

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

KNOW HIS POWER

OVER DISCOURAGEMENT



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GOAL: To know the greatness of God's power over discouragement.

GUIDANCE: Luke 15: 11-32.

GEM: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (PSALM 57:1).

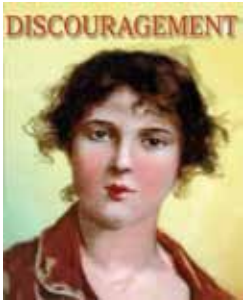
LEADER PREPARATION AND GUIDELINES

- (1) Each person needs a Bible, 3x5 cards, and a notebook for use as a journal.
- (2) Begin each lesson with prayer and ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- (3) Familiarize yourself with the material for each study and answer all the questions.
- (4) Stress memorization of the Scriptures.
- (5) Lead with enthusiasm and excitement. Remember, you set the tone.
- (6) Use the ideas in the *WNAC Program and Plan Book: THAT YOU MAY KNOW*.
- (7) Encourage each lady in your church to attend the study. Give invitations.
- (8) Start and end your meetings on time. Value the participant's time.
- (9) Allow time for ladies to share their own thoughts, but keep personal experiences to a minimum. You want to stress what the Bible says.
- (10) Allow time for fellowship either at the beginning of class or the end.

INTRODUCTION

While reading the first paragraph on page 22 under "Our Reactions," I couldn't help but notice each time the word "I" was used. I counted 18 times in one paragraph. Focusing on self is typical of all of us (if we're honest). Disappointments interrupts our lives. It messes up what "I" want. It turns all our plans and programs into chaos. I can empathize with this study so much. My life for the last 10 years has been nothing like I wanted, yet by the grace of God, I have been blessed and now have a closer walk with Him than ever before.

God knows the plans He has for us. We are His children and He wants what is best for us, even though we would never have chosen that path for ourselves. I would never have picked breast cancer to turn my life totally upside down. I would not have had my mother die unexpectedly or my dad be in a nursing home before his death from strokes. I would certainly not have chosen blepharospasms and experienced a degree of blindness for a few months. I did not want to have deteriorating disks in my neck and back making everyday tasks sometimes very painful. Worst



of all, I did not want my daughter to go through a painful divorce and disrupt her life or our family's lives. We are still suffering from that situation. I could name several more things that have taken place just in the past 10 years, but you get the picture. Life is not about what we want. It's about what God wants for us.

Even when the pangs of despair get almost too hard to bear, we know that God hasn't left us on our own. He is our shelter in the time of storms, our cleft in the rock, our fortress and our protector. He's there when no one else is. He's with us every step of the way—guiding, sustaining and comforting. Keep that in mind when your situations become unbearable. God is molding us into His image in the way we handle all the things life throws at us. We can hold our heads up even when the rain of discouragement is falling on us heavily.

Look to Him for the strength you need to face each new phase of your life. Each day brings new challenges. Nothing here on earth stays the same. God is the only absolute. Trust His promises, lean not on your own understanding and know you can hold His unchanging hand.

WEEK ONE: WITH OUR CHILDREN *(Luke 15:11-31)*

- ⊗ Write the GEM on a 3 x 5 card for memorizing this month: *“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast (Psalm 57:1).*
- ⊗ Go over the questions and answers for Week One, pp. 19-20.
- ⊗ How does the story of the Prodigal son look from your viewpoint?
- ⊗ Which son do you sympathize with?
- ⊗ How do you act when prodigals return to church or to the home?

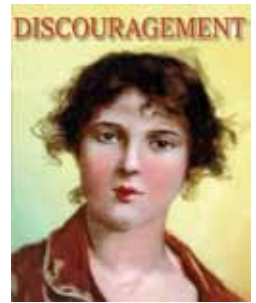
LEADER'S NOTE: Even when the prodigal returns home, the situation may be tense, awkward or sensitive. We may feel like we want to “fix” them or their situation, yet it's not up to us. I read somewhere that with our adult children, or other family members, it's up to us to make them happy and up to God to make them Holy. This doesn't work all the time, but if you remember it, it will help to smooth our many situations.

