

# MONDAY NIGHT CHURCH GROUP

## Come to the table for... COMFORT

### PASSAGE

Psalm 119:49-56

### PRELESSON (15 minutes)

*You will use this same format to begin each night this week.*

Spend some time talking with your students about what they found meaningful during the worship time tonight. As the leader of your group, I want to encourage you to take notes during the worship session so you can have something to relay to the students during this time. Ask questions like:

- How did God speak to your heart through the message/worship tonight?
- How have you seen God working in your life here at camp?
- What is your response to how God has challenged you today?

Use this time to help them understand how God is working in their lives. Remember, not everyone is going to respond the same way; some of your youth are farther along in their walk with Jesus than others. Challenge your students, but also show grace to those who are not very far along in their maturity.

### LESSON (30 Minutes)

We all have things we run to for comfort. Some of us turn to food (which is why we call it “comfort food”); a pint of ice cream after an emotionally draining day is just what we need sometimes! Some find comfort in the presence of family or friends.; others find comfort in sleeping, working out, being outdoors, or a variety of other things.

### ASK

- What is your “go to” comfort (i.e. talking with friends, food, etc.) and why?
- What situations or challenges cause us to need to be comforted?
- List some positive sources of comfort.
- List some negative sources of comfort.

Although there are positive sources for comfort, like surrounding ourselves with family and friends, there are also negative, even destructive sources for comfort (repeat some of the answers the students gave). All might bring about temporary comfort, but they all eventually fade and often have severe consequences. Even the positive sources of comfort are temporary. If we want lasting comfort, we need to choose to commune and meet with God, because He is the one who brings lasting comfort.

**Ask for a volunteer to read Psalm 119:49-56**

Remember your word to your servant; you have given me hope through it. This is my comfort in my affliction: Your promise has given me life. The arrogant constantly ridicule me, but I do not turn away from your instruction. Lord, I remember your judgments from long ago and find comfort. Rage seizes me because of the wicked who reject your instruction. Your statutes are the theme of my song during my earthly life. Lord, I remember your name in the night, and I obey your instruction. This is my practice: I obey your precepts. (CSB)

**ASK**

- The psalmist writes that he finds comfort in the Lord in two ways. What are they? (His promises and His judgments)
- The psalmist found comfort in the promises of God and in God's faithfulness to Israel throughout history. How can we find comfort in the same way the psalmist did?

When we commune with God and grow closer to Him, we can find lasting comfort. Affliction and turmoil will find their way into our lives. But even in though dark times, we can find comfort in God. We miss this lasting comfort when we shut God out of our lives or find substitutes for His comforting presence. If we want to experience His comfort, we must:

1. Know God's Heart: "Your statutes are the theme of my song." God's word was the very life song of the psalmist. The first step to experiencing the lasting comfort that comes from God is to know His Heart. Study His word, understand what is most important to Him and what pleases Him. Some

people believe that God is a killjoy, a dictator who wants to ruin our lives, but that is not the case at all. If it was, why then would the psalmist have made them the theme of his life's song? God's word is not a burden; it is a comfort and a joy. It becomes a comfort when you know God's heart.

2. Remain Steadfast: "The arrogant constantly ridicule me, but I do not turn away from your instruction." Because the world has an incorrect view of God and His word, they do not understand why anyone would want to willfully choose to follow God's word. Therefore, the world will attempt to distract you and pull you away from communion with God. However, because we know God's heart, we fully embrace the joy and comfort that comes from God's word and remain steadfast in Him. It isn't always easy. When fortune seems to favor unbelievers, we might be tempted to go our own way. But we must remain steadfast to God's word.

#### CLOSING (5 Minutes)

Instruct the students to quietly reflect on the material presented and ask themselves, "In what areas do I need to grow in my spiritual walk with Christ? Do I need to better understand God's heart? What needs to change so I can remain steadfast when life gets hard?" Have the students write down an area where God needs to strengthen them and write down some steps that will help that happen. Some examples might be: I want to be in a small group Bible study, I need to really reflect and digest what I'm learning from the Bible instead of breezing over it, or I need a group of friends to point me to God when life gets difficult.

Once they have had a few moments to reflect, pray for your group. During the prayer, with everyone's head bowed and eyes closed, ask for students to raise their hands if they need to experience God's comfort in a fresh way this week. It doesn't matter what the situation is, if they need God's lasting comfort, ask if you could pray for them.

**Church Groups dismiss at 10:20 P.M.  
Please do not dismiss early**

# TUESDAY NIGHT CHURCH GROUP

## Come to the table for... PEACE

### PASSAGE

John 16:25-33

### PRELESSON (10 minutes)

Use the material from the prelesson in Monday Night's Church Group

### LESSON (30 Minutes)

#### OPENING ILLUSTRATION

Share a personal story from your life about a time you faced uncertainty. It can be serious or humorous, but the point of the illustration needs to focus on the fact that you had no idea what was going to happen and how you felt during that time. End it by saying, "It would be nice to say that we would never face uncertainty in life. It would be great if everything went as planned. But life is full of uncertainty, especially for those who follow Jesus. But, even in the uncertainty, we can have total peace, as we will read in tonight's passage."

