

Leader's Life Group Homework Guide

For the week of March 18th, 2018

(This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion)

DIGGING DEEPER (Don't feel like you have to cover all the questions or thoughts. Be sensitive to the needs of the group and where the Holy Spirit may be directing you as you walk through the material)

The Main Idea:

Life is not about you. It's about God.

Key Questions:

- Read Isaiah 40:6-8, 1 Peter 1:24. In what way are we like 'grass?'
- We need to be reminded again and again that we are like grass — disposable, temporary, fleeting, momentary. We are here and gone again. We have one life to use, and the usefulness of that one life depends not on our résumé or even how much we know. It doesn't matter if you have theology degrees, mothered a dozen healthy, happy children, started several 501(c)3's to feed the poor, end Human trafficking. God is unimpressed. Being a creative, innovative or highly effective leader is insufficient. We might make Jim Collins proud, but God yawns at our leadership abilities. We might be a life-hacking, productivity guru. That doesn't make us anything more in God's eyes.
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, 2 Corinthians 12:9. What does God chose to use to display his greatness?
 - God uses pathetic people for his glorious purposes to show his superior power.
 - Do not begrudge your weakness. Embrace your weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon you to reveal God's surpassing greatness
 - Do not lament your insufficiency. Rejoice that Christ is all-sufficient and always dependable.
 - Be encouraged, God intends to use you in all your multifaceted weakness and obscurity for his glory. It's okay to be a nobody, if in all you do, you serve Somebody, that being God
- Read Acts 9:23, 9:29, 13:50, 14:5, 14:19, 15:11, 15:39, 16:23, 16:39, 17:5-7, 10, 17:23-14, 17:18, 18:12, 19:23-41, 20:3, 21:27-30, 22:24, 22:24-29, 23:1-8, 23:12-22, 23:33-27:2, 27:41-28, 28:3-5, 28:13-15, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. In what ways did Paul Suffer?
 - It is believed that Paul's conversion occurred in 36 A.D. and his death in Rome in 68 A.D. That would indicate a ministry of some 32 years. Since 2 Corinthians was written in 57 A.D. and recorded sufferings Paul had endured up to the time of the writing, the list would encompass the first 21 years of Paul's 32-year ministry,
 - Paul's Sufferings as Recorded in the Book of Acts
 - His life was threatened in Damascus. Acts 9:23
 - His life was threatened again in Jerusalem. Acts 9:29
 - Persecuted and run out of Antioch in Pisidia. Acts 13:50
 - Faced possible stoning at iconium. Acts 14:5
 - Stoned and left for dead in Lystra. Acts 14:19
 - Opposed and made the center of controversy. Acts 15:11
 - Experienced the loss of his close friend and co-worker, Barnabas. Acts 15:39
 - Beaten with rods and imprisoned at Philippi. Acts 16:23
 - Cast out of Philippi. Acts 16:39
 - His life was threatened in Thessalonica. Acts 17:5-7, 10
 - Forced out of Berea. Acts 17:23-14
 - Mocked in Athens. Acts 17:18
 - Taken before the judgment seat in Corinth. Acts 18:12
 - Opposed by the silversmiths in Ephesus. Acts 19:23-41
 - Plotted against by the Jews in Greece. Acts 20:3
 - Apprehended by the mob in Jerusalem. Acts 21:27-30
 - Arrested and detained by the Romans. Acts 22:24
 - Barely escaped being scourged. Acts 22:24-29
 - Rescued from the Sanhedrin mod action. Acts 23:1-8
 - Assassination plot against him. Acts 23:12-22
 - Two-year imprisonment in Caesarea. Acts 23:33-27:2
 - Shipwreck on the island of Melita (Malta). Acts 27:41-28:1
 - Suffered a snakebite. Acts 28:3-5

