

Small Group Guide: Contending for the Faith - Exodus 18

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: Share a time when you felt overwhelmed by responsibilities. How did you handle it, and what did you learn?

Key Scripture

Primary Text: Exodus 18:13-27

Supporting Texts:

- Matthew 16:24
- Ephesians 4
- Galatians 2:20
- Romans 5

Sermon Summary

This message explores how God's word has been delivered through history and how we are called to contend for this "once-for-all faith." Using Moses' example from Exodus 18, we see the importance of:

- Learning God's character through His word
- Sharing leadership and teaching responsibilities
- Pursuing peace in relationships through sacrificial love
- Dying to self daily to live out Christ's character

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Word (15-20 minutes)

1. **The Bottleneck Problem:** Moses was judging disputes from morning until evening. What was the real problem Jethro identified? Why wasn't Moses' dedication enough?
2. **Selection of Leaders:** What four characteristics did the men need to have (v. 21)? Why were these specific qualities important for judging disputes among God's people?

3. **The Goal of Peace:** According to verse 23, what was the ultimate goal of this new structure?

Applying the Word (20-25 minutes)

4. **Exhaustion vs. Endurance:** The pastor said, "Exhaustion in ministry does not equate great spirituality." Have you ever fallen into this trap? What's the difference between exhausting yourself and enduring well?
5. **The Conflict Challenge:** The pastor stated, "Conflict is the price we pay for intimacy." How does this change your view of disagreements in relationships? Why do we often avoid conflict rather than embrace it as an opportunity for deeper connection?

Living Out the Word (20-25 minutes)

7. **Dying Daily:** Jesus said we must "deny self, take up our cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). What does this look like practically in your:
 - Marriage or family relationships?
 - Friendships within the church?
 - Workplace interactions?
8. **Seeking to Understand:** The pastor emphasized going into conflict "seeking to understand" rather than "seeking to be understood." Think of a current or recent conflict. How would this approach change the conversation?
9. **Demanding More Blood:** The sermon challenged us with this question: "Who are we to demand more blood?" when Christ's blood is sufficient. Is there someone you're withholding forgiveness from? What would it look like to release them?

Key Takeaways

1. **We cannot live out what we do not know.** Consistent engagement with God's word is essential for spiritual growth and healthy relationships.
2. **God's design includes shared leadership.** We need each other—no one person can bear all the burdens alone.
3. **Peace is the goal.** Biblical conflict resolution leads to shalom—peace with God and peace among His people.
4. **Discipleship means dying.** Following Christ isn't just learning information; it's being willing to lay down our lives for others.
5. **Christ's blood is sufficient.** We have no right to demand justice or hold grudges when Jesus has already paid the full penalty.

Prayer Prompts

Pray for:

- Hearts ready to receive and respond to God's word, even when it's difficult
- Courage to engage in necessary conflict for the sake of peace
- Grace to forgive as we've been forgiven
- Strength to die to self daily and live out Christ's character
- Those in your group who are hurting or struggling in relationships
- The body of Christ at your church—that you would truly love one another well

Looking Ahead

Preparation for Next Week:

- Read the next passage in your church's teaching series
- Continue practicing your chosen challenge from this week
- Come prepared to share one way God met you through His word this week

Closing Reflection

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." - Galatians 2:20

What would change in your life this week if you truly lived as a "dead man walking"—free from the need to defend yourself, prove yourself, or protect yourself?