

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE IMPOSSIBLE: BE THE LIGHT

SCRIPTURES

John 16:33 · John 8:12 · 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 · Galatians 6:9 · Luke 15

THE MESSAGE

On the day after Christmas in 2004, a wave almost a hundred feet high came over a resort in Thailand. It killed more than two hundred thousand people across fourteen countries. Maria and her son Lucas live through it. They are bleeding, separated from the rest of the family, and barely moving. Then they hear a child crying somewhere in the trees, and Maria decides they are going after him even if it is the last thing they do. That decision is the whole weekend. God comforts us in our trouble so we can turn around and comfort somebody else in theirs. Everyone in your living room is either in a storm right now or sitting next to somebody who is. You cannot do everything. You can do something.

BEFORE YOU START

This one ends outside the room. Most weeks you are asking people what is going on *inside* them. This week you are also asking them to name a person who is not at your table and do something about it

before you meet again. If the night ends with everybody agreeing that helping people is a good idea, nothing happened. Get names and write them down so that you can pray for them.

Some of your people need the help, not the assignment.

The weekend said plainly that some of us need to be on the receiving end of that light. Admitting that in a group is harder than volunteering to go help somebody. Watch for the person who has an answer for every question about serving and no answer about their own storm. Do not call that out in front of everyone. Ask them after, at the door.

People raised their hands at every campus this weekend. Somebody at your table may have been one of them and has not told a soul. Leave an opening and do not fill the silence too fast. If it comes, celebrate it, and email smallgroups@eastside.com so the team can follow up with them about baptism.

You will not get through all eight questions, and you are not meant to. Choose the ones your group needs and take them in whatever order serves the conversation.

ICEBREAKER

So, what is the **worst** vacation you have ever been on? What went wrong, and do you laugh about it now?

Go around the circle and keep it moving. You are taking the temperature of the room before you ask anything hard.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The first three stay inside the room. The last two push outward. Do not skip to the outward ones before people have said something true about themselves.

1 Maria and Lucas are injured, separated from the rest of their family, and have every reason to keep moving. They hear a boy crying in the trees and go after him anyway. Even if it is the last thing we do. When did somebody help you at a cost to themselves, and what did it actually look like?

Start here because it is the warmest question in the set and it gets specific people named out loud early.

2 When a storm hits, the pull is to turn inward and go completely self-absorbed. The message was honest about having done it. What does turning inward look like for you, specifically? What do you stop doing, who do you stop calling, what do you start telling yourself?

Answer this one first and name a real thing. If you give a general answer, you will get general answers for the rest of the night.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3 God comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others with the comfort we received. What is something God has brought you through that you have never once used to help anybody else? What is keeping it on the shelf?

The usual reasons are embarrassment, a sense that it is not resolved enough yet, or never having been asked. Any of those is worth saying out loud.

Galatians 6:9

4 Who have you been praying for with nothing visibly happening? How long has it been? The message said not to get tired of doing good, and that the harvest comes at the right time. Be honest about how close you are to quitting on that person.

Expect somebody to name a child, and expect that to land heavy. Let it. Do not try to fix it with a verse.

Luke 15

5 A shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep for one. A woman turns her house over for a single coin. A father watches the road. The message said that is God's posture toward you right now, whatever you have done. When you picture God thinking about you, is that the picture? If not, what is it?

This question goes quiet in most rooms, and the quiet is the answer. Give it room before anyone speaks.

GO DEEPER

The first is for the people who want the text itself, the second gives the comfort verse its actual setting, and the third gets a name and a day.

Luke 15:1-32

GD1 Read Luke 15 straight through as one chapter. Start with verses 1 and 2, which tell you who Jesus is answering and why. Then notice where the third story actually ends. Who is Jesus aiming at, and does that change what the chapter is doing?

Two things worth having ready. The audience in verses 1 and 2 is religious leaders complaining that Jesus eats with sinners, so all three stories are an answer to them, not a general devotional about God's love. And the third story does not end with the party. It ends with the older brother standing outside, refusing to go in, and Jesus never tells you what he decides. Also, the line about the father waking up every day on the edge of town is a preacher's filling in. The text says the father saw him while he was still a long way off, which implies watching but does not describe a daily routine. It is a fair reading of the father's heart. It is not a sentence in the chapter.

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

GD2 Read past the verse quoted this weekend and keep going to verse 11. Paul says the trouble he went through in Asia was so far beyond his strength that he despaired of life itself. What does he say that was for? Paul is writing the comfort promise out of that, not out of a minor inconvenience. What does knowing where it came from change about how you hear verses 3 and 4?

Paul never says what happened in Asia, and commentators have guessed for centuries. The point he draws from it is in verse 9, that it taught him to rely on God who raises the dead rather than on himself.

GD3 Name one person in a storm right now. A name, not a category. Say what you are doing for them and what day you are doing it. Encouraging, praying, listening, a meal, an invitation, a text. You cannot help everyone. You can help someone.

Write every name down before people leave and send the list to the group this week. Ask about every one of them when you meet next, by name, out loud.

CLOSE YOUR GROUP IN PRAYER

“You are the light of the world.”

Pray the names, not the categories. Go around the circle and have each person say out loud the name they gave in the last question, and then pray over those people by name. It takes longer than a general prayer and it is the only version of this that will still be true on Thursday.

Before you finish, pray for the people in the room who are in the storm rather than standing next to it. Ask who wants prayer and then wait. If somebody raised a hand this weekend or wants to, pray with them right there and email smallgroups@eastside.com so the team can walk with them.