- First Roman imprisonment. Acts 28:13-15
 - The apostle Paul went through many hardships in his life as he labored to bring more souls to Christ. Through all this he recorded many events and challenges. Including several ship wrecks. There were three accounted for within his writings (2 Corinthians 11:25). However, there was a fourth one mentioned towards the very end of Paul's life in Acts 27.
 - The last 11 years of his life and work would include
 - The 4th and final year of the 3rd missionary journey.
 - Paul's arrest and treatment in Jerusalem.
 - Paul's two-year imprisonment in Jerusalem.
 - Paul's perilous journey from Caesarea to Rome that included: Another shipwreck and a snakebite
 - Paul's first Roman imprisonment in Caesarea.
 - Paul's "house arrest" imprisonment in Rome.
 - The three-to-four year period between the first and second Roman imprisonment.
 - Paul's second Roman imprisonment which resulted in his execution.
 - Therefore, the list of sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 would include Paul's sufferings during the first two-thirds of his 32-year ministry, but not include the final one-third.
- Agree or disagree with this quote? **There is always a purpose behind suffering, behind shipwrecks too often our tendency is to focus on the circumstance, especially in storms. God emphasizes the objective.**
- John Piper says, "We seldom know the micro reasons for our sufferings, but the Bible does give us faith-sustaining macro reasons." Discuss his 5 Marco purposes of God in suffering,
 - ❖ **Repentance:** Suffering is a call for us and others to turn from treasuring anything on earth above God. Luke 13:4–5
 - ❖ **Reliance:** Suffering is a call to trust God and not the life-sustaining props of this world. 2 Corinthians 1:8–9
 - ❖ **Righteousness:** Suffering is the discipline of our loving heavenly Father so that we come to share his righteousness and holiness. Hebrews 12:6, 10–11
 - ❖ **Reward:** Suffering is working for us a great reward in heaven that will make up for every loss here a thousand-fold. 2 Corinthians 4:17
 - ❖ **Reminder:** Suffering reminds us that God sent his Son into the world to suffer so that our suffering would not be God's condemnation but his purification, Philippians 3:10
 - Read Acts 27. Discuss Paul 4th Shipwreck. What stands out to you in this story of how Paul handled another shipwreck?
 - Paul is on another boat heading for his 4th shipwreck – talk about a man who has grit. He is on his way to stand before the Roman Caesar.
 - Paul along with other prisoners us under the Care of a centurion named Julius. They are sailing along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It was not the best time to sail for the winds were against them. I know exactly how that feels.
 - But no one listens to the prisoner/tent maker and the Centurion followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship and sailed out of port hoping to reach the port Phoenix and winter there.
 - The winds that looked favorable turned into a Hurricane. Euraquilo is the equivalent of one of our Northeaster's, the combination of gale force winds and rough seas that rage along the eastern seaboard from south to north.
 - They finally have to give way to the wind. They barely secured the "Life boat", only one for 275 men. They put anchors out, run ropes under the boat to protect the bottom. They took such a violent beating that the next day they started to throw over the cargo. 3 days later all the tack, the equipment to sail the boat. Acts 27:20
 - Paul stood up, which means they were all holding on for dear life and first gives them an "I told you so" but then assures them they are all going to live because he had a vision. V. 21

- He tells them that they must run aground on some island. Only Paul has tucked away in his heart the promise of God that he would reach Rome alive.
- The remaining 275 passengers knew none of that, so the panic is understandable. There is nothing predictable about voyages on the open sea. Circumstances can change in a matter of moments which is also true in life.
- 14 days of hurricane winds and violent waves. 14 days of no hope in sight. The sailors realize they are getting close to land because the bottom of the sea was getting closer. They drop 4 anchors to hopefully hook something to prevent crashing on the rocks.
- Some of the crew decided to make a break for it but Paul tells Julius that if they leave then everyone dies. The only lifeboat is then cut away.
- Paul again makes a speech, tells them to eat something and assures them that no one is going to die v.33-34
- After they had eaten they throw everything else overboard and they see a beach ahead. They cut away the anchors, and hoist up the sails to beach the boat but hit a reef and the boat begins to break up. The soldiers want to kill the prisoners but Julius prevents them. V. 43-44

• Anchor points are “Firm rocks sunk deeply in a solid foundation. Not casual opinions or negotiable hypotheses, but ironclad undeniableness that will keep you afloat”. What were Paul’s Anchor Points in this story?

- Anchor of Stability – Acts 27:20-26
 - Do not fear, Don’t be afraid, most commanded command in the bible
 - Those are treacherous moments when we reach the point of abandoning hope. At that difficult, gut wrenching moment God says, “Don’t be afraid, I have a plan.
 - People facing intense adversity find it difficult to focus on anything others than the towering waves and stinging winds. Our tendency is times like this is to cut and run
- Anchor of Reality – 27:41-44
 - Reality compels you to take action. The best plan for surviving a storm is preparation.

NEXT STEPS: Review in how to deal with suffering

- Suffering has a Macro reason in our lives. Repentance, Reliance, Righteousness, Reward & a Reminder
- God says, “Don’t be afraid, I have a plan.
- His grace is more sufficient than your strength
- God chose the foolish things, the weak things, the lowly things so that no one may boast before him.
- Life is not about you. It’s about God.
- What are you anchored too?

PRAYER REQUESTS