

# **WHAT TO DO**

When You Don't Know What To Do

## Week 1 Small Group: When You Have to Wait

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

God of strength and peace, so often in our journeys we grow weary in waiting. Frustrated with lack of change and an inability to see the light at the end of dark tunnels, our minds are clouded with doubt. In those moments, remind us that you are always with us; that hope is never lost in you. Give us the strength to encourage others as we each navigate life's uncertain path.

### **BREAKING THE ICE:**

Share a time in your life when you were anxiously waiting on something to happen. What was it like waiting? Who helped you get through it?

### **WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:**

**Read** Luke 24:13-32

- Why do you think Jesus takes time to listen to them for a while instead of just revealing who he is?
- Why do you think Jesus takes the time to re-explain the scriptures to these travelers?
- When in your life did you lose hope and deal with disappointment while waiting for an answer or solution that was slow to arrive? Can you see how God was at work in the waiting? What about the long-awaited answer helped you to realize God was in control the whole time?
- What helps you recognize that it is Jesus who is walking alongside you when you find yourself lost or discouraged on your journey?

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- How will you make time/leave room to see Jesus in the stressful spots of your journey?
- Who in your life can you help to see Jesus at work while they are waiting for answers and a way out?
- Consider those who are distraught and grieving in your congregation and community. How might you walk beside them?

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:**

Ever-present, loving God, may we look to you and for you in all things and all times. No matter what situations we face in life, may we always feel your presence in the highs and lows, the mountains and the valleys. Through us, may the world around us also feel your loving presence. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior, Amen.



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## Week 2 Small Group: When You Have To Listen

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

From all our lives' pathways, you have called us to this place, O Lord. Be with us as we listen for your word and seek your ways. Guide our steps and guard our lives that we may serve you more effectively in this broken world. Amen.

### **BREAKING THE ICE:**

After 40 years of living at the palace, Moses had to flee and become a fugitive in the desert because of one moment's hot-blooded blunder. What is something that you regret and what would you go back and change?

### **WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:**

**Read** Exodus 3:1-17

- God instructs Moses to take off his sandals as he approaches God. Removing shoes when entering a holy place of divine presence and honoring the holiness of the ground is an ancient practice. In what ways do you honor God's holiness both in your personal life and the life of church?
- God was concerned about the suffering of the Israelites. Where do you see the suffering and pain of your neighbors in your community?
- God uses the people around us in special ways to grab our attention. Have you experienced any help and support from your fellow believers that helped you to overcome the adversity in your life?

### **NEXT STEPS:**

Has God ever called you to or put you in a situation outside of your comfort zone?

What are common excuses that we might give God if we don't want to do something?

What kind of spiritual responsibility has God given you?

How can you spend time with God so that you don't lose your direction?

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:**

God was revealed and spoke to Moses in a mysterious and unexpected way: a burning bush. The God of the burning bush is waiting, even now, to encounter us, call us, challenge us and change us. Let us be open to God's surprises.

God, you promised to be with Moses, and we are here to witness the fulfillment of that promise. Just as you were the God of Israel from generation to generation, we trust you are also the God of (your community's name). As we go out, help us to be sustained and surprised by the love of God. Amen.



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## Week 3 Small Group: When You're Struggling with Where God Is Leading You

### OPENING PRAYER

Light of the world, shine upon us and disperse the clouds of our selfishness, so that we may reflect the power of your love and grace in our life together. Amen.

*Surrender...the hardest thing to do, but the results are phenomenal when God is the one you're surrendering to.*  
Unknown

### BREAKING THE ICE:

Often the story of Jonah is told as a Sunday School lesson to children. When was the first time you heard the story of Jonah? If you heard this story as a child, what do you remember about it? Did you ever run away or avoid something or someone?

### WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Jonah 1:1-3

- Nineveh was a powerful and wicked city of the Assyrian Empire. Why does God love everyone, even those who do not do what is right?
- Jonah's reaction and attitude are indicative of a hesitancy/unwillingness to enter into hostile situations that many of us have probably seen or experienced before...even though doing so was Jonah's God-given mission. In what ways do you identify with Jonah?
- How do we know that God wants us to tell everyone else about God?

### NEXT STEPS:

- How have you run from God's purpose and plan for your life? What were the consequences of your running from God?
- Eventually, Jonah went to Nineveh and delivered God's message. However, he was unhappy about it. It is an ongoing process to align our desires with God's desires for us. What might help you run toward God rather than running from God?
- How have you experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in this process?

### PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

No one is beyond God's grace and love. Let us begin to pray for those who seem to be or to feel far from the love of God and look for ways to tell them about God.

Faithful God make our hearts bold with love for one another. Point us to those who do not know your love; give us the words to share. Pour out your Spirit upon all people, that we may live your justice and sing in praise the new song of your marvelous victory. Amen.



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## Week 4 Small Group: Call Me Bitter

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

God of Life, we come with questions, pain, and anger. Sometimes, like Naomi, we worry you are punishing us. As we read and reflect on this story, open our minds and hearts so we might learn to see the grace and love you have woven into our own story. Amen.

*Our human compassion binds us to one another - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.* Nelson Mandela

### **BREAKING THE ICE:**

What do you usually do when you are faced with a difficult situation in life? What activities help calm you when you feel stressed?

### **WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:**

Read Ruth 1:11-21

- What characters in this story (Ruth, Naomi, the women of the town) do you relate to most? Why?
- How did Ruth react to Naomi's pain and bitterness?
- How would you feel in this situation if you were Ruth?
- Have you ever been suffering with an issue and someone told you it was God's will? How did their comment make you feel?

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Is someone in the group willing to talk about a time when you were in as much pain as Naomi when she returned to Bethlehem? What or who helped you during that difficult time?
- What are some ways you could be supportive of a person you know is struggling with a difficult situation right now in their life?
- Identify someone who has been "a Ruth" in your life. How is God calling you be "a Ruth" for someone else?

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:**

God of love, we are grateful that you are bigger than our anger and bitterness. Help us see the people of hope in our lives. Teach us to care for and understand our anger instead of hiding it. Help us, through your Spirit, to wash away our pain so we might better see the image of you that is at the heart of who we are as your beloved children. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



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## Week 5 Small Group: Celebrating God's Unexpected Grace

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

God of grace, sometimes, like Naomi, your grace comes to us through unexpected sources. As we read and reflect on this story, open our minds and hearts so we might learn to see the grace and love you have woven into our own story. Amen.

*How we walk with the broken speaks louder than how we sit with the great.* Bill Bennot

### **BREAKING THE ICE:**

When was a time you felt deeply blessed? Have you ever been blessed by someone you didn't expect to be blessed by?

### **WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:**

**Read** Ruth 4:13-17

- The story of Ruth was likely one that really came into circulation when the people of Israel were slaves in Babylon. What do you think they would have learned from this story?
- In the ancient world, women were often viewed as worthless. What does the Book of Ruth tell us about how our God views women and other groups society views as having little or no value?
- Matthew lists Ruth in his genealogy of Jesus. Ancient genealogies didn't list women. Why do you think he wanted to remind us of Ruth's story when telling Jesus' story?

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- What groups are often viewed by our society as worthless or having little value? How do those groups bless our society?
- How would you feel in this situation if you were Naomi?
- How could you bless someone unexpectedly this week? Develop a plan to bless someone and commit to act on your plan.

### **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:**

Think about a time when you felt like celebrating God's unexpected grace. How could you celebrate all the ways God has blessed your life this week?

God of Grace, we are grateful for all the ways you bless our lives. Open our eyes so we can better see and celebrate your amazing grace. Open our hearts so we can be your instruments of grace to those in our world and our community who are often overlooked and mistreated. In the gracious name of our Savior we pray, Amen.



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