

“These insights will deeply encourage your walk of faith.”

JOHN BURKE, pastor and author of *New York Times* bestseller *Imagine Heaven*

40 VERSES

to Ignite Your Faith

Surprising Insights from Unexpected Passages

Laurie Polich Short



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Welcome to an eight week study of **40 verses to ignite your faith**

It is my prayer that these sessions will prompt a meaningful discussion on some of the lesser known verses of the bible, and the wisdom and encouragement they can give to our faith. I pray that this book will provide spiritual nourishment for your soul, and that this study will give you the tools you need to unpack God's word and learn the mysterious ways He grows our faith.

Since the book is a study of 40 verses, it fits nicely into an 8 week study, with space in between the sessions for individual reflection. Each session begins with an intro question, a video segment (7-10 minutes), and concludes with follow up discussion questions. Feel free to arrange your study in a way that suits your group!

If you are the leader, it's a good idea to spend time preparing for each study by reading (or re-reading) the verses and devotional entries that go with each session. You may also want to familiarize yourself with the Discussion Questions and edit them to suit your group. Consider beforehand what you might share from your own life, because what you share will help set the tone for the group.

Be sure to encourage your group to read the verses and reflections from my book before the session that goes with those verses. Their personal reflection on these verses will deepen their experience with the study. Each person in your group will need both the book and study guide for this study.

It is my hope that each of the 8 sessions will provide an angle on God's word that people haven't seen or noticed before, and that the study will be a game changer for how people reflect on God's word. Often we miss verses that hold the most meaningful truths of Scripture, and this study is an opportunity to hover over these "less noticed" verses and glean what they have to say.

My prayer is that this study will make God's word accessible and lifechanging to people who may not have seen how relevant Scripture could be to their lives. If it does that, my mission in writing the book will be complete.

God bless you in your journey through these Scriptures.

Laurie Short

Introduction

There are 2 ways to begin this study...

If you gather as a group before you begin to read “40 verses to ignite your faith”, just show the promo and distribute materials and ask your group what they would like to learn (or gain spiritually) in the 8 weeks of this study.

If you want to distribute the books before you begin your study, have your group read the first 4 chapters and reflections in Laurie's book before beginning Session 1.

Reflections to read before Session 1

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 1-4 in Laurie's book in preparation for the first study.

Day 1: Genesis 3:3 The subtle insertion of doubt
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Genesis 16:2 Moving ahead of God's timing
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: Genesis 16:13 Never alone
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Genesis 41:1 Remembering and Living our waits
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Icebreaker Question: When was the last time you struggled with God's timing for something you wanted to happen? How did you handle it?

Video Segment: Session 1

Key scriptures: Genesis 3:3, Genesis 16:2, Genesis 16:13, Genesis 41:1

Discussion Questions:

1. Laurie talked about how the stories in the bible seem so dramatic, and this sometimes makes God's work in our life seem a lot less dramatic now. Has that ever been true for you? Which story in the bible stands out as something you remember having an impact on you? Why?
2. Look at Genesis 16:2. When have you experienced God's timing being different than yours? Have you ever been tempted to "move ahead of God" in his timing because you desperately wanted to see something happen? If so, when?

3. Is there anything you are waiting for now? How does Genesis 41:1 speak to your waiting period? Is it possible that God is working in you or around you in ways you can't see? What might be some of the things God is doing in this waiting period?

4. In Genesis 16:13, God reveals through Hagar's story that He is always aware and attentive to what we are going through. In what way can that encourage you in the areas you don't see Him at work? How have you experienced "The God who sees me"?

5. At the end of the video, Laurie tells a story about a man who saw something in her before she saw it in herself. Have you ever had someone who was a cheerleader for you spiritually? How have mentors and voices of encouragement in your life helped mold your faith? Is there anything someone has said that ended up being significant in your faith journey?

6. Look at Genesis 3:3 and the way the serpent leads Eve to question God. In what way(s) do the people around you encourage or discourage you in your faith? Which voices do you have more of around you right now?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 1-4)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

In the garden, we see God setting the stage to woo rather than control humanity. (p.14)

Our prayers move from “God, do what only you can do” to “God, bless me as I do it,” and we slowly drift to a functional atheism. (p.18)

God writes His story with us- not apart from us- and He includes the messiness of our choices in the way His stories unfold. (p.23)

The waits that seem endless now will one day be seen as necessary for what they brought us. (p.26)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

Where in your life do you need encouragement to wait out God’s timing? Spend some time in silent prayer and ask God to bring to mind the places where you might be doing things you want in the time you want them rather than trusting Him.

