Proverbs is an eight-week study that focuses on right living in everyday situations.

Each week will encourage your group to share stories, study God’s word, and support one another through prayer.

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Introduction

Many people tend to compartmentalize their faith. Most people have what is called a God-box. Their God-box contains all activities pertaining to God. Activities like prayer, reading the Bible, going to church, and serving in a ministry are all part of their God-box. And people can access their God-box as much as or as little as they want. Those who open their God-box more frequently than others tend to feel spiritually superior to those around them. This often results in spiritual pride.

The more foundational problem with God-box living, however, is the dissonance that it creates between spirituality and life. Spirituality becomes divorced from everyday situations and scenarios. The potential to interface with God is reduced to a list of activities. When these activities are not being actively pursued, God is put back in the box and placed on the appropriate shelf. Out of sight and out of mind. Perhaps this is why so many people think they have a ticket that will get them into heaven, but have yet to experience any meaningful life change.

There is no such thing as God-box living when it comes to the Bible.

The truth is that everything is spiritual. Every dimension of life is packed with spiritual meaning and significance. A divide between the sacred and the secular is utterly unimaginable. God created it all. He is connected to all that is. And so the arena for spiritual formation cannot be reduced to spiritual activities like prayer, reading the Bible, attending church, and so on. Life itself is viewed as the context for spiritual growth. Everyday scenarios and situations are pregnant with spiritual significance—going to the grocery store or filling the gas tank, taking a walk or mowing the lawn, eating or sleeping, spending time with the family or friends, all of it is spiritual because all of life is spiritual.

The Bible is about a lot more than what happens after death—but certainly not less! The Bible concerns itself with everyday life. And nothing could be more on target than when we turn to the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs provides for us a guide to right living.

Proverbs instructs us on how to handle the everyday situations and encounters of life in a way that contributes to our spiritual formation. As such, it concerns itself with positive instruction in the areas of wisdom and integrity, generosity and humility, forgiveness and justice. And at the same time, it warns against things like foolishness and stubbornness, impurity and lust, anger and unforgiveness, gossip and slander. While there are certainly longer sections of discourse, the majority of Proverbs consists of short and compact statements that teach truths about human behavior and relationships. The use of figurative language, similes, repetition, comparisons, and metaphors are employed throughout for creative instruction.
The book of Proverbs has extraordinary relevancy for contemporary living.

The practicality of Proverbs is actually quite remarkable when you consider that portions of it were written almost 3,000 years ago! While several different authors contributed and editions were probably made during compilement, Solomon is likely responsible for authoring much of the book. The book was originally written to instruct young men on the practicality of living with right values. It was designed to help young men mature into adulthood with the capability of making wise choices. But its applicability certainly extends beyond the original target audience. It has served as a guide to right living for a countless number of people over the last few millennia.

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<td>1-9 – The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel</td>
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The Book of Proverbs

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Proverbs does not contain a list of promises or statements about how life will turn out if one follows a certain course of action. The book speaks in generalities. In general, it is true that if parents raise their children in the way of right living, then their children will be more inclined to live rightly when they come of age. But this is by no means an unequivocal promise. It is a general statement about the importance of providing proper parenting. And certainly there are exceptions to the rule. No one would deny that some kids turn out horribly despite tremendous parenting. Great confusion and misunderstanding can be avoided when we recognize that Proverbs does not always deal with the footnotes and particularities of every life situation.

But this is not to downplay its applicability or relevance. Even when we find ourselves dealing with the footnotes of life, Proverbs will still provide for us a guide to right living. It will still encourage us to break free from our God-box living. So get ready to live outside of the box.
SESSION 1 | Wisdom

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Some people equate wisdom with knowledge. The accumulation of knowledge is believed to be the way to wisdom. So the more knowledge a person acquires, the wiser a person becomes. And this idea is not without merit. Knowledge and wisdom are certainly connected. After all, it would be difficult to be wise and ignorant at the same time. But notice that knowledge doesn’t guarantee wisdom either. One can have knowledge and still make poor life choices.

So how do these two connect?

While knowledge forms the foundation to wisdom, wisdom ultimately extends beyond knowledge. Perhaps we could say that wisdom is knowledge rightly applied in any given circumstance. It’s not just about knowledge. It’s not just about knowing stuff. It’s about applying the right knowledge at the right time in the right way.

The most prominent theme in the book of Proverbs is that of wisdom. And the foundation for this wisdom is a personal knowledge of God and his ways. But knowing God’s ways is never enough. One must live them out. The knowledge of God and his ways must be applied at the right time and in the right way in every circumstance of life.

