

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.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Passages & Key Concepts

1. But Will God Really Dwell on Earth?

1 Kings 8:27

2. Where are God's People Called to Dwell?

John 15:4

3. How Can Sinners Dwell in the Presence of God?

Romans 3:23

4. By What Means are God's People Delivered?

1 Peter 3:21

5. What are the Origins of the Church?

Matthew 16:13-18

6. The Church as the Bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:25-32

7. The Church as the Building of Christ

1 Corinthians 3:5-11

8. The Church as the Body of Christ

Ephesians 1:22-23

9. The Mission of the Church

1 Peter 2:9-10

10. Home in Heaven?

Daniel 12:2-3, Isaiah 66:22

11. Paradise Restored

Revelation 22:1-5

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Will God Really Dwell on Earth?

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Where do you see God's presence?

Reading

- Old Testament: Genesis 1:1,26,27; 2:15; 3:8. Exodus 13:21-22, 25:1-8; 40:34-38; 1 Kings 6:11-13; 8:1-12
- New Testament: Matthew 1:18-25; 18:19-20. John 14:23. 1 Corinthians 3:16

Reflection

- Where is God in all these readings?
- What do we learn about God's dwelling place(s)?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How has God dwelt among His people in the past?
- How and where does God dwell with His people today?

Application

- How do you know God is "with us?"
- What does His dwelling in you mean for your life?

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2. Where are God's People Called to Dwell

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What's your address?
- Why do you live where you do?

Reading

- Old Testament: Genesis 12:1-3. Exodus 19:1-6. Psalm 61:4; 23:6.
- New Testament: Mark 3:13-19; Acts 26:12-18; 1 Peter 2:4-10.

Reflection

- What do we learn about Abraham, the Israelites and David in these scriptures?
- What do we learn about the apostles, Paul and the church in these scriptures?
- How is God's call associated with where we live?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did God call Abraham and other Old Testament characters?
- How did Jesus' coming to live among us demonstrate God's desire to dwell with us?

Application

- What has God called us out of?
- What has God called us into?
- How does this effect our ultimate dwelling?

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3. But How Can Sinners Dwell in the Presence of God?

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Who do you most enjoy being around and why?
- What makes it hard to be around some people?

Reading

- Old Testament: Genesis 3:1-13, 21-24. Leviticus 16:1-22.
- New Testament: Mark 15:37-38. John 1:29. Hebrews 9:1-10:18.

Reflection

- What is a sacrifice and how does it make a difference in one's relationship with God?
- What does sin do to our relationship with God?
- What does God do to overcome our separation from Him?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why does God want to dwell with us sinners anyway?
- Why should we sinners want to dwell with God?

Application

- How does God show us that He loves us even though we are sinful?
- What happens if we do not accept His sacrifice for our sins?
- How do we accept God's sacrifice for our sins?

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4. By What Means Are God's People Delivered?

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What would happen if all the bridges across the Tennessee River were suddenly gone?

Reading

- Old Testament: Genesis 6:9-18. Exodus 14:5-31. Joshua 3.
- New Testament: 1 Corinthians 10:1-4. Acts 22:16. 1 Peter 3:18-22

Reflection

- How did God use water to deliver and bless His people?
- What did they leave behind on the other side?
- How is baptism different from the flood, the Red Sea and Jordan River crossing?
- How are the flood, Red Sea and Jordan crossings like baptism?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What deliverance does a believer receive when he/she is baptized in water?
- How does Acts 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21 describe what happens?

Application

- How is Jesus' sacrifice and baptism connected in the New Testament?
- What did Jesus commission His followers to do to make disciples?
- How can you help someone discover and receive God's deliverance?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

5. What are the Origins of the Church?

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Where were you born?
- What difference does it make where you came from?

Reading

- Old Testament: Exodus 19:3-9, 16-17.
- New Testament: Matthew 16:13-18. Acts 2:22-40.

