Lessons For Connection Groups
Discussion Questions
For Connection Group Leaders

“January – Starting Out Right”

Each week you will want to include the following components in your Connection Group meeting:

1. **Welcome** – This is a time for our group to have a little fun together and to get better acquainted with each other. It is a fantastic opportunity for us to glean insights into the life of each member. Use the group opener questions for this section of the meeting.

2. **Worship** – This is an occasion for us to turn our focus in the right direction. We spend time in praise and adoration to the Lord for who He is and what He has done in our lives. Let the worship lead you into a time of Spirit lead prayer and ministry to each other.

   **Ministry:** Allow your group members to edify each other with the spiritual gifts that God has given to them. Pray for each other and allow the Spirit to minister through His people. Is there a prophetic word? (A word of exhortation, edification, comfort) Is there a word of tongues and an interpretation? Does someone need special prayer? Etc.

3. **Word** – As a group, we open God’s Word and we discuss the topic before us and learn how to apply the Word of God to our everyday situations. We take the sermon that was preached and make it applicable and practical to our everyday situations.

4. **Works** – We discuss and plan how we as a group will actively reach out to the lost and hurting around us. This is where we strategize how we will put “shoe leather” to the truth of God’s Word.

**Important note for CG Leaders:** Information in the light grey color is given to aid you in the discussion of the question. This information was emphasized in the message and needs to be stressed during the discussion of the question.
Lesson #2 – “Prayer and Fasting”

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-18

Group Opener: (Choose a question for your connection group to discuss.)

- Did You grow up in an openly “religious” home? Or was religion a private matter, unseen by you until later years? Explain.
- Where you taught any prayers as a child? What was one of the earliest ones you can recall?

Discussion Questions:

Group Facilitator – It is not necessary to use all the questions. Select ones that will stimulate the most response from your Life Group.

1. How important are spiritual disciplines in the life of a believer? What are some of those disciplines?
2. What are some specific disciplines that are important to you?
3. What “religious disciplines” are valued in your circles? In what way can they be used to impress others? When have you given into that temptation? Why?
4. Do you tend to join in with public religious displays, or do you avoid such disciplines as fasting, praying or giving altogether?
5. What attitudes does it take to practice these disciplines? How does that relate to the attitudes expressed in Matthew 5:3-11? When used properly, what is the value of religious disciplines?
6. What is fasting?
7. What are the different kinds of fasts mentioned in the Bible?
8. What are the spiritual benefits of fasting?
9. If fasting is a discipline we learn (not a normal activity we do), then what will motivate me to do so? What will get me started?
10. Why is prayer connected to fasting? Without prayer, what will fasting actually become?
11. What is prayer? Define it.
12. From the passage in Matthew 6, Jesus gives us a specific pattern to follow when we pray. What is that pattern? How does it pertain to the way we pray today?
13. If prayer is conversation with God, what are the two aspects of a healthy conversation with Him? (Answer: Talking and Listening) Most often, we think of prayer as us doing all the talking, but how important is it for us to listen to God?
Explain your answer.

14. Why is it important to listen when we are led by God to fast? How might fasting help our listening?

15. Have you ever done a prolonged fast? If so, what did you learn from it? How did it affect you spiritually? What was the hardest part of your fast?

**Intentional Discipleship:**

| How can this passage bring transformation to my life? What specific action do I need to take? What practical lessons can we share with those that we are discipling? **Write it down! Start applying it! Share it with others!** |

**CG Action Steps**

- What are some practical ways that our CC can step out in faith and demonstrate God’s love to the people around us?
- What leadership trainings do your members need to take? Have they all completed our IDT levels of spiritual development? If not, what is holding them back?
Lesson #3 – Praying with Power

Scripture: Colossians 1:9-14

Group Opener: (Choose a question for your connection group to discuss.)

- What was your favorite animal at the zoo as a child? Your favorite now?
- Who were your favorite TV or comic book heroes as a child?

Discussion Questions:

✎ Group Facilitator – It is not necessary to use all the questions. Select ones that will stimulate the most response from your Life Group.

