



## **Church at Home Group Guide**

### **Overcoming Discouragement - The Power of Virtuous and Praiseworthy Thinking**

#### Opening Discussion:

1. Share a time when you felt discouraged recently. How did you handle it?
2. What are some common sources of discouragement in our lives today?

#### Key Takeaways:

1. Discouragement is a powerful weapon Satan uses against us.
2. God has given us a divine defense system against discouragement, outlined in Philippians 4:8.
3. The last two defenses against discouragement are thinking on things that are virtuous and praiseworthy.
4. Our minds are the epicenter of worship and the battleground for spiritual warfare.
5. Focusing on virtuous and praiseworthy thoughts benefits us and blesses God.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. How does the idea of discouragement as a weapon of Satan change your perspective on dealing with it?
2. In what ways can we practically implement Paul's advice to "meditate" or focus our minds on virtuous and praiseworthy things?
3. How might our lives change if we consistently thought about things that are "morally superior by God's standards"?
4. Discuss the concept of God seeing our thoughts. How does this impact the way we should approach our thought life?
5. What parallels can we draw between Michelangelo's experience painting the Sistine Chapel and our own struggles with discouragement in pursuing God's calling?

Practical Applications:

1. Thought Journal: For the next week, keep a journal of your thoughts. At the end of each day, categorize them based on Philippians 4:8. Reflect on how you can increase virtuous and praiseworthy thoughts.
2. Praise Practice: Each day this week, intentionally think of something praiseworthy about God or someone else. Share it with the person if applicable, or write it down as a prayer of praise to God.
3. Media Audit: Evaluate the media you consume (social media, news, entertainment). Does it align with virtuous and praiseworthy thinking? Make adjustments as needed.
4. Encouragement Challenge: Identify someone in your life who might be discouraged. Find a way to encourage them this week by highlighting something virtuous or praiseworthy about them.

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for His divine defense system against discouragement. Ask for His help in focusing your mind on virtuous and praiseworthy things, and for the strength to persevere through discouraging circumstances, always seeking to reflect His glory in your life.



**Conversations fuel our faith. Use these discussion questions throughout your week in conversations at tables, in cars, online or wherever you find yourself chatting with the people you love.**

- How might the creative storytelling and theological discussions of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien inspire us to engage with our faith more imaginatively?
- In what ways have you experienced discouragement as a 'weapon' in your own life, and how can recognizing it as such change your response?
- How can we develop our own spiritual 'defense systems' against discouragement, similar to Israel's missile defense systems?
- What does it mean to you personally to 'meditate' on virtuous and praiseworthy things, and how might this practice transform your daily life?
- How can we cultivate a mindset that seeks to please God with our thoughts, not just our actions?
- In what ways can focusing on 'the applause of Heaven' help us persevere through difficult circumstances, as it did for Michelangelo?

- How might viewing our lives as a canvas for God's masterpiece change the way we approach our daily choices and challenges?
- What are some practical strategies we can use to 'set our minds on things above' in the midst of worldly distractions?
- How can we balance the pursuit of moral excellence with the understanding that our worth comes from God's love, not our own virtues?
- In what ways can we encourage and support each other in maintaining a positive, God-focused mindset in the face of discouragement?



### **Day 1: Overcoming Discouragement with God's Truth**

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18

Devotional: Just as Israel's defense systems protect against incoming missiles, God has given us spiritual armor to defend against discouragement. Paul's words remind us that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil. When discouragement strikes, we must remember to put on the full armor of God. Today, focus on the belt of truth. What truths about God's character and promises can you "fasten" around yourself to stand firm against discouragement? Remember, God's truth is more powerful than any lie the enemy may whisper to your heart.

### **Day 2: Renewing Your Mind**

Reading: Romans 12:1-2

Devotional: Paul emphasizes the importance of renewing our minds as an act of worship. Like Michelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel, our lives are meant to be a masterpiece reflecting God's glory. However, we often face circumstances that can cloud our vision and distort our perspective. Today, consider what thoughts or beliefs you need to transform. How can you actively renew your mind with God's Word? Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you identify areas where your thinking needs alignment with God's truth, allowing your life to become a more accurate reflection of His glory.

### **Day 3: Setting Your Mind on Things Above**

Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Devotional: In a world full of distractions and earthly concerns, Paul calls us to set our minds on things above. This doesn't mean we ignore our earthly responsibilities, but rather we view them through a heavenly lens. Reflect on your current circumstances - both joyful and challenging. How might your perspective shift if you truly believed that

your life is hidden with Christ in God? Today, practice lifting your gaze above your immediate situation to see the eternal reality of your position in Christ. Let this heavenly perspective infuse hope and purpose into your earthly journey.

#### **Day 4: The Power of Virtuous Thinking**

Reading: Philippians 4:8-9

Devotional: Paul provides a powerful antidote to discouragement by directing our thoughts towards what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Like a nutritious diet nourishes our body, feeding our minds with virtuous thoughts nourishes our soul. Today, intentionally seek out and meditate on things that align with these qualities. It could be a beautiful aspect of nature, an act of kindness you witness, or a truth from Scripture. How does focusing on these virtuous things affect your mood and outlook? Practice this mental diet and notice how it strengthens you against discouragement.

#### **Day 5: Living for the Applause of Heaven**

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

Devotional: Michelangelo found strength to persevere through discouragement by focusing on the applause of God rather than the approval of men. Similarly, Paul reminds us that our ultimate aim should be to please God. In what areas of your life are you tempted to seek human approval over God's? Today, imagine God standing and cheering "Bravo!" over your faithfulness in both big and small things. How does this change your approach to your daily tasks and challenges? Let the reality of God's loving gaze and future commendation inspire you to live each moment for His glory, even in the face of discouragement.

