim to live unfiltered lives as we abide in Christ and produce spiritual fruit. That way we can better reflect God's goodness, glory, and love to the world around us!

Part 1—Drawing Filters:

- Give students 3–5 minutes to add “filters” to the mirror using the dry-erase markers. **Say something like:** Write or draw something over your reflection in the mirror that represents some of the filters that you wear to hide your true self. This could be a literal phrase (e.g., good student) or symbolic picture (e.g., school books). It doesn't have to be perfect—or even good. Don't worry about trying to impress any of us with your skills (or lack thereof).
- When the students have finished, have everyone step back together and try to see the entire group's reflection in the mirror.
- **Say something like:** What we've drawn is a representation of how we're tempted to hide our true selves from the world—this is our filtered life! When we choose to live filtered lives, we cover up parts of ourselves that we don't like or think that others won't like. When we do that, the people around us can't see us well, and more importantly, can't see Christ through us! Living filtered lives feels like we're protecting ourselves, but we're really missing the opportunity to be Christ's image-bearers. It's really hard to get a clear picture of God's church when we're all wearing our filters.

Part 2—Erasing Filters:

- Go through each “filter” as a group, asking students:
 - If/when have you used this filter?
 - How can you combat this filter with God's truth?
- As you combat each filter with God's truth, wipe that filter away with paper towel. Repeat until all filters have been removed.
- **Say something like:** As we remove our individual filters, the real image of Christ's Church will start to emerge. God wants us to practice living without these filters and show others that we're not perfect, but that God loves us anyway! When we start taking away the filters and letting our true selves shine through, others will begin to see the image of Christ in us, individually and as a community, by the spiritual fruit we produce and his goodness to us.

Debrief:

- How did you feel as you were drawing your filters on the mirror? Do you feel the same way in real life (that you may be filtering parts of your life to hide or look better to others)?
- How does knowing that filters are able to be removed encourage you?
- What is a way God might be encouraging you to show Christ to others this week by how you live?
- What do you expect the benefits to be of living an unfiltered life?

APPLY IT

Identify one situation or group where you may need to live a bit more unfiltered when it comes to being an image-bearer of Christ. What might you need to stop hiding in order to better reflect Christ's image to the world?

Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

Leader's Note: Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, "I'm going to trust God more." The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, "Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust." Challenge your students to answer the questions under the "Be Specific" section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This is the last Small Group session you have with these students! Take some time to close out your session together by praying for them and letting them know what's next. Depending on how connected (or unconnected) these students are to your church, you may want to invite them to come to a youth group night or another youth event. This is also a great opportunity to hand out the Follow Up Journals if your group purchased them.

Schedule: Let students know what's happening next in the schedule and what they need to do or bring with them.

Student Devotional: The Student Book contains a short devotional for students to do on their own. Remember to point this out to students and let them know if and when this fits into the schedule of the weekend. The devotional that corresponds with this lesson is found on **page 41**.

¹ Frank Abagnale," *En.Wikipedia.Org*, accessed September 1, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Abagnale.

² "Con Artist Who Passed Herself Off As Wealthy Heiress Sentenced To 4 To 12 Years In Prison," *Cbsnews.com*, May 10, 2019, accessed September 1, 2019. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/anna-sorokin-fake-heiress-anna-delvey-sentenced-four-to-12-years-prison/>.

³ Caroline Bologna, "Here's Why You're So Obsessed With Scammers," *Huffpost.com*, April 5, 2019, accessed September 1, 2019. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obsession-with-scammers_L5c914672e4b07e05729f2cbb.