Wisdom is the skill of living life in the way of God.
It’s about living in right relationship to God and others.

HG leader, quickly organize a rock-paper-scissors tournament! Best two out of three. Only winners advance. Have the winner open your group in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Deeper relationships will begin to form as you share the different things that you have experienced in your life and hear about the experiences of others. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. Who do you consider to be a wise person? Tell your group about one person that you know to be really wise. What makes that person so wise in your estimation? Give an example.

2. What is one wise and one foolish choice you have made in your life? Share with your group the story behind each one. What were the consequences?
Leadership Tips:
• Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
• Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
• Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God’s Word

A home group is not just a Bible study. You are not a group of study buddies. That is why you have spent the first part of your group sharing stories—because building friendships is an important part of being in a home group. But a home group is not just a social gathering either. You are not just a group of friends. What makes a home group different from a bowling league or softball team is that the people within the group want to become more like Jesus. One of the best ways to become more like Jesus is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word as a group.

HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and read out loud:


Leadership Tips:
• Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
• Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Look at 1:7. What does “the fear of the Lord” mean? Why is this considered the foundation of wisdom?¹
2. Do you agree with 1:7? How have you experienced or observed the truth of this verse in your life?
3. Look at 2:1-11. What are the benefits of applying wisdom and understanding to your life?²
4. How can you be intentional about applying wisdom and understanding to your life? Be specific.³
6. When have you been pushed to really trust God with your life? Tell a story and share the result.
7. Look at 13:10. Do you find it hard or easy to receive advice? Do you often resent advice (15:12)?
7. Look at 13:20. Do you think this is true? How have you seen this in your own life or the lives of others?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:
1. Are you living your life as someone who is wise or foolish? Revisit 1:7 if necessary.⁵
2. What areas of your life need to be submitted to God? What areas need to be fully entrusted to him?
3. Are you walking with the wise? Are your relationships positively or negatively impacting you?

EXERCISE:
Read chapters 2-4 of Proverbs each day this week.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

**DIRECTIONS:**
Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

**Leadership Tips:**
- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

**NOTES:**
1. This is a major theme in Proverbs. The phrase “the fear of the Lord” occurs 11 different times. The fear of the Lord involves a reverence for God and submission to His commands and ways. This is considered the foundation of wisdom because God is the source of all wisdom. The Hebrew word for “beginning” implies the “start” of something. Fear of God is the start of becoming wise. One cannot become a person of wisdom via any other starting point.
2. Notice the “if…then…” flow of these verses. The benefits of applying wisdom are outlined in 6-12. Do you think these are unequivocal promises? Are these always true? Do you think there are exceptions?
3. The goal of this question is to move your group beyond just thoughts and ideas. What can you do to practically pursue and apply wisdom in your life? Try to be as specific as possible.
4. Does trusting God and not leaning on your own understanding imply that you never rely on your own instincts? How do you balance these two out in your life? What does this look like for you?
5. The footnote in your Bible should indicate that a “fool” denotes a person that is morally deficient—that is, a person that lacks spiritual perception and moral obedience to God in every day living.
SESSION 2 | Integrity

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Integrity. It’s hard to find, isn’t it?
People of integrity are small in number. In fact, we live in a culture where a lack of integrity is almost expected. We see it among politicians and professional athletes, movie stars and songwriters, business execs and even religious reps. There are no exceptions. And the reality is that most of us live broken and fragmented lives. We’re all hypocrites to some degree or another. Our decisions and choices are often inconsistent and involve compromise. Our behaviors and actions are frequently dictated by impromptu cravings and impulsive desires. We live lives that are conflicting and contradictory.

Integrity is the quality or state of being perfectly integrated and complete, undivided and unbroken. A person of integrity lives in a way that is consistent in every dimension and circumstance of life. It doesn’t matter where they are. It doesn’t matter what the circumstance. Every decision and choice, behavior and action, is rooted in a way of life that is undivided and unbroken, consistent and without compromise—regardless of who is looking. So, who are you when no one is looking?

The truth is that someone is always looking. We just tend to forget. Most of our moral failures take place in moments when we forget God’s omnipresence. And while the implications of God’s omnipresence are admittedly overwhelming—for he witnesses our deepest failures—it is ultimately God’s ever-present help that leads us into the way of integrity.

The way of integrity is the way of Yahweh.
Integrity involves consistently walking in the way of Yahweh without compromise.

