

GROUP SESSION GUIDE

Rather than a formal leader guide in the back, we've provided what we hope is a simple and functional group plan on these pages. Each week will begin with an introductory page like the previous one. Then you'll find a two-page group guide like this. My suggestion is that you divide your group time into three parts.

1. After this first week, you'll first discuss the previous week's homework.
2. Then watch the 12-15 minute video segment so I can come along. After all, you wouldn't want to leave me out, would you? Where's the fun in that?
3. Finally, end your group time with a closing discussion of the video. (And of course I'd recommend a party, but that's just me.)

The session guide for this first meeting is for us to get to know each other. Then we'll each go do our homework (it will be fun, I promise). Each day, plan to spend a few minutes with that day's study. Don't worry if some days you don't get it all. This isn't a race and you can come back later. When we meet next group session, we'll have this week's study to discuss. Now let's get to know each other and I'll join you by way of video.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION

Getting to know each other:

- * *What is one thing you want your group to know about you?*

- * *What drew you to this study?*

WATCH SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION (VIDEO RUN TIME 14:54)**DISCUSS:**

- * *How did Angie's experience of feeling lost or stupid trying to study the Bible resonate with you? What have been your own challenges in studying the Bible?*

- * *What do you hope to gain as you study and participate with this group in the coming weeks?*

- * *How as a group can you help one another avoid discouragement and feeling overwhelmed, and stay accountable to stick it out for the whole study?*

- * *What are some steps you will take this week to devote yourself to the work of this study?*

SESSION 2: THE BEGINNING

REVIEW WEEK 1 HOMEWORK

- * What new truths did you learn from your homework this week?
- * Day 1: In the past, what kinds of things have been obstacles to your studying the Bible?
- * Day 2: From what you know, what resulted from the original act of disobedience against God (the fall)?
- * Day 3: What do you think God was actually asking when He called to Adam, “Where are you?” in Genesis 3:9? In what ways do you think God calls to us in the same way?
 - Why do you suppose Adam and Eve so quickly tried to blame someone else for their actions? In what ways do you see us doing the same thing?
 - Do you think the promise of redemption eliminates the earthly repercussions we suffer if we’re disobedient to Him? Why or why not?
- * Day 4: What promise from the story of Noah does the rainbow represent?
 - What aspect of the Noah story impacts you most? Why?
 - a. the severity of God’s judgment on sin
 - b. the lengths to which God went to preserve Noah
 - c. Noah’s obedience
 - d. the sacrifices Noah offered after the flood
 - e. something else
- * Day 5: What experiences in your life have caused you to struggle with believing God is good and that He loves you?

WATCH SESSION 2: THE BEGINNING (VIDEO RUN TIME 15:33)**DISCUSS**

- * *What comes to mind when you think about God?*

- * *How are you inspired by the story of the mansion and the truth of authenticity?*

- * *What has been your take on the Bible up to this point? How have you believed it to be true or false?*

- * *In what ways did you gain new understanding of who God is? Of His Word, the Bible?*

SESSION 3: THE PATRIARCHS

REVIEW WEEK 2 HOMEWORK

- * Day 1: What all did God call Abram to do, and what did God promise Abram that He (God) would do in response?
 - What's distinctive about a covenant anyway? Why is it so important?

- * Day 2: What part of the whole parenting Isaac experience do you think would have been the most difficult for you? Why?
 - a. believing God's promise though you had to wait for many years
 - b. believing God's promise though you were way past childbearing years
 - c. avoiding the temptation to try to control the situation, say maybe by getting a slave as a stand-in
 - d. being willing to sacrifice the son for whom you'd waited so long
 - e. something else

- * Day 3: What did Jacob's name mean, and how did it accurately reflect his character?
 - Think of all that Jacob went through. In what events of his life do you see God working to change his character from a deceiver to a prince of God?
 - In what ways do you think the night spent wrestling with God (Genesis 32:22-32) changed Jacob's life?
 - In what sense was the event the climax of a long process?
 - How can you look back at your life and see God doing things to change your character?

- * Day 4: What practical lessons do you think you can take away from the life and struggles of Jacob/Israel and his wives?

- * Day 5: Even only children see something of sibling rivalry in those around them. What elements of Joseph and his brothers' lives made them the all-time case study for sibling rivalry—on steroids?

- * Discuss the meaning of the first 10 pictures on the course map on page 177.

What aspect of Joseph's story impacts you most, and why? Some possibilities might include:

- a. Joseph's faithful character enabling him to rise to power in Egypt despite the many betrayals he suffered.
- b. God's providence—how He engineered the events to bring about the saving of His people.
- c. The drama of the brothers' attempted murder, then sale, of Joseph?
- d. The way Joseph served Potiphar, his fellow prisoners, and ultimately Pharaoh.
- e. The emotional reunion of the brothers and then Joseph with his father.
- f. Some other element of the story.

WATCH SESSION 3: THE PATRIARCHS (VIDEO RUN TIME 15:51)

DISCUSS

- * You are not who you used to be. How has God changed you?
- * How do real people from the Bible like Abraham, Sarah, or Jacob—people who made mistakes and manipulated situations—give you hope?
- * How do fears of “getting what you deserve” hinder you?
- * How are you encouraged to live differently because of what God has done for you?

SESSION 4: THE EXODUS AND THE PROMISED LAND

REVIEW WEEK 3 HOMEWORK.

- * Day 1: Why in the world do you think, when God’s people needed rescuing, He chose to send a baby (Moses)?
 - What part of the story of the life of Moses builds your faith? What part of the story surprises you? What part confuses you?
 - Has God ever rescued you in a way you would never have imagined? Or possibly in a way you didn’t recognize as His deliverance until much later?

- * Day 2: What did you learn about the origin and significance of Passover?

