

Get Your Life Back — Group Discussion Questions

Discuss any or all of the questions below with your group. Choose some questions ahead of time, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them:

Session 1: The One Minute Pause

Matthew 11:28-30: *Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life . . . and you'll learn to live freely and lightly*

1. Are you happy and carefree most of the time? Would you describe yourself as rested and refreshed? Why or why not?
2. In what specific ways has the pace of your life accelerated in the past few years? Are there things you've had to give up (such as hobbies) just to keep up?
3. What is Jesus' general assumption about us within his three questions in Matthew 11:28-30? How accurately does this describe you? What is his core invitation?
4. Benevolent Detachment involves learning to release everyone and everything to God. What are the hardest things for you to release to God? Why?

Session 2: Simple Unplugging

Psalm 119:97-99: *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.*

1. Have you been practicing the One Minute Pause this past week? What affect has the practice had on your heart?
2. Would you say you're drawn to—or perhaps addicted to—the things that offer distraction? Why or why not?
3. What technology would you least want to give up? Most days, do you feel it serves you or you end up serving it? Would those close to you agree?
4. So much of our world can be experienced digitally. In what ways do you seek out “real” things—like chopping vegetables, doing a puzzle, going for a walk, or playing an instrument? What benefit might those things bring you?

Session 3: Get Outside

Psalm 23:1-3: *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul.*

1. In Psalm 23:1-3, where did God take David to guide him into a soul restoring experience? What aspects of beauty and nature are described in this passage?
2. How does God use beauty and nature to refresh your soul?
3. In what ways does beauty reveal the goodness of God's heart and his lavish abundance?
4. What are some ways you can experience the richness of God's creation each day, to receive beauty as a gift from God? How might the practice of receiving beauty into your soul help you get more of your life back?

Session 4: Caring for Neglected Places in Your Soul

Psalm 34:18: *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

1. What two conditions does Psalm 34:18 recognize about people? What promises are made for those in this state?
2. Have you invited God into the neglected places of your soul yet? If not, can you name what is holding you back? Can you name a specific area where you'd like to pursue soul restoration?
3. Name five things that are lifegiving and helpful to your soul. Now, name five things that would fall in the unhelpful category because they are depleting.
4. Now, with which of these two categories in question #3 do you spend the most time in an average week? Do you feel that a change needed? What would that change look like?

Session 5: The Hidden Life of God in You

*John 17:20-23: I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity.
(emphasis added)*

1. How has this video session redefined your understanding of what union with God is—and isn't?
2. Did you grow up in a church or family where the main tenants were faith, obedience, and service? If so, what effect did that have on your heart, soul and relationship with God?
3. Are you surprised to learn that John 17:20-23 isn't primarily about church unity or getting along with each other—but actually about our hidden life with God? How does that help you reinterpret what Jesus is inviting us into?
4. How does knowing that Jesus wants to be intimately involved in your life and spend time together create a new expectancy for what this hidden life of God in you *can* be?

Session 6: The Simple Daily Things

Matthew 6:11: *Give us today our daily bread.*

1. In just six simple words, what is Jesus inviting us in in Matthew 6:11? How does it offer a new perspective about the worries we're carrying from yesterday and the fear we have for tomorrow?
2. Do you wrestle with a sense of frustration that no matter how much of God you experience one day, you need more the next day? Is asking for more of God a part of your daily practice?
3. Can you give an example of how you've looked for God in the amazing or hard, and missed him in the dailies?
4. How can you be more intentional about seeing God, and asking for more of Him, as you pursue soul care in the everyday?

LEADER'S GUIDE

What does it take to lead this study? Get together and watch God show up. Seriously, that's the basics of how a small group works. Gather several people together who have a hunger for God, and are willing to be open and honest with God and themselves. The Lord will honor this every time and show up in the group. You don't have to be a pastor, priest, theologian, or counselor to lead a group through this study. Just invite people to watch the video together and talk about it. All you need is a willing heart, a little courage, and God will do the rest. Really.

