

A CELEBRATE RECOVERY® RESOURCE

JOHN BAKER
JOHNNY BAKER
WITH RICK LAWRENCE

theLanding™

CelebrateRecovery® for Students

LEADER GUIDE 1



Pastor John Baker is the founder of Celebrate Recovery®, a ministry born out of the heart of Saddleback Church in 1991. Since then more than 11,000 individuals have gone through this Christ-centered recovery program at Saddleback. The Celebrate Recovery® program is now used in thousands of churches worldwide. Over 700,000 people have completed the program.

John is a nationally known speaker and trainer who helps churches start Celebrate Recovery® ministries. In addition to writing the ***Celebrate Recovery Curriculum***, he's the general editor of the ***Celebrate Recovery Bible***. John's most recent book is ***Life's Healing Choices***. Since the beginning of Celebrate Recovery®, Pastor John has attempted to reach out to children in hurting homes. He's the co-author of ***Celebration Station™***, Celebrate Recovery®'s program for children, and now the co-author of ***The Landing™***. He's very excited about teenagers having a curriculum of their own.

John and his wife, Cheryl, have been married four decades and have served together in Celebrate Recovery® since 1991. They have two adult children, Laura and Johnny. Laura and Brian were recently married, and Johnny and his wife, Jeni, are the proud parents of John and Cheryl's three grandchildren, Maggie, Chloe, and Jimmy.

Johnny Baker has been on staff at Celebrate Recovery® since 2004 and has been the director of Celebrate Recovery® at Saddleback Church since 2007. As an adult child of an alcoholic who chose to become an alcoholic himself, Johnny is passionate about breaking the cycle of dysfunction in his family and helping other families find the tools that lead to healing and openness. Not only has he seen Celebrate Recovery® work in the lives of his parents and countless others, he has seen it work in his own life as well. He knows that because of Jesus Christ, and by continuing to stay active in Celebrate Recovery®, his children—Maggie, Chloe, and Jimmy—will never see him drink. Johnny is a nationally recognized speaker and teacher of Celebrate Recovery®, a co-author of ***Celebration Station***, and an associate editor of the ***Celebrate Recovery Bible***.

Rick Lawrence has been editor of GROUP Magazine for over 20 years. GROUP is the world's most widely read resource for Christian youth leaders. In his role as "Youth Ministry Champion" at Group Publishing, he leads the organization's expeditionary efforts to challenge, encourage, and equip youth pastors.

Rick has authored hundreds of magazine articles and is the author, co-author, or editor of 31 books including ***Youth Ministry in the 21st Century***, ***Jesus-Centered Youth Ministry***, ***In Pursuit of Jesus***, and ***Ten Tough Things***—all published by Group Publishing. He's a consultant to national research organizations and a frequent conference and workshop speaker.

He's married to Beverly Rose and has a 12-year-old daughter named Lucy Rose and a 7-year-old daughter named Emma Grace.

I'd like to dedicate The Landing to my wife Cheryl—without her dedication and perseverance, this project would never have happened. And to the thousands and thousands of kids who hope to find the answer to their hurts before they become hang-ups and habits.

- John Baker

I would like to dedicate The Landing to my wife Jeni, and our three kids, Maggie, Chloe, and Jimmy. I'd also like to thank Eddie, Doug, Ted, Habib, and many others who were there for me as youth workers. Your investments of time, love, and listening were instrumental in giving me a strong base of faith. Thanks for teaching me about Jesus both in your example and by your words.

- Johnny Baker

To my dear, dear daughters Lucy Rose and Emma Grace—I already see the healing love of Jesus “covering the multitude of sins” that you’ve had to bear in your lives, and your passion for giving grace to others inspires and challenges me.

- Rick Lawrence

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a grand adventure—an exciting and surprising and life-changing journey, in partnership with God. The Landing is a unique experience in at least a couple of ways.

First, it's structured as an ongoing 52-week program—based on the beatitudes where Jesus laid out principles for happiness in the sermon on the mount—for teenagers who are struggling to live their lives in a healthy, God-honoring way. Maybe they come from a dysfunctional home or have faced crises in their life. Maybe they simply need help developing patterns of wise choices, or they wrestle with an addiction of some kind. Whatever their life story, they know they need something more than a typical Sunday school class or youth group meeting. Or maybe they don't know this, but the people who love them do. The Landing is a safe, healing place where teenagers can live a freer, healthier, and more God-centered life.

