

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

To prepare for class, take time during the week to pray, read the lesson's scriptures and look over the questions and think about your answers.

**Structure of each session:**

### **Sharing God's Word**

- Open in prayer.
- Opening question (warm up question)
- Read the passages and discuss the questions
- Finish with prayer, taking requests and praying for us to apply the lessons learned from the scriptures and discussion.

## **Passages & Key Concepts**

### **The Kings**

**1. Saul: Give Us A King, Like the Nations**

**2. David: The King After God's Heart**

**3. Solomon: The Wise Man King**

**4. Asa: The "No Other God's" King**

**5. Hezekiah: The Praying King**

**6. Josiah: The Reforming King**

### **The Prophets**

**7. Elijah: The Kingly Prophet of Israel**

**8. Jonah: The Resistant Prophet**

**9. Isaiah: The Messianic Vision Prophet**

**10. Jeremiah: The Weeping and Warning Prophet**

**11. Ezekiel: The Exiled Prophet**

**12. Malachi: The Cliff Hanger Prophet**

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### 1. Saul: Give Us a King Like the Nations

#### Read 1 Samuel 13-15 & 31 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer

Opening discussion: Don't add to, or take from God's commandments. How would breaking this corrupt God's people? What benefits do we get from strictly following God's word?

- ***Read as a group: 1 Samuel 13:1-14***
- How did Saul disobey God here? Why was this so serious? What does fear do to make us justify disobedience to God's word? How can we avoid this trap?
- What do you think about Saul's punishment? Does it seem fair? Why or why not?
  
- ***Read as a group: 1 Samuel 15:1-3***
- Why did the Amalekites fall under this severe judgment from God? What does this show us about God's nature and judgments? How should we respond to this truth? Should we fear God above all else? Why or why not?
  
- ***Read as a group: 1 Samuel 15:7-23***
- What did Saul do wrong here? Why? What was God's response?
- Why did Saul build a monument to himself? What has happened to this once humble king? How did this demonstrate about Saul's view of himself, and his view of God?
- How did Saul "redefine" his behaviors to take the blame off of himself? How did that work for him? Can anyone explain away their disobedience to God? How does trying to do so reveal our character?
  
- ***Application: Obedience to God in both Old and New Testaments starts with hearing God's word. If we have faith, we trust in God and follow His words with reverence and obedience. Trusting and obeying work together. Fear of God and love for God join together as well to motivate us to do what God tells us to do. God wants us to be close to Him. He disciplines us to help us become more like Him. God's judgements range from gentle correction to severe punishment. Walking closely to God, even when it is hard and painful, brings God glory and assures eternal blessings for us.***
- Why is partial obedience to God insufficient? What are some examples?
- How can fellowship with strong Christians help us obey God more fully in all areas of our lives?
- To obey is better than sacrifice. How can we avoid substituting a sacrifice for obeying?

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Close in prayer

### 2. David: The King after God's Heart

#### Read 1 Samuel 16-17 and Psalms 23 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer. Opening discussion: What qualities do you look for in a person who will lead our nation? What is the most important quality in your mind?

- ***Read 1 Samuel 16:1-10 together***
- God told Samuel to anoint Saul as king (see 1 Samuel 8-9). Because of Saul's disobedience, God told Samuel that Saul would be removed from being king and the kingdom would be given to another, who was better than Saul. Thus the new king was chosen by God based on the heart of the one Samuel would anoint.
- What qualities does God look for and how is this different from the way we see things?
- Why did Samuel think Eliab was the Lord's choice? What is the irony between here and 1 Samuel 10:23-24?
- What does verse 1 Sam. 16:7 suggest about the qualities God considers to be most important?
  
- ***Read 1 Samuel 16:11-13 together***
- What about David seemed to hinder him from qualifying for the position of king?
- How did David's shepherding work prepare him to serve as king?
- What did David's watchfulness and care for sheep say about David's character?
- Based on this passage, and Psalm 23, what qualities qualified David to be king?
  
