

END OF WEEK 1

Small Group Discussion Guide

The following guide is designed to serve as a potential framework for your discussion. Feel free to use it as is or adapt as the Spirit leads.

INTRO

As we begin this series, there are so many different places we could go in Scripture for this first study, but we wanted to begin by encouraging your connect group to share your own experiences. We have also included two Psalms to help you think through our faith and mental health journey.

OPEN

What are some of the struggles or stigmas you've heard or been taught about faith and mental health?

Have you had your bouts with mental health struggles that you're willing to share or have you been close to others in their journey? Share as much of your experience as you're comfortable with remembering the expectations of safety and confidentiality within your group.

HEAD

Read Psalm 22 together, then share any thoughts, ideas, or insights that you gain simply from the reading of the Word.

According to this Psalm/prayer, how did David feel about his relationship with God?

If we're told God will "never leave us or forsake us" (Deuteronomy 31: 6) and He is "with us always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 20), were David's feelings representative of reality?

In verse 3, what does David do that changes the tone of how the Psalm started?

HEART

Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt that God abandoned you? If so, what was that like and how did you deal with it?

David often shares his struggles in the Psalms. He's not afraid to cry out in anger or fear or share his questions. But often, he brings his Psalms back to a place of worship. What part does worship play in helping us establish healthier mental health practices?

When we're in the thick of a struggle with maintaining good mental health, it can be tough to do the things that we know are good for our heads and our hearts. David turned to worship as best as he could, even when it hurt. What is one positive mental health practice that has worked well for you in the past and how can you keep it at the forefront of your thoughts?

HANDS

The Psalms are a beautiful picture of what it's like to follow after God even with the roller coaster of life and all its emotions and challenges. Through this series, one suggestion would be to read through a Psalm a day, and instead of Psalm 1, Psalm 2, and Psalm 3, read them as if it's Day 1, Day 2, and Day 3 journal entries in the life of a follower of God. Make a note of what you identify with and don't, but always note how David tries to turn his attention away from himself and his circumstances and back to God.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

"As the deer longs for the streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?... Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again - my Savior and my God!" Psalm 42: 1-2, 5

END OF WEEK 2

Small Group Discussion Guide

The following guide is designed to serve as a potential framework for your discussion. Feel free to use it as is or adapt as the Spirit leads.

INTRO

Dr. Kenny Boyd writes to us from his experience as a mental health professional. He is a member of Crosswalk church in Redlands and has expertise in mental health. We understand that each of these weeks will look and feel slightly different, but we are excited that he was willing to write for us.

OPEN

What temptations have you had to deal with, and how did you overcome them? where are you? How have temptations formed you or made you who you are today?

Would you be willing to share any of your experiences and what helped you process these temptations?

Remember, this must be a safe space for everyone to share.

HEAD

If you continue to read Luke 4, you will see that right after the temptations, Jesus outlines the mission of God that he came to fulfill.

How has dealing with temptation shaped you in a way that has made you more prepared to be able to do the work that God has called you to do?

How did people receive Jesus after he said what he was here to do?

HEART

Do you know what breaks the heart of God? Is it the same thing that breaks your heart? Is there a way that we can use the learnings that we acquire as we deal with temptations to help heal not only God's heart but our hearts as well?

Why would dealing with temptation be a question of the heart as much as of the mind and hands?

How can you help others with temptations they might be dealing with?

HANDS

It is often in the doing that we are made a bit more healthy. What can you do today to work toward a greater mental health and stability around this idea of temptations? Is there a call you need to make, a connection with a counselor or pastor that might be helpful? What can you do in order to keep things moving forward in the way that you deal with temptation and the ripple effect of those temptations in your life?

WORDS TO REMEMBER

1 Corinthians 10:13—13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

END OF WEEK 3

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OPEN

What are your thoughts about demon possession and mental health in Scripture? What did you hear growing up? Was there such a thing as mental health, or was it all demon possession, or vice versa?

GETTING INTO THE TOPIC

Do you think demon possession happens today? Why or why not?

