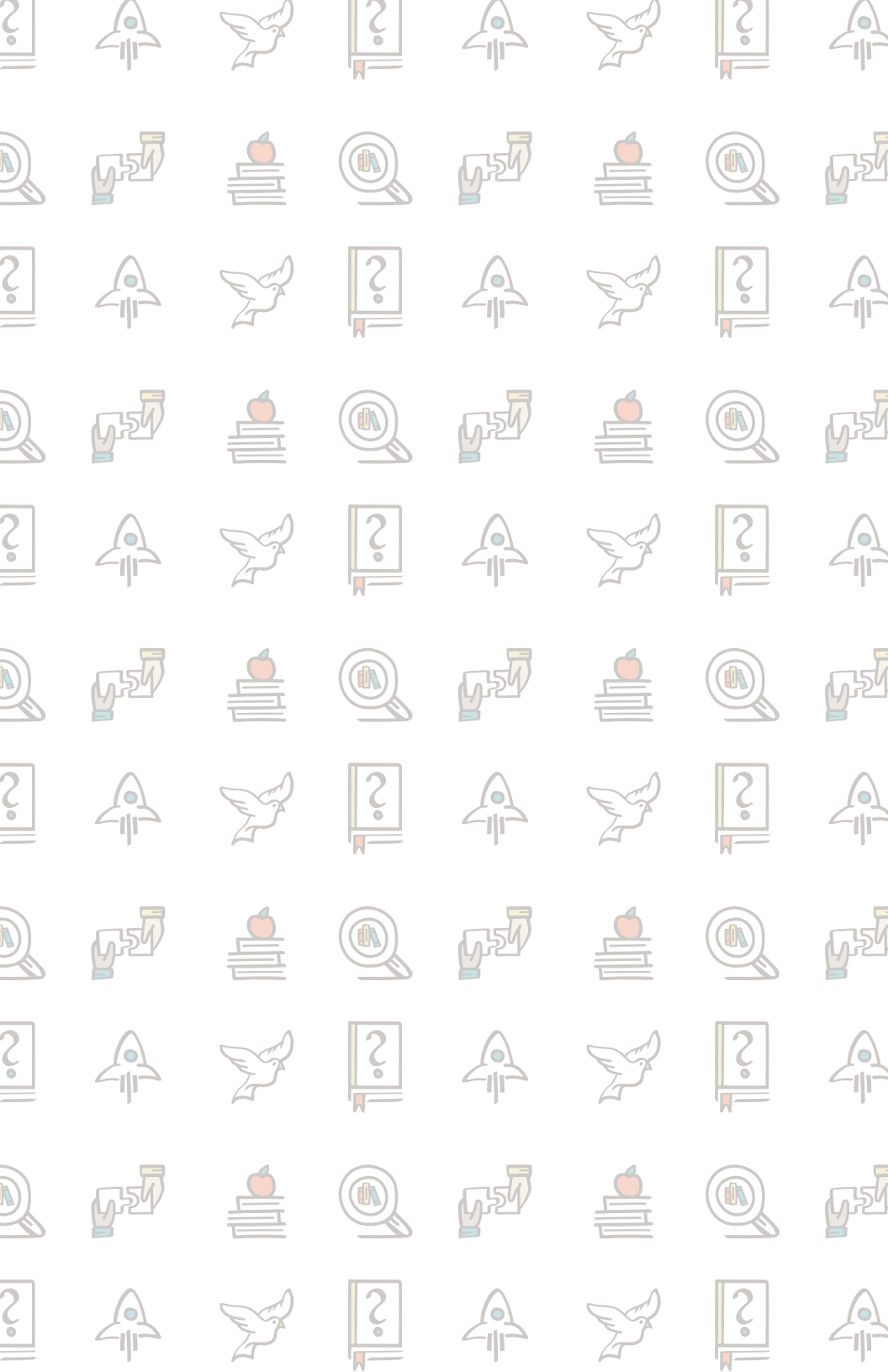


SET FREE



SMALL GROUP GUIDE

READ · RISE · RESTORE
A CHURCH & SCHOOL LITERACY CAMPAIGN



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LEADER • WEEK 1

Additional background and discussion prompts to support your discussion. These items are optional and should support your overall conversation.

WATCH

- This is a “cold open.” It does not require a description before showing. Allow group to experience it without expectations.
- The goal is to have everyone FEEL the experience of GENERATIONAL POVERTY, not to draw conclusions, critique or fix people.
- Let the discussion questions flow from what people experienced.
- If you are satisfied with the discussion after question 1, skip question 2 and go to question 3.