Pray for what God wants you to see through this study. With your group, ask God to open your hearts to new insights from His word, and for spiritual growth over the next 8 weeks.

Before Session 2:

*Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 5-9 in Laurie's book
in preparation for the following week's study*

Day 1: Exodus 3:12 The sign comes after you obey
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Exodus 16:19 Manna, Maggots and Trust
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: Exodus 32:1 The temptation to find another God
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Numbers 13:27-28 The Buts that steer our faith
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: Deuteronomy 10:13 For our own good
What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Additional Notes:

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever been rappelling - or done something that required a step of faith? If so, what happened?

Video Segment: Session 2

Key scriptures: Exodus 3:12, Exodus 16:19, Exodus 32:1. Numbers 13:27-28, Deuteronomy 10:13

Discussion Questions:

1. If you had to assess your muscle of faith, would you say that it was strong or weak? Why? What is the scariest step of faith you've ever taken?

2. In Exodus 3:12, God tells Moses that his sign will come after he's stepped out in faith. Does this resonate with your experience? Have you ever been afraid to do something because you weren't sure if God would be there for you? How does this verse speak to your life?

3. In the video Laurie says “God works with us; He doesn’t work for us. We have to actually take a step of faith.” How does this concept speak to your faith journey? Do you tend to wait for God to line everything up before you step out in faith? Or are you able to step out and let Him lead you as you go?

4. Exodus 16:19 talks about how God fed the Israelites in the wilderness and how they were not supposed to hoard what they had, but trust that God would provide it each day. Is it hard for you to live in the present and let God provide for you? Where is it hard for you to trust Him?

5. Look at Numbers 13: 27-28. Can you think of any “buts” in your life that have become barriers in your faith? If you were one of the spies in Numbers 13, do you think you would you have been like the ten who let their circumstances make them afraid, or like Joshua and Caleb who believed in spite of the circumstances that God would be faithful? What is one area of your life where you wish you could trust God more?

6. At the end of the video, Laurie says “*Stack up the impossibilities and watch God move.*” Have you ever experienced that in your faith journey- or seen God do it for someone else? What would you like to see God do in your life right now? What would it look like to open yourself up to the way He might do it?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 5-9)

Circle the quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

The sign comes in the form of God's faithfulness when we look back. (p.30)

Whether our need is assurance or provision, tomorrow's need can drive us to fear and clinging today. (p.34)

The thing we grab onto apart from God will ultimately take control of our lives. (p.40)

What begins as a "but" eventually becomes a barrier (p.42)

The freedom we think we'll find by escaping God's boundaries is actually found by living within them (p.46)

Suggested Prayer Time: Pray as a group or in pairs:

Where do you need more faith in your life? Ask God to show you where you need to let go and trust Him more.

Pray for what step God wants you to make to increase your muscle of faith. Is it believing Him more? Obeying the boundaries He has given? (Deuteronomy 10:13)? Trusting Him for tomorrow? Continuing to wait for Him to come through?

Commit to praying with one other person for the power to step out in faith this week.

Before Session 3:

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 10-14 in Laurie's book in preparation for the following week's study

Day 1: Joshua 1:7 Not turning to the right or left

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Judges 7:2 Too much of you is not enough of God

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: 1 Samuel 3:10 Hearing God's voice

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: 2 Samuel 11:1 The Decisions before the Decision

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: 1 Kings 17:3-4 Elijah's school of faith

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Additional Notes:

Icebreaker Question: Are you more distracted by temptation or fear when you are trying to follow God? Why?

Video Segment: Session 3

Key scriptures: Joshua 1:7, Judges 7:2, 1 Samuel 3:10, 2 Samuel 11:1, 1 Kings 17: 3-4

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you experience God's leading? Is it an inner voice? A nudge? Do you always follow what He is leading you to do? Why/Why not?

2. Why do you think Moses counsels Joshua not to turn to the right or left as he is following God? (see Joshua 1:7). Have you ever been kept from following God by what you see? Does the concept of "spiritual blinders" resonate with you? Where do you need them most right now?

3. In the video, Laurie tells the story of David's fall with Bathsheba and it all begins in 2 Samuel 11:1. Have you ever seen in your own life where an initial harmless decision paved the way for a bad choice? If so, when?

4. What choices could you make right now to keep you protected from something bad happening down the road? Can you think of an area of struggle where you should be positioning yourself differently? Have you ever experienced the choices being harder or more painful the further you go? If so, when?

5. 1 Samuel 3:10 reveals how Samuel had a mentor in Eli to help him discern God's voice. Have you ever had a mentor? If so, what is one thing that mentor taught you (or modeled for you) that has stayed with you? Have you ever thought about reaching out and being a mentor for someone else?

