

If you have limited time to prepare, this 3-step outline is a helpful tool for leading a small group discussion:

1. Read the text from Sunday's message.
2. What did you find most helpful/confusing/new/ that you did not understand from the message?
3. What were your big takeaways? How will you put these into practice in your life?

Getting Started

- How has your view of God been influenced by this global pandemic?
- Share examples of how you have witnessed God's power, provision, protection, faithfulness, grace, mercy and love?
- What are you trusting God for in this season?
- Read Isaiah chapter 40 to expand your view of the greatness of God. Focus your initial prayer time as a group on verses 28-31 as you look to Him to renew your hope and strength for this season.

Discussion

- Share your key learnings from the past 8 weeks and our study through the book of Ruth.
- What might you apply from the examples of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz to your life during this season?

The story of Ruth is one of rescue and redemption. Our personal story is also a story of being brought from death to life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that when we each trusted Jesus as Savior, we were not just cleaned up and improved, but rather we were made new! We are then to draw continually on God's supernatural strength and power to enable us to walk worthy of our great calling in Christ (Eph 4:1-6).

Isaiah understood God's compassionate and forgiving heart and willingness to shepherd His people through the difficult season of captivity in Babylon and their return to Jerusalem. He also knew God's willingness to energize His people and to protect and provide for them (Is 40:29-31). In the New Testament, Paul prayed that the Ephesians might experience God's "power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength" (Eph 1:19). This is the same power that God demonstrated when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated Him "at the right hand in the heavens" (Eph 1:20). It's also the same power that "made us alive in Christ ... and seated us in the heavens" (Eph 2:5-6). Furthermore, it's the same power and strength that can enable us to walk worthy of our great calling (Eph 3:16, 20-21) and to be victorious over Satan, the enemy of our souls (Eph 6:10-11).

- Life Essentials Study Bible

Becoming like Christ is a process, even though God sees us already glorified (Romans 8:29-30). He calls us to the ongoing process of putting off the old self and putting on the new self (Eph 4:17-24). We all need at least three ongoing experiences to renew our hearts and minds and to "be transformed" into people who reflect the life Jesus.

1. Vital learning experiences with the Word of God
 2. Vital experiences with God and one another
 3. Vital witnessing experiences with the unsaved world
- What have you observed to be the most significant factors that contribute to spiritual growth?
 - Which of the three experiences listed above would you like to grow in over the coming months?
What practical steps can you be taking as you grow to walk in manner worthy of the calling you have received?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the promise of Your Word that those who hope in You will renew their strength. You alone are the source of all strength, for You are the ruler of all things and in Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to me. Strengthen me to stand firm, to stand for righteousness, to stand for Your kingdom! Like Daniel, may my life be characterized by integrity and “above reproach conduct”. Even in the midst of injustice, may I be one who turns to You in worship and thanksgiving. May I always run toward You and not grow weary. Empower me, I pray to walk and not faint. Help me to not fear or be dismayed, regardless of the situations that I am in, or the condition of the world around me, for You are God and You hold all things together. Hold me together, I pray! Strengthen me and help me, uphold me with Your righteous right hand and with power through Your Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart in all His fullness! Have mercy on me, Father and help me to lean on You and find my strength in You alone for my spirit is willing but my flesh is so weak, and I confess to You, Lord:

The weakness of my faith and flesh ... O Lord, have mercy!

The undisciplined use of my mind ... Renew and strengthen my mind by Your Word!

The sin that I yet hold on to ... Wash me and cleanse me.

The timid ways in which I still live ... I turn from a spirit of fear and trust in Your name!

Increase my faith. Destroy doubt and unbelief in my heart and mind and empower me to live boldly. May the sphere of influence in which You've planted me resonate with the praise of Your name and the imprint of Jesus be left on all that I touch. For Your name and Your renown are the desire of my heart. In Jesus' powerful name. Amen.

(Isaiah 40:31; 1 Chronicles 29:12; Isaiah 41:10; Daniel 6; Isaiah 40:31; Colossians 1:17; Ephesians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Matthew 26:41; Romans 12:29; Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 12:2; 26:8)

From *Pray The Word* by Tiece L. King