

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of March 15-21, 2020

“GOD OF OUR SEASONS”

GETTING STARTED

To the facilitator: As your group begins, use this section to introduce the topic. If possible, give a brief recap of the sermon.

Share a memorable point, a spiritual lesson, a personal application, a question, or something that challenged you from the sermon last Sunday.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:2-8. Which of the 14 comparisons strikes the most to you in this season of your life?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Before you begin the session, take your phone, tablet, or any other electronic device that you may have with you. Turn it off or put it in airplane mode. Use your phone only to access or read Bible passages if you did not bring a Bible with you.

1. How does it make you feel to know that God is ultimately in charge of all the events in your life (3:1)? Are you comforted by this reality? If so, how does this truth comfort you? Do you find God's sovereignty a bit disconcerting? How so?
2. Do you agree with writer of Ecclesiastes that God's plan includes a time for "everything" (3:2-8) — even war, death, mourning, and hate? Why or why not? Are you the kind of person who is able to "take life in stride" or do you have extreme highs and lows, depending upon the circumstances? If the latter, what can I do to be more spiritually consistent?
3. One writer poses four possible ways a person can respond to the list in 3:1-8:
 - Be content with the particular time you are currently experiencing.
 - Be alert to take advantage of current opportunities.
 - Be determined to do what's right even if it's unpleasant.
 - Be willing to accept both the highs and lows of life.Among the four, which application resonates the most to you?
4. Read Luke 15:11-32. Thomas Constable makes this comment of verse 12: "Normally the inheritance did not pass to the heirs until the death of the father. To request it prematurely was tantamount to expressing a wish that the father would die." Place yourself in the father's shoes; what are you feeling when your son essentially tells you to drop dead?
5. From the sermon, Ptr Nic said: "It's a terrible thing when you don't wait your turn and you try to get ahead of God (referring to the younger brother) But it might be even worse when you're sleeping right under the Father's roof, waiting upon God and not realizing

what is already yours (referring to the elder brother)." Who do you relate to in this season of your life — the younger or the older brother?

6. How have you seen Ecclesiastes 3:11 proven true in your life and the lives of others? Can you sense a longing for the eternal in yourself and others? What does this look like in reality? How has God made "everything appropriate in its time" in your life? What expressions of this have you seen recently?
7. **[NEXT STEPS]**

This week, pray for God to help you see the blessing of living a life in the sovereignty of God.

 - I will commit to go through the devotionals everyday this week.
 - I will seek to know more about who God is by regularly reading his Word.
 - I will fight against comparison by _____.
 - I will learn to find the good in any situation that I face this week.
 - I will surrender my situation to the Lord.
 - I will pray daily for the healthcare professionals who are in the frontlines of the COVID outbreak, pray for the country and the people who have been infected by the virus.
 - Other ways I will apply this lesson: _____.

REFLECTION

With the increasing coronavirus cases outside of China, many believers across the world wonder how to respond to the increasing alarm. What would God have us do in the face of a growing international health crisis? Should our churches close their doors for fear of spreading illness? Should I take my kids out of school? Cancel travel plans?

It is important to be reminded about what we already know. Worry is not our friend, and panic is not our way. Solomon reminds us, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Prov. 24:10). May it never be said that God's people are governed more by fear than faith. Corrie ten Boom, along with other faithful from among the nations, led courageously in the face of the Nazi fascism—a different form of deadly virus. And she reminds us, "Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength."

In times of crisis, the world needs steady people who are strengthened by God's grace and selfless by God's power. Worry accomplishes nothing except weakness of heart and head.

While we remain on alert against viruses of doctrine or disease, worrying won't change our circumstances or lower our chance of infection. It won't help us fight off illness or move us to action. Worrying about COVID-19 (or anything else) will only increase trouble. Rather than worrying and being anxious, Jesus calls us to respond with prayer and faith in him (Matt. 6:33–34; Phil. 4:6). We need not worry ultimately because we know the One who has defeated sin and death (1 Cor. 15:55–57).

Remind yourself continually: it takes the same amount of energy to worry as to pray. One leads to peace, the other to panic. Choose wisely.

CLOSING THE SESSION.

Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray that you will learn contentment and find joy in where you are today.
- Pray for those who are hurting, going through fear, worry and anxiety in the group.
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends and loved ones.

DAY 4. LOST & DON'T KNOW IT

Read: Luke 15:11-32.

“Lost” is a heart-breaking word. Whether it’s connected to death, defeat, directions or possessions, it can bring us face-to-face with emotions ranging from frustration and anger to the very deepest grief. And in this parable, Jesus shined light on a subtle truth: sometimes we’re lost and we don’t even know it.

The obvious sinner in this story, the younger son who demanded his inheritance then squandered everything he had, but was ultimately repentant.

Next Jesus introduced the second son – the older brother, who was diligently working in his father’s field when sounds of life drew him home. This son was loyal and law-abiding, but his response revealed the hard heart that was hiding behind those good deeds: “I have served...I never disobeyed...” Here, pride and entitlement thrust their ugly heads high and shout, “When am I going to get the respect I deserve?!”

The father’s response painted a beautiful picture of grace: “You are always with me ... all I have is yours...be glad with me – can’t you see? Your brother left a dead man and has come back home alive!”

Jesus’ teaching must have been like a cup of cold water to those who had drawn near with ears to hear. But for the law-keepers hiding in the corners, his message was lost. This grace was too much to take in. We know where all this leads: rejection, betrayal and death. But that’s still not the end of the story. Whether we are lost in selfishness or self-righteousness, the Father longs for all to come to him. Jesus teaches that no country is too far, no heart is too hard, no child is too lost to be found in him. Jesus will always pursue us with love, wrap us in grace, and restore us with joy.

Reflect & Apply.

1. Although this is a familiar story, please do not rush through in reading it. Which son do you identify with? Why?
2. Do you find it encouraging that “what brings us back to God” is not necessarily the primary motive for seeking him out? Ponder on what happened to the younger son.
3. What did the elder son miss out? Ponder on his reaction.
4. What action does the Holy Spirit want you to take based on the lessons from this story?

DAY 5. WORRY OR PRAY

Read: Luke 12:22-34.

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Reflect & Apply.

1. How would you differentiate between worry and being careful?
2. This teaching from Jesus begins with a strong exhortation not to worry. What does Jesus say not to worry about in 12:22, 29?
3. Jesus offers two examples from nature – the birds and the wildflowers – for his disciples. What do these two examples tell us about worry and faith?
4. What is God teaching today? Where do you need to trust him more? How are you going to do that? At this time, follow the instructions of Paul in Phil 4:6 and pray!



Living Word NRA
Worship God. Advance His Kingdom.

GOD OF OUR SEASONS

March 15, 2020

Questions for Personal Study & Reflection

This 5-day devotional includes readings with brief commentaries that builds upon the weekend sermon. You are encouraged to take the time to read the Bible passages and meditate on them. On average, you will need 20-30 minutes to complete them.

Reflection questions and applications are intended to invite you to slow down and ponder on the truths that God is teaching you. Daily application steps are also given to help drive the message in practical ways.

