

God Has a Purpose Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. If you could experience somebody else's life for one day, whom would you choose?
2. Tell the group about a grandparent or older loved one whom you think fondly of.

Read the following passage: John 17:1-26.

John 17 gives us a window into a profound moment. These are Jesus' final hours before the cross. He's about to be arrested and sentenced to crucifixion, and he knows it. Jesus has just celebrated the Passover with his closest friends, and this is one of his final opportunities to pray with them. Jesus' prayer pulls back the curtain and gives us an extraordinary glimpse into the heart of God. God's purpose is his glory and his people.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Read Mark 9:2-10. How did Peter respond to seeing Jesus' glory? Why do you think David and Moses wanted to see God's glory? What are some ways we benefit when God is glorified?
2. Can you think of any moments when you have caught a glimpse of the glory of God? Explain. How can we live to glorify God?
3. What happens when we lose sight of the glory of God?
4. Look again at John 17. What are some things that Jesus prays for us or says he *has* given to us or says he *wants* to give to us? Which do you find most striking?
5. Life is a key concept throughout the Gospel of John. It becomes clear that we are to understand this life not just with respect to duration ('eternal life') but with respect to quality. What does it mean to have Jesus' life in our present circumstances? What are some ways you think God wants you to experience greater life in the present?
6. Jesus prayed that we would have the full measure of his joy. Consider the following quote from Henri Nouwen.

Will I [understand the father's joy]? ... Will I [let the father embrace me]? ... Will I [be able to share in the celebration]? ... It is an important question because it touches—strange as it may sound—my resistance to living a joyful life. ...

I am not accustomed to rejoicing in things that are small, hidden, and scarcely noticed by the people around me. I am generally ready and prepared to receive bad news, to read about wars, violence, and crimes, and to witness conflict and disarray. I always expect my visitors to talk about their problems and pain, their setbacks and disappointments, their depressions and their anguish. Somehow I have become

accustomed to living with sadness, and so have lost the eyes to see the joy and the ears to hear the gladness that belongs to God and which is to be found in the hidden corners of the world.

Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

Do you ever find yourself resisting joy? Explain. Why do you think we do this? What might help you embrace the joy Jesus wants for you?

7. Jesus prayed that the “oneness” of his followers would reflect his unity with the Father. What are some ways walking in authentic community with others benefits us? How might our love for and unity with one another impact those around us? What is something you can do to experience greater community in the midst of our unusual circumstances?
8. Do you see God’s purpose being fulfilled around you? Explain.
9. What is one way you can align yourself with God’s purposes this week?

Pray