

## Small Group Guide: God's Justice and Mercy in Ezekiel 17-18



### **Summary:**

In of Ezekiel 17 and 18, we're confronted with the timeless struggle between human choices and divine justice. Through vivid parables and direct proclamations, God reveals His heart for His people. We see how political alliances and misplaced trust led to Jerusalem's downfall, yet even in judgment, a promise of hope emerges. The imagery of a tender twig becoming a majestic cedar beautifully foreshadows Christ's coming. As we reflect on this, we're challenged to consider where we place our trust. Are we relying on worldly alliances or on God's unfailing promises? This message reminds us that while consequences for our actions are real, God's desire is always for our redemption and flourishing.

### **Key Takeaways:**

1. God holds individuals accountable for their own actions and choices.
2. Repentance and turning to God leads to forgiveness and life.
3. God desires salvation for all, but His justice requires judgment for unrepentant sin.
4. God's heart is unchanging - His mercy and desire to save exists throughout Scripture.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. In Ezekiel 17, God uses a parable about eagles and vines. What does this imagery represent, and how does it relate to Israel's situation at the time?
2. How does God address the proverb "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" in Ezekiel 18? What does this teach us about personal responsibility?
3. Ezekiel 18:21-22 speaks about God's forgiveness for those who repent. How does this Old Testament passage align with New Testament teachings on salvation?
4. In what ways does Ezekiel 18 challenge the concept of generational curses? How should we view the impact of family history on our spiritual lives?
5. Discuss God's statement in Ezekiel 18:23: "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" How does this reveal God's character?
6. How does the sermon connect the "dry tree flourishing" in Ezekiel 17:24 to Jesus' death and resurrection?
7. In what ways do you see God's justice and mercy balanced in these chapters of Ezekiel?

### **Practical Applications:**

1. Self-reflection: Take time this week to examine your own life. Are there areas where you've been blaming others for your spiritual condition? How can you take more personal responsibility?
2. Repentance exercise: Write down any sins or areas of your life that need change. Pray over each one, asking God for forgiveness and strength to turn away from them.
3. Sharing God's heart: Identify someone in your life who may not know God's desire for their salvation. Pray for an opportunity to share this truth with them this week.
4. Gratitude journal: Each day, write down one way you've experienced God's mercy or forgiveness. Reflect on how this impacts your relationship with Him.
5. Scripture memorization: Choose a key verse from Ezekiel 18 (such as verse 23 or 32) to memorize and meditate on throughout the week.

Closing Prayer: Thank God for His justice and mercy. Ask for His help in living responsibly before Him and sharing His heart with others.

## 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide:



### **Day 1: God's Heart of Mercy**

**Reading:** Ezekiel 18:21-23, 30-32

**Devotional:** God's heart is revealed in these powerful verses from Ezekiel. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God earnestly desires their repentance and salvation. He takes no pleasure in judgment, but longs for His people to turn back to Him. This passage reminds us that God's love is not passive or distant, but active and yearning.

Reflect on areas in your life where you may have strayed from God. Remember that no matter how far you've wandered, God's arms are open wide, ready to forgive and restore. His heart breaks for the lost and rejoices over one sinner who repents. Today, take a moment to appreciate God's relentless pursuit of your heart. How can you respond to His merciful invitation?

## **Day 2: Individual Responsibility**

**Reading:** Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-20

**Devotional:** In a culture that often blames circumstances or others for personal failings, God's message through Ezekiel is striking. Each person is responsible for their own spiritual condition. While we may be influenced by our environment or upbringing, ultimately our relationship with God is a personal matter.

This truth is both sobering and liberating. It means we can't hide behind excuses, but it also means we're not bound by generational curses or the mistakes of our ancestors. God deals with each of us individually. Today, examine your heart. Are there areas where you've been avoiding responsibility for your spiritual life? How can you take ownership of your faith journey and respond personally to God's call?

## **Day 3: The Promise of Restoration**

**Reading:** Ezekiel 17:22-24

**Devotional:** In the midst of judgment prophecies, God offers a beautiful picture of future restoration. The tender twig from the cedar represents the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would come from humble beginnings but grow to provide shelter for all nations. This prophecy reminds us that even in our darkest moments, God has a plan for redemption and renewal.

When life feels hopeless or you're facing difficult circumstances, remember that God specializes in bringing life from death, and making the dry tree flourish. His promises of restoration extend beyond Israel to all who put their trust in Him. How can you cultivate hope in your life today, trusting in God's ultimate plan for restoration?

## **Day 4: The Call to Repentance**

**Reading:** Ezekiel 18:30-32

**Devotional:** God's call to repentance is not a harsh demand, but a loving invitation. He urges His people to turn from destructive paths and embrace the life He offers. This passage emphasizes our ability to choose - we can cling to our transgressions or cast them away and receive a new heart and spirit.

Repentance is more than feeling sorry; it's a decision to change direction. It involves honest self-examination and a willingness to align our lives with God's will. Today, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where repentance is needed. Embrace God's offer of a new heart and spirit. What practical steps can you take to turn away from sin and towards God's life-giving ways?

## **Day 5: God's Presence in Suffering**

**Reading:** Ezekiel 17:1-10, 22-24

**Devotional:** The parable of the eagles and the vine illustrates Israel's political entanglements and coming judgment. Yet even in this dire prophecy, God reveals His sovereign control over nations and His ultimate plan for redemption. This reminds us that God is present and active, even in times of suffering or national calamity.

When we face personal or collective hardships, it's easy to question God's presence or goodness. But like the tender twig that becomes a majestic cedar, God can bring beauty and purpose out of our pain. He doesn't always remove our suffering, but He promises to be with us through it. How have you experienced God's presence in difficult times? Take a moment to thank Him for His faithfulness and ask for eyes to see His work in your current challenges.