

Getting Through What We're Going Through

Life Group Leaders Guide

Objective

This guide contains the information and questions you will need to lead a life group study during our current sermon series. Our aim is to spark Spirit-led, Bible-centered conversations that anyone can participate in regardless of how biblically literate they may or may not be. **The win** that we want you to experience is when your group members **connect** more closely with each other and with God so that they are encouraged to move forward in living out their faith.

Directions

The *Purpose* and *Move* sections are for the leader to read to the group to provide clarity. **Do not feel pressured to cover all the questions.** Decide which ones may work best for your group. You will see brief notes interspersed between groups of questions to help give the group context for their answers. The *Notes and Commentary* section (when included) is optional reading for the leader to get background information and better understanding of the passages before leading the discussion.

Series Overview

Our current circumstances of this pandemic are unprecedented in our times, and we are left wondering how we are going to get through it. Getting Through What We're Going Through is a series that shows us how God gets us through all seasons of life, and the proactive steps we can take to move with him.

Getting Through What We're Going Through Series Schedule

| Week | Sermon Date | Topic |
|------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 4/19 | Cry to God |
| 2 | 4/26 | Hope in God |
| 3 | 5/3 | Life Group Socials |
| 4 | 5/10 | B.L.E.S.S. for God |

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

B.L.E.S.S. for God

The Big Idea

The mission of God can't be hindered by circumstances.

Flow of Study

Icebreaker: What's something you hope *doesn't* go back to "normal" once the quarantine is lifted?

Move #1: Let's begin by reflecting on this week's sermon.

1. What stood out to you most from this sermon on the example that the Apostle Paul set for us?
2. What relevance do you believe this message has for your own life right now?

Move #2: The sermon focused on the latter half of Acts 28 and Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Let's back up in the text and look at some similarities in how he utilized other difficult circumstances. En route to Rome for trial, Paul went through a two-week cyclone at sea.

Read Acts 27:21-26 (NIV)

21 No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss. 22 But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. 23 For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, 24 and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' 25 So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. 26 But we will be shipwrecked on an island."

3. Even in the middle of such a harrowing life-or-death experience, Paul pointed people towards God. What are some specific ways that he portrayed God in his conversation?

(Note to leader: For example, he described his relationship to God being one of "belonging," a God who is engaged and aware of his circumstances, who speaks courage and drives away fear, who knows the future and is in control of it, a God who is good and gracious, a God who is trustworthy.)

4. What are some specific ways that we can similarly be encouraging people to look to God right now?

Read Acts 27:33-37 (NIV)

33 Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. 34 "Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish." 35 Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. 36 Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— 37 all 276 of us who were on board.

5. Examining the text, how did Paul make use of a meal in this situation to point people toward God? How can we do the same?

6. How might eating with the crew have opened doors to further ministry with them?

Note: This part of the story concludes with the ship being run aground and broken to pieces on the coast of a small island named Malta. But everyone on board made it safely to shore, just as Paul had prophesied. The commanding officer was particularly protective of Paul.

Move #3: Next, let's observe how Paul responded to this new situation of being stranded on the island.

Read Acts 28:7-10 (NIV)

7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. 8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. 10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

7. Considering what Paul had just been through, what is fairly unusual about his focus here?
8. Why do you think Paul concerned himself so much with the needs of the people on the island?
9. As a result, over the three months he was stranded there, the people came to greatly appreciate Paul. How would this affect his influence with them?
10. What are some ways that you might bless people around you during this difficult time?
11. Throughout this journey, Paul leveraged his misfortune and dangerous circumstances to advance the mission of God. What is motivating or demotivating you to do the same during these trying times?
12. How might we work together as a group to point people to Jesus right now?

Next Steps: Be super intentional each week to look for ways to B.L.E.S.S. those who don't know God--

1. Begin with prayer (pray regularly for them by name)
2. Listen (take a genuine interest in them and their story)
3. Eat with them (have coffee--even if over a video chat)
4. Serve them (drop off some toilet paper/ groceries/ a plant/ kids activity books/ meal)
5. Share (tell how God is helping you through this; invite them to join you for our livestream or life group)

Prayer: End your study with a time of praying with and for each other. Take requests, but be sure to pray also about what you've discussed today.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

On Acts 27

As a result of this storm, most of the people on board would have become seasick and not have eaten for several days. In this hopeless situation Paul came with a word of encouragement, having himself been

encouraged by God (2 Cor. 1:3–4) through a vision. When he said that they should have taken his advice (27:21), he was not making an “I told you so” statement but trying to win their attention. Twice he asked them to keep up their courage (27:22, 25), basing that appeal on his vision. God had a job for him in Rome, and because of that everyone would be saved (27:24). ...

Being agents of hope. Since Paul believed so strongly in the sovereignty of God, he could look beyond the bleak situation and anticipate good to come out. A vision of sovereignty may not come to us at once because our natural tendency may be to panic in a difficult situation. If so, we must grapple with God until we come out of that situation and are able to go to the people with a word from God rather than with a public display of anxiety. ...

Twice in this passage Paul asked the people to take courage (27:22, 25). He then buttressed these words by eating. Thereupon, “they were all encouraged and ate some food” (27:36). Our words and actions can cause us to be agents of hope in a world that often seems hopeless. One of the most powerful messages we can give to the world is that God is sovereign and that there is therefore hope amidst the gloom that may temporarily engulf us. (Ajith Fernando, *NIV Application Commentary: Acts*)

But [Paul’s] personal magnetism and sterling character, his outstanding leadership, and his Spirit-filled life, affecting enemies and friends alike, are so clearly etched on the history as a whole that there is no good reason for distrusting this portion of the narrative. He was no less dynamic as a prisoner than as a free man; and for this information we are not dependent simply on Luke, for after reaching Rome Paul made a profound impression both on the praetorian guard and on others in the imperial service (Phil. 1:13). (E.F. Harrison, *Acts*)