**Structure of each session:**

**Sharing God’s Word**

* Open in prayer.

This prayer should be brief. More in-depth prayer will occur at the end of the discussion time.

* Follow-up

When appropriate, follow up on charges or questions from the last session’s Application.

* Ice Breaker

A question to lead in to the big ideas and essential questions for today’s discussion. Allow any responses to these. Don’t look for right or wrong answers.

* Reading

Read the text together. Round robin style, individual readers, etc. Use whatever method works for your group. It is recommended to try and involve all in reading at some point in the quarter together.

* Reflection Questions

Open questions to get the group thinking about what they have just read – suggested questions on discussion guides are merely suggestions. It may be simple enough just to ask something like “What do you notice here?” or “What strikes you in this text?” as a starting point.

* **Essential Questions**

A key question about the ideas presented in the text. Be sure to address these and allow time for thinking and responses. **This should take the bulk of your discussion time (20 minutes or so).**

* Applications

Prompts to move the conversation into personal applications of the text.

**Prayer**

Identify members of the group each time to lead prayer (possibly more than one each time) and perhaps someone to take note of prayer requests.

Prompt the group with a question like “How can we help you in prayer tonight?”

**Fellowship Time**

Set aside time intentionally to talk to each other. Work on sharing life and faith together.

**Passages & Key Concepts**

**1. Previewing the Promised Land – Numbers 13**

 Report with a Mixed Message: Who trusts in God?

**2. Losing the Promised Land – Numbers 14**

Without Faith it’s Impossible: What is the fruit of rebellion?

**3. Entering the Promised Land – Joshua 1:1 – 5:12**

When Faithful Followers have a Courageous Leader: Who do you trust to lead you?

**4. Claiming the Promised Land – Joshua 5:13-6:27**

God Brings Down the Walls: What victory has God given to you?

**5. Failing to Fully Claim the Promised Land – Judges 1-2**

Stopping Short of the Finish Line: Why is finishing well important?

**6. Failing to Fully Claim God as King – 1 Samuel 8**

Give us a King like the Nations Around Us: What does rejecting God as King look like?

**7. God’s Promise to and Through an Earthly King – 2 Samuel 7**

The House that God Built: Is there a throne that will last forever?

**8. Exile from the Promised Land – 2 Kings 17 & 25 and 2 Chronicles 36:15-23**

The High Price of Unfaithfulness: What happens when we turn from God?

**9. Return to the Promised Land – Ezra 3**

A Remnant Will Return: How does God bring His people home?

**10. The Coming King – Isaiah 2:1-4, 9:1-7, 11:1-7, 40:1-11**

What the Prophets Foretold: What will God do to restore His rule and kingdom?

**11. The Suffering Servant – Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-9, 52:13 - 53:12**

The Price of Redemption is Foretold: What price will God pay to restore His people?

**12. Preparing the Way – Malachi 3-4**

Where on earth are we going and how will we ever get there?

**1. Previewing the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* What have you seen lately that you wanted but couldn’t have?
* How does that feel?

Reading

* Numbers 13

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* What is the background for this event and what is Israel expecting?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How important is the report from the 12 spies?
* What good things do they tell about the promised land? What bad things?

Application

* Where is Israel’s faith tested in this event?
* What good things does God promise us?
* What challenges our faith in God’s promises?

**2. Losing the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Has your GPS ever led you astray?
* Which is easier to believe: good news or bad news? Why?

Reading

* Numbers 14

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* Discuss the difference between the faith of Joshua and Caleb and the other 10 spies.
* How is this a test for Israel’s faith?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How does Israel’s response to the bad news of the 10 spies affect their relationship with God?
* How does God respond to their rejection of His leadership?

Application

* What do we lose when we disobey God?
* How can you be like Caleb when the majority is against you?
* Who suffers when we sin?

**3. Entering the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* When is the last time you witnessed a great act of faith and courage?
* What did that do for you?

Reading

* Joshua 1:1 – 5:12

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* How are courage and faith connected in this text?
* What does God do to honor the faithful leadership of Joshua?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* When faithful leaders lead and faithful followers follow and give support, what happens?
* What is different about this event and the one back in Numbers 13-14?

