

Discussion Guide for Small Group Meetings January 7-13

(Based on Daily Readings for January 1-6)

Icebreaker

What rule did you have the most difficulty following when you were growing up?

Weekly Review

In this week's readings, God created the universe, including the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Things turned tragic when they and their descendants rebelled against God. As human wickedness grew, God decided to send a global flood in judgment. In His mercy, God chose to save Noah, his family, and representatives of all animals through the building of an ark. After the floodwaters receded, God established a covenant with Noah, symbolized by the rainbow, promising never to destroy the world in the same way again.

In your week's readings, what did you learn about God? What's one Bible passage or reflection thought that stood out to you?

Focus on Genesis 3

1. As you think about the paradise created for Adam and Eve, why do you think God gave them one rule to obey?
2. In verses 1-5, what strategy did the serpent use to deceive Eve? How does Satan use this same strategy today? Explain why this strategy still works today.
3. What do these verses tell us about temptation and how to resist it?
4. What happened when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit? How did they respond? Why was their response an act of futility?
5. In verses 11-13, we see Adam and Eve blaming others and refusing to take responsibility for their sin. According to James 1:13-14, who is responsible when we give in to temptation? What is the root cause?
6. In verses 14-24, how did God punish Adam and Eve? Do you think we ever "get away with" giving in to temptation?
7. Can you think of a scripture passage or example from the Bible that is especially helpful to you in the battle against temptation?

Praise/Prayer

As you close your time together, be encouraged that God is faithful to help you endure temptation through the Holy Spirit, His Word, and other believers (1 Corinthians 10:13). God does not want you to fight temptation by yourself. He knows that we are better together. Spend time praying that God will give you the wisdom and strength to resist temptation and obey the Lord this week.

Discussion Guide for Small Group Meetings January 14-20

(Based on Daily Readings for January 7-13)

Icebreaker

Share one of your favorite memories of a time you spent with one or both of your parents growing up.

Weekly Review

In this week's readings, humanity received a fresh start after God sent judgment through a worldwide flood and gave His promise never to flood the earth again. The sinful nature of mankind flourished as the people built the Tower of Babel. God confused their languages, and the different people groups scattered. God decided to create the Jewish nation through a man named Abram (later known as Abraham). Abraham leaves his home and heads to Canaan with God's promise of descendants as numerous as the stars. In their old age, Abraham and Sarah's faith is tested, and Sarah eventually gives birth to their son, Isaac. Abraham's faith is tested again when God commands him to sacrifice Isaac, but God provides a ram for the offering, reaffirming His covenant with Abraham.

In your week's readings, what did you learn about God? What's one Bible passage or reflection thought that stood out to you?

Focus on Genesis 22

1. God had promised to build a great nation through him and give him descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven. Now, God commands him to sacrifice his and Sarah's firstborn son, Isaac, on an altar. Describe some of your thoughts and emotions if you were Abraham.
2. As you read back through verses 3-10, what actions by Abraham demonstrate his commitment to obey the Lord fully?
3. According to verse 8, what did Abraham believe would happen?
4. How does Hebrews 11:17-19 further explain Abraham's rationale for taking the knife to slaughter Isaac on the altar? Can you think of a time when you displayed this amount of faith in God?
5. How was this event a picture of what Jesus did for us as He journeyed to the cross? Use the following verses to help you answer: John 1:29, John 3:16, John 19:17.
6. In verses 15-18, what did God tell Abraham He would do because Abraham had not withheld his son?
7. Describe a time when obedience to God required you to give up someone or something you loved. How did God provide for you in that difficult time?

Praise/Prayer

We can have confidence today that God always keeps His promises (Romans 8:28) and will never abandon us (Romans 8:38-39). When the lights go out in our journey, and we can't see the path ahead, we can trust that God has made a way. Spend time praying that God will strengthen your faith in Him even when you don't see how He will come through.

Discussion Guide for Small Group Meetings January 21-27

(Based on Daily Readings for January 14-20)

Icebreaker

Were you a rule follower or a rule breaker growing up? Has anything changed now that you are older?