REFLECT

- Context on Isaiah 1:17: Isaiah begins his prophesy with a warning of impending judgment on the People of God. Isaiah warns that empty worship is not enough and lays out a vision of what God longs for from His people. This verse is part of that longing.
- If your group is the contemplative sort. Before asking the response questions, consider reading Isaiah 1:17 again only ask everyone to feel the verse (maybe close their eyes). Ask them to notice what word or phrase the Spirit emphasizes for them.

DISCUSS

- If your pastor preached last Sunday on a similar topic, encourage the group to integrate the pastor’s lesson while discussing here.
- Additional statistics from the US today:
 - A mother’s reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children’s future academic success.
 - 40% of 4th graders are below basic reading level
 - 80% of low-income 4th graders never reach reading proficiency.
 - 75% of state prison inmates did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.
 - 130 million adults in the United States struggle to read basic sentences.
- Jubilee context: 3500 years ago, the Mosaic Law included a system to make sure that any hurting family had a fresh start every 50 years.

APPLY

- Context of Luke 4:18-19: This passage is from Jesus’ first recorded sermon in Luke’s Gospel
- If you can, connect the conversation to how your faith community could impact literacy amongst your neighbors/community.
- If you have a local literacy movement (like ReadKC in Kansas City), explain what you know.

GROUP DISCUSSION

WATCH

Cold open: [Fugi and Adrian](#)

Questions immediately after watching:

1. What was the strongest emotion you felt while watching?
2. What moment had the greatest impact on you?
3. Did this connect to anything you've experienced or witnessed?
4. Did you have any epiphany, even a small one?

OPEN IN PRAYER

REFLECT *READ 1-2 TIMES*

Learn to do right;

Seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;

Plead the case of the widow.

ISAIAH 1:17

Questions:

1. What jumped out?
2. What does this verse say about what God values?

DISCUSS

Injustice, oppression, and poverty—without intervention—quickly become generational. The pain, lack of opportunity, and limitations are passed from parents to children.

READ: HOW GOD'S PEOPLE CAN BRING JUSTICE THROUGH LITERACY

Question:

What does 'Disrupting Generational Poverty' mean to you today?

Consider

- 1 in 7 children in the U.S. currently live in poverty
- 1/3 to 1/2 of children who were poor growing up remain poor as adults

JUBILEE (Leviticus 25)

Every 50 years: Debts forgiven. Slaves set free. A fresh start for hurting families.

1. How would this system affect society?
2. How does it make you feel?
3. Where do you see generational impacts of poverty, debt, wealth, and opportunity today?

APPLY

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor...
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

LUKE 4:18-19

Questions:

1. Where do you hear the Year of Jubilee in Jesus' words?
2. How can the People of God bring the Jubilee spirit here and now?
3. How would you like to participate in bringing Jubilee to your neighbors?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LEADER · WEEK 2

Additional background and discussion prompts to support your discussion. These items are optional and should support your overall conversation.

WATCH

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- If you are satisfied with the discussion after question 1, skip question 2 and go to question 3.

REFLECT

- If your group is the contemplative sort. Consider reading Proverbs 21:3, 15a again only ask everyone to feel the verse (maybe close their eyes). Ask them to notice what word or phrase the Spirit emphasizes for them.

DISCUSS

- If your pastor preached last Sunday on a similar topic, encourage the group to remember that lesson while discussing.
- Context of Matthew 25: Recorded from one of Jesus’ last public teachings. This passage is an insight into God’s kingdom in a broken world. It expresses a blessing on those who have encountered the “King” and are so moved to live in a kingdom-way.
- Additional passages to inform a biblical reflection on “justice”:
 - Zechariah 7:9-10: Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor.
 - Micah 6:8: He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
 - Amos 5:24: But let justice roll down like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.
 - Psalm 89:14: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.
 - Matthew 23:23: Jesus, “You have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”

APPLY

- Luke 9:48: If your group doesn’t see it. The “least” language and ‘done it to me’ theme are rare in Jesus’ teachings and appear in both Matthew 25 and Luke 9.
- Additional verses on God’s heart for children: Matthew 19:13-15, James 1:27, Matthew 18:5-6, 10, Psalm 82:3
- If you can, connect the conversation to how your faith community could impact literacy amongst your neighbors/community.
- If you have a local literacy movement (like ReadKC in Kansas City), explain what you know.

GROUP DISCUSSION

WATCH

Cold open: [Bianca and Children](#)

Questions immediately after watching:

1. What was the strongest emotion you felt while watching?
2. What moment had the greatest impact on you?
3. Did this connect to anything you've experienced or witnessed?
4. Did you have any epiphany, even a small one?