Application

* Where is God blessing your life today?
* How important is courageous leadership to the church today?
* What does God want us to do regarding leadership in the church?

**4. Claiming the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* How do wars begin?
* How do you fight for the right?

Reading

* Joshua 5:13 – 6:27

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* How do you feel about the way Joshua handled this situation?
* What do you think about the battle plan against Jericho?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How does God’s way seem strange to us at times?
* When we obey God’s will and simply do what He tells us, who gets the glory? Who discovers God’s blessings?

Application

* Where is God’s hand in working in your life?
* How does this story show God working His plan for His people?
* Are there any walls in your life that you hide behind that God wants to take down?

**5. Failing to Fully Claim the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Have you ever left a job unfinished?
* What does that do to you?

Reading

* Judges 1-2

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* Where did Israel go wrong here? Why?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How important is it that we finish the work God gives us? What does that mean?
* When we compromise the Lord’s commands and grow lax in our responsibilities, what happens to our children’s faith?

Application

* What are we working for in this life?
* In what ways is the job never finished?
* When can we join with Jesus and say, “It is finished!”?

**6. Failing to Fully Claim God as King**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Name some openly Christian Presidents of the United States?
* Why is that less likely for future Presidents here?

Reading

* 1 Samuel 8

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* What do the people of Israel want? Why?
* How does God respond to their request?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How is Israel actually rejecting God as their king? What does that mean?
* What kind of relationship does Israel have with God here? How would you describe it?

Application

* How is God ruling in your life?
* When God is not ruling in your life, who does?
* How can we give ourselves over to God’s authority and rule more completely?

**7. God’s Promise to and Through an Earthly King**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Describe your dream house.
* Who would you have build it?

Reading

* 2 Samuel 7

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* Describe the background for this text.
* How is this part of God’s plan for His people, even today?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How is this a prophecy of Christ’s coming? What details does this give us about Him?
* What is David’s response to God’s gracious promise here?

Application

* How does God use specific people as leaders in His plan?
* What do these promises to king David have to do with us today?

**8. Exile from the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Have you ever had to move when you didn’t want to?
* Where would you hate to have to move to and why?

Reading

* 2 Kings chapters 17 and 25, 2 Chronicles 36:15-23

Reflection

* What strikes you in these texts?
* What was Israel’s spiritual condition when they went into exile?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* What happens when we turn from God?
* Why is it that this cycle of sin and punishment keeps happening?

Application

* When the punishment of God comes, how will we be able to stand secure?
* What can you do to find peace in a fallen world?

**9. Return to the Promised Land**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Describe recovery from a bad experience. What did you learn?

Reading

* Ezra 3

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* Who are those that lead the way home and what are they like spiritually?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How does God bring His people home?
* What challenges do they face upon their return?

Application

* What has God done in history that most dramatically shapes your view of Him?
* How is your life affected by this?
* What is so difficult about repentance?

**10. The Coming King**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* Describe the ideal leader.

Reading

* Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 11:1-7; 40:1-11

Reflection

* What strikes you in these texts?
* What conditions are described here under the banner of the coming King?
* Who benefits from His coming and why?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* What will God do to restore His kingdom?
* What are some things the coming King does?

Application

* How is Jesus King of our lives?
* What do we do to show that we have received Him as our King?
* What challenges does this bring for us? What blessings?

**11. The Suffering Servant**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* What hardships have you endured?

Reading

* Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53:12.

Reflection

* What strikes you in these texts?
* Why do you think it is that suffering is part of God’s plan for our redemption?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* What price will God pay to restore His people?
* Why did God consider us worth the cost? What does this say about God’s grace?

Application

* How is suffering valuable in your life?
* For what do you consider worth suffering?
* Can God suffer?

**12. Preparing the Way**

*Open in prayer.*

Ice Breaker

* What do you have to do before you can plant a garden?

Reading

* Malachi 3-4

Reflection

* What strikes you in this text?
* How do you know that God is a planner?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

* How does God prepare His people for the coming of Jesus?
* What things need to be in place before, during and after He comes?

Application

* What prepared you to accept Jesus as the Christ?
* How can we help prepare others for His rule and work in their lives?
* Who are you helping prepare to receive Him?