SCRIPTURE CARD GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

"EXILE AND RETURN: THE KINGDOM FAR AND NEAR" MARCH 17

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Imagine you're looking through a crack in a doorway. You can see that there's something on the other side, but you can't see the whole picture. To really know what's on the other side you would have to open the door all the way. Reading the Bible can be like that. You might read a bit about David, or one of Jesus' parables, about Queen Esther or a talking donkey, some handwriting on the wall, and a guy that got shipwrecked. But how does it all fit together? What's the big picture of the Bible? Over six weeks, we're going to work our way through the one story that the Bible is telling, how God has been at work from the beginning in the Garden of Eden through the Old Testament to Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. We'll look back at what has happened and what it all means for what is happening now and what is to come.

Follow the directions below for a guided group discussion with a friend, in a family, small group, etc. Grab a Scripture Card (printed or electronic) and simply follow steps from 1 to 6 on this page and the next.



PRAY

About 1 minute

Open with prayer.



BIG IDEA

A minute to read

The cycle of rebellion and discipline reaches its climax as God allows Babylon to destroy Jerusalem, and carry His people away and into exile. Ultimately God allows the exiles to return to the kingdom to rebuild. In Jesus, God brings the Kingdom to us. Highways are made through wasteland, valleys, and mountains are leveled. curves are straightened, and rough places are smoothed. The restoration of all of creation has begun!



CONNECT

About 10 minutes

Describe a time and place where you felt known, loved, settled, and the most yourself?

What elements of that time and place do you think allowed you to feel that way?



March 17, 2024

²It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written: "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. ³ He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!'" - Mark 1:2-3 NLT

Reflect

A prayer to start...Father, as I read your word, please open my ears to hear and my heart to surrender to your purposes today.

Read the full passage in your Bible - Mark 1:1-18.
What is something that is catching your attention from the passage? Pause here, camp on this a bit, be curious.

John the Baptist had one job to do. What was it and how did he go about it?

How have you experienced God calling you to himself or back to himself after you have wandered?



DISCUSSION HELP:

Use follow-up questions to take the discussion deeper. Guide answers to be honest and real.

Can you say more about that?

How have you seen that play out in your life?

What does that stir up in you?

Has anyone else had a similar thought or experience?

What might God be inviting you to do?



DISCIPLE LIFE DISCUSSION

About 45-50 minutes. Read the Scripture above and discuss the questions there. Additional questions below.

Read 2 Chronicles 36: 11-23. Reflecting on the Babylonian exile and destruction of the temple, how do you think the exiled Jews felt about their sense of home, identity, and belonging?

The exiles may have felt "too far gone" for God to bring redemption. How would you describe the hope of Jesus to someone who may feel that way today?

Read Ezekiel 37: 26-27. Describe God's promises of restoration here.

Read John 1:29. Jesus comes to make his home among us, to bring a covenant of peace, and to make us God's people again. How have you experienced Jesus' presence, peace, and power recently? In what ways would you like to experience more of Jesus?





Read the prayer prompts and allow for a time of reflection.

Break into groups of 3-4. Share your prayer request with the people you are grouped with and pray aloud for each other now.

THE [DISCIPLE] LIFE

Pray

Let that last question be a springboard for prayer... maybe gratitude or even, at present, repentance.

Invite God to reveal his glory to you, the glory of his son, Jesus.

Thank God for his relentless love, always calling you back, never giving up on you.

Live It Out

Start with prayer...who is someone in your life who is living apart from God? Identify someone and pray for them

Ask God to show you how to reach out to them with his relentless love. Make a plan and do it.

Jesus, thank you for inviting me into this LIFE of following you today!



LIVE IT OUT:

About 2 minutes

Read the "Live It Out" section and invite the group to take the steps noted.