HG leader, identify the person with the biggest feet in your home group. Have that person open your group with a word of prayer. You’re up Bigfoot!

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. When have you lacked integrity? Share a story about a time when your lack of integrity was exposed or found out. What happened? What was the result? And what did you learn from the experience?

2. When have you been rewarded for showing integrity? Share a story about a time when you were positively rewarded for doing the right thing. How did this impact you? How did it make you feel?
Leadership Tips:
- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to self-disclose. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God’s Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

**HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and have each of them read out loud:**

15:9  10:9  16:2-3  30:12  4:26-27

Leadership Tips:
- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
1. How would you define integrity? Does Proverbs 15:9 help with forming a definition? If so, how?1
2. How would you summarize 10:9 in your own words? Do you think this is generally true? Why or why not?2
3. When have you done something you knew was wrong? Did you experience a lack of peace right afterwards?
4. Look at 16:2. Do you think motivations are important when it comes to integrity? Why or why not?3
5. Look at 16:3. What is this verse saying? Do you think that this verse could be misconstrued?4
6. Have you ever experienced God’s blessing in your life after surrendering something to Him? Share the story.
7. Look at 30:12. When have you been pure in your own eyes? Have you ever justify wrong behavior?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**
1. Are you a person of integrity? What areas in your life do you lack integrity?6
2. What safeguards could you put in place to guard against these areas of weakness?
3. Who could you share matters of integrity with for the purposes of accountability?

**EXERCISE:**
Your challenge for this week is threefold: First, identify three vulnerable areas in your life regarding integrity. Second, identify some safeguards you can put in place for each area. Last, tell a close friend or someone that you can trust about these vulnerabilities and safeguards.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:
Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:
• Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
• Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
• Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
• Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:
1. The introduction should provide your group with some ideas in working toward a definition. But notice that Proverbs 15:9 makes a meaningful contribution by rooting integrity in Yahweh and the pursuit of righteousness.
2. The point of 10:9 is that those who walk in integrity can rest securely whereas those who lack integrity will also lack peace of mind because their wrongdoing will eventually be discovered.
3. Your group might want to consider the teachings of Jesus. His teachings—particularly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)—work to intensify and internalize the way of Yahweh as described in the Mosaic Law. What implications does this have for spiritual transformation? Talk about this as a group.
4. Some people might approach this verse with the understanding that they can do whatever they’d like so long as they commit it to God and ask for His blessing. The implication is that if they commit their ways to God, then God will automatically help them fulfill their goals. But this verse seems to be suggesting quite the opposite. The idea is that as one brings their life under the reign and rule of God, God will establish their plans because their plans will now be aligned with His plans. What does your group think?
5. A safeguard is a decision made in advance that helps distance a person from temptation. A man, for example, could make an advanced decision to never be alone with a woman (other than his spouse) to safeguard against the possibility of temptation. Can your group think of other valuable safeguards?
6. Your group might not be at a place where people can answer this question openly. That’s okay. Simply have group members make a mental note and save their answer for this week’s exercise.
SESSION 3 | Humility

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

The opposite of humility is arrogance. A person that is arrogant tends to exude self-confidence and self-importance, pretension and pride. And this is because they have over-estimated their own importance. They have an inflated self-perception—one that is primarily based on comparisons and judgments that bend in their favor. So they see themselves as smarter, or more successful, maybe even more religious, than the people around them. They always come out on top. Perhaps this is why arrogance is generally not considered a positive virtue that one should work to acquire. No one likes to be around a big ego.

The opposite of arrogance is humility. Humility is the quality or state of having a right estimation of one’s own importance. It doesn’t imply a lack of self-confidence or self-importance, but rather, a sound and modest understanding of oneself. A person that is humble avoids making self-serving comparisons and judgments and has no internal need to come out on top. In fact, they often intentionally and purposefully elevate others.

We all live with a mix of humility and arrogance. But humility is the biblical virtue that is worth pursuing.

HG leader, identify the most musical person in your home group. Host a mini-American Idol audition. The winner opens your group in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. When have you had an experience that was totally humiliating? Share a story with your group about a time when you felt totally embarrassed. What happened? Can you laugh about it now?

2. Has someone ever put you above themselves in a meaningful and significant way? Share a story with your group about a time when someone else put you first. How did that impact you?

