

# LIFE GROUP GUIDE: TJOBG #9: "THE JOY OF TRUTH"

## CONNECT IN with one another

Christians have different views on Hallowe'en. What do you think? Is it a celebration of the occult or a harmless bit of fun?

[Leaders: There's no axe to grind here – just an opportunity to coach people to disagree on secondary issues in a godly manner.]

## CONNECT UP with God

- Ask somebody to read Romans 1:16-17. Get them to read it again two more times, slowly.
- Now read Martin Luther's conversion testimony, based on those two verses: "I burned with desire to understand a term used in Romans chapter 1, where it is said: 'The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel.' It troubled my dreams. I hated the very phrase, 'the righteous of God' since I understood it to mean the righteousness that makes God punish sinners who fall short of it. In spite of all my religious exertions as a monk, I knew that I was still a sinner before God. My conscience was extremely troubled by my sins and I was not convinced that any of my religious actions came any way towards appeasing God. For a start, I didn't love this God who waved his righteousness under my nose. I hated him, and if I did not blaspheme his name in secret, I was certainly indignant and murmured violently against him. I said: 'Is it not enough that he condemns us to eternal death because of the sin of our fathers, and waves his righteousness under our noses in the Old Testament? Must he also torment us further in the New Testament by announcing his righteousness and anger again there?' I was beside myself, my conscience was so violently upset, and I ceaselessly puzzled over this passage from St Paul. You see, I really wanted to know what Paul could mean by this phrase: 'The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel.' Finally God took pity on me. While I was meditating, day and night, and examining the implications of the words 'The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, as it is written: the righteous shall live by faith,' I began to understand that the righteousness of God here doesn't mean that God waves his righteousness under our noses to torment us. It refers to the righteousness which God gives freely to sinful people so that they be counted as righteous and have eternal life if they have faith. So what Paul means in Romans 1 is that the Gospel reveals to us a way in which we can be counted as righteous as an undeserved gift from God. That's what it means when it promises us that 'the righteous shall live by faith.' Immediately I felt that I had been born again. I seemed to have entered the broad gates of Heaven itself. From then on all Scripture seemed different to my eyes. I ran through the texts as my memory recalled them and noted other terms which had to be explained in similar fashion, like the work of God – meaning the work that God accomplishes in us by his grace, giving us strength and wisdom and salvation as a free gift through Jesus Christ, all for the glory of God. Up until that moment, I had detested the phrase 'the righteousness of God,' but now I loved and cherished so sweet a saying. That verse of Paul in Romans chapter 1 became the very gate of Paradise for me."
- What do you find most challenging about Martin Luther's conversion testimony?  
[Help for leaders: How troubled are we with our own sins? How honest are we with God about the Bible passages that trouble us? How much do we 'ceaselessly puzzle' over such passages, 'meditating day and night' on what God says to us?]
- Martin Luther's discovery transformed his own experience of God. Although a monk and avid churchgoer, he considered this to be the moment of his true salvation. When he nailed it to the church door in Wittenberg on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1517, it transformed much of Europe's experience of God too. How should this encourage us today?  
[Help for leaders: People need help to believe God's Word can truly transform them, and through them their friends too.]
- On Sunday Phil encouraged us to celebrate the fact that God finds deep joy in the truth. Please can someone read the following verses? – Jn 3:33, Heb 6:18, Titus 1:2, 1Cor 13:6.
- Phil encouraged us to recognise that God has revealed that truth to us in his Word. Please can someone read Jn 17:17, 2Ti 2:15 and Jn 14:6?
- Phil encouraged us to believe that when we find our joy in God's truth, it still unleashes his power in our lives today. Read Ps 1:1, Acts 13:48, 1Th 2:13 and James 1:6-8.
- Phil encouraged us to believe that if we share God's Word of truth, it will unleash his power in the lives of unbelievers too. Read Isaiah 2:3, Acts 8:4&8 and 2Th 3:1.
- CONNECT OUT with the non-church people around you
- Therefore let's do as Paul commands us in 2 Thessalonians 3:1. Pray for one another, that you will find deep joy in the life-transforming truth of God's Word. Then pray for those around you, that God will help you to share boldly, expectantly and fruitfully, just like Martin Luther.