- ***Application: God chooses people to serve His purposes. None are perfect, yet some demonstrate qualities that are more godly than others. Three things God esteems: a humble heart, a contrite spirit, and a reverence for God's word. (Isaiah 66:2). Do we value these and pursue them?***
- Who do you identify with most in this: Samuel, Jesse, Jesse's sons, or David. Why?
- Did you know that God has chosen you to serve Him? How does this impact your life?

Close in prayer

### 3. Solomon The Wise Man King

#### Read 1 Kings 3, 4, 11:1-10 for class preparation

*Begin with Prayer.* Opening discussion: Who do you trust to give you wisdom? What sources do most people seek for this?

- ***Read 1 Kings 3:1-9 together***
- If God told you to ask for whatever He should give you, what would you say? Why?
- Solomon asked for wisdom and understanding. What did that reveal about him?
- When do you feel inadequate? How would God's wisdom help you?
  
- ***Read 1 Kings 3:10-13 together***
- God was pleased with Solomon's request. Why? How important is wisdom to you?
- God gave Solomon much more than he asked. What does that reveal about God? Where has God's generosity been shown to you?
- How was Solomon's wisdom used to build up the kingdom of Israel?
- What books of the Bible are attributed to Solomon? How have these shown Solomon's wisdom?
  
- ***Application: Solomon did not ask for riches, but God gave him wealth along with wisdom. God supplies the needs of those who seek Him. But most people are not given huge wealth and power, yet all of God's children have access to His wisdom. How does Jesus' life demonstrate wisdom when wealth is missing?***
  
- When you consider your priorities and compare them to Solomon's, what do you see?
- What is the wisdom, wealth and power God gives to all His children? How are these better than what Solomon received?
- Heaven is worth the wait. What happened to Solomon in His older years that shows how we can lose the gifts of God if we are not faithful?

Close in prayer

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### 4. Asa: The “no other gods” king

**Read 2 Chronicles 14-16 for class preparation**

**Begin with Prayer. Opening discussion: Who needs a clean break from their past? Why?**

- *Read 2 Chronicles 14:1-5 together*
- What does the Bible say about Asa’s rule as king?
- How did his faithfulness impact the lives of those in the kingdom?
- What does it mean to seek the Lord (vs 4)? Practically speaking, how does seeking the Lord impact us individually? How does it impact those around us?
- Devotion to God and to doing God’s will with strong determination has influence on others as well as ourselves. How does repentance and throwing off ungodly influences play a part in this?
- What kinds of “idols” are prevalent in our culture today? Why are they appealing? What dangers do they pose to Christians of different ages? Youth? Young families? Older?
  
- *Read 2 Chronicles 15:8-19 together*
- What forms of idol worship are in our culture today? What makes them appealing? How are these dangerous to Christians?
- How should we treat idolatry when our own family members fall into it?
- Asa was thorough in cleansing away idols from Israel. Why is this important? How should we imitate this act of faith in our lives?
  
- *Application: Asa removed idols, but also commanded Judah to seek the Lord and follow His word. This resulted in a revival and restoration of faithfulness among the people. God used Asa to bring this about for the nation. God can use us to bring about restoration in our own families and among those close to us.*
  
- Has your family background kept you from serving the Lord? How is Asa a helpful example for you?
- Idols take the place of God in our lives. Of what temptations are you most vulnerable?
- How do you overcome allowing “other gods” to lead you astray? What characterizes a life without idols?

Close in prayer

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### 5. Hezekiah: The Praying King

Read 2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chronicles 29-30 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: If your family was facing a great danger, who would you turn to for help?

- ***Read 2 Kings 18:28-32 together***
- How must it have felt to hear the warning of this Assyrian warrior?
- How have you been tempted to lose your trust in God and give in to the ungodly commands of powerful men? How would you respond to threats like this?
  
- ***Read 2 Kings 19:1-7 together***
- What was Hezekiah's first response to this threat? What does this reveal about Hezekiah's character and faith?
  
