

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Structure of each session:

Sharing God's Word

- Open in prayer.
This prayer should be brief. More in-depth prayer will occur at the end of the discussion time.
- Follow-up
When appropriate, follow up on charges or questions from the last session's Application.
- Ice Breaker
A question to lead in to the big ideas and essential questions for today's discussion. Allow any responses to these. Don't look for right or wrong answers.
- Reading
Read the text together. Round robin style, individual readers, etc. Use whatever method works for your group. It is recommended to try and involve all in reading at some point in the quarter together.
- Reflection Questions
Open questions to get the group thinking about what they have just read – suggested questions on discussion guides are merely suggestions. It may be simple enough just to ask something like “What do you notice here?” or “What strikes you in this text?” as a starting point.
- **Essential Questions**
A key question about the ideas presented in the text. Be sure to address these and allow time for thinking and responses. **This should take the bulk of your discussion time (20 minutes or so).**
- Applications
Prompts to move the conversation into personal applications of the text.

Prayer

Identify members of the group each time to lead prayer (possibly more than one each time) and perhaps someone to take note of prayer requests.

Prompt the group with a question like “How can we help you in prayer tonight?”

Fellowship Time

Set aside time intentionally to talk to each other. Work on sharing life and faith together.

Passages & Key Concepts

1. Knowing Good and Evil: From life to death.

The Bible opens with the beginning of creation. God is already there. He is the author and source of all creation. It is created good, but temptation and deception come and God's children fall into sin. Sin brings the curse of God and death. Sin spreads and ruins, bringing God to regret creating humanity. Is there any hope for a Savior now?

2. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

God promised that through Abraham He would bless all nations. Abraham's descendants carry the promised seed and blessing of God. A Savior is coming! God gave a covenant to Abraham whose benefits reach us today. How did God save Jacob?

3. Joseph, the Favorite Son, Brother, Betrayed and Sold, Becomes the Savior.

The patriarchs were real people with real weaknesses. God works both directly and behind the scenes at times to bring about His will for His people. How did God raise up Joseph to save Israel?

4. Job, Gold Tested in the Fire: Satan's accusations prove hollow.

We don't know exactly when Job lived. It appears to be during the Patriarchal times, thus we read it at the end of Genesis. Job's faith is put to the greatest tests one can imagine, and explores the depths of human suffering in the context of spiritual conflict. Job struggles as he seeks a redeemer.

5. Moses Call to Deliver Israel: God's hand in it all.

Job never receives answers to his questions, but is honored by God before his accusers. Moses, a reluctant rescuer, is called by God for a saving ministry to God's people. Let's look at Moses for our lesson about the SAVING MISSION of God for His people.

6. Israel Rescued, but are they Really Saved Yet?

God's chosen people, Israel, were resistant to His saving work of bringing them into a relationship with Himself. They wanted freedom from slavery, but did not recognize their own slavery to sin. What was Israel expecting from God and how were they disappointed? How will God bring them into a saving relationship with Him?

7. When God Dwells Among His People

Nearness with God involves lifestyle changes and behavioral modifications that are not always easy or comfortable. Loving God and living in God's presence is not natural. God puts up with a lot more than we do in this process, but He does not put up with resistance, disobedience or rebellion.

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8. What is Holiness and How Can We be Holy?

The closer we are to God, the more we are changed and the more we must demonstrate our respect for His holiness. God instructs us in how to conduct ourselves before Him and what the consequences are for violation of protocol. How does salvation change us?

9. Wilderness Numbering and Organization

God counts us all and knows our number. He is interested in everyone just as a shepherd numbers his sheep. God organizes the people so that they can travel in mass throughout their wilderness wanderings. God is a God of order and He expects His people to follow His administration. How do saved people follow God?

10. Wilderness Testings

When God's people rebel against Him there are consequences. God knows how to punish the rebellious while training up the next generation into faithfulness.

11. Moses Final Words to Israel (Part 1)

Look for the word "heart" in Deuteronomy. That's what God wants us to give to Him, our hearts. Seeking God's rule and righteousness is impossible for those whose hearts are not given to the King. What draws us closest to God? How does obedience in action play a part?

12. Moses Final Words to Israel (Part 2)

Joshua takes the leadership and a faithful generation enters and begins to conquer the promised land. How long does clear sailing in our faith last? What are some beautiful moments of victory?

13. From Faithfulness to a Cycle of Sin

Joshua leads Israel into the promised land. God gives them victory as long as they keep the covenant. One sinner in the camp can bring dire consequences on the rest. After Joshua dies, the generations following him turn away from God's way and begin a cycle of sin, punishment, repentance and deliverance that repeats itself in the Judges. When God's rule and righteousness are neglected, what is life like?

14. God's Promised Seed in the Midst of Chaos

Israel struggled with unfaithfulness and idolatry during the period of the Judges, and yet the book of Ruth reminds us of God's workings among His people to fulfill His promise to Abraham.