Leadership Tips:
• Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
• Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
• Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

**Engage God’s Word**

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<td>16:19</td>
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**Leadership Tips:**

• Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
• Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Look at 16:5. What does “proud of heart” mean here? Do you think that this is a harsh statement?
2. In what areas are you proud of heart—that is, in what areas are you living independently from God?
3. Look at 13:10. When has your pride gotten in the way of a relationship? Is pride always part of conflict?
4. How are pride and accepting advice connected? Have you ever been so proud you resisted advice?
5. There are three words used for “humility” in Proverbs. Look at 6:3. How is humility being used here?
6. When have you had to humble yourself before another person to be free from debt or wrongdoing?
7. Look at 16:19. Another word for humility is used here. See 25:6-7 also. How is it being used here?
8. Do you generally put others above yourself? Do you usually choose to take the lower spot? Be honest.
9. Look at 18:12. Another word for humility is used here. See 15:33 as well. How is it being used here?
10. When has pride preceded humility in your life? Share a story when your pride was wounded?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you identify any areas of pride in your life that need to be surrendered?
2. Are there any people in your life that you need to humble yourself before and seek reconciliation?
3. What opportunities do you have to put others before yourself and give your life away for their betterment?

**EXERCISE:**

Jesus gave us a model for humility. He constantly elevated others above himself and gave his life away (time, energy, and resources) in ways that benefited other people. Your challenge this week is to put one person above yourself in a significant and meaningful way. Give your life away (time, money, energy, resources) to benefit another person. Then write this experience down along with some reflections on how consistently living this way could shape you and be formational for you as a follower of Jesus.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

**DIRECTIONS:**
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**Leadership Tips:**
- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

**NOTES:**
1. “Proud of heart” here implies a life lived independently from God. Perhaps this will shape whether or not your group thinks this verse sounds harsh. Is a life lived independently of God deserving of punishment?
2. Pride can get in the way of accepting advice. Being arrogant and a total know-it-all attitude stands in contrast to someone who is humble and willing to learn. Some people are too proud to learn from others.
3. The opening verses of Proverbs 6 paint the scenario of taking responsibility or ownership for someone else’s debt. The word related to “humility” in 6:3 is rapas and is a strong word for humbling yourself before another.
4. The word for humility in 16:19 and 25:7 is sapel and has to do with intentionally choosing a lower position and humble posture instead of being arrogant and assuming a place of status and prominence.
5. The word for humility in 18:12 and 15:33 is anawa and has to do with modesty.
SESSION 4 | Generosity

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Generosity is not a popular topic. People don’t like to talk about generosity because talking about generosity usually involves talking about money. And nothing makes people more uptight than talking about the thin green line. Part of this is understandable. We’ve all heard stories about churches that have used generous gifts to pad their pockets. Perhaps a healthy suspicion is appropriate. But many others don’t want to talk about money because they like their money and the lifestyle it affords. The bottom line is that nobody likes to be told how to spend their time, money, or resources. They’d rather be left alone.

Just because people don’t like to talk about matters of generosity doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t. Did you know that money was the second most frequent topic Jesus spoke about? The first was the Kingdom of God. Did you know that there are over 3,000 verses in the Bible that deal with issues of poverty and justice? That’s a lot of verses. Did you know that greed is the second most frequently mentioned sin in the Bible? The first is idolatry. And greed is simply a form of idolatry.

The bottom line is that matters of generosity matter. But what doesn’t matter is how much you have. Generosity is not dependent upon wealth. The rich can be generous or stingy and the same goes for the poor. Generosity is not dependent upon what you have or don’t have, but rather, is contingent upon how you relate to what you do have. The Bible encourages us to be generous with our stuff (time & money) because God has been and continues to be generous with us.

Most of us live somewhere in between greed and generosity. But generosity is the one we need to be moving toward.

HG leader, identify two people without food allergies. Go to the fridge and grab a couple of food items. Conduct a blind taste test. Winner opens in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. How have you been a recipient of generosity lately? Share a story with your home group about how you have been recently touched or impacted by the generosity of another person—big or small.

2. When were you last moved to be generous toward another person in a spontaneous way? Share a story with your group about a time when you were generous with someone else in an unplanned way.
Leadership Tips:
• Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
• Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
• Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God’s Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and have each of them read out loud:


Leadership Tips:
• Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
• Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
2. How do you sort through all the different requests to give toward charitable organizations and causes?
3. Look at 19:17. Does being kind to the poor go beyond pity? How can we be aligned with the poor?
4. Look at 11:24-26. In your experience, has generosity been the path to blessing and prosperity? Explain.
6. Look at 28:27. What does this verse say about God’s providence toward those who are generous?
7. Have you ever put God to the test here—been so generous God had to come through? What happened?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:
1. What changes need to take place in your life for you to become a more generous person?
2. How can you be more relationally engaged with those who are less fortunate? What steps can you take?