- ***Read 2 Kings 19:14-19 together***
- What did Hezekiah do with the letter from the Assyrian army? Why did he do this?
- When have you spread out before the Lord something threatening to you? What happened? How did God respond?
- How did Hezekiah begin his prayer? Was this important? Why or why not?
- What reason did Hezekiah give to God for God to save them? How is this helpful for us in our prayers?
  
- ***Application: Psalm 6:9 says, "The Lord has heard my plea for help; the Lord accepts my prayer. God hears the cries of His children. God wants us to pray to Him in faith and seek His strength to fight our battles. God fights for us and works to bring us to Himself. May we determine to spread out our cares and needs before Him in faith."***
  
- What are hopeless situations in life where prayer is the only tool?
- Does this story in the life of Hezekiah encourage you to pray? Why or why not?
- What prayer requests do you have right now that this group can pray with you about?

Close in prayer.

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### 6. Josiah: The Reforming King

**Read 2 Kings 21:19– chapter 23, 2 Chronicles 34-35 for class preparation**

*Begin with Prayer...* Opening discussion: What spiritual training did you have growing up? How did this affect your faith?

- ***Read 2 Kings 21:19-24 together.***
- What was Josiah's father like? How would you describe his relationship with God?
  
- ***Read 2 Kings 22:1-7 together.***
- What is the significance of naming Josiah's mother?
- What kind of relationships do you think had an impact on Josiah's faith? Why do you think Josiah decided to be like David?
- David wanted to build the temple. How did Josiah demonstrate this same concern for God's temple?
  
- ***Read 2 Kings 22:8-13 together***
- How did the words of God's law impact Josiah? What was his response? How might his knowledge of this father and grandfather's lives have shaped his thinking?
- Isaiah 66:2 The Lord says, "This is who I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and who trembles at my word." How did Josiah demonstrate all these?
  
- ***Application: Josiah took the throne at the age of eight! Kings always had influencers around them who they used and counselors and advisers. Josiah's faith and dedication were an amazing turnabout from his father and grandfather. Somehow God instilled in him the desire to follow in the footsteps of David and seek God. (2 Chron. 34:3). When he was about twenty years old, Josiah began purging Judah and Jerusalem of idol worship. Jeremiah the prophet may have had influence in Josiah's life, as Jeremiah began to prophecy during this period.***
  
- What did Josiah do that impresses you most? Who have you seen that demonstrates such dedication and faith? How have you been influenced by people of strong faith? How have you influence others to be faithful?
- Has anyone told you that you have helped them have a stronger faith? What are some things you can do to help restore faith in others?

Close in prayer

## 7. Elijah: The Kingly Prophet

### **Read 1 Kings 17-19 for class preparation**

*Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: When have you taken a bold stand for the Lord? What happened?*

- ***Read 1 Kings 18:17-21 together***
- Imagine Elijah challenging leaders of our government today. How might he express his challenge?
- When Elijah issued his challenge, why did the people stay silent? Why do people stay silent today?
  
- ***Read 1 Kings 18:22-24 together***
- The prophets of Baal represented the faith of the Ahab and Jezebel. What did Elijah do to demonstrate they were false and their god, Baal, was impotent?
- Why did the prophets of Baal believe that their idol would perform a miracle? How is that different from Elijah's faith?
  
- ***Read 1 Kings 18:25-29 together***
- What did the prophets of Baal do to persuade him? What happens when we put our faith in "gods" that are not God?
  
- ***Read 1 Kings 18:36-39 together***
- Notice the contrast between Elijah's prayer and the appeals of the false prophets to Baal. What is significant about this?
- Does God answer prayers today like those of Elijah? What does James 5:13-20 tell us about prayer?
  
- ***Application: Elijah took a bold stand for the Lord. He challenged the false prophets of the false god of His day. His relationship with God was obviously very different from their "relationship" with Baal. Yet, they had the popular position even with the king and queen. We have opportunities to make a stand for the Lord in our time. Our faith and prayers can make a difference and bring glory to God.***
  
- What is the main point of this event? Was this the work of Elijah for God, or the work of God through Elijah? How would you describe this and what difference does it make?
- How do you address differing viewpoints about God? How could Elijah's example help?
- In what ways does Elijah's faith encourage you? How will you stand up for the Lord?

