



Week Three

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for meeting us here! Help us to hear from you and to grow in friendship with one another. We want to get the most out of our time today. Amen.

If your group is new this season or you have some new members, start with this simple icebreaker.

- What is the last good movie you watched?

A Note for All Leaders: This week's guide has more verses and questions. Don't feel pressure to hit all the content; pick the content from the guide you feel you will foster friendship and faith. See the "How to Use this Discussion Guide" notes at the bottom of this guide for more help.

Talk It Over

This week we continued our new series #relationshipgoals. During this series, we are looking at various types of relationships and various practices we can adopt to bring greater health to our relationships. This week the content is focused on the changing seasons of life — especially in marriage, but know, no matter your relationship status, this guide was created with you in mind.

- There is no such thing as perfect relationships, perfect kids, perfect parents, perfect families. In what ways do you find yourself sometimes believing the lie that relationships should be "perfect"?
- Why do you think some of us are so prone to think relationships should be void of all struggle?

Read Genesis 8:22 (Voice) and Ecclesiastes 3:1 (Voice)

Life's seasonal shifts will be both expected and unexpected. You may just have gone through a season of change, be in one now, or one may be on its way. The point is: You should expect life to be constantly changing.

- How comfortable are you with change by nature? Have you always been this way?
- Tell us about the last changing season you were in. If you are in a season of change now, share about that.

Read Daniel 2:20-21 (NIV)

Changing seasons are often outside our control. Even in the best of circumstances, new seasons have a way of undoing our life or causing some unraveling.

- What changing season have you gone through that was not something you would have chosen? How did you eventually learn to relinquish control?
- Tell us about a new season that wasn't bad but caused some unraveling.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NCV)

While it's normal to want to know why things are happening, more often than not, understanding follows an

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experience — understanding doesn't precede the experience. We, of course, may never know why some things happen. In fact, if we understood why God allowed all things to happen our image of God might be too small.

- By nature do you seek to know why something happens? Why or why not?
- Is there something in your life you have faced but never received a satisfactory reason for? Tell us about that thing and how you have worked to come to terms with the unknown. *As we do this, let's be careful not to rush to answer one another's unanswered questions.*

Read Romans 8:28 (Voice)

Life seasons can be discouraging and disorienting or they can be enriching and rewarding. We all have wins and losses; seasons in the valley and seasons on the mountain top. There is something about these changing seasons that *can* really help us to grow and mature. The Bible even tells us God can bring good and create purpose out of all things — even out of the most difficult seasons. He doesn't make bad things happen, but he can still work through the most difficult seasons of waiting, grief, loneliness, depression, facing consequences, and so on when we give him full access to our life.

- Take a second to honestly consider. In difficult seasons, how quick or slow are you to consider how God may use the season to grow and mature you? Share about what came to mind.
- Are you generally open or closed to seeing what good can come out of bad situations?
- Consider a difficult season of life. How did that difficult season grow and develop you?
- What are some practical things we can do to give God access to our lives even in the difficult seasons?
- Looking at your life this season, what may God be looking to grow and develop in you?

Let's look at four ways we can choose to embrace growth no matter the season:

1. Trust in God's love and intentions for you. / Read Deuteronomy 11:2 (GNT) and 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 (NLT)

- When do you most quickly forget that God loves you and is for you?
- In what ways are you experiencing God's love and heart for you this season? *If your group is ongoing, you know we have asked this question before. The question is important enough to ask again.*

2. Prioritize your primary relationships. / Read James 4:14

- We live in a culture that tries to make us think individualism and autonomy are better than interdependence. When is interdependence hardest for you? Why do you think that's the case?
- Consider who and what are the most important people and things to you. In what ways are you investing in those things well this season?
- In what ways are you not prioritizing the things most important to you this season?
- Every season has limits, is there anything you are investing in this season that you may need to put aside for another season?
- Are there any opportunities being offered to you this season that may not always be there?
- Do you have things you want to do that you have put on hold in order to live this season well?

3. Communicate clearly and often. / Read Proverbs 20:5 (MSG)

- Inside each of us is a deep chamber. How natural is it for you to share about things inside your heart?
- Communication is a two-way street. We speak *and* we listen. In what ways do you think you can get better at listening to the people around you?
- If you are a Christian, God desires to be connected to you. How easy or hard is it for you to communicate with God?

4. Start today. / Read Proverbs 3:22 and Ecclesiastes 11:4 (NLT)

- Sometimes the things that paralyze us are regrets about the past or worry about the future. Would you say you are inclined more to worry or regret? Tell us a memorable story — serious or funny — tied to your worry or regret.
- Often times we don't try to do what is good or embrace growth because we overcomplicate the task. What is one simple thing you can do this week to embrace growing?

Closing Prayer

God, you are good and you desire to help us grow. Help us to experience your love in this season; help us to know the ways you are inviting us to grow and mature. Empower us to follow you and to live well. Amen.

If your group is new, be sure to cover any important details for next week's meeting.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.