1. What is Paul’s one request in verse 9?
2. What does it mean to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will?
   Answer: That you want what God wants for your life. You are saying, “Lord, let your will be done in me whatever it costs, whatever it takes, wherever it leads.”
3. God has a will (or desire) for your life. But you also have a will (or desire) for your life. When you pray, “Your will be done,” you are asking that His will take precedence over your will. What does this mean for me to pray this way? What are the implications for my life?
4. Only one will can be done at a time. Either God calls the shots, or you call the shots. Either He is in control or you are in control. It’s not easy to pray like that because it means giving up control of your own life. Why is it so difficult for us to give God the control of our lives? Why do you think we struggle so much with turning everything over to Him?
5. Why do you want to know God’s will? Is it so you can consider it, or do you want to know God’s will so that you can do it? Explain. Be honest.
6. Are you ready to love what He loves, to go where He sends you, to obey what He tells you to do, to suffer when that is required, to wait when that is required, to endure when that is required, and to rejoice when that is required? Explain. Do you struggle with any of what was just stated? If so, what?
7. What do you think about the following statement, “The will of God is more about who I am on the inside than where I am on the outside?” Agree. Disagree. Explain.
8. In verse 10, what is the purpose for Paul’s prayer request? Or, why was it important that they be filled with the knowledge of God’s will?

9. What are the four results that follow when we walk worthy of God and pleasing Him in everything? (see verse 10-14)

Observations from the sermon:
1. We will have a life that bears fruit (v. 10b).
2. We will have a life that grows in the knowledge of God (v. 10c).
3. We will have a life that endures in hard times (v. 11).
4. We will have a life that gives thanks continually (vv. 12-14).

10. Meditate for a moment on the following statement, “Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” (By John Eldredge, in his book “Wild at Heart”) What is it that makes you come alive? What is keeping you from doing that?

11. For too long we have thought the will of God was boring, dull, negative, tame, and something like homework in Algebra class. You have to do it, but you don’t have to like it. How wrong we are! To be filled with God’s will means that we are finally free to come alive. To be filled with God’s will means we are finally free to fulfill our destiny. To be filled with God’s will means we are free from the tyranny of following the world’s agenda for us. To be filled with God’s will means we are free to risk everything for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom. If you ever decide to seek God’s will, your life may be many things, but it won’t be boring. Where is your life right now? Is it alive with the will of God? Or, would you say that your life is spiritually boring?

12. The world needs people who have come alive through the knowledge of God’s will. And that’s a perfect description of the people who pray this prayer. Have you come alive?

Intentional Discipleship:

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CG Action Steps

- When was the last time that your CC sponsored an Alpha Course? When will you do the next one? Remember, our Connection Communities are always to see the harvest around them and seek to demonstrate the Gospel to them.

- Are you personally discipling others in their walk with the Lord? If not, what steps do you need to take to get started? Remember, each of us has been called to make disciples. Let us be faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20.
Lesson #4 – Stewardship – Understanding Who Is the Real Owner

Scripture: Psalm 89:1-18 (Key verses 11 & 12) (see also Psalms 24:1-2; Haggai 2:8; 1 Cor. 6:19)

Group Opener: (Choose a question for your connection group to discuss.)

- Have you ever been forced to break an important promise? How was it taken by the “Promisee”?
- What part of yourself was most mature in your early teenage years: body, soul, or spirit?

Discussion Questions:

Group Facilitator – It is not necessary to use all the questions. Select ones that will stimulate the most response from your Life Group.