15. God Installs His King: Saul Falls, David Rises

Leaders that represent God well are not always easy to come by. A brief comparison to the heart of Saul and the heart of David gives us insight into God's rule and righteousness. What differences emerge between Saul's faith and David's? What makes David a man after God's own heart? What does that mean?

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16. Saul Dies and David becomes King

Saul finally faces the consequences of resisting God's authority. David is rewarded for his faithfulness and God establishes David as king.

17. David's Rise and Fall

With great power comes great responsibility. David does well until his power blinds him and his fleshly desires drag him into sin. When confronted David confesses his sin and God forgives him, but the sword does not depart from his house from that day forward.

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1. Knowing Good and Evil: From life to death

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What does the word “saved” mean?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week’s readings?

- For this lesson read - Genesis 3

Reflection

- How did the human race fall into sin?
- What did sin lead to and how did sin effect relationships?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Who is this seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 and how do the genealogies of the Bible lead us toward that One who is to come?
- How does God rule over an imperfect world to lead us to His righteousness?

Application

- Where has sin brought pain or strife into your life?
- How has God brought His saving grace into your life?

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2. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Are there any famous ancestors in your family tree? Who?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Genesis 35:1-15

Reflection

- What do you know about Jacob? (His parents, his brother, his wives, his father-in-law, his children).
- How has God helped Jacob? How would you describe Jacob's relationship with God?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Is Jacob saved? Why or why not?
- Where has God shown His grace and protection upon Jacob and his family?

Application

- Compared to Abraham's faith, how would you say Jacob rated?
- How does our faith in God affect our relationship with Him and with others?
- Comparing your faith with Jacob's faith, how do you rate? Why?

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3. God uses Joseph to save his family.

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

What does it mean to be a savior?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Genesis 45 and 50:15-21

Reflection

- Discuss the background of Joseph's relationships with his father and brothers. What has happened over the years?
- How does God work to bring good results out of evil intentions?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How is Joseph as savior of his family treated by his family? How does this story parallel the gospel of Jesus?

Why is the SAVING MISSION sometimes the hardest? How is it worth the pain?

Application

- Who do you know that needs a Savior but doesn't realize it?
- What can God do through you to help them come to see Jesus as their Savior and Lord?
- What are you willing to go through to help them?

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4. Job, God's Prized Man of Faith

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Who do you know that has faced crisis without a seeming purpose or meaning?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Job 1-2

Reflection

- Why does the devil want to destroy Job's relationship with God?
- What limits him?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do you know that God cares about Job in this story?
- What struggles does Job face as he endures pain and suffering?

Application

- Does God still allow His people to suffer?
- How did Jesus deal with betrayal, unjust punishment and pain?
- What does God expect of you and what do you expect of Him?

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5. Moses, God's Reluctant Deliverer

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What good thing have you done that you didn't want to do?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Exodus 3-4

Reflection

- What is the background of Moses before God called Him?
- Where was Moses when God called him and what was his response to God's call?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does God want from Moses and why?
- Why is Moses resistant to God's calling?

Application

- So far in scripture, every saving worker of God has faced difficulty, why is this?
- What makes the saving work worth the trouble?
- How do the saving stories of scripture prepare us for our SAVING MISSION as a church today?

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6. Israel Rescued from Egypt but are they Really Saved Yet?

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- How do you know if you are saved or not?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Exodus 20:1-21, 32:1-20

Reflection

- How has God demonstrated His care for Israel up to this point?
- How would you describe Israel's relationship with God here?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Has God not saved His people? Where is Israel's faith?
- Why does Moses have such a strong relationship with God?
- Why doesn't Israel share that faith?

Application

- What does saving faith look like in action?
- How does Moses faith contrast with the people of Israel's faith?
- What does it take to have a saving faith in God?

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7. When God Dwells Among His People (Part 1)

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What kind of house do you want to live in?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Exodus 39:32- 40:38

Reflection

- What does it mean that they did everything just as the Lord commanded Moses?
- The tabernacle was built as a dwelling for God. Why is this significant?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How is God's presence among His people made visible to Israel?
- How did God demonstrate His approval of their work on the tabernacle?

Application

- How does God dwell among His people today? What is His tabernacle?
- In what way does God's dwelling among us bless us?
- What responsibilities does God's dwelling among us bring?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

8. When God Dwells Among His People (Part 2)

Open in prayer:

Ice Breaker

- Why are some people so hard to live with?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Leviticus 9:1-10:11

Reflection

- Why did God choose to live among the Israelites?
- How it go at first? What did Aaron's sons do wrong? Why such a severe punishment?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does God expect from His people and why?
- The ultimate salvation is from God's wrath, what does God's wrath do to us?

Application

- When the punishment of God comes, what are it's results?
- "Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." Why is this an important part of the SAVING MISSION of the church?
- Since we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, how do we prepare ourselves for this?