EXERCISE:
Your exercise for this week is to give generously of your time, money, or resources to another person. Afterwards, record the experience along with some reflections on how consistently living this way could shape you and be formational for you as a follower of Jesus.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

**DIRECTIONS:**

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

**Leadership Tips:**

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

**NOTES:**

1. God created both the poor and the rich in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). The issue of how we see people is worth much consideration. Do we see people the way God sees people? Or, do we see people in terms of their economic status?
2. Don’t limit your discussion to this one example. How else do group members find themselves relating to the poor and oppressed? Are there more substantial ways than encountering someone on the street?
3. How we can intentionally move toward the poor is also worth careful thought. How can we bridge gaps and initiate relationship so that we can be of more substantial and meaningful help?
4. Take into consideration how one’s motives could potentially change through a consistent pattern of giving.
5. Saving an inheritance for one’s children and one’s children’s children is an act of generosity. Instead of spending all that one has acquired on oneself, the person intentionally puts aside personal interests and immediate pleasures for the sake of future generations.
Contentment

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

The assumption that contentment is something that can be purchased is what drives our economy. Behind every marketing strategy and advertisement is the assertion that you lack something. Did you know that the average American is bombarded with over 3,000 advertisements each day? When you are watching TV or listening to the radio, driving your car or checking your email, you are constantly encountering messages that prey on the belief that you lack something you really need. Marketing exists to create a lack of contentment.

But you cannot buy contentment. You can buy the big house or the new car, the latest gadget or the best technology, the trendiest clothes or the greatest toys, and still be completely miserable. Contentment is not something that can be purchased, but rather, is an attitude that requires careful cultivation.

Contentment is the internal quality or state of being satisfied. And it largely hinges on perception. Perpetually dwelling on what you lack will inevitably lead to a lack of contentment. But cultivating a grateful attitude by focusing on what you have will lead to deep and lasting satisfaction. There is simply no way that you will be content in marriage if you are constantly considering who would make a better spouse. Maybe you have a great spouse and you just haven’t thought about it enough! Contentment, or a lack thereof, literally affects every dimension of our lives.

God is in the business of bringing people out of slavery and into freedom. Walking in contentment brings us to a place of liberation.

HG leader, identify someone in your home group that has a really bizarre or strange talent. What is it? Have that person open your group in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. When have you felt most content with your life? Share about a time in your life when you felt most satisfied or fulfilled. What were the variables that made life so enjoyable and satisfying?

2. When have you felt most discontent with your life? Share about a time in your life when you felt most unsatisfied or unfulfilled. What were the variables that made life so unpleasant and unsatisfying?
Leadership Tips:
• Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
• Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
• Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God’s Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and have each of them read out loud:

12:12  21:25-26  30:7-9  25:16-17

Leadership Tips:
• Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
• Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Do you think that contentment is contingent upon the circumstances of life? Why or why not?1
2. Look at 12:12. Who is being contrasted here? How does contentment differ between these two?2
3. Has a desire or a craving ever caused you to do something that you knew was wrong?3 Share a story.
4. Look at 21:25-26. What is this verse saying? And how does it bear on our discussion on contentment?4
5. How are your cravings shaping you? In what ways do your desires determine your actions and behavior?
6. Would you say that satisfying a desire leads to contentment or does it increase your desire for more?5
7. Look at 30:7-9. Do you think that living in between wealth and poverty is the best place to be?
8. What temptations have you experienced at either end of the spectrum? Is one more dangerous?
9. Look at 25:16-17. What principle is embedded in these proverbs? How does this relate to contentment?6
10. Would you say that you are living in moderation? If not, are you closer to poverty or riches?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:
1. What do you crave right now that you do not have?
2. Would you say that you are content or discontent right now? Explain.
3. What steps can we be taking to swim upstream in our consumeristic culture?