OPEN IN PRAYER

REFLECT READ 1-2 TIMES

*To do righteousness and justice
Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice...
It is a joy for the just to do justice*

PROVERBS 21:3, 15A NKJ

Questions:

1. What jumped out?
2. What does this verse say about what God values?

DISCUSS

Questions:

1. What does "Justice" mean to you?
2. How do you hear it used?

Discuss this definition:

Justice is not making sure people get what they DESERVE, justice is making sure everyone has what they NEED.

Consider

Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

MATTHEW 25:34-36

Questions:

1. Where do you see Jesus' heart for justice in this passage?
2. The writers of READ talk about "Preventative Justice."
What do you think that means?

Consider

- 80% of low income 4th graders never reach reading proficiency.
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
- Students who don't meet reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
- High school graduation can be reasonably predicted by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of 3rd grade.
COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Question:

What is the relationship between childhood illiteracy today and Jesus' justice categories in Matthew 25: Hungry/thirsty (welfare), Stranger (immigrants), Naked (exploitation), Sickness (addiction) and Prison?

APPLY

(Jesus) said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

LUKE 9:48

Question:

1. Where do you hear the message of the Matthew 25 passage in this verse?
2. How could the People of God bring preventative justice and "receiving a child" together?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LEADER • WEEK 3

Additional background and discussion prompts to support your discussion. These items are optional and should support your overall conversation.

WATCH

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- If you are satisfied with the discussion after question 1, skip question 2 and go to question 3.

REFLECT

- If your group is the contemplative sort. Before asking the response questions, consider reading the parable again only ask everyone to feel the verse (maybe close their eyes). Ask them to notice what word or phrase the Spirit emphasizes for them.
- The “Good Samaritan” parable is very familiar to many. Help your group hear it “fresh, like the first time.” Consider asking them to place themselves inside the story: What do they smell or see around them, etc.? What do they feel? Maybe ask them to place themselves inside the experience of the Samaritan as he rounded the bend and saw the hurting stranger.

DISCUSS

- Encourage the group to bring their thoughts from the Set Free family devotional or from the pastor’s Sunday sermon into the conversation.
- Other passages that teach that true faith is experienced in behaviors:
 - John 14:15: “If you love me, you will find yourself keeping my commandments.”
 - Ephesians 2:10 “For you are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”
 - Romans 16:25-26
 - 1 John 2:4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
 - James 2:14-17
- Side observation: Did you notice that Jesus’ answer included literacy: “What is written... how does it read...?”

APPLY

- Context of Isaiah 58:10-11: Isaiah is writing to God’s people exhorting them to turn away from selfish and ritualistic faith and embrace what God most cares about.
- If you can, connect the conversation to how your faith community could impact literacy amongst your neighbors/community.
- If you have a local literacy movement (like ReadKC in Kansas City), explain what you know.

GROUP DISCUSSION

WATCH

Cold open: [Hailey](#)

Questions immediately after watching:

1. What was the strongest emotion you felt while watching?
2. What moment had the greatest impact on you?
3. Did this connect to anything you've experienced or witnessed?
4. Did you have any epiphany, even a small one?

OPEN IN PRAYER

REFLECT READ 1-2 TIMES

Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he encountered robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by coincidence a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was on a journey came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.'

LUKE 10:30-35

Questions:

1. This is a well-known story. What jumped out this time?
2. What does this passage say about what God values?

DISCUSS

Jesus tells the Good Samaritan parable in response to an initial question.

And behold, a lawyer stood up and put (Jesus) to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And (Jesus) said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"

LUKE 10:25-26

Questions:

1. Why is the initial question the lawyer asks significant?
2. What are we to do with Jesus telling the story of the Good Samaritan to answer a question about how to inherit eternal life? Is Jesus elevating behavior above belief?
3. Is inheriting eternal

Like the Samaritan, what are some places we “pass along the road” where we could do what Jesus would do: street corners, local schools, social services, etc.? Like the Samaritan, what everyday talents could we offer to a hurting person? Who is the “stranger” (a person from a different background, tossed aside and in need) in your neighborhood? Where are they?

APPLY

*And if you offer yourself to the hungry
And satisfy the need of the afflicted,
Then your light will rise in darkness,
And your gloom will become like midday.
And the Lord will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.*

ISAIAH 58:10-11

Questions:

1. What does this passage say happens when we do what JESUS DOES?
2. The Good Samaritan helped someone who was discarded, in need, and different than himself. How is a struggling child like the stranger in the Good Samaritan or in the exhortation in Isaiah 58?
3. How does all this apply to literacy? How might we be blessed by being a reading mentor? What is the one idea you are taking away from today’s discussion?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LEADER · WEEK 4

Additional background and discussion prompts to support your discussion. These items are optional and should support your overall conversation.

