

LIFE GROUP LEADERS GUIDE
The Joy of Being God #14 – “The Joy of Journey’s End”

Tips for Leaders

Your Life Group meeting is a perfect opportunity to reflect on what God is saying to each of group in the middle of a busy week. Throughout the evening encourage people to consider “What is God saying to me?”. This might be something that directly relates to Sunday’s sermon, or the study you’re leading, but be open to the fact that it might not be. Allow space for people to discern God’s voice and will for their lives. You can help them do this through the questions you ask and the time you allow for prayer. Be open to the Holy Spirits guiding you.

CONNECT IN with one another

- What was the best thing about your Christmases as a child? What was the worst thing about them? *[Leaders note: Asking about childhood Christmases is a great way of discovering what someone’s childhood was like in general. By asking this specific question, you’ll draw out a general picture of what makes the people in your group who they are today.]*

CONNECT UP with God

- How would you respond to a non-Christian friend who said, “There’s no way I could ever believe in your God. There’s no way that God can be good, when there’s so much suffering in the world!” *[Leaders note: This is the most common objection to the Christian faith by nonbelievers. It is also the biggest theological challenge voiced by Christians. Therefore, give people time to articulate their response to the question. You aren’t just training them to think about Gospel apologetics – you are also training them to think well as disciples of Jesus.]*
- Split into three groups to answer the question above from several different verses in the Bible. Give your groups a set time (no less than 15 minutes) to discuss before they feed back to the whole Life Group.
 - Group 1: Answer the question from Isaiah 46:10, Romans 8:28 and Hebrews 12:2.
 - Group 2: Answer the question from Revelation 21:1-4 and John 16:20-22.
 - Group 3: Answer the question from Matthew 13:24-30, John 9:1-3, 2 Cor 4:17-18 & 1 Peter 1:6-9.
- *[Leaders note: Group 1 is about the wisdom of God. If he is big enough to blame for suffering in the world, he is also big enough to trust to work it all for good. God is no mere observer of suffering. He went to the cross, thinking nothing of its shame because he saw the big picture of what it would achieve. Group 2 is all about the ultimate plan of God. We are heading for a place where there will be no suffering, and where we will no more dwell on our pain than a mother holding her newborn baby in her arms. Our anger against suffering is actually a sign that God has placed a sense of this eternity in our hearts (Eccl 3:11). Group 3 is all about the loving patience of God. He does not end the sin and suffering in the world because we ourselves are a cause of sin and suffering in the world. When we complain, we are actually complaining about his loving patience towards us! He uses the pain and suffering of this world to make people reach out to him for salvation – both in terms of unbelievers repenting and in terms of believers turning their backs on this world to seek more and more of God.]*
- Lead out of your discussion into a time of worship in which you praise the Lord for his wisdom, his master plan and his loving patience towards us. Give people permission to express their own pain in suffering, but encourage them to see it through the lens of the happy God’s great love towards them.

CONNECT OUT with the non-church people around you

- We have just seen that one of the reasons why God allows suffering to continue in the world is that he longs to save the people in our city who do not yet know him. Let’s therefore pray for them.
- Read Colossians 4:3-6 together and use it to fuel your prayers for your friends and neighbours. Pray for God to give you opportunities (v3). Pray for God to give you clear communication (v4). Pray for God to give you wisdom not to miss an opportunity (v5) and to know how to answer everybody graciously and intelligently (v6).
- Pray particularly for our Christmas services and the enormous opportunity they provide for us to share Jesus with those around us.