

## 2026-01-11 Small Group Guide

### Small Group Guide: Don't Lose Heart

#### Opening Prayer

Begin your time by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word, and to help the group apply these truths in practical ways throughout the week.

#### Icebreaker Question

Share about a time when you faced a difficult circumstance but looking back, you can now see how God was working through it. How did that experience shape your faith?

#### Key Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3, 7-11 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith..."

#### Key Takeaways

We are not promised an easy life - Following Christ doesn't guarantee comfort, but it does guarantee His presence and purpose through difficulties.

God disciplines those He loves - Hardships are often God's way of developing us spiritually and preparing us for what's ahead.

Joy is a choice, not a feeling - We can rejoice always (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) because our joy is based on who God is, not our circumstances.

Don't lose heart - When we fix our eyes on Jesus and remember what He endured for us, we gain perspective and strength to persevere.

Our foundation matters - Having a solid, biblical understanding of God helps us stand firm when trials come.

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Message

The pastor mentioned that we often lose heart when "there's no peace in our soul" or when we're "emotionally involved more than faithfully involved." What does this distinction mean to you?

Read Hebrews 12:7-11. How does viewing hardship as God's discipline (or development) change your perspective on current challenges you're facing?

The sermon contrasted American Christianity with biblical Christianity. In what ways have we become too comfortable or assumed God owes us an easy life?

### Personal Reflection

The pastor asked: "Are we really foundationally based on our faith truly in Christ? Or is our faith more in our life and our lifestyle?" How would you honestly answer this question about yourself?

Think about the last time you faced a significant trial. Did you respond with rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)? What made it difficult or easy to respond this way?

The sermon mentioned that we often talk about problems more than we pray about them. When have you been guilty of this? What would it look like to flip that pattern?

### Going Deeper

Read Proverbs 1:20-33. This passage shows wisdom (God) calling out to people who reject it. How does this passage challenge you about responding to God's correction or guidance in your life?

The pastor said, "If I really got what I deserve, it would be hell. Anything less than hell is God's grace to me." How does this perspective help us maintain gratitude even in difficult times?

Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2). What was that joy? How can anticipating our future with Christ help us endure present difficulties?

### Application

What "stones of remembrance" can you recall—times when God clearly delivered you or provided for you? How can remembering these moments help you trust Him now?

The sermon emphasized that we should be "magnets" drawing people to Christ, especially through how we handle hardship. Who in your life might be watching how you respond to difficulties? How can you be a better witness this week?

### Practical Applications

#### This Week's Challenge

Choose one (or more) of these practices to implement this week:

OPTION 1: The Rejoice-Pray-Thank Practice Each day this week, intentionally practice 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

Morning: Start your day by rejoicing in who God is (not your circumstances)

Throughout the day: Pray continually—turn complaints into conversations with God

Evening: List 3 things you're thankful for, including challenges God is using to grow you

OPTION 2: Reframe Your Hardships Identify one current difficulty you're facing. Instead of asking "Why me?" ask:

"What are You trying to teach me through this, Lord?"

"How can this make me more like Christ?"

"Who might be watching how I respond to this?"

Journal your thoughts and prayers about this situation.

OPTION 3: Build Your Foundation The sermon emphasized knowing who God really is, not just who we think He is. This week:

Read through Hebrews 12 each day

Write down what you learn about God's character

Identify one false assumption you've had about God and replace it with biblical truth

OPTION 4: Create Stones of Remembrance Write down 5-10 times God has been faithful to you in the past. Keep this list where you can see it daily. When you face new challenges, review this list to remember God's faithfulness.

Group Prayer Focus

Pray for perseverance - Ask God to help group members not lose heart in whatever they're facing

Pray for proper perspective - That we would see trials as God's discipline (development) rather than punishment

Pray for witness - That our joy in hardship would draw others to Christ

Pray for specific needs - Share current struggles and pray specifically for God's strength and wisdom

Pray for our nation and world - Rather than just talking about current events, commit to praying about them

Closing Thought

"Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:3)

When life gets hard, fix your eyes on Jesus. He endured the ultimate

injustice—the cross—for the joy of bringing you into God's family. If He could do that, He can carry you through whatever you're facing today.

For Next Week

Read Hebrews 12 daily

Come prepared to share one way God has been developing you through a current challenge

Bring your Bible and be ready to dig into Scripture together

Leader Notes

Be sensitive to those in the group who may be going through genuinely difficult circumstances

Balance the sermon's challenging message with God's grace and compassion

Encourage honest sharing—create a safe space where people can admit struggles without judgment

Don't let the group get stuck complaining about circumstances; gently redirect to what God might be doing

Consider following up individually with anyone facing significant trials