

Getting Out of the Crazy Cycle 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 had to change your name, what is one name you would consider changing it to?
2. Describe a time when you got lost.

Read the following passage: Joshua 6:20 - 7:1.

Joshua and the Israelites experienced a tremendous victory over the city of Jericho. The text tells us that “the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.” The beginning of Joshua chapter 7, then, is somewhat jarring. The Israelites were unfaithful, and this unfaithfulness led to a resounding defeat and subsequent judgment upon Achan and his family. Sadly, this pattern repeated many times in Israel’s history. God would deliver the Israelites from one oppressor or another, but their unfaithfulness would lead them back into chaos. We, too, often experience our own version of this cycle. We want to live our lives a certain way, but we routinely fall into the same dysfunctional patterns. How do we get off of this cycle?

In his gospel, Matthew presents Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of Israel’s long history. Jesus is the true “Joshua” (the name “Jesus” is the Greek variant of the Hebrew name “Joshua”). Jesus is the only one who can deliver us once and for all from our real enemies.

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

1. Read Matthew 1:20-23. What were some of the factors that led Jesus’s earliest followers to conclude that Jesus was the divine Son of God?
2. What are some of the important implications of the incarnation? How are we in a more favorable position than Joshua’s generation?
3. Comment on the following statement (inspired by Exodus 32:1-6): “When we think God is distant, we are prone to make idols.”
4. In the opening chapters of his gospel, Matthew observes that Jesus relived many of Israel’s experiences. The author of Hebrews similarly recognizes that Jesus faced all the temptations that we deal with (see Hebrews 4:15-16). How does Jesus’s identification with us help us?
5. Jesus’s disciples were transformed by his love for them. How can we experience Jesus’s love for us in a deeper way?

6. Most Jewish people hoped that God would send a Messiah who would deliver them from their Roman oppressors. Instead, God sent Jesus to deliver us from our sin. Read Romans 7:14 - 8:4. Explain how Jesus and the Holy Spirit help us get free from the crazy cycle. Compare this with Colossians 2:13-15, which also incorporates Jesus's victory over demonic spirits.

Pray