

WEEK 4:

WHERE IS GOD IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING?

Objective: Move your group to a more vulnerable and deeper level of discussion about surrendering their lives to Christ and their faith in His holiness, sovereignty and goodness. Place a greater emphasis on prayer time, continuing to develop a deeper prayer connection in the group.

PRAYER POINTS

- For deeper connections within your group as a result of the prayer experience. Pray that the people in your group experience God and their relationships with Him in a new way.
- For openness in sharing as you move into the next two weeks on surrender and strongholds.
- That God would draw people to a place of surrender to Him.

LEADER PREPARATION

- Pray that God would show you whom He wants to be future Life Group leaders and Rooted leaders. Begin giving them responsibilities in the group.

Good leaders are people who:

- like to engage with people in Life Groups
- are Rooted and mature in their faith
- are living a spiritually and morally disciplined life
- are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit within the group
- are good listeners and able to draw people out in conversation
- are passionate about growing people in their faith in areas of prayer, serving, and evangelism
- have the spiritual gift of discernment
- are able to handle difficult conversations about faith without “preaching”
- can ask good questions and guide strong people

GROUP TIME

25 minutes - Welcome and Connection

By now you all are getting to know each other. If you want, engage them in an opening question. This will help everyone collect their thoughts, put outside thoughts behind them and be present for group time. Some suggestions:

- What happened this week that surprised you? Why was it unexpected?
- Go around the room and have the group give each person a one-word affirmation.

15 minutes - Introductory Questions

- When you were a kid, did your parents ever make you give up something that was yours and you knew it was not fair, but had to do it anyway?
- Have two people share their two-minute story.

60 minutes - Discussion

The theme from this week is surrendering to God and understanding that His plans for us are perfect.

In order for us to surrender our will to God, it requires that we trust Him. Below are suggested opening questions you can use. Keep in mind, you may have nonbelievers in your group. Help them to answer as is appropriate or give them permission not to answer and encourage them to ask questions.

- Where have you seen God at work around you recently?
- How have you seen God use you to accomplish His will?
- What plans do you think God might have for your future and how do they relate to your dreams for your life?
- How do you wrestle with surrendering to God's will today?

Leader notes: Recognize that more mature Christians sometimes share challenging experiences from many years ago. Encourage them to tell of times God has moved in their lives recently.

Be okay with disagreement. We are all on our own journeys and may not see eye to eye on everything. Encourage people to bring their Bibles and share their views based on what the Bible says, not just what they think the Bible says. Ask, "Where did you see that? Let's find the context for it."

Prepare your group for next week. The strongholds week is powerful and moving. Let them know they will be sharing their stronghold struggles in the group in a way that is sensitive, confidential, and honoring to God. Let your group know you will be praying for them throughout the week.

Observe, listen ask questions, and take notes.

20 minutes - Prayer Requests

- Prepare the group for strongholds next week.
- Increase the focus on prayer, giving everyone the opportunity to develop the spiritual discipline of quieting their hearts to listen to God.
- Prayer requests can be done as a group or you can break into prayer partners.
- Remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality.

10 minutes - Closing

- Homework will take more time. Prepare the group to share and be prayed over.
- If you prefer, you can set additional time to pray over strongholds outside of the group time.

WORKBOOK REVIEW

Where is God in the Midst of Suffering?

The focus this week is surrendering to a good and gracious God, following Him, and holding on to faith during the bad times as well as the good.

Day 1 The Reality of Hardship and Suffering

- All of us have gone through times of despair or feeling completely alone. In that time, what were your feelings about your situation and about God?
- What lessons learned from David's life can help you through these challenging times?

Day 2 You Are Not Alone

- Describe a time when you have felt hopeless.
- Describe a time when, despite your circumstances, you have had hope from the Lord.
- If you are in a hard time right now, do you feel as though you are in God's hands? Why or why not?

Day 3 Double-Fisted Faith

- Describe your feelings of "double-fisted faith." Is this idea a struggle for you? Or do you embrace it?
- When have you had to clench your fists and cling tightly onto God's promises, not knowing the outcome of the situation?

Day 4 Our Response: Surrender

- What would it take to completely surrender your life to God?
- What is a care in your life you need to give over to God right now?

Day 5 Character Like Christ

- What challenges are you facing now that are helping transform your character to be more like Christ's?
- Where do you see God's hand working in your circumstances?