6. 1 Kings 17:3-4 shows how God worked in Elijah's life before calling Him to ministry. How has God worked in your life (or what has He taught you) that you could draw from to minister to others? Can you think of a person who might glean from your experience so you can begin encouraging someone else?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 10-14)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

The more we focus on our faith, the smaller our fear grows (p.51)

Our greatest stories happen when we lean on nothing but God (p.55)

When we ask God to speak, we need to be prepared to do what God says (p.59)

Once we position ourselves in a place we shouldn't be, we are more likely to proceed with something we shouldn't do (p.62)

The bigger our need is, the more faith we end up with when God comes through (p.66)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

Is there a temptation you are struggling with that you need to make better decisions than you are making? Pray for God to give you strength to think things through and stop heading down that path.

What path might God be calling you to? Pray for His leading and guidance if you don't know, and strength and courage if you do know. Pray with someone who knows you and can speak into your life. Ask for the accountability and support you need to fulfill God's dreams for you, and to begin reaching out to others.

Before Session 4:

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 15-18 in Laurie's book in preparation for the following week's study

Day 1: 1 Chronicles 17:23 The courage to pray for the bigger story

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Esther 4:14 The story within the story

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: Job 1:8 God's affection in our trials

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Job 42:3 Seeing our life in context

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: Review and Reflect

Reflect on the last 4 verses and choose the one that spoke to you most

Additional Notes:

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever looked back on a chapter of your life and realized that you thought one thing was going on, but God was doing something else? If so, when?

Video Segment: Session 4

Key scriptures: 1 Chronicles 17:23, Esther 4:14, Job 1:8, Job 42:3

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever heard the story of Esther before? Was there anything new you learned from the angle that Laurie told it? What speaks to you most about Esther's dilemma and choice? Do you have a "Mordecai" in your life to make you aware of what God is doing around you?
2. Can you relate to the awareness that you are part of a bigger story? What might be a bigger story God has you in right now? Have you ever had to sacrifice something you wanted in order to willingly take part in God's story for someone else? (like David in 1 Chronicles 17:23)

3. Laurie tells a story about how God used a broken dream to position her to be a part of a different (and much bigger) story. Have you ever seen God do that in your life? How might he use a disappointment in your life to cause you to be used in a bigger way?

4. Look at God's affection for Job in Job 1:8. How does this shape your view of difficulty in your life? Is it possible that it is a complement from God when He believes in us enough to allow our suffering? Or do you think God's pleasure is strictly manifested through His blessings?

5. In Job 42:3, Job is invited to lift his eyes beyond his present circumstances to the ways God is working around him. In what way do you need to do that right now? Is there a perspective shift you need in order to take your eyes off your difficulty to what God might be doing in and around you? What could you do to find that?

6. After listening to Laurie tell Esther's story and her Haiti story, what strikes you about God's bigger stories? What is one step you could take to enter into the bigger story around you? Is there something you need to let go of? Some fear you need to overcome? Do you need more vision to see what God is doing? Share what you need to step into God's bigger life.

Quotes for reference (from chapters 15-18)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

Our no in God's story might mean someone else's yes (p.71)

If we never give God the things we have, we will never know what God could have done with them (p.75)

God believes in us enough to move our faith beyond the things He gives us—and to see His favor in what He asks from us instead (p.78)

Once we've seen through God's eyes, our eyes are never the same (p.83)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

Pray for the vision and courage you need to step into God's bigger story for your life. If there is anything blocking you- a fear you have or a personal dream you are over focused on- pray for the ability to let go and enter in more to what God is doing in and around you.

Ask God to help you change your perspective from being the center of your story to making God the center of your story. If there is a suffering or broken dream in your life, invite Him to use it in His bigger story. Then keep your eyes open to what He will do.

Before Session 5:

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 19-24 in Laurie's book in preparation for the following week's study

Day 1: Psalm 131:2 A weaned faith

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Psalm 143:5 Looking back for our future

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 5:15 Nothing you can carry

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 11:5 God's activity

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: Isaiah 30:21 The voice behind you

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 6: Isaiah 50:11 Lighting your own fires (**BONUS VERSE THIS WEEK**)

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Icebreaker Question: Is there something you are waiting on God for right now where you are tempted to stop trusting and do something for yourself?

