



1. ENOUGH OF THE BAD NEWS

ICEBREAKER



If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves**.

To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following questions:

How informed are you by the news today? Are you the type of person who likes to read the news all day long, catch the late news for updates, or do you stay away from it?

Share with your group.



WHAT TO EXPECT

Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...

We've got good news...and bad news. Actually, the bad news is the easy part because it seems like everywhere you go, you can find it! That's why we need to stay positive! In this session we will learn how to stay positive in the struggles and challenges we are facing.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE. Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.

Tip: CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. If possible, what is said in small group, stays in small group. One motto groups use is: Share "nothing, to nobody, never" outside of the group.

ONLINE Tip: MUTING OF MICROPHONES. Get familiar with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid outside noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) There are optimists and pessimists. Some pessimists say they're just "realists," but let's be honest - they usually look at the darker side of life too. Optimists are committed to looking at the brighter side!

What do you think of optimists? Some people get annoyed or even upset. It's easy to view optimists as disconnected from the world and unprepared for disaster. But optimism is not a denial of reality. It's not blind faith, either. Optimism is confidence in the successful outcome of our future! Optimism is hope, just like our hope in the Lord.

But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see Him for myself. Yes, I will see Him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!
(Job 19:25-27 - NLT)

Job was at the end of his rope. He had lost it all! His wealth, his kids, even his marriage appeared to be rocky. But through it all, he had hope and he was able to see the future with optimism.

You may be facing an impossible boss or job loss. You may have to deal with annoying neighbors or crushing disappointment. You may be facing the possibility of testing positive for the coronavirus or dealing with a health issue or some other diagnosis that you recently found out about. Whatever you're facing, you can be assured that God will be with you and help you as you trust and obey Him. This can help you stay positive.

Share about a time in the past when you or someone you know faced negative circumstances but they put their hope and trust in God to help them through it. How can you do this in your challenging circumstances right now?

2.) You've heard the phrase, "You are what you eat." It might be said that we are what we think. What consumes your mind controls your life. So it's important to stay in control of your thoughts, especially when it's easy to see the negatives in life.

Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. (Ephesians 4:23 - NLT)

The life you live is reflected in the thoughts you think. As you go about your day, different thoughts go through your mind. Some are good, others are bad. Some are positive, others are negative. It's up to us to manage our thought life. This can be done when we allow the Holy Spirit to control our minds.

What are some practical ways to stop and check our thoughts? (Ex. Reading God's word to make sure our thoughts align with God's word, inviting the Holy Spirit to take control of them, pray, listen to worship songs, etc.)

3.) Negative thoughts can be influenced by negative experiences. What has happened to us in the past can shape our view of the future. For many of us, we take a “worst-case scenario” approach. We will think of the worst possible outcome, believing that we are preparing just in case, and then our thinking becomes consumed by that worst-case scenario. But rarely does the worst-case scenario actually happen.

Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? (Matthew 5:27 - NLT)

Think of your thoughts as deposits in the bank. Positive thoughts, like hope and trust, are positive marks on your balance. Negative thoughts, like worries and fears are a drag. They can't add a single moment. Instead, they can take away from it.

Think of a time when you expected the worst and didn't get it. How did you feel when you realized your worries were for nothing?

4.) When we go through rough patches and feel overwhelmed by negative thoughts, one way to turn around to the positive is through our friendships. Often, it always seems that when we are down, others are up. And when they are down, we are up. That means we need to lean on each other in times of need.

*Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.
(Hebrews 10:24 - NLT)*

The strength you gain from a struggle is not just for you. It's so you can comfort others as they go through similar difficulties. And when you are facing struggle you can lean on their strength.

Talk about a time when you leaned on another person to help you get out of negative thoughts. Is there anyone you know who is struggling that you can reach out to this week in order to encourage and offer support? (There's no need to mention their name.)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

When the world goes negative, we need to go positive. That means changing the way we think. This week, when you encounter a negative thought:

- Stop the train of thought.
- Exit the negative emotions.
- Get on board with God's hopeful future for your life!



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.

Sample Prayer:

"Father God, we know that all around us there are tests, trials, and struggles. It seems that now more than ever there are opportunities for negative thoughts, hopeless feelings, and destructive behaviors. But Your Holy Spirit is always there to transform the way we think. Help us find the opportunities for optimism this week as we commit to stay positive! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!"



Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

DURING THE WEEK

Find Time To Read God's Word



The Power of Feeding on God's Word Daily

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

As we read God's word, we begin to see how God responds to things. Doing daily devotions re-patterns the way we think and transforms the spirit of the mind. Then, when we face similar situations as Jesus did, we begin to respond in the same way.

Doing devotions is an excellent way to record, process, and share what God is speaking to you. It's also a useful tool to use at a later time to reflect on and review some of the "gems" that you have received. Without writing these down, you may forget God's promises and some very important life lessons! While doing devotions is a very personal time with the Lord, you may want to share some of your daily devotions with your family, friends, co-workers, or small group. Through discussion, you may be able to look deeper into what God is speaking to you, gain new insights, and even encourage others.

Sample Devotion

SCRIPTURE

"If you do not carry your own cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple."
(Luke 14:27)

OBSERVATION

Self-sacrifice is a prerequisite for discipleship. Self-centeredness has no place in the life of a Jesus follower.

APPLICATION

It can be hard to focus less on self and more on Jesus, but when we do we are living out the very commands of Jesus.

PRAYER

God, help me to live a selfless life by always focusing on what You want instead of what makes me happy, comfortable, and content. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE...

I use God's mighty weapons, not those made by men, to kick down the devil's strongholds. These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding Him. With these weapons I can capture rebels and bring them back to God and change them into men whose hearts' desire is obedience to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:4-6 - LB)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. (Romans 8:18 - MSG)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 3

SCRIPTURE...

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

(Hebrews 4:12 - NIV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 4

SCRIPTURE...

Be alert and think straight. Put all your hope in how God will treat you with undeserved grace when Jesus Christ appears.

(1 Peter 1:13 - CEV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, will be revealed.
(Titus 2:12-13 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...