EXERCISE:
Your challenge for this week is to take inventory of how you are being shaped by your desires and your cravings. Read 1 Timothy 6:1-10 every day this week and write down every craving or desire that you have—big or small. Then do some reflection on how your cravings and desires are shaping you and your level of contentment in life.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:
Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:
• Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
• Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
• Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
• Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:
1. Have your group think about how they answered the opening questions. Isn’t it the case that we are more likely to be discontent when the circumstances of life are challenging or difficult? How do you explain this?
2. This verse contrasts the wicked and the righteous. Whereas the wicked desire profit acquired through evil means, the righteous cultivate produce of their own. The main difference is that the wicked are not content with what they have, and as a result, desire what does not belong to them in the first place.
3. Everybody in your group should be able to answer yes and provide a story. What sin has ever taken place without originating from desire (Jas. 1:13-14)? It always starts with desire.
4. The key thing to notice here is that the sluggard is discontent because he is fantasizing over what he does not have and is unwilling to work for. Do you ever find yourself in covetous day-dreaming—wishing you had something that belonged to another person?
5. Does acting on an impulse to purchase something, for example, lead to contentment or more desires and more purchases? Does fulfilling a craving or desire have a snowball affect on your cravings and desires?
6. The principle in these verses has to do with moderate living. Eating a moderate amount of honey is enjoyable. But eating too much honey can give you a stomach ache. Visiting your neighbor every once in awhile may result in favorable relations. But visiting everyday will probably annoy them. In both cases, moderation is the key.
HG leader, read the following out loud:

The Bible says that we are created in the image of God. But what does that mean? Some say that it has to do with our authority. God gave us authority to rule over creation. Others say that it has to do with the soul. The soul is what separates human beings from other animals on the planet. But perhaps the most convincing answer is that the image of God has to do with relationships. We were created by a relational God. And this relational God has put his relational stamp upon us.

Relationships. Community. Togetherness. It’s all part of our DNA. Perhaps Facebook is on to something. Think about all the different people you are relationally connected to in some way. You have and maintain relationships from the past and present, from a variety of social contexts—school, work, church, and so on—with varying degrees of commitment and intimacy. Some of these relationships you have intentionally chosen such as close friends or a spouse. Others were decided for you such as brothers and sisters. But the bottom line is that we all desire to be connected. We crave relationships.

None of this is to imply that relationships are easy. They’re not. Real relationships are complex and dynamic, uncertain and incredibly difficult to navigate. And this is because they’re all ultimately broken. We live in a world of broken relationships. We do things and say things that hurt others and cause pain. We are also the recipients of hurtful words and actions. It’s a mad world. But the relational God that created us in His divine-image also holds the wisdom to have and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. And much of this wisdom has been provided for us in the book of Proverbs. We’d be wise to give it our utmost attention.

HG leader, identify the person who most recently saw a movie in the theatre. What movie was it? How would they rate it? Then have them open in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

**QUESTIONS:**
1. When have you experienced an authentically mutual relationship? Share with your group about a friendship that was defined by a mutual giving and receiving. What kinds of things made this friendship so great?
2. When have you experienced a really difficult or strained relationship? Share with your group about a friendship that was really toxic. What kinds of things were done and said that made it this way?
Leadership Tips:
- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God’s Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and have each of them read out loud:

16:7  3:3-4  14:20  17:17  23:6-8

Leadership Tips:
- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Are you the kind of person that likes a ton of friends or just a few really close friends? Explain.
2. Look at 16:7. How does one’s vertical relationship with God affect one’s horizontal relationship with others?
3. Have you experienced this to be true? Has your relationship with God paved the way for peace with others?
4. Look at 3:3-4. What two things are of the utmost importance? What is the result of living them out?
5. What do love and faithfulness look like in action? What are some of the ways you express these in your life?
6. Look at 14:20. What does this verse say about the motivations that are often behind friendships?
7. What balance should there be in a friendship between giving and receiving? Should it always be equal?
8. Look at 17:17. What is this verse saying? Why is it hard to stick with someone when they are facing difficulty?
9. When has someone stuck with you during a difficult time? What kind of impact did it have on your friendship?
10. Look at 23:6-8. What is this verse saying? How can calculating costs and keeping tabs be relationally toxic?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:
1. How is your relationship with God going? (scale of 1 to 10)
2. How are your horizontal relationships going? What is putting strain on them? What needs adjustment?