Weekly Review

In this week's readings, Abraham's son Isaac took Rebekah as his wife, and they bore a son named Jacob. Jacob would trick Isaac into giving him his blessings rather than his brother Esau. One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, would be sold by his brothers into slavery. The narrative followed the plight of Joseph in Potiphar's house where he resisted the advances of Potiphar's wife but was wrongfully accused and thrown into prison. After being forgotten in prison for a period of time, Joseph finds favor with Pharaoh after interpreting his dreams and is given charge of all of Pharaoh's house.

In your week's readings, what did you learn about God? What's one Bible passage or reflection thought that stood out to you?

Focus on Genesis 39

1. In Genesis 39:1-5, what are the reasons given for why Potiphar decided to put Joseph in charge of his household?
2. With Joseph's newfound position of authority, his integrity and commitment to the Lord come under attack. What tactics does Potiphar's wife use to tempt Joseph in each of the following verses? In each case, how does Joseph resist?
 - Genesis 39:7 –
 - Genesis 39:10 –
 - Genesis 39:12 –
3. How can the example of Joseph help you keep your integrity and character intact?
4. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul instructs the church in Corinth to resist sexual immorality. How does his instruction reflect what Joseph did? Why do you think running away from tempting situations is better than staying and trying to resist?
5. How did Joseph's attempts to do the right thing lead to big problems? What are some potential costs associated with you taking extreme measures to maintain your integrity as a devoted follower of Jesus?
6. After Joseph was wrongfully accused and thrown into prison, how did he respond (Genesis 39:21-23)? How would Joseph's integrity eventually pay off for him?
7. What do you think it means to live with integrity as a follower of Jesus? What is one piece of advice you might give to a new believer to help them maintain their integrity with the Lord?

Praise/Prayer

If you sometimes wonder if keeping your integrity is worth it, be reminded that God is pleased with your integrity and will bless your commitment to honor Him (Psalm 41:11-12). Prayer is one of our greatest tools for walking in holiness. If we band together in prayer for one another, we will be better equipped to maintain our integrity and resist the temptations that come our way. Pray for one another that God will give you wisdom and strength to walk in integrity this week.

Discussion Guide for Small Group Meetings January 28 – February 3

(Based on Daily Readings for January 21-27)

Icebreaker

Did you attend family reunions growing up? What do you like about them? What did you dread?

Weekly Review

Joseph's brothers' journey to Egypt to buy grain during a famine, unknowingly encountering their long-lost brother, Joseph. After a series of tests, Joseph reveals his identity, forgives his brothers, and invites their family to settle in Egypt. Joseph's brothers fear retribution after Jacob's death, but Joseph reassures them of his forgiveness. The Israelites multiplied in Egypt and faced harsh slavery. Moses is born and placed in the Nile but is rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses grows up in the palace but flees to Midian after killing an Egyptian taskmaster mistreating a fellow Israelite.

In your week's readings, what did you learn about God? What's one Bible passage or reflection thought that stood out to you?

Focus on Genesis 45

1. Twenty-two years had passed since Joseph's 10 older brothers sold him into slavery and he hasn't seen them since. What do you think was going through his brothers' minds when Joseph revealed himself to them?
2. Joseph quickly assures his brothers that he has forgiven them. According to Genesis 45:5-8, what did Joseph believe about God that helped him get to this point of forgiveness?
3. What might have been the outcome if Joseph had not forgiven his brothers and instead sought revenge for what they had done to him?
4. As you read Genesis 45:14-15, why do you think Joseph could no longer control his emotions? What do you imagine some of those feelings were?
5. According to Genesis 45:16-20, what happened because of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers? Do you think forgiving others for the hurt they have caused you is more for their benefit or yours?
6. In Colossians 3:13, what does the Apostle Paul say is the basis for why followers of Jesus should forgive others? Can you think of any situation where it would be okay to withhold forgiveness from someone who has hurt or wronged you?
7. What freedom have you experienced as a result of forgiving someone in your life? Share about that experience if you are willing.

Praise/Prayer

As children of God, we can find great comfort in knowing that the mercies of God are new every morning and that there is no limit to His love and forgiveness (Lamentations 3:22-23). Being forgiven of an offense is welcome news when we've wronged another person. But the prospect of forgiving someone who has hurt us deeply is oftentimes difficult to consider. As you close your time together, pray for those who may be struggling to forgive someone. Ask God to give each person the strength to forgive just as Christ has forgiven them (Ephesians 4:32).