1. How does the Psalmist define love in this Psalm (vv.1-2)?
2. Why do you think the Psalmist launches into a lengthy hymn to the Creator at this point (vv. 5-18)? What is the connection between God’s faithfulness and His might?
3. The psalmist’s God has power to create and defend. What other power does Yahweh have (vv. 14-16)? How is the true and living God different from the pagan gods (see Ex. 34:67)?
4. The foundational principle of stewardship is that God is the owner of all. So, what does that say about our relationship to the owner and the stuff entrusted to us? (Psa. 89:11-12)
5. If God is the owner, then what is my responsibility with what I have been given? (Psa. 89:11)
6. What does it mean to be a steward? What do stewards do?
7. As a manager I have a divine responsibility. As a manager I must learn to think like the owner thinks. I must manage the owner’s assets for the owner’s benefit. A manager carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he or she manages. So, how will this affect the way that I give? (1. I will give abundantly (1 Chron. 29:14). 2. I will give sacrificially (2 Cor. 8:1-5). 3. I will give joyfully (2 Cor. 9:7; Col. 3:1; Ex. 36:47)
8. As a manager we will give an account for how we managed what God entrusted to us. What are some areas for which we will be accountable? (1. The Owner will check how devoted we have been to Him (Rom. 12:1). 2. We will be accountable for our possessions - the things that He entrusted to us.)
(Eph. 5:15-17; Ps. 118:24; 74:16). 3) The owner will examine what we have done with the gifts and abilities He has granted us (1 Pet. 4:10)

9. If the examination were today, if the Owner called you to give an accounting this very day, what would the record say about your giving? Would it reflect a humble belief that you are only managing what He owns? Would joy and cheer mark your life as one who gives generously because you know your investment is gaining heavenly treasure for you? Some of us may need to rethink how we’re spending our resources for Christ and His Kingdom.

10. How would you rank yourself as a steward of God’s resources? How would your family rank you? How about others who are watching you?

11. What is your greatest struggle when it comes to managing God’s resources? Be honest.

Take a moment to pray for each other and to thank God for all that He has entrusted to you.

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Lesson #5 – Getting Back to The Book

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Group Opener: (Choose a question for your connection group to discuss.)

• Who were you named after? Where did they come from? Who else shares your family name?
• What would you like to discover about your family tree?

Discussion Questions:

✎ Group Facilitator – It is not necessary to use all the questions. Select ones that will stimulate the most response from your Life Group.

1. What was the occasion for assembling the people on the “First day of the seventh month” (v. 2; see Lev. 23:24; Nu. 29:1-6)? Why the public square instead of the temple for this activity?
2. How do the people first respond to the Book of the Law of Moses (vv. 3,5,6,9)? How do you account for this response?
3. What is the make-up of this large gathering? Who is helping them to understand the Scriptures “clearly”? Why can’t the lay people understand the Bible on their own?
4. What happens when God’s people rediscover God’s Word (vv. 9-12; see Dt. 16:14)?
5. How did the people demonstrate their appreciation and honor for the Word of God? (vv. 4-6) Is it something that God’s people should do today to show their appreciation for the Word? Why?
6. How did they present the Word to the people? Why is this the best method to approach God’s Word? (vv. 7-8)
7. Why did the people weep? Why is this a positive sign? (v. 9; see also Heb. 4:12-13)
8. Nehemiah and Ezra and other leaders told the people to stop weeping and to start celebrating, why? What resulted? (v. 10)
9. Notice the progression in Nehemiah 8:1-12: Teaching...hearing...understanding...applying...demonstrating...celebrating. What lessons can we learn from this? What happens to you when the Word of God is read and taught?
10. Who is in the second, follow-up study (v. 13)? What do they discover and do (vv. 14-17; see Lev. 23:34-43)?
11. How important was the reading of God’s Word in your own spiritual renewal? Which had the greater impact on you: Private Bible study or public preaching? Why?
12. When you heard the word and embraced the Gospel truth, did you weep and mourn? Celebrate with joy? Did you then give to the poor or reach out to others on the margins of society? How else did you spread the word?
13. What acts of God do you celebrate with regularity and joy as one of his pilgrim people?
14. What three activities from this chapter would be foundational to the renewal of a church? How could you Connection Group help in one such activity?

As a group, thank God right now for this precious book. The book that reveals God to us, that shows us our true condition, that tells us the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and that leads us all the way from earth to heaven. Take time to celebrate the goodness of God in giving you this wonderful book.

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**CG Action Steps**

- Take time this week to write an encouragement card to a member of our CG. Give them a verse that will comfort them and remind them of God’s goodness to them. Pray for one another each day.
- In what way can our group reach out and demonstrate the Gospel to someone who is going through a tough time? Don’t just talk about it – take action!