5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 4 | God Loves Your Questions

BOTTOM LINE

God loves when you go to Him with questions. He loves to reveal things to you.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

Each Kensington campus had a separate focus for this week. Although this discussion guide may not follow along directly with the weekend message you heard, we think this discussion will offer an opportunity for you to explore God's longing to reveal things to you. You can discover what God loves by asking Him.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7:7-11, Jeremiah 29:12-13 and 33:3, James 1:5 and 4:3, Psalm 32:8-10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** If you pray, what are some things you typically ask God during prayer?

2. **Read Matthew 7:7-11 and Discuss:**
   a. What kinds of things do you think God hopes we seek and ask Him for?
   b. Is there anything we are responsible for on our end, or is this like a "blank check" from Jesus for us to get whatever we want? (Refer to James 4:3)

3. **Read James 1:5 and Discuss:** What are some differences between knowledge and wisdom?

4. **Read Jeremiah 29:12-13 and 33:3 and Discuss:**
   a. These are words from God to people who are in exile and despair. Notice that God is not promising that their trials will vanish. What does He promise them?
   b. There has always been and will always be great mystery in this world. God himself is a wonderous mystery to us. Yet, He says that if we ask, He will answer. What is a "great and unsearchable thing that you do not know" and have you considered asking God about it? Why or why not?

5. **Read Psalm 32:8-10 and Discuss:**
   a. What are some of the ways you think God uses to instruct, teach and counsel us?
   b. Is there a time when you experienced God answering, instructing, or teaching you? Share your experience with the group.

If Jesus demonstrated humanity at its best—as God originally intended—it would make sense that we follow His example. Even Jesus asked questions of God.

TRY THIS

Take some time to pray this week and be intentional about including time to ask questions and to listen. And then remember to pay attention to other ways that God might reveal things to you throughout the week. Share your experiences with the group next time you meet.

5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 3 | God Loves Leisure

BOTTOM LINE

God cares about our rhythm of work and rest. He made taking a rest every 7 days one of His "top 10".

GOAL OF THE GROUP

We will look at what scripture says about rest and discuss what that looks like for each of us.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:23-28

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Do you intentionally rest from work weekly? Explain.

2. **Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Discuss:**
   a. God lists this idea of resting for a day each week as one of His "top 10" (the 10 commandments). Why do you think it is so important to Him?
   b. The Israelites had just come from Egypt, where they lived as slaves, when they receive this command from God. God wanted them to know they were no longer slaves, but heirs (sons and daughters). He wants us to know the same thing. In what way do you slip into the identity of slave rather than heir?
   c. Do you ever find yourself unable to resist checking in with work when you have the day off? Do you know that checking a text or email can release dopamine, a brain chemical that provides a feeling of pleasure? The feeling of someone wanting us, needing us, even for work can become addictive. You can become a slave to it. Do you ever experience a sense of unease or even withdrawal when you intentionally rest from productivity? Share with the group.

3. What should sabbath rest look like? We could create a checklist of what is considered work, what is permissible, and what is not. But, would that just be another form of enslavement? **Read Mark 2:23-28 and Discuss:**
   a. Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi. Keeping the law was very important to Jewish leaders. They had developed very strict guidelines to be followed to ensure the law was being observed. What do you think Jesus and His disciples were doing? Were they working?
   b. What do you think Jesus means when he says "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."?

4. Take a few minutes to think about what rest looks like for you personally. Rest is not necessarily sleep or simply "checking out". Think about the word recreate (re-create). What refreshes and re-creates you? When do you lose yourself and simply enjoy?
   a. Share a few things that come to your mind when thinking of what refreshes and re-creates you. Notice how different each person might answer.
   b. Discuss the importance of knowing what is restful for you and what is not.
   c. Discuss the concept of divert daily, withdraw weekly, and abandon annually. Do you currently practice any of these? Is there a personal goal you would like to challenge yourself to set?

God created us to work and to rest. He doesn't want us to be a slave to either.

TRY THIS

Take time to think about how you uniquely rest and recreate. What re-creates you? Make a list of at least 10 things and share at your next group time.

5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 2 | Purple

BOTTOM LINE

Mid-term elections are happening this week in our country and, although we may all be burned out from constant ads, arguments, mud-slinging and division, we will take a look at how we can say that God loves politics. God loves purple (red and blue – democrat and republican) because God loves leadership.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

We will discuss how we are to live under the authority of government and leaders. We do not need to be in agreement regarding our views on political policy, party, or persons. We should be united in the truth that we all serve one King who humbled himself so that we can all be truly free.