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9. Israel Counted and Organized

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- How many members of this church are there and why does it matter that we know?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Numbers 1-2

Reflection

- Why were the people numbered and assigned places to camp?
- Where is God's tabernacle in the camp and what does that signify?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How does this help demonstrate the historical validity of this record?
- What value does God place on the order and number of His people?
- Jesus told about a shepherd who had 100 sheep and one got lost, how does God's concern for numbers demonstrate His care for His people?

Application

- What is the point of counting our attendance at church services?
- How do we respond when we realize someone is missing?
- How can we apply this to our SAVING MISSION as a church?

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10. Wilderness Testings

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What does leadership look like?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Numbers 16

Reflection

- What kind of treatment did Moses endure?
- How does God deal with rebellion against His chosen leader?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What objections did the people have against Moses and Aaron's leadership?
- How did Moses defend his leadership to them?
- What did God do to show approval of Moses as His chosen leader?

Application

- What will happen to those who reject Jesus, God's saving leader?
- How did Moses leadership foreshadow this?

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11. Moses Final Words to Israel

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What words of wisdom have you tried to follow?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Deuteronomy 6

Reflection

- What's the most important instruction God has given?
- What does Deuteronomy 6 teach us to help save our children?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are the priorities of God that we find in this chapter?
- How important is it for this to be practiced and passed down to the next generation?
- What happens if it fails to be practiced or passed down?

Application

- How are we doing at passing on the saving faith in our families?
- What can we do at home that will make a saving difference for the next generation?
- What are some things that hinder passing on the saving faith?

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12. Moses' Last Words to Israel (Part 2)

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What do you think about the future of our country?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Deuteronomy 30-31

Reflection

- Moses prophecies that Israel will fall away and later be restored. How has the history of God's people repeated itself through the centuries?
- What words of warning and encouragement do we find Moses message here?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What warnings do God's saved people need to hear and heed today?
- How does loving God make a difference in whether His people are saved?

Application

- Look at Deuteronomy 31:9-13. What does this tell God's people to do publically?
- Look at Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What does this tell God's people to do in their homes?
- What happens when God's people don't obey these commands?

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13. From Faithfulness to a Cycle of Sin

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- In what ways have you seen history repeat itself?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Judges 1:27-2:19

Reflection

- Why does God get angry when His people only partially obey Him?
- What went wrong with Israel's faith?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did the children of the faithful generation not continue in the faith of their fathers?
- What did the generation that did not follow God's will do? Why?
- What can we do to avoid this for our children's future?

Application

- Look at 1 Timothy 4:16 - what two things are important in the saving mission God has given us?
- How does God work through our examples to others in both what we do and what we teach?

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14. Ruth's Story of Redemption

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Who led you to faith in Jesus Christ and how?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - Ruth 1-4

Reflection

- What kind of woman was Ruth?
- What kind of woman was Naomi?
- What kind of man was Boaz?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is a kinsman redeemer? How does Ruth become part of God's people?
- What did Ruth hope for when she left her home in Moab to stay with Naomi?
- How does God bless her and Naomi?

Application

- How has God blessed you?
- What temptations have you struggled to resist? Why?
- What does God do to get us to come to Him? What must we give up?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

15. Saul's Rise and Fall.

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What happens to people when they want power, prestige and popularity?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - 1 Samuel 15

Reflection

- How did God test Saul to see if he would be faithful? How did Saul do?
- What does Samuel say about Saul's choices and their consequences?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Was Saul saved? Why or why not?
- How do Saul's behaviors demonstrate his relationship to God?
- What went wrong?

Application

- Why do God's people make wrong choices? What are the consequences of those choices?
- What does this passage say about obedience and disobedience to God?
- Can God change His mind about choosing us?
- (Read 1 Samuel 15:10-11 and then verse 28-29) How do you harmonize these two passages?

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16. Saul's Fall and David's Rise

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Who is one of your favorite past U.S. Presidents and what did you like about him?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - 2 Samuel 1-4

Reflection

- How did God remove Saul from being king of Israel?
- What was David's response to Saul's death? Why?
- How did God make David to be king?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did God save David?
- Why didn't God just destroy Saul early on and put David on the throne? Why all the struggles and political stuff?
- How is God working all things together for good for David through this?

Application

- God works through history using real people to accomplish His purposes. How have you seen this?
- How does God use real life situations and circumstances to bring us to salvation?

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17. David's Rise to Power, His Sin and it's Consequences

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- How does power ruin some people?

Readings: Where did you see God saving anyone in this week's readings?

- For this lesson read - 2 Samuel 7 & 11-12

Reflection

- What did David want to do for God in chapter 7? How did God respond?
- Where was David's faith in chapter 11-12? How did God respond?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did David show repentance when Nathan the prophet confronted him with his sin?
- (Read Psalm 51) Where do you see hope in this Psalm?
- How did David's sin bring life long consequences for David and his family?

Application

- Why do saved people still sin?
- What does God expect His saved people to do when they sin?
- What are some life long consequences of sin in a saved person's life, even after being forgiven?