- ⊗ Upon their return, Is it difficult to treat people “normally”? Or do we “love” them from afar?
- ⊗ Do you have a lot of hurting people in your local church? Most churches do, but we may not always know the situations.
- ⊗ What can you do for these people? *(love them, pray for them, treat them normally)*
- ⊗ Have you ever had to encourage someone whose child has left home?
- ⊗ Name some Scriptures that help in these situations. (Proverbs 22:6, I John 5:13-15)
- ⊗ How do you get over a heartbreak? *(Don't dwell on it, get busy doing something for someone else, pray without ceasing, write your feelings in a journal, continue going to church, stay faithful and be positive)**
- ⊗ Make an entry in your journal to describe what you think the prodigal did upon his return.
- ⊗ Close in prayer and thank God for your children no matter in which scenario (Prodigal or Brother) they fit.

* *Dealing with heartbreak (any loss or grief) in healthy ways is vitally important. Merely stuffing it, pushing it down, pretending it is not there or projecting the grief (pouring ourselves into something else, whether a worthy cause or other people does not ultimately change or lessen our grief, but is at its essence, a form of denial. Two helpful resources are, **Good Grief**, a free downloadable Focus on the Family booklet about dealing with loss (www.parsonage.org/images/pdf/GoodGrief.pdf) and a website (parentsofprodigals.com).*

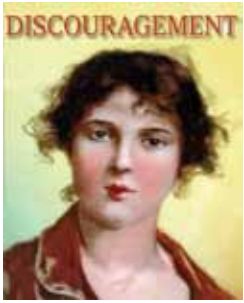
WEEK TWO: WITHIN OURSELVES (2 Samuel 11:1–12:25)

- ⊗ Read the GEM together aloud.
- ⊗ Go over all the questions and answers for Week Two, pp. 20-21.
- ⊗ Do you hide in the shadow of God’s wings when trouble arrives?
- ⊗ How does God overshadow us with His care? (*comfort, peace, protection, mercy, salvation, eternal life*)
- ⊗ Have you ever had to experience wanting to be with a child, grandchild, or anyone on a holiday or special event when they couldn’t be with you? How did that make you feel?
- ⊗ How do you feel when your world falls apart? (*Blaming yourself, unable to cope, angry, scared, panic stricken*)
- ⊗ Do you tell everyone you know or do you tell the Lord?
- ⊗ Who is the mender of broken hearts? (*Jesus—He sets everything right, but we need to trust Him for healing—Psalm 147:3; Isaiah 53:5.*)
- ⊗ Jesus experienced everything we are faced with. Read Hebrews 4:15-16 and tell what He gives us in our time of need. (*Grace*)
- ⊗ Do you search your heart often for unconfessed sin?
- ⊗ What do you do with idle time?
- ⊗ In your journal, list some things that will be productive for your spiritual life and for the Kingdom. (*Bible reading, study, prayer, visiting, meditation, teaching a class at church, helping with church activities and mentoring young people*)
- ⊗ Close in prayer. Thank God for the Holy Spirit’s leading in your life.



WEEK THREE: UNEXPECTED DISAPPOINTMENTS (Psalm 18)