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 2:13-17, Matthew 5:38-44, Colossians 2:15

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** How would you describe your family's involvement or interest in politics while growing up? How do you think this has affected you today?
2. **Read 1 Peter 2:13-17 and Discuss:** Peter is addressing these thoughts to Christians who were living under extreme violent persecution simply for their religious views. Discus your thoughts on what Peter is saying. Do you understand how people can live as free, and honor the emperor?
3. In what is widely considered the greatest message ever preached, Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount to a large crowd gathered on the side of a mountain. Jesus used his brilliance and his spiritual authority to bring a new teaching to the people. Several times Jesus would state "you have heard it said...But I say..." Jesus was teaching as one with authority and people were amazed. This is a small part of that message. **Read Matthew 5:38-44 and Discuss:**
    a. Jesus lived in an extremely dangerous and volatile political climate. The Roman Empire was the occupying force, and some Jewish leaders, hungry for power and wealth, had sold out to the Romans. For the average Jewish person, there was deep anger and hatred toward both of these political forces. Yet, Jesus does not teach about personal retribution. He takes a radically different approach. What are the 5 different examples Jesus uses to show us how we are to respond when we are wronged?
    b. Can you imagine what Jesus might use as illustrations if He were teaching this same thing to us today using examples that are relevant to our current daily life? What might be comparable?
    c. Discuss what it could look like today for you, your family, your small group, or your church to "love your enemies". Be as specific as you can.
    d. If we want to make a difference in the world, we need to lead like Jesus. Jesus showed what it looks like to fulfill 1 Peter 2 and how to start a revolution. What would you say are some of the attributes of the leadership Jesus taught and demonstrated?
4. **Read Colossians 2:15 and Discuss:**
    a. When Jesus died on the cross, it looked like He had failed. What a spectacle of Rome's power and Jesus' weakness. But, according to this verse, what actually happened?
    b. Jesus is the full revelation of God. He could have demonstrated power by crushing authorities or enemies. Instead, He shows us something bigger than the mighty political power of the Romans. Explain how His power was revealed in a way that aligns with what he taught in the sermon on the mount.

If we put our hope in a political leader or in a government we will be disappointed. We can't be married to the agenda of the donkey or the elephant. We must be married to the party of the lamb!

TRY THIS

Practice radical, subversive, revolutionary love this week. Seek ways to actively express the kind of love Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount. Election week will undoubtedly offer you opportunities to love an enemy. Come to group next time prepared to share how you were able to practice the kind of love that is in submission to the King of Kings as your only hope.

5 Surprising Things God Loves

Week 1 | Laughter

BOTTOM LINE

When you discover what a person loves, you discover what is at the heart of that person. It is no different with God. We often have misconceptions about the heart and character of God. This series will reveal a God that many of us don't really know. We will look at 5 things that God loves...and they might surprise you.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

The goal of this week's group is to consider and discus how God and joy go together, and how it could be a misconception that the more spiritual we become, the more serious we are.

SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 8:8-10, Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22, Philippians 4:4-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** While growing up, would you describe your impression of God as joyful and laughing? Explain.

2. **Read Nehemiah 8:8-10 and Discuss:**
   a. This meeting is comparable to what we would call a church service. The Israelites are gathered, someone is reading from the scriptures and teaching about it. As the people are listening, they are serious and mournful. Does that sound like church to you? Have you had an experience of being in church and being told or sensing you should not laugh?
   b. Look again at verse 10. The people are told there should be joy and celebration on a sacred day. But celebration is not intended to merely be self-centered. What does Nehemiah suggest? How do you see the modern church living this out?

3. **Read Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22 and Discuss:**
   a. The book of Proverbs contains a collection of timeless wise sayings. Can you think of recent discoveries in science or medicine that confirm these two ancient sayings hold truth?
   b. Have you ever experienced or witnessed laughter as good medicine?

4. **Read Philippians 4:4-5 and Discuss:**
   a. This is a letter Paul wrote to a church while he was in prison and unsure if he would ever get out! It seems strange that he would be telling a church to rejoice. How do you think Paul was able to have joy in the midst of what appears to be dire circumstances? Have you ever experienced joy that transcends circumstances?
   b. It is said that there is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness can be a reaction to circumstances, but where does joy come from?
   c. We see again, in this letter from Paul, there is more to joy than simply enjoyment. Look at verse 5 and imagine what the joy of the church could look like to those who do not know joy! In what ways do you see Christ followers living this out? In what ways do you think we have missed this opportunity?

Statistically, a child laughs about 500 times a day and an adult laughs about 15 times a day. Have we equated "growing up" with "being serious"? Laughter can cause increased heart and respiratory rate, relaxation of muscles and even an increase in production of disease fighting immune cells.
Laughter is good medicine.

TRY THIS

Fun and laughter are really good for you emotionally, physically and spiritually. Do you find humor in every day things? Have you gotten a bit too serious? What cracks you up? A comedian? A funny movie? A funny friend? Intentionally spend some time, just for fun, pursuing laughter this week!