

Exciting Update: Streamlined Small Group Discussion Guide

We're moving toward a streamlined, one-page "Sermon Discussion Guide," a tool crafted to support growth in biblical practices within your small groups. This consistent, weekly guide empowers you to lead dynamic discussions on any sermon, speaker, or topic.

As we transition to this new approach, we will include additional resources along with the guide for the next few weeks. These will include an example of how to lead your group through the "Grow" section of the guide and other resources to help you prepare.

The "Sermon Discussion Guide" and additional resources will remain accessible for download on the app and website. If you have any questions, please contact your campus groups pastors.

Stay tuned: We're developing a one-stop resource page for group leaders. You'll get easy access to tools like the Sermon Discussion Guide, a new Scripture Discussion Guide, our updated REAP Bible Study Method, the 3 Circle Drawings, and various free commentaries, among other helpful materials!

Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

1. **Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
2. **No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
3. **No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
4. **Sharing.** Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

Sermon Discussion Guide

CONNECT

5-10 minutes

After reviewing the four rules of group discussion, begin your time with some connection questions to foster biblical community.

Personal Connection:

- What were your "highs" and "lows" this week?
- Last week, you mentioned _____. Can you give us an update?

Spiritual Connection:

- What has your time with God looked like recently?
- Where have you specifically seen God's work in your life lately?

GROW

20-30 minutes

Start the discussion by giving a brief overview of the **SERMON**. Ask everyone to look up the main passage in their own Bible or Bible app. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

Reflect:

- What was your main takeaway from the sermon?
- What scripture spoke to you?
- What insights did you gain about God, humanity, and your personal life?
- How did this sermon challenge or reinforce your current beliefs?
- Do you have a life experience that relates to the sermon's message?

Dig Deeper:

- What aspects of the sermon were familiar, challenging, or thought-provoking?
- Where does the key passage fit into the Bible's grand narrative (use the 3 circle gospel drawing for reference)?
- What cultural or historical details might the original audience have understood that differ from our understanding today?
- What are some cross-references to this passage that are present in other areas of the Bible?
- What theological themes were highlighted in the sermon?

Take Action:

- How would you describe the sermon to someone who wasn't there?
- How would you explain the sermon to a child?
- What specific action will you take this week based on the sermon's message and our discussion?

SHARE

5-10 minutes

Transition into a time of discussing how to live out what you learned by sharing with others:

- What is your main takeaway from our discussion? Who is one person you will share this with this week?
- How have you recently used your gifts to serve your family, our church, and our community?
- Who can you invite to church or our small group?
- How can you bless someone in your circle of influence?
- Are there any opportunities for our group to reach out to our community this week?

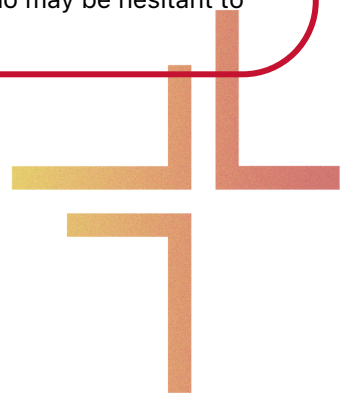
PRAY

5-10 minutes

Enter a time of prayer by considering the following questions:

- What is your plan for spiritual growth this week?
- What challenges do you anticipate this week?
- What personal prayer requests do you have for the week?

Take note of each person's requests. Spend some time praying for each other. Encourage those who may be hesitant to pray out loud.



Example of how the GROW section of the Sermon Discussion Guide might flow:

12.10.23 Sermon

Overview:

The Disciples in the Boat – God Gives Us Peace in the Storms
Luke 8:22-25

Pastor Chip is taking us through the classic story, The Tale of the Three Trees.

Second tree story recap:

In the story, the second tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean and said, I want to be a strong ship. I want to travel mighty waters and carry powerful kings. I will be the strongest ship in the world.

But instead of a mighty ship, the woodcutter shaped the second tree into a simple fishing boat. Too small and too weak to sail an ocean or even a river, he was taken to a little lake. Every day, he brought in loads of dead, smelly fish.

One evening, a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon, a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. He knew he did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through the wind and rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, Peace. The storm stopped quickly as it had begun. Suddenly, the second tree knew he was carrying the King of heaven and earth.

Reflect (8 minutes):

What was your main takeaway from the sermon?

What insights did you gain about Jesus?

Share a time when God calmed a storm in your life or gave you peace that could have only come from Him.

Dig Deeper (8 minutes):

Read Luke 8:22-25 as a group.

Where does this passage fit into the Bible's grand narrative?

What does the Bible say about peace? About fear?

How do you experience peace in the storms of life?

Take Action (8 minutes):

What specific action will you take this week based on the sermon's message and our discussion?

Summary of Commentary Insights on Luke 8:22-25

Authority Over Nature:

- In Luke 8:22-25, we witness a remarkable display of Jesus' authority. The disciples found themselves in a life-threatening situation as a violent storm raged around them. The waves crashed into their boat, and fear gripped their hearts. In this moment, Jesus stands up and rebukes the wind and the raging waters. What's striking is that nature itself obeys His command. The wind ceases, the waves grow calm, and a great stillness exists.

- This scene echoes Psalm 107:29, which declares, "He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed." Jesus' authority extends beyond human affairs; it encompasses the very elements of creation. This incident underscores that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Faith and Fear:

- While Jesus remained composed and at peace during the storm, His disciples were overwhelmed by fear. This contrast highlights the role of faith in our relationship with Jesus. Faith is the antidote to fear. It's about trusting in the authority and power of Christ, even when circumstances seem dire. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." When we exercise faith, it dispels fear and allows us to rest in Jesus' authority.

Peace in Christ:

- After Jesus rebukes the storm, there is a great calm. This transformation from chaos to serenity symbolizes the peace that Jesus brings into our lives. His presence alone can bring a profound sense of tranquility. As believers, we can experience this peace during life's storms, just as the disciples did in that boat.

- In John 14:27, Jesus reassures us: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." This peace surpasses understanding and is a precious gift from our Savior.

Trusting Him:

- This passage invites us to trust Jesus in the storms of our own lives. Just as He had authority over the stormy sea, He has authority over our challenges and uncertainties. Whether it's personal struggles, health issues, or complicated relationships, our trust in Him can bring about a similar transformation – from turmoil to tranquility.

- Trusting Jesus means acknowledging His authority and surrendering our fears and worries to Him. It means knowing that He is with us in the boat of life and will guide us safely to the other side, even when the waters are rough.

Cross References

The story of Jesus calming the storm is found in the following passages in the other synoptic Gospels:

Matthew 8:23-27: This account in Matthew is very similar to the one in Luke. It also describes the disciples' fear during the storm and Jesus' rebuke of the wind and waves, resulting in a great calm. It emphasizes Jesus' authority over nature and the disciples' amazement at His power.

Mark 4:35-41 Mark's version of this story parallels the accounts in Matthew and Luke. It recounts the disciples and Jesus in the boat during the storm, with Jesus rebuking the wind and calming the sea. The disciples' fear and Jesus' question about their faith are highlighted in this passage, emphasizing the themes of authority and faith.