

CONNECT GROUP LEADER GUIDE

HEADS UP! #10 A Sharpened Focus

BEGIN WITH YOUR HEART

When God doesn't make sense. A great discussion to have with your group. If your group is newer or still learning to trust each other in honest discussion, ease into this deeper question with this discussion starter.

- **As a group list some examples of painful childhood situations that eventually led to joy.** (Notice how your perspective changed with experience, i.e. being dragged to the dentist, but having great teeth at your wedding OR fighting your parents over eating vegetables and now seeing the health benefits as an adult, etc.)



A LOOK AT THE WORD

Read and make observations about these three passages in Acts, but encourage the group to resist jumping to the “what can we learn?” question until you’ve read all three of them. Hearing all three stories first helps us to see some of the similarities and differences to shape what we can learn about these trials.

Short on Time? – Choose one of the passages from Acts and answer the questions at the end. Each of them alone makes for a great study in the challenge of trusting God to turn our trials into joy.

Quick Study Notes

1. Encourage the group to **notice the source of the trial in each of these** situations that the early believers faced. How does the source of the trials they were facing compare to the source of our trials? For this discussion, identifying the source of the trial becomes critical to understanding the confidence we can have from God.
2. If we are **not facing any pressure or trial because of our faith in Jesus** and a life lived in pursuit of His mission and His glory what does that say? On the other hand, we don't seek trouble and trial as Christians, but we shouldn't be surprised if living for Jesus means we are not well liked (1John 3:13)

MY LIFE- OUR MISSION

Ask yourself, “Who shares my tough stuff?” If you suddenly found yourself in the midst of a trial because of your faith, who would walk through that with you? Who shares your faith in Jesus and would have your back in prayer and in action? Encourage your group to invest your life being that kind of friend for someone else and invite someone into your life to do the same for you.

Christ Community Church - Announcements

- ⊙ **The Perfect Gift** is coming! Save the date - December 10! Watch for opportunities to serve, donate and share the event with others.
- ⊙ **First Principles Bible Study Class** | NOV 6 through DEC 11, 10:45a in the north side of Gather 2. This 6 week course on Sunday mornings will teach you some fundamental skills for studying God's Word and how to apply that study to teaching others. For information and registration information visit ccames.org/classes or contact Ron Stubbs at rstubbs@ccames.org.
- ⊙ **Blinks Volunteers Needed** | for upcoming evening Basketball Evaluations, as well as for the upcoming Upward Basketball season. Barista training is available. Contact Marilyn Rohlf to find out more [jammr@isunet.net or 515-203-1018].



CONNECT GROUP STUDY

HEADS UP! #10 A Sharpened Focus 1 Peter 4:12-19

OVERVIEW: This CGS will focus on Peter's encouragement to persist in TRUSTING GOD to turn TRIAL into TRIUMPHANT JOY at the revelation and appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

BEGIN WITH YOUR HEART

There are times, are there not, WHEN GOD DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. James Dobson wrote a book with that title. The "fiery trial" He's permitted to disrupt our life just doesn't fit. It can really throw us off. "Unfortunately," Dobson notes, "many young believers—and some older ones too – do not know that there will be times in every person's life when circumstances don't add up – when God doesn't appear to make sense" (p.9)

When has this happened to you? Share it, and as you do, pinpoint specifically that which simply didn't make sense? Include what impact it had on your faith, or how it reshaped your relationship with God.

A LOOK AT THE WORD

This week's 1 Peter 4 teaching asks us "not to be surprised at the *fiery trial*" that intercepts our experience. We're not to think that "something strange is happening to us." **Peter suggests that tough trials be considered normal.** Hmm... Tough to do. Let's remember the "normal" experience of believers in the early days of the church. What can we learn?

What's happening in Acts 5?

- Read the circumstances vss. 12-21
- Read how Peter and John were treated vss. 21b-40
- Read how they responded to the Lord vss.41-42

What's happening in Acts 6-7?

- Read the circumstances 6:8-15, 7:51-53
- Read how Stephen is treated 7:54-58
- Read how Stephen is received 7:59-60

What's happening in Acts 12?

- Read the circumstances vss. 1-5
- Read how the Lord responded vss. 6-11
- Read the amusing reaction of believers! Vss. 12-17
- Read the outcome vss. 18-19

What are the things which should NOT surprise us?

- Matthew 24:44
- 1 Thess 5:1-11
- James 5:7-11
- 1 John 2:28-3:3
- 1 John 3:13

Admittedly, in a country like the USA, this kind of physical persecution for our faith is rarely experienced, though it certainly is by our brothers/sisters around the world. Still, in our setting, **what are we to learn from the experiences of early believers?** And, what confidence can we have in the Lord? (again, return and read 1 Peter 4:12-19)

MY LIFE- MY FAMILY-OUR MISSION

MY LIFE – James writes, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (1:3). How important is it for us not to face our "various" trials alone. **So, with whom are you sharing your tough stuff?** If something is gnawing at your life and faith, share it!

MY FAMILY – Launch a bit of a conversation about the things that can get difficult in our lives because we are Christians, eager to follow and please the Lord Jesus? **Let each family member identify at least one challenge.** Then, simply pray together for one another to trust God to come through in those hard times.

OUR MISSION – Each week, hundreds and hundreds come through our doors for Sunday GATHER worship services. **Their hearts are hungry for encouragement from God about the significant struggles of their lives.** THINK ABOUT how you can help people connect in a life-defining, life-encouraging relationship in Christ. WHAT we do with one another, regularly is so important (read Hebrews 10:24-25).