Reflection

- Where did the church come from?
- How is the church connected with the people of God in the Old Testament?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- When God called Israel out of Egypt, how did that foreshadow the church?
- What is the difference in the Old Testament assembly of God's people and the church of the New Testament? What similarities do we share?

Application

- How is the church the fulfillment of God's purpose for Israel?
- When and where did the church begin?
- Who were the first members of the church and how did we Gentiles get in?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

6. The Church as the Bride of Christ

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- When is the last time you attended a wedding?

Reading

- Old Testament: Genesis 2:21-23. Isaiah 62:4-5.
- New Testament: John 3:22-29; 14:1-3. Matthew 9:14-15. Ephesians 5:25-32. Revelation 21:9-27.

Reflection

- How does the Bible depict God's people as a bride?
- What kind of relationship does this image imply?
- How does this define the roles of the relationship between Christ and the church?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does it mean for the church to be the bride of Christ?
- What is the purpose of marriage? What does this teach us about God?

Application

- What makes marriage holy?
- How does our present culture distort the holiness of marriage?
- How does the Bible's teaching on marriage exalt it?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

7. The Church as the Building of Christ

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- Describe your dream house.
- Who would you have build it?

Reading

- Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- New Testament: Matthew 16:13-18; 21:33-44. Ephesians 2:19-22. 1 Peter 2:4-8.

Reflection

- What kind of house does God live in?
- How did Jesus build His church?
- What kind of materials is the church made of?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How is the church built by Christ?
- How is it still being built?

Application

- How are you allowing Christ to fit you into His church building work?
- What is your part in this building project?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

8. The Church as the Body of Christ

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What do you do to keep your body healthy?

Reading

- Old Testament: (No equivalent)
- New Testament: Colossians 1:15-18. Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:1-7, 11-15. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Romans 12:4-8.

Reflection

- How is the church like a body?
- Where does Jesus connect with the body?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How are we members of Christ's body?
- What implications does this image have for our relationships with Jesus and each other?

Application

- How is a member of a body different from a member of a team or other organization?
- What kind of commitment should we have toward Christ and other members of the body?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

9. The Mission of the Church

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What's your preacher's job description?

Reading

- Old Testament: Genesis 12:1-3; 22:16-18.
- New Testament: Matthew 5:13-16. Luke 19:10. Matthew 20:28. John 20:19-20. Matthew 28:18-20. Mark 13:34. Matthew 25:14-30.

Reflection

- What did Jesus teach us about our mission?
- Who did Jesus expect to carry out this mission?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How big is the church's mission?
- When will we be finished?

Application

- How are we doing at fulfilling our mission as a church?
- What are our strong points?
- What are our weak points?
- How can we improve?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

10. Home in Heaven?

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

Reading

- Old Testament: Psalm 16:5-11; 23:1-6. Isaiah 65:17; 66:1; 22-23.
- New Testament: Hebrews 11:13-16. John 13:36; 14:1-3. 1 Peter 1:3-12.

Reflection

- What's your understanding of where you will be after you die?
- How does the Bible describe where we will spend eternity?
- What kind of bodies will we have and what will they experience?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How is heaven the ultimate home?
- Where is God and where will you be in eternity?
- What can we look forward to there?

Application

- How do you know if you are going to a heavenly home?
- What kind of preparations can we make to be sure?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

11. Paradise Restored

Open in prayer.

Ice Breaker

- What do we mean when we say, “They are in a better place?”

Reading

- Old Testament: Isaiah 25:8. Daniel 12:2-3.
- New Testament: Philippians 3:20-21. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18. 2 Peter 3:13. Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27; 22:1-5.

Reflection

- What strikes you in these texts?
- What does it mean that God will wipe away all tears from our eyes?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- If Hell is the ultimate curse, what is heaven? How is this so?
- What is forever for?

Application

- Why should we focus on our heavenly home? (Col. 3:1-3)
- What is there that is worth giving up what is here now?
- Why is this hard for so many to accept?