

## Small Groups Guide

2 Chronicles 20:1-19

Sunday July 9, 2023

1. Short opening prayer (one person or popcorn style prayer)
2. Group sharing time (time for everyone to talk about what is going on and how they are)
3. Follow-up on from last week on things people were going to fill their bucket up with and how they were going to make themselves more available to others to show love.
4. Go over sermon.
  - i. Do you remember what the sermon was about?
  - ii. Summarize sermon if no one can really remember: A positive, optimistic attitude will allow us to do truly remarkable things. We can be so positive and optimistic not just for the heck of it, but because an almighty God is on our side.
  - iii. Everyone answer: "Would you say that you are mostly an optimistic person or a pessimistic person?" Discuss.
  - iv. Recall the story of Jehaziel from 2 Chronicles 20. When everyone saw defeat by an enemy force, he saw a win because they had God on their side.
  - v. What are some other biblical stories or characters you can think of that demonstrate the power of positive/optimistic thinking because of our faith in God?
    - Read Matthew 14:22-33 ... Peter walking on the water. It took an entirely optimistic attitude to jump out of that boat onto the water!
    - Read parts or all of Judges 7 (definitely read first 7 or 8 verses) ... Gideon and his 300 soldiers. God was determined to show Gideon that it wasn't Gideon doing amazing things, it was God!
    - What other examples can you think like them?
  - vi. Can you think of people around you who are quite positive/optimistic how they live and think? How does that attitude affect you and others?
  - vii. How can you take some steps to be more optimistic? Go around and give examples.
    - Some ideas from Pastor Matt
      - a. Get rid of the junk thoughts. Write down all the negative thoughts that get in the way. The negativity in our mind occupies the space and time that we normally would use for positive/optimistic thoughts.
      - b. Intentionally write down the positive/optimistic thoughts you want to develop.
      - c. Practice meditation (sit or walk for 10 minutes focusing only on your breath ... this will help you to notice all the negative thoughts that are usually automatic).
      - d. Have an accountability person. This person should be honest with you about the tone of your thoughts and words alerting you if you're getting negative.
  - viii. Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2AzzSHfhPw> ... shows that we can create very negative thinking patterns that can become physically ingrained in our brains. Also shows that we can create new neural pathways and positive thinking habits.
    - Power of Cognitive Behavior Therapy to change your negative thoughts into positive ones.

- ix. Two worksheets: CBT Practice Exercises and Socratic Questioning
    - Have one person volunteer to do page one of the first worksheet (CBT Practice Exercises) out loud. Have one person volunteer to talk through the second worksheet (Socratic Questioning).
    - Without intentional work like this most people never change their negative thinking habits.
  - x. Watch <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/player/video/128460?session=128460>
    - Pay attention to how this woman's positive attitude makes a difference. Also notice that her positive attitude doesn't come from nowhere ... it comes from her committed faith.
  - xi. If there is time read:
    - Matthew 19:26
    - Philippians 4:13
5. Closing prayer
- a. Make sure to pray for positive and optimistic thoughts when possible. Pray that God reminds us that with God anything is possible

## **Youth Group Guide**

Luke 15:11-24

Sunday June 25, 2023

1. Short opening prayer (one person or popcorn style prayer)
2. Group sharing time (time for everyone to talk about what is going on and how they are)
3. Go over sermon.
  - a. Sermon summary: For June 25th continued our sermon series on dealing with difficult people. We dug further into how we deal with difficult people daily. We also read about some of the ways that Jesus dealt with difficult people. From those readings, we realize that Jesus didn't

handle all types of difficult people the same. He took a different approach for each one. We probably need to do the same thing with the difficult people in our lives. Near the end of the sermon, we talked about the reality that we must have attitudes of humility and forgiveness before we can truly love our enemy the way Jesus commanded us to. At the closing, we discussed that God doesn't see people the way we see them. We often see them as difficult all the while God sees them as a work in progress. We need to learn to see people the way God does, and they will help us greatly in dealing with difficult people (again this requires humility).

- b. Who are some people you really don't like? Give some real everyday examples of what they do that makes you not like them. For example, I have one person I don't like because she is always negative about everything I try to do.
- c. Why do you feel this way about those people?
- d. How do you respond to their unkindness?
  - i. Ex: Some people ignore them, yell at them, get revenge, gossip about them, etc.
- e. How do you think God wants you to treat those people?
- f. Summarize story of lost or prodigal son from Luke 15:11–24. In this story the son messed up real bad and really hurt his father. But when he came back home the father completely forgave him and welcomed him back home. He did that out of love even though their relationship was torn to parts and they should have been enemies.
- g. That story reminds us that if we forgive people we can find ways to love them.
- h. What does this mean for your everyday life?
  - i. You don't have to let people treat you badly just because you love them.
  - ii. You don't even have to talk to someone just because you love them.
  - iii. It might mean something simple like praying for them.
  - iv. The way you deal with every difficult person might be difficult. Ask God for help in knowing what to do.
- i. Exercise: Everyone take a scrap of paper and write the name of one person on it that you don't like (that you don't mind the rest of the group knowing about). Give the pieces of paper to one person who will read each name and pray for them. Then take your piece of paper back home and put it somewhere you'll be reminded this week to pray for that person.

#### 4. Prayer