WATCH

- This is a “cold open.” It does not require a description before showing. Allow group to experience it without expectations.
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- Let the discussion questions flow from what people experienced.
- If you are satisfied with the discussion after question 1, skip question 2 and go to question 3.

REFLECT

- If your group is the contemplative sort. Before asking the response questions, consider reading the parable again only ask everyone to feel the verse (maybe close their eyes). Ask them to notice what word or phrase the Spirit emphasizes for them.
- The story of Tabitha is not familiar to many, so you may need to just let your people experience it for the first time (we will discuss it more soon).
Note: Peter eventually heals Tabitha, but the story seems to emphasize that the Lord wanted Peter there so he could witness Tabitha’s life and impact.

DISCUSS

- “Gentiles” simply means “nations.” Up to this point in Acts, the Christian church had existed exclusively in Jewish communities, not yet called to the “gentiles.”
- Contextual considerations of Acts 9:36-39:
 - It immediately follows the conversion of Saul/Paul, the eventual Apostle to the Gentiles
 - The story of Tabitha is the FIRST story of ministry to gentiles.
 - It triggers Apostle Peter’s next experiences (Acts 10) and conversion to minister to the nations (gentiles).

APPLY

- Encourage the group to bring their thoughts from the Set Free family devotional or from the pastor’s Sunday sermon into the conversation.
- Help your group get creative with the final “thought exercise.” Help evoke their imaginations as a “think tank” called to bring the best points to their church leadership.
- If you have a local literacy movement (like ReadKC in Kansas City), explain what you know.

GROUP DISCUSSION

WATCH

Cold open: [Marquise](#)

Questions immediately after watching:

1. What was the strongest emotion you felt while watching?
2. What moment had the greatest impact on you?
3. Did this connect to anything you've experienced or witnessed?
4. Did you have any epiphany, even a small one?

OPEN IN PRAYER

REFLECT READ 1-2 TIMES

Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which when translated means Dorcas); this woman was excelling in acts of kindness and charity which she did habitually. But it happened at that time that she became sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upstairs room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Do not delay in coming to us." So Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the room upstairs; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

Acts 9:36-39

Questions:

1. Is this story familiar to you? What jumped out as you read it?
2. Nestled in between the story of Saul's conversion and Peter's calling to the Gentiles, is Tabitha's story. What does Tabitha demonstrate about what God values?
3. What was Tabitha's relationship with her neighbors?

DISCUSS

In the Book of Acts, the church immediately changed the world all around them:

Mass conversions (e.g. Acts 2:41), Eradicating illness (e.g. Acts 5:12-16),
Converting authorities (e.g. Acts 17:4, 12, 34), Overturning economies/cults (e.g. Acts 19:23-27)...

...AND overwhelming with acts of kindness and charity (Acts 9:36-39)

Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which when translated means Dorcas); this woman was excelling in acts of kindness and charity which she did habitually... all the widows stood beside (Peter), weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

ACTS 9:36,39

Consider:

Joppa was a Roman garrison city, a gentile city, populated by Roman soldiers' families, widows and orphans.

Questions:

1. Why is this location surprising?
2. What does this location teach us about Tabitha?

Discussion:

At this time, Tabitha is the only disciple we know of who is living among gentiles.

Group Thought Exercise:

How did Tabitha interpret her community? What demographic did she identify as being in profound need? What was the need? How did she use her resources—time, talent and treasure—to serve that demographic and meet that need?

APPLY

Later in his life, the Apostle Peter wrote:

Live an exemplary life in your neighborhood so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.

1 PETER 2:12 MSG

Questions:

1. What does this passage say about the calling of the church?
2. What lessons, life principles, or convictions do you suspect God wants you to take away from today's discussion?

Throughout history, when the church has been at its best, it has taken on an "issues of the day" and devoted its resources—time, talent, and treasure—to addressing and hoping to it. Examples include plagues, infanticide, gladiatorial games, human sacrifice, witch hunts, preservation of libraries and the advancement civil rights.

Experimental thought exercise:

Imagine that your church asks you to make a case for childhood literacy as an “issue of our day”: Why should the church care?

Why is the church positioned to address it? How might addressing this issue help the church be the church as God intended? How can you bring your resources—time, talent, and treasure—to eradicate this issue in your community?

CLOSE IN PRAYER



READ · RISE · RESTORE