A FEW TIPS FOR LEADING A GROUP:

- ***Be honest.*** Remember that your honesty will set the tone for your time together. Be willing to answer questions personally, as this will set the pace for the length of your group members' responses and will make others more comfortable in sharing.
- ***Stick to the schedule.*** Strive to begin and end at the same time each week. It's helpful that the people in your group can trust you to be a good steward of their time, and they will be more willing to come back each week. Of course, you want to be open to the work God is doing in the group members as they are challenged to reconsider some of their preconceived ideas about the availability of the kingdom of God to bring them joy in their everyday lives, and at times you may want to *linger* in prayer or discussion. Remember the clock serves *you*; your group doesn't serve the clock. But work to respect the group's time, especially when it comes to limiting the discussion times. You don't have to get to every question suggested.
- ***Don't be afraid of silence or emotion.*** Welcome awkward moments. The material presented during this study will likely bring to the surface areas of pain and suffering. Don't be afraid to ease into the material with the group to allow space for honoring one another's stories and personal questions.
- ***Don't dominate the conversation.*** Even though you are the leader, you are also a member of this small group. So, don't steamroll over others in an attempt to lead—and don't let anyone else in the group do so either.
- ***Prepare for your meeting.*** Watch the video for the meeting ahead of time. Though it may feel a bit like cheating because you'll know what's coming, you'll be better prepared for what the session might stir in the hearts of your group members. Also review the material in this guide and be sure to spend time in prayer. In fact, the *most important* thing you can do is simply pray ahead of time each week:
Lord Jesus, come and rule this time. Let your Spirit fill this place. Bring your kingdom here. Take us right to the things we really need to talk about and rescue us from every distraction. Show us the heart of the Father. Meet each person here. Give us your grace and love for one another. In your name I pray.
- ***Make sure your group members are prepared.*** Send out a reminder email with the Zoom link a couple of days before the meeting to make sure folks don't forget about it.

AS YOU GATHER:

You will find the following counsel to be especially helpful when you meet for the first time as a group. I offer these comments in the spirit of “here is what I would do if I were leading a group through this study.”

As your group gathers for the first time, start your time with introductions if people don’t know each other. Begin with yourself and share your name and what you want to learn most from this study. Going first will put the group more at ease.

After each person has introduced themselves, share—in no more than five minutes—what *your* hopes are for the group. Then jump right into watching the video session, as this will help get things started on a strong note. In the following weeks you will then want to start by allowing folks to catch up a *little* with some “hey, so how are you?” kind of banter. Too much of this burns up your meeting time, but you have to allow some room for it because it helps build relationships among the group members.

Note that each group will have its own personality and dynamics. Typically, people will hold back the first week or two until they feel the group is “safe.” Then they will begin to share. Again, don’t let it throw you if your group seems a bit awkward at first. Of course, some people *never* want to talk, so you’ll need to coax them out as time goes on. But let it go the first week.

INSIGHT FOR DISCUSSION:

If the group members are in any way open to talking about their lives as it relates to this material, you will *not* have enough time for every question suggested. That’s okay! Pick a few questions ahead of time that you know you want to cover, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them.

You set the tone for the group. Your honesty and vulnerability during discussion times will tell them what they can share. How *long* you talk will give them an example of how long they should. So give some thought to what stories or insights from your own work in the study guide you want to highlight. WARNING: The greatest temptation for most small group leaders is to add to the video teaching with a little “teaching session” of their own. This is unhelpful for three reasons:

1. The discussion time will be the richest time during your meeting. The video sessions have been intentionally kept short so you can have plenty of time for discussion. If you add to the teaching, you sacrifice this precious time.
2. You don’t want your group members *teaching*, *lecturing*, or *correcting* one another. Every person is at a different place in her spiritual journey—and that’s good. But if you set a tone by teaching, the group will feel like they have the freedom to teach one another. That can be disastrous for group dynamics.
3. The participants will have watched the video teaching and possibly read the corresponding chapters in *Get Your Life Back*. They don’t need more content! They want a chance to talk and process their own lives in light of all they have taken in.

A STRONG CLOSE:

Some of the best learning times will take place after the group time as God brings new insights to the participants during the week. Encourage group members to write down any questions they have as they read through *Get Your Life Back* and do the preparation work. Make sure they know you are available for them as they explore what God has to say about any of the concepts that might be new or challenging to them. Finally, make sure you close your time by praying together. Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study. (A closing prayer is included in the guide, should you want to use it instead of or in addition to extemporaneous prayer.)

Finally, make sure you close your time by—praying together! Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study. Also, be sure to “practice” some of the specific prayers your group will be learning about during the sessions. Many of these prayers can be found in the corresponding chapters to the sessions or in the appendix in the *Get Your Life Back* book.

Thank you again for taking the time to lead your group. May God reward your efforts and dedication and make your time together in *Get Your Life Back* fruitful for His kingdom.