



BiG iDEA SMALL GROUP DiSCUSSiON GiDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. Do NOT feel like you have to use every question. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

8.29/30.09 // Renegade Joy - Joy in Suffering

BiG iDEA: *The hope we have in Jesus brings a joy that surpasses all other experiences.*

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: What was your worst accident as a child that caused you pain?

Option 2: Do you think most people would believe that it is possible to experience joy in the midst of pain and suffering? Why or why not?

// Questions for Discussion _____

1. Read John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

In this verse Jesus tells us that we will have trouble but that we should take heart. What is meant when He tells us to take heart in the midst of troubles?

What is meant that He has 'overcome the world'?

2. Read Philippians 3:7

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Paul 'counts' his life experiences and accomplishments a loss compared to knowing Jesus. What are some examples of how people 'count' their life as a success or failure?

What are some dangers of counting your life based on tangible things?

3. Read Philippians 3: 10-11

¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the **fellowship of sharing in his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Why do you think sharing suffering and hard times with someone improves the bond between the two?

Optional: Share a time when you (or someone in the group) went through a hard time with someone else and the effect it had on the relationship.

4. How do you think suffering changes our priorities?

5. Read 2 Timothy 4: 7-8

⁷I have fought the **good fight**, I have **finished the race**, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Paul talks about his faith experience in terms of a fight and a race. What do you think would be some examples of fighting a good fight or finishing the race in terms of going through suffering?

What would be some practical things to help us through these times?

6. Read 2 Corinthians 12: 7-9

⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you**, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

God did not remove Paul's suffering when he asked. What is meant by God's grace being sufficient in the midst of Paul's suffering?

7. Read Philippians 4: 4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶**Do not be anxious** about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

How does worry and anxiety hinder us from experiencing joy?

Is it possible to experience the peace and joy of God and be filled with worry?

8. Read Psalm 6:3

My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long?

David was a man after God's own heart. He cried out to the Lord in his pain. Why do you think the Bible gives us examples of David crying out in anguish to God?

What is the balance between crying out to the Lord and trusting in the Lord in our difficulties?

// Application _____

Commit to memory the words of Jesus in John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Is there an area of pain or suffering you are battling right now in life? How can this group help you walk through this and experience the Joy in Christ?

// Prayer _____

**Pray for God's grace for those who are suffering.
Pray that we would be aware of those suffering around us and show them the compassion of Christ.**

"You'll never know Jesus is all you need
until Jesus is all you have."

~Mother Teresa