

Community Group Questions Guide

Ice Breaker (10min):

Help people to loosen up and share. For the first week, take time to go around and have people share their name, and what their plans are for Halloween.

Opening Prayer (5min):

- **Introduce time of prayer-** After the group welcomes one another, open in prayer. Let your group know what to expect during prayer time, something like: As we start our group time I will open with a word of prayer, there will be a minute or so of silent reflection and then I will read the scripture from Sunday and then close in prayer and we will enter into our discussion time.
 - **Open with a brief word of prayer-** God we thank you for this time together, we open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us, allow us to hear your voice and experience your spirit at work. Come Holy Spirit.
 - **Sit before the Lord in silent prayerful reflection for 1-2 minutes**
 - **Read the scripture listed below aloud for the group to reflect on.**
 - **Close in a word of prayer:** God thank you for your word, come holy spirit and allow us to understand what it means for our lives, lead us in our time of discussion together. In Christ's name, amen.

Main Scriptures from Sunday: Romans 8:18-28, 35-39 (NIV)

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that^[h] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Read this message overview to the group: (5min)

Hopefully you had a chance to hear the message from Sunday. In it Pastor Josh Bueno talked about “present suffering, present help and a future glory” as a part of our Good News for All People teaching series from Romans.

In this message there were three points taken from the text in Romans 8:

1. The realities of present suffering: ALL creation, humans included, are subject to suffering and frustration. Romans 8:20-25
2. The realities of present help amidst suffering: ALL of God’s people have a present help (The Holy Spirit) in the midst of suffering. Romans 8:26-29
3. The reality of a future glory: A future glory of adoption, and love fulfilled in Christ awaits ALL those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit. Romans 8:18-19, 23-25, 31-32, 38-39

In chapter 11 of his book “Walking with God through Pain and Suffering” Tim Keller while making reference to the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendigo in Daniel 3 speaks of God walking through the fire with these three young men in Nebuchadnezzars furnace. Tim Keller writes this;

“There is no way to know who you really are until you’re tested. There is no way to really emphasize and sympathize with other suffering people unless you have suffered yourself. There is no way to really learn how to trust in God until you are drowning. But we also learn from this story that God is with us in the fire. That is a metaphor that means he knows what its like to live through the miseries of the world-he understands. It means he is near, available to be known and depended upon within the hardship. He walks with us, but the real question is will we walk with him? If we have created a false God-of-my-program, then when life falls apart we will simply assume he has abandoned us and we won’t seek him. This is important to consider, because we all know that suffering does not only refine, it can also harden and consume. So what do you have to do in order to grow instead of being destroyed by your suffering? The answer is you must walk with God. And what is that? It means we must treat God as God, and as there.”

Work though these discussion questions together (30min):

- Is anyone open to share some of your “present sufferings” with the group? (Group Leader, it might be good to go first, to help the group feel comfortable with sharing)
- Have you or someone you’ve known walked away from faith in God because of suffering? If so, invite people to share those stories.
- How do you view your own present sufferings? Have you experienced God amidst these sufferings? If so, share with the group what that experience has been like.

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- Have you ever experienced the “Spirits help in your weakness”, mentioned in Romans 8:26-27, what was that helpful presence like? How would you describe it to others?
- What might be some intentional spiritual practices that could help you to live more aware of the present help that is the Holy Spirit?

Group Prayer (10min):

- Share personal prayer requests and spend some time praying for one another as a group. For this first group session, you can write down the prayer needs and pray for them. The hope is to get your group comfortable with sharing personal prayer needs and praying for one another regularly. You will need to model this at first and set the tone.