Second, The Landing is not a lecture-style resource. It's designed to get teenagers talking about and exploring new ways of thinking and doing. They won't just be listening to someone speak—instead, they'll be talking to each other and to your leaders in a fully engaging environment that includes simple experiences that will help them “own” what they're learning. In most classes or small group studies, the leader controls pretty much everything about the direction of the lesson, and the

teenagers just follow along. With The Landing, the leader provides strong leadership and overarching direction, and encourages the students to participate and engage in the discussion. This style of teaching helps everyone feel the satisfaction of playing a key role in the journey.

We believe that true transformation comes when you get closer to Jesus. We feel so strongly about this, we're going to write that sentence again:

We believe that true transformation comes when you get closer to Jesus.

The aim of The Landing is to help hurting teenagers get closer to Jesus as they learn key principles during a journey toward a better life—to move their focus on Jesus from the fringes of daily life to the bull's-eye of everyday life.

Finally, we want to remind you that you're about to partner with God to change the life trajectory of the people who participate in The Landing. This really will happen. People will get closer to Jesus, and they will learn about their hurts, hang-ups, and habits that have derailed them. And many of them will be changed by this experience forever. Thanks for having the courage and the determination to be a part of the nuclear moments that are about to take place. Along with the participants in the study, you'll not only end up worshiping Jesus at a deeper level, you'll also give people a pathway to freedom in their lives.

BOOT CAMP FOR LEADING THE LANDING

This yearlong experience probably differs from most studies you've led. Even if that's not the case, we've learned some vital insights over the years for leading study times that involve a lot of interactions, debriefing, and feedback. Instead of a lecture or fill-in-the-blank style—strategies that have questionable long-term impact on teenagers—we use music, video, high-octane discussions, and experiences to get at the core truths we're learning. This is a really fun, amazing way to lead people into deeper learning.

Let's explore what makes this series different and what you can expect as the leader.

THE LEADER'S ROLE

In a typical small group or youth group study, a leader talks almost the entire time. Sometimes, a couple of discussion questions get tossed out, but they're often a side dish to the real meat of the study.

In *The Landing*, the leader talks, but the participants talk, too. A lot. If you're leading this series, you'll feel more like a ringmaster than a lecturer. You'll offer strong leadership in a context where many people participate and add to the content of the study.

Allow us to explain why that's such a great thing. First, research shows that teenagers learn best by doing. In fact, the people who learn the most in any class are

the teachers—because they first need to ingest what they're teaching before they teach it. So what happens when teenagers get immersed in experiences and talk to each other (and you) about what they're learning while they're learning it? Well, real learning takes place.

If you're a curious person who likes good conversation and who knows how to ask follow-up questions, you'll thrive in this learning environment. If you don't think you have any of these qualities, don't worry. We've crafted instructions for these sessions in a way that allows anyone to lead them. You simply need to see your role as a strong leader who has a lot to offer, but who wants to hear the experiences and opinions of others as well.

Of course, the most important aspect of leading this study is to let it transform you first. If you've experienced Celebrate Recovery® firsthand—this content is based on that dynamic resource—you know the life-changing power that this material has. If you haven't been through Celebrate Recovery®, allow this material to transform you as you prepare to teach it to students. As you prepare to lead, you need to pursue the questions and insights first. In essence, that's what being a leader means—going first. Preparation, prayer, and planning are essential. In these lessons, the leader provides important insights. Right now, these insights are all in our voice. You could say them verbatim, just as we've written them for you. But of course, you can filter everything through who you are. You do want to make sure to understand and own these insights—by the time you lead each lesson, you'll

have explored it for yourself first and let it impact you. Throughout the lessons, we've placed the words you need to say in bold preceded by the words SAY or ASK. This allows them to stand out, and you can easily scan for what you need to say.

One more important role for you, the leader, is to help teenagers celebrate and enjoy the changes God is making in their lives as they progress through this material. The subject matter can feel heavy at times so you'll need to create an environment that allows students to feel safe, and at the same time celebrate the better choices they will be making and the victory they are finding in Jesus.

There are a few key things you can do to make the group safe for everyone. As you prepare for your lessons, ask God to point out anything you can share from your experience. Students will gain so much from your willingness to be open and honest. In fact, you may find that in order to get the discussion started you may want to share first. We've included some guidelines, which will be discussed later in the section titled Group Guidelines, that will help you and your students in answering the small group questions.

