

STUDY GUIDE

ENCOURAGED 06.18.2017

[set up]

What are some of the most encouraging things you've heard from other people?

What are some of the most discouraging things you've heard from other people?

For the LifeGroup leader: Tell a story about a time when you were discouraged but received encouragement from someone and it changed the trajectory of your life. Conclude by sharing a lesson you learned about the importance and power of encouragement.

Open your time together in prayer.

[digging deeper]

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20. What parts of this passage do you think would have been an encouragement to the Thessalonians? What parts of this passage are most encouraging to you?

As a leader, research www.persecution.com for a recent story about the suffering our brothers and sisters around the world are facing for the sake of the gospel. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and then read the story to your group. Ask, "What thoughts or feelings do stories like these stir inside you? What changes do you think God wants to make in our lives today as a result of stories like these? How might we be an encouragement to our suffering brothers and sisters around the world?"

Have your group members take a self-assessment on how well they give encouragement to others.

- 10 - all of the time
- 7 - most of the time
- 5 - some of the time
- 3 - rarely
- 1 - never

- I routinely let others know how thankful I am for them.
- I am very specific (not generic) in sharing the positives I observe in the lives of others.
- I am especially sensitive to give encouragement to my brothers and sisters who are suffering.
- I am intentional about sharing my encouragement face-to-face, with eye contact.
- I let people know how proud I am of them.
- I lead other brothers and sisters to consider how bright their eternal future is.

Ask your group members, "Where did you score highest? Lowest? Why? What is one thing you will do to increase your ability as an encourager of others?"

Prepare 3x5 cards with each person's name at the top. Ask your group members to think about other members of the group. As an exercise in encouragement, pass the cards out. Play some instrumental praise music. Ask each person in the group to write down one characteristic, gift, talent, skill they see in the person whose name is on the card. After all the cards have been passed around the room, give the card to the individual whose name is at the top. Ask them to read aloud what the members of the group have written about them. Then ask, "What did you like about this exercise? What was hard about it for you? Where else might you be able to do something like this?"

On another giant post-it, write at the top "Characteristics of great encouragers" then brainstorm a list of characteristics of great encouragers. Don't forget to include the four points of the message from this last weekend.

[living it out]

For the LifeGroup leader: Bring a card to send to someone whom you know who needs encouragement. In real time, write a short note to model for your group how to write a note of encouragement. Read it aloud as you write it. After the demonstration, ask your group what they learned about encouraging others from your example. Then ask, "What could I have done better?"

Hand out a card for everyone to use to write a note of encouragement to someone in their life who needs it. Play a little instrumental praise music and give each person time to write the note. Afterwards, ask for volunteers to read the note that they wrote to someone else.

Close your time in prayer. Pray for the persecuted church and those individuals in the story shared earlier. Thank God for the gifts, talents, skills, and characteristics of the individuals in your group. Pray for people who are discouraged in your circle of influence, particularly those who are lost. Pray that members of your group will grow in their capacity to encourage family members, one another, and other brothers and sisters in Christ.