Close in Prayer



## **8. Jonah: The Resistant Prophet**

### **Read Jonah for class preparation**

*Begin with prayer... Opening discussion: What excuses do people use to avoid doing God's will?*

- ***Read Jonah 1:1-3 together***
- What did God tell Jonah to do? What did Jonah do?
- Why do you think Jonah fled to Tarshish? Why not just stay home? What do you imagine Jonah was thinking?
  
- ***Read Jonah 1:4, 7-12 together***
- What is ironic about what Jonah told the sailors about himself and God? How did his actions and words contradict one another? Why are our actions and words important when we share God's word with others?
- Did Jonah's counsel to throw him in the sea reflect God's will or is Jonah just being rebellious still? Some think Jonah would rather die than go to Nineveh. Some think Jonah just knew he deserved to die for bringing this trouble. What are your thoughts?
  
- ***Read Jonah 1:17-2:4 & verses 9-10 together***
- Were God's actions in verse 17 God's judgment or God's mercy? Explain. How did this bring Jonah to his senses?
  
- ***Read Jonah 3:1-5 together***
- How did Jonah respond to God this time? What was his message to Nineveh? What is unusual about this sermon?
  
- ***Read Jonah 3:10-4:11 together***
- What were God's questions to Jonah? What do you think God intended for Jonah to understand?
- God's compassion on the lost is clear. Do you think Jonah got the point? Do we?
  
- ***Application: Jonah's book leaves it open as to whether the prophet got the point. This open ended ending causes us to ask ourselves, are we like Jonah?***
  
- Who are the Ninevites in your life? What would it take to get you to go share the gospel with them?
  
- Close with Prayer

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### 9. Isaiah: The Messianic Prophet

#### Read Isaiah 6 and 53 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Is serving God a privilege or a burden? Explain.

- ***Read Isaiah 6:1-4 together***
- God revealed Himself to Isaiah in a powerful way here. What is significant about the timing God chose? Why might this be important?
- How does God reveal Himself and show His glory today?
  
- ***Read Isaiah 6:5-7 together***
- What did Isaiah see? What are some of the details? Why did Isaiah's thoughts move from seeing the awesome glory of God to seeing himself? What did this contrast between God's glory and his condition do to Isaiah? What did Isaiah do?
- Imagine this all ended at verse five. Why do we often end our view of God with a sense of inadequacy?
- How does God change our condition to prepare us for service?
  
- ***Read Isaiah 6:8-10 together***
- Why did God ask "Who shall I send and who will go?" Why not just command Isaiah?
- Why would God send a messenger to those who will not listen?
  
- ***Application: The prophet Isaiah saw the glory of God. He was never the same after this encounter. Isaiah worshipped God, but also recognized that he was unfit to be in God's presence. This is when God made Isaiah fit for service. God then called for a servant and Isaiah answered, "Here am I, send me." Read Isaiah 53 and discuss the questions below.***
  
- Have you seen God's glory? Where is God's glory seen for the world today? Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." How is the cross a scene of God's glory?
- How has your encounter with God's glory changed you?
- How do our sins prevent us from serving God? Where does God need to cleanse you and what might God's call on your life be?

Close in prayer

## 10. Jeremiah: The Weeping and Warning Prophet

Read Jeremiah 1 & 20 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: What's the most difficult assignment you have ever had?

- ***Read Jeremiah 1:4-6 together***
- When did God make plans for Jeremiah?
- What does this tell us about God? What does it tell us about Jeremiah?
  
- ***Read Jeremiah 1:7-10 together***
- What was Jeremiah's excuse? Does this sound familiar? Who else (even today) does this and why?
- How did God provide for Jeremiah? How does God provide for us today?
- What has God given us so that we can accomplish the mission He has given us today?
- What is our mission from God?
  