Next, as this is an ongoing 52-week program that does not close or require sign-ups, you may have some students that begin attending after you've already completed several of the lessons. It is important that these students feel safe and included here in The

Landing as well. You may want to designate some leaders or more mature students to come alongside the newcomers to help them along. In addition, you may decide to modify some of the questions to suit a younger audience, such as junior high students.

THE STUDENT JOURNAL

Each student in your class will need a Student Journal. These Student Journals are an integral part of the experience for your teenagers. The journals have material in them that complements the lessons they're going through without duplicating content. It's reading that will really help teenagers consider, process, and deepen what they're learning. Each Student Journal segment ends with a series of questions that are tied to the questions they discussed in their small groups. The journals also serve as a notebook for each participant. We've included lots of room for taking notes; keeping meaningful reminders, quotes, or Scripture references from the lessons; writing personal insights; and answering questions. Encourage participants to use the journals regularly.

These journals are intended for your students' eyes only. They should be encouraged to keep these journals in a safe place. Knowing that neither you, nor anyone else, will be reading these journals will allow the students to freely express themselves and write things they may not yet feel comfortable sharing in a group setting. Working through a journal yourself will help you better understand what your teenagers may be feeling throughout this journey.

MILESTONE MARKERS

We have provided key tags as a way to celebrate each teenager's journey through this program. These key tags are designed to celebrate significant milestones in your teenagers' participation in The Landing—Day 1, Week 2, Month 1, Month 2, Month 3, Month 6, Month 9, and Year 1. All of these tags are available at group.com or simplyyouthministry.com.

These key tags are a great visual reminder for your students to celebrate the journey and to keep focused on the changes they are making. After Closing Time, right before Connect Time, while they are still gathered together, distribute the key chains by asking the students, "Who is here for the first time?" Then proceed through the rest of the marker lengths.

WORSHIP TIME

Nearly every lesson features a Worship Time near the start of your gathering. Usually there's an activity or a conversation that precedes a time of singing some favorite worship songs or listening to songs on a CD or from your MP3 player. If you have a worship band comprised of teenagers this can be an opportunity for them to participate and lead. Or you may have a leader who plays an instrument who could lead during this time.

Sometimes we suggest playing soft and unobtrusive instrumental music as a background during discussion or experience times as well.

VIDEOS

Included in your kit are 4 DVDs (corresponding with each Leader Guide) with video clips for one of the two lessons under every topic. The instructions are easy to follow, and the video clip always precedes your small group time, which features discussion of the clip.

Be sure to preview, cue up the clips, set the volume, and test your electronics before people arrive for the session. If you're fiddling with equipment while people arrive, you basically greet them with your backside. At best, this means you're distracted as you talk with them.

EXPERIENCES

Many of the sessions in this series include experiences that participants will do and you'll then "debrief." By "experiences," we mean activities that encourage everyone to participate. These might be fun, meditative, or mildly uncomfortable. But the goal is to lead people into activities where they feel fully engaged.

"Debriefing" is just another way of saying that you will artfully engage participants with good initial questions about the experience, followed by good follow-up questions. You help the people in your group build bridges from unforgettable experiences to unforgettable truths. When you succeed, you can truly say two things: You've "taught," and the participants have "learned."

These experiences aren't just fringe illustrations or funky gimmicks. Research shows that students learn

more deeply through direct experiences than any other teaching approach. You might be tempted to think lightly of these experiences, or diminish them, or cut them out if you're pressed for time. **But resist that temptation!** We know not just from research but from personal experience teaching this way, that good experiences—debriefed well by a leader—hold unmatched power to capture and change people.

We urge you to pay close attention to the details of these experiences so you can easily give instructions to participants. Preparation and planning are essential. We provide clear and specific direction on how to set up, lead, and debrief these experiences. A leader can ruin a great experience by leaving out a crucial principle, giving fuzzy directions, or not grasping the makeup of the experience itself. Even more, you'll torpedo a powerful experience if you "hedge your bets" by apologizing for or diminishing an experience in your setup for it. If you doubt that people will get much out of the experience, suspend your disbelief and just decide to believe people will do what you ask them to do. We can tell you, they will. And they'll remember the experiences years from now. However, do not be discouraged if a student chooses to not participate at first in these experiences. Your confidence that a student will eventually participate in a safe environment is crucial.

We'll talk a little more about what to cut and not cut from each session if, for some reason, time is tight. But our general rule of thumb is never cut an experience.

Instead, cut down on what you say. As much as we want to just tell people what we think they should know, a good experience will teach people a lesson they'll never forget. Keep in mind that the experiences in this journey aren't just "illustrations" or "object lessons"—they're the very meat of the study. So, more than any other aspect of this series, make sure you understand and are ready to lead the experiences.