Do you think a demon could also possess a person who surrendered to Christ? Explain.

HEAD

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and share any wisdom, insights, or impressions you received from reading the Word.

What does spiritual warfare look like today in our Western world?

How do we take captive our thoughts and fight back against the darkness?

Read Luke 8: 26-39 and share any wisdom, insights, or impressions you received from reading the Word.

Why do you think the demons yelled and shrieked when they came in contact with Jesus? This exchange between Jesus and the demons was the longest of any other story. Usually, the demons just said who Jesus was and did whatever he said. Why do you think Jesus allowed this exchange? Why let them into the pigs instead of the abyss or bottomless pit?

In verse 35, why do you think the people were afraid of seeing the man with Jesus being sane and in his right mind? Wouldn't this be time to rejoice?

HEART

How can you and I help each other remember that the battles we face every day have a physical and spiritual component?

How can we help each other fight the battle?

HANDS

What's one thing your Connect Group members can pray over for you today that concerns your own battle? When you close your connect group time, have one person commit to pray over another person until every person is covered in prayer. Then, share those prayers with the team so that over the next week, your Connect Group family can continue lifting you in prayer.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

“Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11 NLT

END OF WEEK 4

Small Group Discussion Guide

The following guide is designed to serve as a potential framework for your discussion. Feel free to use it as is or adapt as the Spirit leads.

OPEN

This week is about helping those who might have been in danger of self-mortal harm (suicide). This is the last thing we want anyone to go through. The central message is that we must help them get professional help as soon as possible. But Dr. Pruehs gives us some great counsel on how to help someone in this situation. However, please ensure you don't try to handle this yourself unless you are a mental health professional.

GETTING INTO THE TOPIC

Have you or someone you know ever had Suicidal Ideation? How does this connect to someone's spirituality and mental health?

If it is not triggering, would anyone in your group share a time they have struggled with SI or had gotten to a pretty dark place in their mental health journey?

HEAD

We know our mental health has peaks and valleys, like anything else in our lives. Is there some scripture that can help with this?

Psalm 34:17-20- When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

Isaiah 41:10- Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Exodus 14:14- The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

1 Corinthians 12:9- But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

We do not give you these texts to shame anyone for having these thoughts, but we want you to know how much God loves you and is walking with you through these valleys. Not only friends and family and community would miss you, but so would God.

HEART

How can we as a community, family, and friends help one another when we see someone slipping into despair? What is appropriate and reasonable to do and take responsibility for?

HANDS

Sometimes, the ministry of presence is an integral part of what we can do to help someone. While it seems like we might not be doing anything, know that we are deeply invested in being a presence in someone's struggling life.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. John 1:16 NLT

END OF WEEK 5

Small Group Discussion Guide

The following guide is designed to serve as a potential framework for your discussion. Feel free to use it as is, or adapt, as the Spirit leads.

OPEN

Shared experiences and mutual respect are important for us as we build friendships and also build a healthy understanding of who we are. As you get together today, share with the group a time when your respect for your friends grew through something that you all went through together.

GETTING INTO THE TOPIC

Jesus was deeply moved in this pericope. He cried, which would have been seen as something less than masculine in his time. We see that Jesus was often someone who eschewed cultural and societal norms. What do you think we can learn from this episode in the life of Jesus? How do you think the disciples would have interacted and understood the way Jesus was behaving and feeling?

How does this stack up to the experience that happened right afterward with Peter pulling out a sword?

HEAD

We are always fighting what is expected of us. In the first century, there was much expected of men in particular. Today, while things are different, are there expectations for both men and women that we, as Christians, should be pushing against? And what would those be?

HEART

How can we help one another lead more authentic and honest lives, both emotionally and spiritually?

What kind of homes and safe places will we need to create to live our most authentic lives?

HANDS

As you sit with your Connect Group, can you share a time when you were vulnerable with your emotions and how it went?

Did it go well?

Was it painful?

What would you do differently?

What can we learn from each of these experiences?

WORDS TO REMEMBER

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. 2 Corinthians 6:11-13

