

Guide for Growth Group Hosts

Week #1: Why Do Bad Things Happen?

FIRST MEETING TIPS

*(Since this is your first meeting of the semester, have an icebreaker such as having everyone say their name and one interesting fact about themselves, etc. Next, see if someone can remember all of the names and interesting points. Lastly, dive into the questions! **You don't have to cover all of the questions in this guide.** If your group really resonates with a particular question, it's perfectly fine to spend more time on it. Have a great first meeting!)*

MAIN GROWTH GROUP SCRIPTURE

*"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." **2 Peter 3:8-9 (NIV)***

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- The scripture we just read tells us that the Lord is not slow in keeping His promises. Has there ever been a time in your life where you felt the Lord was slow to answer your prayers? Has there ever been a time when you looked back at your life and were glad that you didn't get everything you wanted when you asked for it?
- That same verse tells us that the Lord is patient with us. We should extend that same patience to others. How patient are you with others and where do you need to exercise more patience in your own life? (i.e. your drive to work, waiting in line at the grocery store, patience with your spouse, etc.)
- (Read the verse below) Sometimes bad things happen in the world (or in our life) because people hurt us. We can rest in the fact that Jesus has already overcome the world. Think about your own life. Has there ever been an instance in your past where you were hurt or disappointed by someone? If someone else was going through a similar circumstance, what biblical advice would you give them?

"...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
John 16:33 (NIV)

- Sometimes bad things happen to us because of the choices that we make - like choosing to cheat on our taxes, fudging the expense report at work, etc. We will often make those wrong choices despite the consequences. Imagine the scenario of an angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other. We've all experienced the temptation to do wrong. Think of a specific situation in your life. What did you do to overcome that temptation? What did you learn from that situation?

- Sometimes it appears that bad things are happening to us, but really God is doing something big in our life. Have you had an experience where something “bad” happened such as losing a job, but that “bad” situation turned out to be one of the best things that could have ever happened to you? Share it with the group.
- (Read the Verse Below) We all want patience and perseverance, but the Bible tells us that perseverance stems from the testing of our faith. Sometimes God is doing something in you to prepare you for the next level in your life, but the process isn’t always comfortable. Pastor Jeff often says, “God is more concerned with your character than your comfort.” How has your faith been tested either now or in the recent past? What do you think God was trying to do in you or what was He trying to prepare you for?

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” James 1:2-3 (NIV)

- (Read the Verses Below) Sometimes bad things happen simply because the world is broken. Sin came into the world as a result of Adam’s sin. Jesus (specifically His death on the cross) was the Father’s remedy for our sin problem. Even though the world is broken, we have help in the midst of the chaos. Have you ever been in a chaotic situation, but God gave you peace in the midst of that storm? Share it with the group.

“Sin came into the world through one person, and death came through sin. So death spread to everyone, because everyone sinned.” Romans 5:12 (GW)

“So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:21 (NLT)

- (Read the Verse Below) Aren’t you glad that God does not treat us as our sins deserve? When we ask for forgiveness, our sins are removed from us as far as the east is from the west. What does this verse imply about God’s love for us?

“[God] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:10, 12 (NIV)

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus is the answer for the brokenness that’s in the world. If you haven’t accepted Jesus into your life, simply repeat this prayer: *Jesus, I need you in my life. Forgive me for all of my sins and mess-ups. I’m tired of doing life alone and I need your help. Come into my heart and be Lord over my life. I believe in my heart that you are Lord, that you died for my sins, and that you rose from the dead. Thank you Lord for forgiving me and saving me. AMEN*

DIVE DEEPER

Go deeper during the week!

- A great way to dive deeper and learn more about Jesus is by attending the 101 Class at Heritage. You can stop by the Next Steps area in the Heritage lobby to sign up and get more information.
- Read the **daily devotionals** each day found at www.experienceheritage.org/blog. You can sign up to have them delivered daily to your email inbox by clicking here: <http://experienceheritage.org/Devotionals>.
- Read the **Main Growth Group Scripture** each day during your quiet time with God. What specifically is God saying to you through this verse?

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PRAYER GUIDANCE

(During the prayer time, pray for the entire group collectively. Before you pray, check to see if anyone has a special request.)

Growth Group Checklist

- (After the prayer, decide who will be bringing the snack next week and share any other announcements.)
- (Encourage the group participants to pray for each other during the week.)
- (Remind the participants that they can view the message each week on our website: <http://experienceheritage.org>)