SUPPLIES

Because the lessons contain hands-on, interactive experiences, you'll need to gather supplies before each week's meeting. Don't wait until the last minute to look at the list of items you'll need—preparation and planning are essential. We've done our best to recommend items that can be found in a typical youth room or church facility. Encourage other leaders to pitch in and help bring or acquire supplies, especially if you don't have a budget for these supplies. Whenever possible, don't buy—just bring or borrow. If you have a particularly large group of teenagers going through The Landing, you may want to pick and choose which experiences you do with everyone and perhaps leave a couple of experiences as demonstrations with a few volunteers.

In some cases, we've offered suggestions on alternative supplies for activities. These recommendations can help you save money or time in gathering supplies. Throughout this curriculum, you're welcome to substitute supplies that reduce expenses or time but continue to give teenagers a hands-on, interactive learning experience.

Here are a few notes on frequently needed supplies:

- » **Paper:** Keep a lot of this handy. We ask students to write their thoughts or answer questions a lot. Teenagers can use their copies of the Student Journal, but for the ones who don't have or forget to bring their copies, keep a healthy supply of paper.
- » **3X5 cards:** You'll use these a LOT! We encourage you to purchase them in large quantities before starting The Landing.
- » **Pens and pencils:** Your teenagers will do a lot of writing, and we generally assume that most young people don't carry pens and pencils with them to church or small group gatherings. Keep this supply well stocked.
- » **TV/DVD player:** As mentioned earlier, this kit includes a DVD with a video clip for one of the two lessons under every topic. If you have a projector system in your meeting room, go ahead and use it—don't feel constrained to use a TV.
- » **Bibles:** In many of the lessons you'll be asking for students to read verses from the Bible. While some of your students may bring their own Bibles with them, and you may want to encourage them to do so, it's a good idea to have a few extra Bibles on hand. You don't have to buy any special Bible for this, just bring any Bibles you have and ask the other adult leaders to do the same. We've used a variety of Bible translations in this curriculum, but you'll see that the New International Version is most prevalent. If your youth ministry or congregation has a preferred translation, you're welcome to use it throughout your lessons.

- » We've included a CD-ROM in this kit. It's full of handouts that you can use in The Landing, including small group questions, handouts for students, and **AN IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ALL LEADERS TO READ AND UNDERSTAND**. Look through the CD-ROM's contents as you're preparing for the first lesson to gain a sense of all the tools you'll find there.

DISCUSSIONS

At the heart of this series, you'll need to make a commitment to spark great discussions. As with any great discussion, you won't always be sure which way a conversation will go. You might be tempted to impose your will or your agenda on every discussion, but (for the most part) it's good to resist that temptation. Your goal should be to get every person contributing to the life and content of the sessions.

Sometimes teenagers want to follow rabbit trails—directions that stray from your plan and threaten to hijack the carefully crafted teaching thread. Often, it's OK to follow rabbit trails—as long as the trail leads toward the overarching goal of the lesson. Occasionally, a participant might take over and force the study in a different, and potentially unsafe, direction. When you sense you're getting bogged down in an unhelpful rabbit trail, stop walking down it and return to the main path.

Sometimes a student will give an answer that is confusing or irrelevant. You'll want to try hard not to place value judgments on how people answer.

The goal behind all this strategy is to make your group a safe and inviting place for people to add their voice to the conversation. Throughout The Landing, you'll switch between many kinds of interactions: partners, trios, small group, and whole-group discussions. If you believe a partner- or trio-focused discussion topic would work better for your teenagers in a larger group, then use it in that setting. The primary purpose for the variety of group sizes is to encourage everyone to participate and speak. Not all teenagers will engage as actively in the larger groups, but they'll be more willing to answer and share their views with just one or two peers.

Each lesson's small group time includes an opportunity for you to bring other safe, mature adult leaders into the journey with your teenagers. We've labeled these individuals as "conversation leaders," and their role is to facilitate that part of the lesson. We encourage you to provide these leaders with their questions in advance. If you find that you don't have enough adult leaders to serve in this role, empower your teenagers to ask the questions.

WHAT TO CUT...AND NOT

Because of the learning approach we use in this series, you might need to cut part of a session because of time. That's OK, because coverage isn't the goal of these studies. Instead, focus on deeper learning and transformation. You can feel OK about occasionally letting a conversation go on a little longer if needed. We've designed these lessons to last two hours from start to finish.