EXERCISE:
Your challenge for this week is to take inventory of your relationships. Start with God. How have you been experiencing God lately? What things are getting in the way of connecting to God consistently? Write them down. Then consider your horizontal friendships. Who are you closest with? Write down their names. Then reflect on how those relationships are going. Are they defined by mutuality and reciprocal giving? What is putting strain on these relationships? Pray and ask God to help you put on love and faithfulness in each relationship.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:
Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:
• Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
• Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
• Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
• Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:
1. If your group has already discussed this question during the New Friend Request series, you can either revisit it or simply move on to the next question. It’s totally up to you.
2. The principle in this verse is that one’s vertical relationship with God affects and influences our horizontal relationships with others. Harmony with God translates into harmony with others. Everything hinges on God.
3. The two mentioned in this verse are love and faithfulness. What does it really mean to live these out?
4. Why is it that the rich never lack friends but the poor don’t seem to have many? Get your group to think about how our motivations affect our friendships. We often want to be friends with someone because of what they can do for us. What would it look like to reverse this tendency and start owning our motivations?
5. This verse is suggesting that a true friend will stick with you no matter what. A true friend is consistent in their love. They will be there at all times no matter what—not just when things are going well.
6. True friends don’t give begrudgingly or keep a checklist of what they have done for you. Rather, they give with open hands and full hearts. They give out of a genuine love that transcends keeping tabs.
SESSION 7 | Gossip

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

What sins do you find particularly reprehensible?
Some might say having an affair or committing murder. Others might pick premarital sex or perhaps homosexuality. Still others might say money laundering or fraud, drunkenness or drug use. But how many would say gossip? My guess is not many.

The interesting thing is that gossip is actually mentioned quite frequently in the Bible. The theme of gossip and the use of the tongue pops up almost 20 times in the book of Proverbs alone. And this is quite significant considering that homosexuality is mentioned less than 10 times in the entire Bible. Of course none of this is to downplay sins that are mentioned less frequently. Sin is sin no matter how often it is mentioned in the Bible. But maybe frequency is indicative of significance. And how many churches are known for their stance against gossip? My guess, again, is not many. We tend to be self-selective in our judgments. We often condemn sins that we do not struggle with while conveniently ignoring those that are pervasive in our lives. We’d be wise to take the speck out of our own eyes.

Gossip is the act of divulging information about another without their consent or permission. The information divulged could be trivial and non-threatening or malicious and damaging, but in either case it is rarely productive. Gossip sours relationships and separates friends, destroys families and corrupts work environments. Those who walk in the way of wisdom are sure to avoid it at all cost.

Gossip is a relational toxin.
It pollutes our relationships and our own lives.

HG leader, identify the person in your group that has the next b-day coming up. What do they want to get as a present? Have them open your group in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. When have you found out about some negative gossip circulating about you? Share a story about a time when someone gossiped about you behind your back. How did that make you feel? What did you do about it?
2. When have you been caught gossiping about another person? Share a story about how your gossip put strain on a relationship with a family member, friend, or co-worker. What did you learn from this situation?
Leadership Tips:
• Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
• Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
• Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God’s Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and have each of them read out loud:


Leadership Tips:
• Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
• Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Look at 18:21-22. What are these verses saying? When have words brought you life? What about death?
2. Are your words promoting life or death? Have you ever said something that totally deflated someone?
3. Look 18:8. What is this verse saying? Why is gossip so alluring? What’s the draw? Why do we engage it?
4. How does gossip affect the person listening? Are there negative consequences to listening to gossip?
5. Look at 26:23. What is this verse saying? How can we make sure our words and motivations are aligned?
6. Look at 17:4. What does listening to gossip say about you? What does it say about your character?
7. What do you think is the best way to respond to someone that is gossiping about someone else to you?
8. Look at 26:18-19. Why does humor not mix well with hurtful words? How do you feel about sarcasm?
9. Look at 11:13. Do people have confidence in you? Can people trust you with the content of their lives?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:
1. How big of a problem is gossip for you? (on a scale of 1 to 10)
2. In what contexts are you most likely to engage in gossip (work, family, friends)?
3. What changes do you need to make in order to become a person of integrity with your words?

EXERCISE:
Your challenge for this week is to take inventory of your words. At the end of each day, play your entire day over in your mind as if you were watching a movie. Pay special attention to your choice of words throughout the day. Allow the Holy Spirit to affirm those moments where your words gave life to others. Also allow Him to gently point out those moments where your words were hurtful. Ask for forgiveness and resolve to move forward in the way of Jesus.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

**DIRECTIONS:**
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**Leadership Tips:**
- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

