

***What We Can Expect from God Now:
Seven Spiritual Truths for Trusting God in Troubled Times***

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LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK 1

Advance reading: Pages 1-11

Introduction

As leader, briefly share with the group why you are looking forward to doing the study together. Explain that you are going to begin each session with a couple of “Focus” questions, which are designed to help everyone get into the subject prior to actually discussing the book. Urge them to answer the questions personally, not theoretically.

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. How has this global pandemic affected your faith?
2. In the midst of all the fear and uncertainty, what are you expecting from God?

**Spiritual Truth 1: Remember your limited ability to understand the will and ways of God.
Take whatever God offers.**

Discuss key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Isaiah 55:8-9

Discuss: How does the word from Isaiah 55:8-9 support Spiritual Truth 1?

Read: Isaiah 55:1-3

Discuss: What do you think Isaiah is referring to when he writes this invitation? How do these verses speak to you?

Read: Luke 24:13-22. Key verse: Luke 24:17

Discuss: How does the mental state of the disciples on the road to Emmaus mirror how you or others may be responding to the pandemic (or some other current crisis)?

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. What questions do you really want God to answer for you?
2. Though you may not understand what God is doing or why God does not seem to be helping more, how are you taking advantage of what God is offering to do for you?

WEEK TWO

Advance reading: Pages 12-21

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. What important issues or decisions have emerged for you due to the global pandemic?
2. How do you tend to respond to the big challenges? Do you tend to fight, flee, or freeze?
 - a. Fight—try to overcome the challenge, lash out, overpower people or circumstances.
 - b. Flee—run away from the danger or unpleasant circumstance, or
 - c. Freeze—become stuck in indecision, unable to move one way or another, become passive, letting others or circumstances make the decision for you?

Spiritual Truth 2: Expect God to be at work in your life, leading and guiding you; and act accordingly.

Discuss key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Proverbs 3:5-6

Discuss: How does this proverb apply to a pandemic?

Read: James 1:5-6

Discuss: What kind of wisdom do we need from God in such times?

Read and discuss the first paragraph on the top of page 18.

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

How are you taking a *both-and approach* to the current crises? That is, how are you *both* taking responsibility for leadership in times of crisis *and* trusting in God to lead and guide? (Example?)

Conclusion—Managing our fight-flee-freeze responses

1. Be self-aware. Know how you tend to respond in a crisis.
2. Quiet yourself
 - a. Take several deep breaths.
 - b. Put the situation, decision, and your response into God's hands.
3. Be thoughtful
 - a. Identify what is your responsibility in this crisis. E.g. to care for self or others, a decision that is needed, an obligation you must fulfill.
 - b. How is your instinctive response influencing your ability to assess the situation and take responsibility?
 - c. What kind of help do you need from God to handle the crisis and in taking responsibility for what you need to take responsibility for?
4. Practice listening for God's voice and the leading of the Holy Spirit through Scripture, others, and circumstances on an ongoing basis.

WEEK THREE

Advance Reading: Pages 22-31

Introduction

Action-takers among us. For example, the heroism and dedication of countless doctors, medical workers, researchers, and other public servants, some of whom are literally risking their lives to save others, is humbling and inspiring.

Positive thinkers, those who are refusing to be imprisoned in their hearts and minds, even if their bodies are locked down. These inspiring, glass-half-full folks are seeing opportunities everywhere and are making the most of them—more time with family, space for creativity and music, quiet and rest, reading and reflection, communication with friends, and so forth. They are learning new things and finding meaningful ways to show Christ's love to those near and far.

Overwhelmed Observers For those hit hardest by the coronavirus, lockdowns, or closure of businesses, there is a great deal of pain, fear, and loss. Some feel like Job, whose children were suddenly killed, and health destroyed. All he could do was sit on the ground, weeping or calling out to God, grappling with a tragedy beyond comprehension.

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. Would you describe yourself primarily as a) An Action-Taker, b) Positive Thinker, or c) Overwhelmed Observer in the midst of this pandemic? Give an example.
2. What thought or feeling is most influencing your response to the pandemic right now?

Spiritual Truth 3: Expect your loving God to strengthen your faith, build your character, and restore your hope through your suffering.

Discuss key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Romans 5:3-5

Discuss: How does God want to work in you through your sufferings? How does this work in practice?

Read: Romans 8:28-29

Discuss: Based on these verses, what is the good that God has in mind? What does that look like in an individual's life?

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. Where can you see God bringing good out of the present crisis?
2. How can you see God using your suffering to make you more like Jesus Christ?

WEEK FOUR

Advance Reading: Pages 32-43

Introduction

The idea of suffering with Christ might sound noble, but few of us truly want to do it; and, in any case, few of us in the USA are ever subjected to it. However, on any given day, many Christians around the world are being discriminated against and even persecuted because of their faith. Christ told us disciples to expect it. And Paul and Peter considered it a great honor. So, how should we think about suffering for Christ, and is there any connection to what we're experiencing during this pandemic?

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

Have you ever suffered for your faith in Christ? If so, what happened?

Spiritual Truth 4: Expect to share in the sufferings of Christ. Expect to share in his glory.

Discuss Key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Romans 8:14, 17

Discuss: How do you interpret these two verses?

Read: Luke 9:23-24; Philippians 2:5-8

Discuss: In what are Jesus' attitude and his choices an example for us? What does it mean to pick up our cross and follow him?