- * Day 3: What purposes (you can certainly think of more than a few) did God have in giving His people ...
 - the Ten Commandments?
 - the tabernacle?
 - the ark of the covenant?
 - Why do you think God chose to have His people wander in the wilderness for 40 years?

- * Day 4: How do you feel about the fact that Moses didn’t get to go into the promised land with the people? (He did get to go later, though. See Matthew 17:1-5). What lessons do you think you could draw from the end of Moses’ earthly life?
 - How does the red cord in the story of Rahab fit into the Bible story of redemption?

- * Day 5: If God used special birth narratives to mark major turning points in Scripture, why do you think the birth of Samuel fits that list? What major change did Samuel signal?
 - In what ways are you called to be “set apart” and different from the world? How would you say that you have succeeded? How have you failed?

- * Review and discuss the course map on page 177.

WATCH SESSION 4: THE EXODUS & THE PROMISED LAND (VIDEO RUN TIME: 16:51)**DISCUSS**

- * *What are some situations or circumstances where you've doubted that God would come through for you? What caused your doubts?*

- * *What hinders us from trusting that God is going to give us exactly what we need?*

- * *The reward of Ruth's obedience was provision by her redeemer, Boaz. Compare and contrast the parallel in our relationship with Jesus.*

SESSION 5 THE KINGDOMS AND THE PROPHETS

REVIEW WEEK 4 HOMEWORK

- * Review the icons on the course map you've covered so far.

- * What was the huge shift in the kingdom that you learned about this week in your homework?

- * What or whom have you elevated to the position of king in your life?

- * How does true repentance look different from an "I'm sorry?"

- * Day 1: Like Saul, do you ever let other people's opinions shape your actions? How does that work out for you?
 - To what conclusion did Samuel immediately jump when he saw Jesse's eldest son? What does God's response (that He looks at the heart, not the outside) mean to you?

- * Day 2: Has there been a time when you felt punished by God? How has that affected your relationship with Him?

- * Day 3: Solomon began so well and then many wives led his heart away from the Lord. What sorts of things do we deal with that try to lead our hearts away?

- * Day 4: What did you see in Isaiah 53 that points you to Jesus?

- * *Day 5: How does the fact that God predicted the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity encourage or discourage you? Possible thoughts could include:
 - a. *Wow, God was pretty harsh. Seventy years?*
 - b. *God was incredibly patient before He sent them into captivity.*
 - c. *I bet they thought God had forgotten them.*
 - d. *Incredible how God had a plan in mind all the time.*
 - e. *All the pieces fit together for our good, but it sure can be painful.**

- * *What hope do you see in Joel 2:25? How could that hope encourage you in your situation?*

- * *The Old Testament ends on a note of hopeful failure. How does the failure of Israel to find the perfect life point to the Messiah God would send?*

WATCH SESSION 5: THE KINGDOMS AND THE PROPHETS (VIDEO RUN TIME 12:17)

SESSION 6 THE MESSIAH

REVIEW WEEK 5 HOMEWORK

- * *What new things did you grasp from the Scripture this week in your homework?*

- * *Day 1: What clues did we see indicating that Matthew wrote the story of Jesus the Messiah with a focus on Jewish readers? How did Matthew seek to present Jesus?*
 - *What aspect of Jesus' birth and young life as told by Matthew most impressed, surprised, or intrigued you?*

- * *Day 2: Why was John the Baptist reluctant to baptize Jesus?*
 - *What unique authority did Jesus give to the 12 apostles? How do you think believers today relate to the tasks Jesus gave the apostles?*

 - *What did Jesus begin to tell His disciples in passages like Matthew 16:21?*

- * *Day 3: Who gathered together to plot to arrest Jesus? What do you think motivated them?*
 - *How do we sometimes have to choose between obeying God and concern for what people will think of us?*

- * *Day 4: What happened in the moment Jesus died? (Matthew 27:51) What significance do you see in that happening?*
 - *How have you seen evidence of Jesus in the world? in the lives of those around you? in your own life?*

- * *Day 5: What are the four Gospels, the intended audiences, and the goals of each Gospel writer?*
 - *What happened in Acts 9:1-22? What happened as a result?*

- * *Discuss the course map and the meaning of all the icons so far. Do you think you could use the icons to tell a child the story of the Bible?*

WATCH SESSION 6: THE LETTERS (VIDEO RUN TIME 11:41)**DISCUSS**

- * *How would you explain the temple veil being torn to a friend? How would you help them grasp the spiritual significance of this moment?*

- * *What new truths did you learn about Jesus this week?*

SESSION 7 THE LETTERS

REVIEW WEEK 6 HOMEWORK

- * Day 1: What promise that Paul extended to the young believers at Thessalonica (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) means the most to you?
 - What that Paul said about himself in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 impressed you?
 - Based on Galatians 2:16, what justifies a person?
- * Day 2: What does Colossians 3:11 mean to you?
- * Day 3: What sort of lives (actions) should believers have to back up their belief?
 - Why should we be willing to endure suffering in order to fulfill the ministry God has given us?
- * Day 4: Why is taming the tongue such an important issue for believers?
 - Why is James 5:16 so important for us as believers?
- * Day 5: What did you discover about the apostle John this week?
 - According to verses 2 John 5-6, what is the greatest commandment and how do we show it?

WATCH SESSION 7: THE LETTERS (VIDEO RUN TIME: 11:21)**DISCUSS**

- * *How does Paul's story bring you hope? Inspire you? Challenge you?*

- * *Are you trusting God to use your life for His purposes in this world? Explain.*

- * *How can difficult times bring us closer to Christ? When have you seen that happen in your own life?*

- * *Do you believe God is everything He says He is? Do you trust Him? If so, how are you living your life to tell His story?*