- ⊗ Say the GEM together.
- ⊗ Go over the questions and answers for Week Three, p. 21.
- ⊗ Name some unexpected disappointments in your life.
- ⊗ How did you handle the situation?
- ⊗ Have you memorized Scriptures that can help when your life is in turmoil? (*Psalm 119:11*)
- ⊗ Write these verses down in your journal and try to memorize them: I Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6 (*Some renderings say “Be anxious for nothing...”—I like that.*); and Romans 8:38-39.
- ⊗ Why does God want us to rely on Him instead of anything else? (*Consider John 3:16. Max Lucado says, “Life at times appears to fall to pieces, seems irreparable. But it’s going to be okay. How can you know? Because God so loved the world”. God is our only hope in this world. Things and circumstances will always change. Be prepared with God on your side.*)
- ⊗ How can worry and stress affect you? (*Deteriorates physical health, lack of sleep, lack of peace, upsets schedules, indicates a distrust of providence*)
- ⊗ Is it easy to stop worrying when disappointments or discouragements are surrounding us? (*Of course not, because we’re human. But we can turn things around by giving it all to Jesus.*)
- ⊗ Do you remember Romans 8:28 in these troubling times? Let’s say it together----“All things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are called according to His purpose.”



- ⊗ As a group, write down any problem, disappointment, burden, whatever on a piece of paper. Put all of them in a metal bucket or something fireproof. Pray that you can let God have control of each situation. Then carry the container outside and set fire to the problems inside. As the smoke goes up, sing all three verses of the chorus, “God Is So Good”, p. 22, *Free Will Baptist Hymnal*, REJOICE.

WEEK FOUR: OUR REACTIONS (*Psalm 55-57*)

- ⊗ Have someone say the GEM aloud.
- ⊗ Go over all the questions and answers for Week Four, p. 22 together.
- ⊗ How do you react in times of trials? (*Withdraw in fear, get angry, cry, scream, talk, or pray*)
- ⊗ Why does Satan get so much pleasure out of us not trusting God? (*We’re doing exactly what he wants us to do, relying on anything other than God—1 John 3:8; Mark 14:38.*)
- ⊗ How do you help someone going through difficult, seemingly impossible situations? (*Be a friend--pray, love them, lend an ear, encourage, send cards, help any way you can.*)

LEADER’S NOTE: In the best of times, a friend is great, but in the worst of times, a true friend is a necessity. Of course Jesus is to be our very closest and best friend, but flesh and body friends can usually help when no one else can. They provide a physical being with arms to hug you, ears to listen to you, eyes to cry with you, lips for advice, and hands to help you.

- ⊗ What does the storms of life do to your faith? (*Draw close or push God away—Ephesians 6:10-11.*)
- ⊗ What do we all want these times to do to our faith? (*Make it stronger.*)
- ⊗ Can you trust God when your heart is breaking, when you are all alone, when you’re very sick, when your bank account is empty, and on and on?
- ⊗ How does our reactions to events affect others around us? (*Many times they are watching to see what we will do. So a good rule of thumb is, “Think before you react.”*)
- ⊗ Do you ever focus on your problems instead of the Lord? (*Psalm 140:7 tells us that God is the strength of our salvation and keeps our head covered in battle. Let Him fight your battles.*)
- ⊗ What does the verse in Isaiah 40:31 mean? (*We are to wait for God to act in His own time. Then we can soar like the eagles as He gives us strength.*)
- ⊗ When is God’s power the strongest? (*When we are weak—2 Corinthians 12:9-10*)
- ⊗ Read Nehemiah 8:10 and James 1:2. We can’t be happy all the time, but we can still have joy.
- ⊗ Can you praise the Lord until your worries disappear?
- ⊗ Make an entry in your journal and describe your reaction to a disappointing situation in your life. If you could change it next time, what would you do? Would you have given the situation more time? Sometimes, the worst thing we can do is rush ahead with an action or a decision.
- ⊗ Close in prayer. Ask God to give you strength to stay strong and faithful every day of your life no matter what comes your way.

IN CLOSING...

I once heard a preacher on the radio say, “Faith is like film, it’s best developed in the darkness”. When I’ve been through some very difficult things in my life, it seems my faith grew each time. We can look at unpleasant situations as our darkroom of preparation for beautiful prints of the future. God knows what is best. He will work everything for our good if we continue to love and obey Him. Leave your worries, disappointments, and dreams in His hands.