

## GROUP GUIDELINES

1. **Everyone shares in sentences, not paragraphs.**
2. **Focus only on what this passage is saying, not on other passages.**
3. **Focus only on what this group is seeing.**
4. **Give people time to respond. Silence is OK.**
5. **What is shared within Life Group is to be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.**

## CHECK IN & LOOK BACK

As you begin your Life Group, have each person share their answers to the following questions. The purpose is to allow for the opportunity to get to know one another more personally:

- **What are you thankful for?**
- **What is causing you stress?**
- **Did God reveal or speak to you more from our passage we studied last week?**
  - Consider the Sunday message, Tuesday Devotional, and/or Worship Resource.
- **Do you or anyone you know need any kind of help?**
  - How can this group help you/them?
  - Is this something to share with SGPC Deacons or church Leadership?

## PASSAGE STUDY

1. **Read the passage aloud three times from three different versions.**

We believe our English translations are (with inspiration and revelation from the Holy Spirit) sufficient, but we also acknowledge there is no single complete translation from the original language into contemporary American English. Reading from three different versions helps participants to get a fuller (although still not complete) picture of the original meaning. Bible apps make it easy to access a variety of translations.

\* Choose at least one “standard” translation (ESV, NIV, NKJV, etc.) and at least one “contemporary” translation (NLT, MSG, GNB, etc.). Contemporary translations are easier to digest for newer believers and bring fresh perspective to familiar passages for long-time studiers of the Word.

**2. Retell the passage in your own words—without looking!**

Try to adhere as much as possible to the original order of events of the story or points made by the writer. Include as many details as you can. Let everyone chime in from memory and have one person check against an open Bible if the group gets stuck. For personal study and preparation, write what you remember (even if it is just in outline form), then compare it to Scripture).

**3. What stands out about this passage?**

Identify at least one thing that stuck with you. It could be specific wording in one translation that highlighted a point while another translation highlighted a separate point. It could be a concept that resonated within your spirit in all three readings. You can identify more than one. Allow each person to share as they feel comfortable and acknowledge the validity of each person's observation because everyone will interact with the same passage differently depending on where they are in life. Even if the same person repeats the study while in a different season, this response will be different.

**4. What do you like about this passage?**

Allow yourself to enjoy Scripture and to be comforted by it! You may or may not find something to like in every passage.

**5. What do you not like about this passage?**

(What about this passage makes you feel uncomfortable?)

Allow yourself to be challenged by the hard things of God's Word. "Not liking" is not the same as "not obeying" or "disagreeing." Be honest about your reactions, knowing that you may or may not find something to dislike in every passage.

## **DISCOVER**

**6. Who are the main characters?**

List all the players in the passage. They can be human, divine, spiritual beings, even impersonal or inanimate nature! Anyone or anything that is a part of the passage is included. God is not always mentioned specifically in every passage, so don't be afraid to bring that up!

**7. What does this passage tell me about God?**

Look for the role of God—Father, Son, or Holy Spirit—in the passage. Even if he isn't named as an active character in the passage (e.g. in the book of Esther, he is never mentioned), God is active throughout all of Scripture.

**8. What does this passage tell me about humanity?**

(What does this passage reveal to me about the way humans think and live? What does it show me about the spiritual condition of humankind?)

Start with the obvious, almost verbatim, responses. Then ask God to reveal deeper layers about the human heart and spirit and how He sees us.

**9. What does this passage tell me about creation and God's sense of order?**

(What does this passage tell me about how & why God created things the way they are?)

How does creation (besides humanity) show us God's values and way of living? Depending on the passage, the "creation" approach may or may not be applicable. Regardless, throughout the passage, look for how the unfolding of events and points reveals (or deviates from) God's heart and intentions.

**APPLY**

Allow time to let your Life Group members think & write out their responses. Encourage sharing, emphasizing that what is shared within this group is to remain confidential. These questions allow for following up with one another in an intentional way to provide accountability and encouragement.

**10. In what ways does my life align with God's Kingdom?**

Based on what you discovered about God, humanity, and creation in this passage, evaluate your current lifestyle and habits. What fits with what you have discovered? What adjustments need to be made?

### **11. What can I do to grow spiritually and personally?**

What are some practical steps you can take to be a clearer example of what you discovered about God and his ways? Think of at least one action you can take and measure this week. If you are doing this study on your own, think of at least one person who can encourage you and share your decision with them. If you are in a group, decide how you want to spur one another on. Keep the accountability easy to manage and maintain. If you aren't big on phone calls, commit to a text message or email. If technology is not a shared value, find simple ways to check in on one another.

## **EXPAND**

### **12. Who can I share this with?**

Ask the Lord for the name of at least one person He wants to share your discovery with. Write down the name and put it where you will see it regularly. If you're with a group, share with your group (keep the name anonymous, if necessary).

### **13. How can I share it?**

Ask the Lord for a plan to share: time, place, one key point to highlight, words to explain in a way they will understand.

### **14. Who can I invite to study the Bible?**

Ask the Lord to reveal to you someone from your sphere of influence or local community that you can invite to study the Bible with you. If you would like to invite them to Life Group, make sure you check in with your Life Group leader partner as well as the comfortability of your group.