

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of February 16-22, 2020

“UNAFRAID: SETTING OUR EYES ON THE LORD”

GETTING STARTED

To the facilitator: As your group begins, use this section to introduce the topic. If possible, give a brief recap of the sermon.

Share a memorable point, a spiritual lesson, a personal application, a question, or something that challenged you from the sermon last Sunday.

How did you personally respond to the COVID-19 outbreak? Would you consider your response as “reasonable fear” or “unreasonable fear”? How would you differentiate between “reasonable fear” and “unreasonable fear”?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. *Read 1 Samuel 17:4-11.* What was so intimidating about the way Goliath is described in these verses? How did the Israelites, including King Saul, react? How had the fear of Goliath spread throughout the people of Israel? Have you ever seen fear spread to others in your life?
2. *Read 1 Samuel 17:32-50.* Why was David willing to face Goliath when all the rest of the Israelites trembled in fear? What were some of his experiences that made him rely on God?
3. *Discuss.* Identify some ways that people deal with their fears and anxieties (e.g. stay busy, drink alcohol, chew fingernails, talk to somebody, etc.) Pastor Nic made the point that “you are not David in the story.” Why is this an important perspective?
4. *Read Psalm 16.* What was David’s request in this psalm? Have you ever started out your prayer like this? Does it surprise you that his request is in verse 1 and then the rest of the psalm was all about his relationship with God? Why or why not?
5. *As a group, memorize Psalm 16:8.* Look back in your life and think of a time when you were badly overcome by fear and worry. How did you handle it? What lesson can you learn from this verse and how can you appropriate this in your life in a practical way?
6. *Share.* Paul Trip says there are three things we need to remember to help us in our fears, struggles and worries: (a) that the world belongs to God, (b) that we are his children; (c) that struggles are part of God’s plan. Which of these do you tend to forget most often? What could you do to help yourself remember these truths?

7. In Psalm 16:9-11, David talks about the results of focusing on the Lord. What are these? Would you say that you are enjoying the same kind of results that David has in your life today?

8. [NEXT STEPS]

This week, pray to ask God to reveal areas in your life where you can give glory to God.

- ☐ I will commit to go through the devotionals everyday this week.
- ☐ I will trust God with my fears, worries and anxieties.
- ☐ I will meditate on Psalm 16:8-11.
- ☐ I will memorize Psalm 16:8 and constantly remind myself of this.
- ☐ I will cultivate my relationship with the Lord in prayer, meditation and solitude.
- ☐ Other ways you can apply this lesson _____.

REFLECTION

(Excerpt from the article, “In times of affliction and fears, live for what really matters,” by Edmund Chan).

“Be extra careful and vigilant.”

“Avoid crowds and handshakes.”

“Wash your hands often.”

“Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.”

“Wear your mask.”

These are common advice, in view of the contagious coronavirus infection.

My wife Ann and I are assessed as *staff-at-risk* because of our frequent travels, being in confined spaces onboard planes, multiple conferences and crowds. Moreover, we are from Singapore, which is a hotspot on Dorscon Orange alert right now. So, in the current situation, if I were asked to offer just *one* counsel, what would I say?

Don’t just *stay* alive, *live* the life.

Here’s what I would say: “*Stop worrying about staying alive – be more concerned about living the life!*”

Not to worry about staying alive does *not* mean that we are to be reckless. Rather, it is a statement that is undergirded by two important convictions:

1. Being worried and being careful are two entirely different things. There is no use worrying. However, there *is* a responsibility (and wisdom!) to be careful. They are two different things.
2. There is more to life than mere existence. Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.” (Luke 9:24; Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35)

As a Christian, faced with a societal condition of fear and uncertainties, we ought to shine as light — with a message of *hope!*

For the complete article, check out:

<https://saltandlight.sg/faith/in-times-of-affliction-and-fears-live-for-what-really-matters-challenges-rev-edmund-chan/?fbclid=IwAR0c4pBiGsHiyBcCUn1xu7ullHulYfDuCAG73XeBHXN2Bm5iqNxxkBlS90k>

CLOSING THE SESSION.

Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray for courage to walk faithfully with God and to focus on him.
- Pray for those who are hurting, going through fear, worry and anxiety in the group.
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends and loved ones.

DAY 4.

A few years ago, a local TV ad showed a woman sitting in a car. She's minding her own business, and suddenly a man comes out of the blue, rips the door open, and pulls her out of the car roughly. It looks like he's attacking her, and we look on in horror. Then the camera pulls back, and we see that the car is on fire and the woman didn't know it. The man wasn't assaulting her; he was rescuing her. The ad finishes by saying, "You need the bigger picture. Channel 10 News gives you the bigger picture."

In the story we have read about Jesus today, it's clear that the disciples and others need to see a bigger picture too. As they ask Jesus about the blind man, they are only looking through the narrow lens of their own thinking. Jesus explains, though, that the bigger picture in this man's story is about bringing honor to God.

Reflect & Apply.

1. How do you think would it feel like to live as a blind person?
2. What does Jesus do when he sees the blind man? Did you find anything strange in this story? What does Jesus say was the ultimate purpose for healing this blind man (cf 9:3)? Have you ever considered the glory of God connected to your fears?
3. Why is it important for us to understand that there is a bigger picture even if we don't necessarily see it? Is there a particular circumstance today that is bothering or angering you? Pray that the Lord will give you peace and confidence to trust in the bigger picture he has in your situation.

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DAY 5.

"The Lord is my light . . . my salvation . . . the defense of my life." Interestingly, David says God *is* all of this. The Lord doesn't simply give these things. In other words, the psalmist laid claim upon God himself rather than his works. Because of the Lord's presence, which meant more to David than anything else, the he asks: "Whom shall I fear . . . whom shall I dread?"