**NOTES:**
1. You can also look back at the previous verse. The “fruit of the mouth” refers to a person’s words. A person’s words can be positive, uplifting, and edifying or destructive, hurtful, and damaging. When has someone’s words given you life? When has someone’s words totally deflated you?
2. The Hebrew for “choice morsels” refers to food that is greedily devoured. Once food has been consumed or devoured, it is assimilated into the body. And so it is with gossip. Gossip is often alluring and attractive. But once we have devoured it, the content we have listened to shapes us. How has listening to gossip negatively impacted you? How does listening to gossip become part of you and distort you?
3. The “coating of silver” refers to a shiny glazed finish on a piece of clay pottery. The analogy is intended to contrast the outside and the inside. The outside looks shiny and nice, but the inside is just clay. And so it is with a person who has bad motivations (on the inside) and charming words (on the outside). Is there any dissonance between who you are on the outside and the inside in relation to your words?
4. This verse clearly associates listening to gossip with wicked character.
5. Once an arrow has struck its target, the damage has been done. And so it is with hurtful words. Once hurtful words have made impact, the damage has been done. No amount of humor will cover it up.
Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Have you ever wanted to give up or throw in the towel? Let’s face it, we’ve all been there. The stress of a new job or the load of schoolwork, the strain of a relationship or the challenge of being in a new place, the reality is that life circumstances can get so overwhelming that we just want to raise the white flag. We want to give up.

And while it is wise to know your limitations and you certainly shouldn’t work yourself to death, the value of diligence should not be underestimated. Diligence is the act of pursuing something despite obstacles—an earnest effort to accomplish a task or goal that is underway. Being diligent involves perseverance and hard work, marching toward progress in the face of opposition. It is the opposite of laziness and slothfulness, a general failure to grab life by the horns. Those who are diligent have a higher chance of achieving their goals and experiencing success in almost all areas of life. Diligence is undoubtedly a key component of solid character.

The word diligence often brings to mind an athlete that succeeds despite tremendous odds or a businessman that closes a deal in the face of significant opposition. And while such images are totally appropriate and even helpful, we must not overlook the necessity of diligence in our spiritual lives. The bottom line is that following Jesus will require diligence.

The pursuit of God is more a marathon than a sprint. Diligence is the virtue that will help us cross the finish line.

HG leader, identify the most disciplined individual in your group—you know, the kind of person that makes everyone else look bad! Have them open in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:
1. When have you worked hard in order to achieve something significant? Share a story about a time when your diligence allowed you to accomplish something great. How did you feel before and after succeeding?

2. When have you given up or thrown in the towel prematurely? Share with your group about a time in your life when you failed to persevere or be diligent. Do you regret that decision? What would you do differently?

Leadership Tips:
• Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
• Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others. But try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
• Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

**Engage God’s Word**

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God’s word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

**HG leader, divvy up the selected proverbs among your group and have each of them read out loud:**


**Leadership Tips:**

• Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
• Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
1. Would you categorize yourself as a procrastinator? What methods of procrastination do you like to employ?
2. There are three words used for “diligence” in Proverbs. Look at 22:29. How is diligence being used here?¹
3. Are you the kind of person that is quick, prompt, and always ready to accept a new task or challenge?
4. Look at 11:27. Another word for diligence is used here. What aspect of diligence is being highlighted?²
5. How diligent are you when it comes to staying focused on what matters? Consider your top priorities.
6. Look at 21:5. Yet another word for diligence is used here. What aspect of diligence is being highlighted?³
7. Do you think that being diligent forces one to plan well? How have you experienced this in your life?
8. Look at 10:4. Was the concept of this verse modeled or taught in your house growing up? Explain.
9. Look at 12:24, 27. When has working hard earned you a position above your peers? Share a story.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**
1. What areas in life are you not doing due diligence? Be honest.
2. What changes need to be made? Do you have any intention of making these changes?

**EXERCISE:**
Your challenge for this week is to take inventory of your goals. Write out your short-term and long-term goals and put them in their respective categories—spiritual, professional, relational, and so on. Then write next to each goal one or two action steps you can take toward its achievement. Close by surrendering each goal or area of life to God in prayer.
Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other’s life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:
Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:
• Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
• Don’t pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
• Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
• Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:
1. The Hebrew word here is mahir and it carries the connotation of being quick or prompt. An individual that is quick, prompt, and always ready for a challenge often accomplishes great things. How could this concept or nuance of diligence be of spiritual benefit?
2. The Hebrew word here is sahar and it has to do with looking early or eagerly for something. This kind of diligence has to do with staying focused on what is most important and pursuing it with due diligence. What is most important to you in life? How can you stay focused on what is most important and diligently seek after it?
3. The Hebrew word here is harus and has to do with the ability to act decisively. Those who are diligent tend to chart their course in advance and then make decisions based on the projected outcome. Are you pursuing any goals? Do you live a reactionary life or do you tend to chart your own course?