- ***Read Jeremiah 1:11-16 together***
- What vision did Jeremiah see and what did it mean? God's word will be accomplished. He will see to it. Does that comfort you or make you worry? Explain.
  
- ***Read Jeremiah 1:17-19 together***
- What kind of message does the Lord give Jeremiah to deliver? How will people respond? How did God prepare Jeremiah to deal with the opposition? How does God prepare us?
  
- ***Application: Jeremiah's job was to deliver the word of God faithfully. This would be his success. God calls us to share the gospel. Whether anyone listens or not, we have a mission. Jeremiah suffered greatly for his obedience to God. His life is an example of living for God in a world that resists God's word. God supplied Jeremiah with friends and support, but often they were not able to intervene. Jeremiah's suffering is an example for us. May we find strength to endure whatever may come as we follow Jesus.***
  
- What are some excuses people have for not living in obedience to God?
- What reassurances (and warnings) does God give us as we follow Jesus and confess our faith?
- How does suffering work to make our faith stronger?

Close in prayer

## 11. Ezekiel:

### Read Ezekiel 33 and 37 for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: Why do people have alarm systems in their houses and cars?

- ***Read Ezekiel 33:1-9 together***
- What was the role of the watchman in Israel in the days of Ezekiel?
- What happened if the watchman did not sound the warning when the enemy came?
- How was Ezekiel to serve as a watchman (vs 7-9)? What was his specific responsibility and how would Ezekiel himself be responsible to God?
  
- ***Read Ezekiel 33:10-11 together***
- What does this show us about God? What are God's desires?
- What do people blame God for today? How do these accusations hold up in light of vs 10-11?
  
- ***Read Ezekiel 33:30-33 together***
- What are people saying about Ezekiel and why? Why do they come to hear Ezekiel preach?
- The good news is that people were flocking to come and hear Ezekiel. What is the bad news?
- Why did the people come and listen but not obey? What does God want for us when we hear His word?
  
- ***Application: God made Ezekiel the watchman for the house of Israel. Ezekiel's job was to sound the warnings of God's judgments. The words of Ezekiel seemed entertaining to his listeners, but they did not hear him with faith so that they obeyed. What is God's word of warning for today? Jesus declared it: The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news! The King came to us! Now we must come follow Him, and call others to do the same.***
  
- In what sense are we watchmen for those around us? How does this relate to sharing the gospel?
- What are some reasons people resist the role of being a watchman and sharing the good news and warnings of God's word?
- How can you be on watch this week?

Close in Prayer

## 12. Malachi

### Read Malachi for class preparation

Begin with Prayer... Opening discussion: What difficult message have you had to give to someone? How did it go?

- ***Read Malachi 1:1-2 together***
- God declared His love for His people. How does God declare His love for us today?
  
- ***Read Malachi 1:6-8 together***
- What does God call himself in verse 6 (three metaphors)? To whom is God speaking? How do these three metaphors describe God? What honor should God be given here?
- How did the priests of Malachi's day despise God's name? What kind of offerings were they giving to God? What warning does this give to us today?
  
- ***Read Malachi 1:9-11 together***
- How did God respond to the offerings of His people here? What did God say He would rather have them do if this is how they continue to worship Him?
- What does verse 11 tell us about the honor of God? Where will His honor extend on this earth? How will God's name ultimately be treated?
  
- ***Read Malachi 1:12-14 together***
- According to vs 13, how do the priests feel about offering God sacrifices? How can we apply this to ourselves today?
- Do you think people try to "con" or deceive God? Explain.
  
- ***Application: Malachi spoke plainly about the religious establishment of his day. He called out the priests and spoke God's word boldly and strongly. When worshippers become weary in well doing and lose their love for the Lord, Malachi has a message to turn our hearts back to God. Giving, Praying and Fasting are three expressions of worship that Jesus speaks about in Matthew 6. God is worthy of our best.***
  
- What does your attitude toward worship reveal about your relationship with God?
- How can we rekindle wholehearted love for the God who so loved us, that He gave His Son?

Close in Prayer