The Hebrew term used by David, translated "confident," means "to trust, to be secure, to have assurance." This means that the source of David's confidence and stability was not his own strength—but God. His Lord was his only foundation for rocklike stability. What an unshakable foundation!

Reflect & Apply.

1. What does your hope in God look like in your daily life?
2. David references three great reasons why he wasn't afraid of the unknown or something that he can't control. What are these?
3. What does waiting and faith and how we view our circumstances have to do with how we respond to fear?
4. Identify some verses that show you David's posture before God as he writes the words of this psalm. List them down. How can you apply these in your life today?

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“The Main Thing” (Series)
February 16, 2020

This 5-day devotional includes readings with brief commentaries that builds upon the weekend sermon. You are encouraged to take the time to read the Bible passages and meditate on them. On average, you will need 20-30 minutes to complete them.

Reflection questions and applications are intended to invite you to slow down and mediate on the truth that God is teaching you. Daily application steps are also given to help drive the message in practical ways.

DAY 1.

WHEN YOU ARE IMMORTAL

Read: Acts 23:1-24.

We read about the plot in Acts 23:12. But it didn't work. Why? Because a string of unlikely events happened.

A boy overheard the plot. The boy was the son of Paul's sister. The boy had the courage to go to the Roman centurion guarding Paul. The centurion took him seriously and brought him to the tribune. The tribune believed him and prepared "two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen" to take Paul to safety.

Every one of those events was highly unlikely. Strange, but that's what happened. What had those hungry men lying in ambush overlooked? They failed to reckon with what happened to Paul just before they made their plot. Christ said Paul was going to Rome. And that was that (Acts 23:11).

It has been said that “a Christian is immortal until his work on earth is done.” That statement means that nothing can harm you without God’s permission.

Christians aren't immune to sadness. What happens to others also happens to us. The difference is this: We know that God protects us from harm so that nothing can touch us that doesn't first pass through his hands of love. That knowledge doesn't mean that we don't weep or we don't suffer. Far from it. But it is the basis for the statement that *"we sorrow but not as those who have no hope"* (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Our sorrow is different precisely because we hope in God.

Reflect & Apply.

1. What does this passage say about the reality of evil in the world? Do you get angry with the injustice that you see around you? What have you seen lately?
2. How did God encourage Paul (cf Acts 23:11) in this story? Why is it important that we hold on to the right promises of God? How does that give you confidence?
3. Think of the past week. Can you see God's goodness in your life? In what way? List as many as you can. Pray that you might see and give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy.

DAY 2. FREE FROM FEAR

Read: Psalm 34:1-10.

Fear sneaks into my heart without permission. It paints a picture of helplessness and hopelessness. It steals my peace and my concentration. What am I fearful about? I'm concerned about the safety of my family or the health of loved ones. I panic at the loss of a job or a broken relationship. Fear turns my focus inward and reveals a heart that sometimes finds it hard to trust.

When these fears and worries strike, how good it is to read David’s prayer in Psalm 34: “I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears” (v. 4). And how does God deliver us from our fears? When we “look to him” (v. 5), when we focus on Him, our fears fade; we trust Him to be in control. Then David mentions a different type of fear—not a fear that paralyzes, but a deep respect and awe of the One who surrounds us and delivers us (v. 7). We can take refuge in Him because He is good (v. 8).

This awe of his goodness helps put our fears into perspective. When we remember who God is and how much he loves us, we can relax into his peace. “Those who fear him lack nothing” (v. 9), concludes David. How wonderful to discover that in the fear of the Lord we can be delivered from our fears.

Reflect & Apply.

1. How does this Psalm use the word “fear”? Is the meaning of “fear” in verse 4 the same as the meaning of “fear” in verse 8, or verse 10? What are those meanings? If they are different, how are they different? Why do you think so?
2. What does the psalmist mean by “taste and see”? In what way(s) can a Christian “taste and see that the LORD is good”?
3. To whom or what are you tempted to go to, other than God, when you experience hard times? List the top 3 answers and ask God to help you replace those with your relationship with him.

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DAY 3.

FEAR OF THE FUTURE

Read: Isaiah 41:8-14.

What scares you? When we ask children this question, they will often mention fear of the dark, or spiders, or getting lost. Teens and adults are more experienced and tend to mention bigger risks, such as mass shootings, a natural disaster (often called an “act of God”), or anything that could rob us of life—either our own or that of a loved one.

Our Creator God knows how we are made and how fear can cripple us. In the Bible the message “Do not fear” occurs some 365 times, in one phrasing or another. The prophet Isaiah, speaking God’s words to God’s chosen people, encourages Israel to trust God—even though they will suffer in captivity—and not to fear, because God has an amazing rescue plan.

When we lose our job, learn that we have a serious illness, face a big financial loss, or watch a family member make dangerous choices, we naturally experience fear for the future. What is going to happen to us—or to them? How will we get through this?

God's words in Isaiah invite us to look at the big picture, the overarching story. Our God promises, in effect, "I am with you; I am your God; I will strengthen you and help you. My right hand will take hold of your right hand, so do not be dismayed."

Reflect & Apply.

1. What is it about the future that you're afraid of?
2. What is happening in 41:1-4? How do the nations respond in 41:5-7? In what ways is Israel's relationship with God described in 41:8? How would this have encouraged God's people in exile (cf 41:9-10)?
3. Identify one practical way you will respond to the past few days' studies. Write it down. Reflect on it. Put it into practice this week. If you can, share it with a brother/sister or your small group.

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