#### ASK

- What are some specific areas of life where we might face uncertainty?
- How do people in your circle of relationships typically respond when things don't go as planned?
- Do you ever consider the uncertainty of life? What might be a problem with either dwelling on life's uncertainty too much or not at all? Explain.

Spending all of our time worrying about what is going to happen in life will freeze us in fear and keep from accomplishing God's will for us. However, living as if everything is going to go as planned has negative consequences as well. We can put so much trust in ourselves and our plans that we don't rely on God at all. The truth is this: life is full of uncertainty. For those of us who claim Jesus as Lord, we will face even more uncertainty in this world. That's the bad news. The good news is that Jesus overcame the world!

## **Have a volunteer read John 16:31-33**

Jesus responded to them, “Do you now believe? Indeed, an hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

In this passage, Jesus was preparing His disciples for His impending crucifixion. Not only would the disciples be separated from Him and see Him suffer immensely at the cross, but Jesus also knew that the world would soon seek to persecute all those who called on His name. Jesus reminded His disciples that even though they would leave Him, that He would not be alone because the Father would be with Him. Even though He would be physically alone, Jesus would experience the presence of the Father.

### **ASK**

- Think of a time that you felt God’s presence during a difficult time. How did you know that God was present with you?
- How did God’s presence help you during that difficult time?
- How can we help remind others that God is present during uncertain times?

It seems cliché to say, “God is there in the bad times,” or, “God is with you when life is rough.” The truth is, God is present during those uncertain times, even if we can’t feel His presence. It is during those times that we must seek God and commune with Him, because when we do, we will experience His peace. Jesus is our greatest example of this peace. Even though Jesus asked for the suffering to pass, He had peace and embraced the cross because the Father was with Him and He was completing the Father’s will. True peace can only be found in God the Father. When we commune with God; when we rely on Him, we will find that peace that surpasses all understanding.

### **CLOSING (5 Minutes)**

Instruct the students to quietly reflect on the material presented and ask themselves, “What is an area of my life where I need God’s peace?” This could include a relationship that has hit rocky ground, a tricky family situation, school problems, spiritual unrest, etc. Have the students consider where they need God’s peace the most in their lives. Then, split your students into even groups according to how many adults you have (e.g. if you have 3 leaders and 15 students, have 3 groups of 5 with an adult with each group). Instruct the leaders to pray for the students in the group. Don’t ask for specific details. Instead, ask the students to say something like, “I need God’s peace in a close relationship” or “peace in my family” or “I need peace at school.”

**Church Groups dismiss at 9:35 P.M.  
Please do not dismiss early**

# WEDNESDAY NIGHT CHURCH GROUP

## Come to the table for... GRACE

### PASSAGE

Hebrews 4:14-16

### PRELESSON (10 minutes)

Use the material from the prelesson in Monday Night's Church Group

### LESSON (30 Minutes)

#### ASK

- In your own words, define grace.
- Share a time when you were shown grace by a family member, friend, teacher, or even a stranger. What consequence should you have been given? How did they show you grace?
- We know that God showed us grace by allowing Jesus to carry the punishment for our sins. In what other ways does God continually show us grace?

If you asked someone on this campus to give you an example of grace, the best answer would be when God allowed Jesus to pay the price for our sins by what He did on the cross. Though that is the greatest act of grace ever shown by God, the truth is that God continually shows us grace every day. Although we know that God shows us grace, many times we forget and lose sight that He is gracious to us. We get caught up in the struggles of life and we focus on the mistakes we've made and soon we can forget the wonderful grace that God has shown and continues to show us. Many Christians walk around with such guilt and shame over their failings when it shouldn't be that way. What's worse is that if we allow guilt and shame to have its say, we can further distance ourselves from God and His Grace.

#### ASK

- When you sin, do you feel close or distant from God? Explain.
- When you feel distant from God, what steps do you take to move closer to Him?

## **Have a volunteer read Hebrews 4:14-16**

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Christians should seek not to intentionally sin against God. We are called to live as Christ lived, to walk in holiness and godliness; to be a light. With that said, Christians still fight against the flesh and its desires. We are not made perfect after proclaiming Christ as Lord and following Him. We are going to sin at times. It seems many Christians feel they cannot come to Jesus after they have sinned. That we must punish ourselves for sinning by feeling guilty and shameful. We should feel convicted about our sin, but conviction should drive us to Christ. Guilt and shame drive us away from God. Have you ever experienced that before? Yes, we all have.

We should not distance ourselves, instead we should live these two truths:

1. Jesus empathizes with you: Jesus knows what you are going through. Jesus was tempted in every way that we are tempted. Jesus understands. You hear this said all the time, “You just wouldn’t understand.” How many times have you used that with your parents or your friends? We have a deep need to be understood and to have empathy shown to us. Jesus understands and shows empathy to us because He’s been there. He’s knows what it’s like to be tempted to disobey God. So if there is anyone you can confide in, anyone you can run to, it’s Jesus.