Read: Luke 22:42-44; Hebrews 5:7

Discuss: In what way were Jesus' cries for help from God "heard" by God?

Read: Romans 8:18, 29-30

Discuss: What does it mean to share in Christ's glory? Is that now, later, or both?

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. How could the call to share in Christ's suffering inform your attitude and response to the needs of others in the midst of this crisis?
2. How does the promise of sharing in his glory inform and encourage you in times of suffering?

WEEK FIVE

Advance reading: Pages 44-53

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

What do you do when you can't see *anything* good coming out of your suffering? What if you expect only more of the same—more uncertainty, more loss, more pain? Or, what if you just don't have any more energy to try? What do you do when your darkness is just dark?

Spiritual Truth 5: Remember—Nothing can separate you from the love of God.

Discuss key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Hebrews 13:5

Discuss: What is the practical benefit of Christ's abiding presence with us throughout our trials in this life (now)? What hope does his promise give us for eternity (later)?

Read: Romans 8:19-25, 38-39

Discuss: What does it mean that all creation is groaning? What is the "hope" Paul speaks of (beyond the end of the current pandemic or any other temporary crisis)?

Read: Romans 8:38-39

Discuss: What is the value of nothing being able to separate us from the love of God?

Read: Hebrews 2:18; Romans 8:26-27

Discuss: How can Jesus help us in our time of trial? How does the Holy Spirit pray with and for us in practice?

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. What do you do when you are so discouraged or so worn down that you want to give up?
2. What kind of prayer is most helpful to you in dark and difficult times? How could you lean on Jesus and the Holy Spirit more?

WEEK SIX

Advance reading: Pages 54-63

Introduction

For the next two weeks, we're going to discuss what Scripture teaches us about how to handle our worries and anxieties. This first week, we're going to focus on the power of prayer. Next week, we'll discuss some practical suggestions for analyzing our anxieties and dealing with them in a more rational manner than is usually possible when we are in the grips of fear.

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. When do your anxieties tend to overwhelm you?
2. How have you been able to draw on your faith and relationship with God at such times?

Spiritual Truth 6: Expect more peace as you put your anxieties in God's capable hands.

Discuss key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Philippians 4:6-7

Discuss: What do you take from these verses that could help someone struggling with anxiety?

Discuss: The author's summary of Paul's guidelines based on these verses (pages 57-60)

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. How are you handling your worries and anxieties these days?
2. Which of the author's suggestions might be helpful to you from day to day? (page 62)

WEEK SEVEN

Advance reading: Pages 64-73

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. Did you try any of these suggestions from last week for how to handle your anxieties? If so, how did it go?
2. What still seems to be toughest for you when you are feeling anxious or preoccupied with something you are worried about?

Spiritual Truth 7: Expect to be renewed, as you accept your limitations and wait on God.

Discuss key Scripture (20-30 minutes)

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31

Discuss: What encourages you from these verses?

Read: Ephesians 3:20-21

Discuss: What encourages you from these verses

Read the author's suggestions on how to handle anxieties (pages 68-70)

Discuss: How do you understand the intellectual options available to you when you feel worried or anxious about something? (Act, Wait, Let Go)

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. Is there something, anything, you could do to help alleviate your worries? What is within your power that you could do to help yourself right now? ("Act")
2. What worry in your life belongs in the "Wait" category?
3. What worry of yours belongs in the "Let Go" category? If you put this matter aside for now, how could you better focus your attention and use your energy for some constructive purpose?

WEEK EIGHT

Advanced reading: Pages 74-85

Introduction

This is the final week of this book and Bible study. The goal of today is to reflect on what we else we could do to make the seven truths for trusting God in troubled times a more powerful source of strength for our lives. Each us needs to think about what may be standing in the way of living by these truths, and what we could do to overcome these obstacles to let these truths transform us.

Focus—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. When in your life have you been conscious of choosing (or not choosing) faith in uncertain, difficult, or troubling times?
2. What was the result of your choice?
3. What would you do differently, if you went through that kind of situation again?

Discuss key Scripture (20-25 minutes)

Read: Joshua 24:14-15

Discuss: What was Joshua's choice? How does his example represent the kind of choice Christians need to make daily?

Discuss: The author's experience when he almost lost his faith and the lessons he learned from that experience (pages 76-80).

Personal reflection—Individually, in small groups, or as one large group (10 minutes)

1. Where do you need to make a more definitive decision to trust God?
2. What obstacles are standing in the way?
3. What do you need to do to overcome them?

Conclusion (5 minutes)

The leader should share what he or she has most appreciated about this eight-week book and Scripture study. Invite others to reflect on the main takeaways they will take with them for their own personal life going forward.

Draw your group members' attention to the online resources created by the author (next page).

Close in prayer

Online Resources from Tim Geoffrion

On Tim's Blog Site

All posts on Spirit-led living and Spirit-led leading: www.spirit-ledleader.com

On Faith, Hope, and Love Global Ministries' Website

For general information: www.fhlglobal.org

For Bible studies, essays, books, and journal articles: [Resource Library \(English\)](#)

For seminary courses and sermons: [Teachings and Sermons](#)

To sign up to receive monthly enewsletter and/or notifications of Tim's posts, go to Faith, Hope, and Love Global Ministries' [home page](#) and click on the button in the Our Periodic E-Newsletter box that says, "Sign Up Now." Or simply [click here](#).

To contact Tim directly, please email him at tim.geoffrion@fhlglobal.org. He always welcomes your comments, questions, and other input.