A few general guidelines about cutting stuff: Aim to cut from the middle of the session if you're tight on time, rather than the beginning or the end. Never cut an experience in favor of leader-talk. If you must choose between participants discovering a truth in discussion with others and you simply telling them the truth, opt for option A. Let others own what they're learning. You might be tempted to cut discussions short for the sake of time. If you do, you'll have a lot of frustrated people on your hands—people who simply don't have enough time to talk about the great question you asked them to pursue. These frustrated people then have a hurdle to overcome if they're going to return to the study the next week. So, cut and condense what you have to say in favor of retaining what others have to say. Don't worry, you'll still have many opportunities to guide, influence, and frame the discussions.

SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS

One of the most important parts of The Landing is the small group time. It is imperative that these groups are safe! Students will be opening up about their lives and answering questions that require personal and thoughtful answers. For this reason, there are two main factors to keep in mind when splitting your large group into small groups. First, all of the small groups in The Landing must be gender based. Boys with boys and a male leader, and girls with girls and a female leader. No exceptions. Also, as The Landing is a place for junior high as well as senior high students, you may have a wide range of ages each week. If possible, try to have the small groups be as close in age as possible, keeping in mind to always

keep them gender specific. As we mentioned earlier, at different points of the lessons your students will be in groups of either pairs or trios. During these times allow students to partner with whomever they feel most comfortable.

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

To make sure The Landing is a safe place for students—where they can share their hurts, hang-ups, and habits—we've included five important guidelines (pp. 17-18). These guidelines are simple and straight forward, but we know they may be new to you. These guidelines are a part of every Celebrate Recovery® resource, including Celebration Station and now, here, with The Landing. By following and modeling these guidelines, and ensuring that the students in your discussion groups do as well, you'll be making The Landing a place where they can share honestly and openly. These five guidelines are integral to the success of these kinds of discussion groups.

Students need a place where they can share and not feel judged. We've done our best to make sure there aren't any questions that have "right" and "wrong" answers. The questions are designed to get students thinking and sharing. As a conversation leader you may feel from time to time the urge to shape a student's answer. Resist that temptation! Remember that these guidelines aren't just for the students, but they're for you too.

For example, Guideline 2 states, “Please avoid all cross talk.” Here are some examples of cross talk:

- » Two people having a discussion that excludes the rest of the group
- » Agreeing or disagreeing with someone’s sharing
- » Asking a question about something shared

Cross talk makes a group unsafe. Students may be opening up about events and emotions for the first time ever. If they are told they should not feel a certain way, the group is no longer safe for them. If they are challenged or questioned, even just to clarify, the group may no longer feel safe for them.

As the leader you will have to model and even enforce these guidelines. When students see that each discussion will be held with these guidelines in mind, and that you follow them, too, their sharing will be deeper because they feel safe.

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

1. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS WHEN SHARING WITH THE GROUP.

We want to be sure everyone has time to share, so please limit your sharing to three to five minutes. If you focus on your own thoughts and feelings, you're less likely to "wander" and discuss unrelated topics. As the group leader, I may let you know when you've shared for too long, but if you focus on what matters most, you'll likely stay within the time boundaries.

2. PLEASE AVOID ALL CROSS TALK.

We want each person to be free to express feelings and thoughts without interruptions. Here are some examples of "cross talk." Two individuals engage in conversation while excluding everyone else. A group member interrupts or inappropriately laughs when another person shares. Or a group member says, "I can relate to you because..." or "I can't relate to you because...." Please be respectful toward the other members of our group, because I know you want everyone to be respectful when it's your turn to share.

3. WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER.

Sometimes in our group settings, we hear about other people's challenges, and we want to offer

solutions to fix their problems. We may have the right intention, and we may want to share the wisdom we're gaining from being in this awesome program. But the other person may not be ready or want to hear or understand. You will protect each other by simply supporting one another and not trying to "fix" one another.

4. VALUE AND PROTECT ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY.

It hurts to discover that information someone has shared here is being discussed outside of the small group time. Some of us struggle with trust issues because we've been hurt by other people. We all need to know that this is a safe place to share. What is shared in our group stays in our group. The only exception is if someone threatens to injure himself/herself or others.

5. AVOID OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE; IT HAS NO PLACE IN A CHRIST-CENTERED GROUP.

I'd encourage everyone in this group to follow this biblical thought, found in Ephesians 4:29—*Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*

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