2. We will find grace: Notice in this passage that both the words grace and mercy are used. We need both from God. We need mercy because God could have decided to judge us and give us the punishment for sin. Instead, He showed us mercy by allowing Jesus to suffer in our place. We need grace because we are sinners and we could not make things right between us and God. So, God showed us grace by giving us Jesus’ righteousness and blessing us even though we don’t deserve it. While we need both, it is much easier for us to understand God’s mercy than God’s grace. Let’s say you get pulled

over for speeding. The punishment is that you pay a fine. Typically, we would plead for mercy from the police officer so that we would not get what we really deserved. Here's the thing: we do not need to plead for mercy from God when we make a mistake. We need mercy, yes; but mercy has already been given to you permanently. When you called Jesus Lord, mercy was given to you. The passage doesn't say go to God's throne of mercy. It says to go to the throne of grace. Many times, we go to God and beg for mercy, when what we really need is His grace.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve. To finish that illustration, it would be mercy for the officer to not give you a ticket. It would be grace for the officer to instead of ticket, giving you \$100. God's grace is shown in that He loves us, cares for us, and blesses us even when we fail. Many of you are constantly going to the table for mercy, but what you really need and what is always available is grace.

**CLOSING (5 Minutes)**

Instruct the students to quietly reflect on the material presented and ask themselves, "What is an area of my life am I allowing guilt and shame to overshadow God's grace?" After they have had some time, instruct them to split up into groups and pray for one another. They don't have to share any details, just that they need to experience God's grace fresh and anew.

**Church Groups dismiss at 9:35 P.M.  
Please do not dismiss early**

# THURSDAY NIGHT CHURCH GROUP

## Come to the table for... HOPE

### PASSAGE

Ephesians 1:18

### PRELESSON (10 minutes)

Use the material from the prelesson in Monday Night's Church Group

### LESSON (30 Minutes)

I don't have to tell you that there is an awful amount of bad stuff going on in the world. Turn on the news and you will hear some of the most depressing and saddening stories of your life. Violence, hatred, suffering, injustice, run rampant in the world and many of you live in that environment every day. The one thing the world is short on is hope. It looks like things will never get better and that it is only getting worse.

### ASK

- In what do the people around you place their hope? (some examples might be money, possessions, friends, test scores, etc.)
- Do they truly find hope, or do they seem empty?
- Are there any Bible passages that come to mind when you think about hope? What are they and why do those stand out to you?

We all need hope. We all need to know that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Viktor Frankl was a psychology professor before World War II. When the Nazi's came to power, Frankl found himself on a train to the concentration camps. Frankl lost everything, yet he still found meaning in his life. He did this through his belief in God and the hope that one day that God would allow him to go back and do what he loved: teaching psychology at the university. You could probably think of no darker circumstances: starving, working in the freezing cold, being beaten, and being constantly threatened with and surrounded by death. Yet, Frankl had hope. If someone can find hope in such dire circumstances, then we can find hope as we live in the world of uncertainty.

## **Have a volunteer read Ephesians 1:18**

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

Many times, we can lose sight of hope. Think of driving in the rain: sometimes the rain is falling so hard that you cannot see very far in front of you, and you cannot see the lines on the road. You need to be able to see those lines to know where you are and to stay in your lane. As Christians, we must not lose sight of our hope in Jesus. When Peter walked on the water, He only sank because he took His eyes off Jesus. Jesus was His hope for walking on water, and to us, Jesus is our only hope for salvation and for navigating this unstable world.

### **ASK**

- Share a time when you lost focus and it almost cost you. What did you stand to lose?
- Why do you think we lose focus on our hope in Jesus? How do the events of the world cause us to lose focus?
- How can we regain that focus, that hope in Jesus?

It's difficult to be in the world and not be affected by the turmoil going on around us. We must remember, however, that our hope is not in circumstances, but in Jesus. We have an eternal inheritance waiting for us no matter what happens in the world. Maybe this week you've needed to be reminded of that truth: that we have a hope greater than anything in the world. Right now, you may feel like you are living in a hopeless situation. Tonight, I want to pray for you that although the circumstances are dark, the hope of Jesus shines through.

## **CLOSING (5 Minutes)**

Lead a time of prayer for your students. We suggest that you do something like this:

“We know that tomorrow we will be going home and although many of us might be ready for that, there are some who are headed back into a world that is less than hopeful. We know that Jesus is our hope in times and areas of darkness, so we want to pray for you tonight that God would give you hope in whatever situation you need it. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want you to raise your hand if you need the hope of Jesus in your \_\_\_\_\_ (Maybe include 3-4 areas such as: school, family, friends, health, future, etc.)”

Pray for each area, asking that God would give hope and provide the necessary changes in the lives of everyone involved so that they can experience hope.

**Church Groups dismiss at 9:35 P.M.  
Please do not dismiss early**