Video Segment: Session 5

Key scriptures: Psalm 131:2, Psalm 143:5, Ecclesiastes 5:15, Ecclesiastes 11:5, Isaiah 30:21, Isaiah 50:11

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever heard the concept of a “weaned faith”? How does the image Laurie illustrated (from Psalm 131:2) impact what you believe about spiritual growth? Would you say your faith is “weaned”? Would you call yourself a baby Christian, an adolescent Christian, or an adult Christian? Why?
2. Have you ever looked back over your life to gain confidence in what God is doing now? (see Psalm 143:5) What is one way you’ve seen God’s faithfulness in the past that you can hold on to for something you are not seeing right now?

3. Ecclesiastes 11:5 talks about all the things God is doing around us that we hardly notice or think about. Does it help you to realize how much He controls? What feels out of control right now that this verse might speak to in your life? How might trusting God for this help you grow a “weaned faith”?

4. Laurie read a story in the video called “Hope for the Flowers” to illustrate the importance of waiting on God for what He needs to do in the dark. Can you think of something God might have done (or is doing right now) in a waiting period? Have you ever become different in your faith because you had to wait?

5. Ecclesiastes 5:15 talks about the things we can and can't carry with us when we leave this earth. Does remembering this help you realize the importance of the “inner work” God is doing when we find ourselves in darkness? Do you think that's why God allows so much of that in our lives? Why is it important to Him that we deepen our faith?

6. How does Isaiah 50:11 speak to you about short circuiting God's work in the darkness? Are there any fires you are lighting or torches you are providing because you are tired of waiting? When you think of the image of a caterpillar emerging too soon from the cocoon, how does that encourage you to wait on God? What specifically do you need to wait on Him for right now?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 19-24)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

When our faith is weaned, we do not need God's immediate answer to know God is working (p.87)

By remembering God's faithfulness in the past, you find the vision you need to see your way ahead (p.90)

The intricacies of God's plan are beyond what we could ask or imagine (p.99)

If you want the great adventures God offers you, take a risk to heed the voice behind you (p.103)

We grow in the darkness, and when we short-circuit or avoid it, we end up missing a part of our development that we need (p.107)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

Whether it is something you are waiting for now, or something you may be called on to wait in the future, ask for the patience and perseverance you need.

If you are in a waiting period right now, find a prayer partner who will pray you through this time. Commit to continue praying until you see the answer of what God is doing in your life.

Before Session 6:

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 25-29 in Laurie's book in preparation for the following week's study

Day 1: Jeremiah 29:5 Build houses and settle in

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Jeremiah 31:33 The writing on our hearts

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: Ezekiel 37:3 The God who breathes life and hope

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Jonah 1:5 Running away from God

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: Jonah 3:4 The small step God can use

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Additional Notes:

Icebreaker Question: Is there something God might be calling you to do that you are resisting? If so, what?

Video Segment: Session 6

Key scriptures: Jeremiah 29:5, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 37:3, Jonah 1:5, Jonah 3:4

Discussion Questions:

1. When was the last time you were living in a season you didn't want to be in? Are you in one of those seasons right now? How does Jeremiah 29:4-7 speak to your situation? What could you do to "settle in" to where God has you right now?
2. When Laurie tells her story about the girl she mentored in the inner city, she reflects that sometimes we are reluctant to reach out because we feel like we don't have what it takes- especially in difficulty. What is one step you could take right now to make yourself available to participate in another story? Is there a ministry or cause you feel drawn to? Where might you volunteer and just show up for what God might have for you?

3. In Ezekiel 37:3, God asks Ezekiel if he believes the dead bones can live. Do you believe God can do the impossible? Are you willing to lay aside your timeline and your specific direction for how it needs to happen? What God sized prayer do you have that you might be willing to pray with perseverance, confidence and openness to the way God might answer it?

4. Jonah heard from God and ran away from what God asked him to do. Have you ever done that? What happened?

5. Look at Jonah 1:5. What are some of the ways we “take a nap” when we don’t want to hear what God is saying to us? (avoiding church, keeping a constant flow of media, not reading the bible, etc). What is your favorite form of taking a nap? Is there any area of your life where you are napping now?

6. When you see how God gives Jonah a second chance in Jonah 3:4, does that encourage you in your own faith journey? Have you ever needed a second chance? How might this encourage you to consider doing something you felt God wanted from you that you haven’t done? What does the Jonah 3 show us about what God needs from us in order to do His work through us?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 25-29)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

We may not be able to choose what happens to us, but we can choose our response to what God wants to develop in us (p.111)

You are invited to simply receive what God has already decided by calling you His (p.115)

Our places of despair set the stage for hope (p.118)

It is when we hear what we don't want to hear that our faith is tested and we are suddenly tempted to grow deaf (p.123)

The promise of a second chance is ours when we are ready to say yes to what God (p.127)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

Where in your life do you need encouragement to wait out God's timing? Pray for the patience and perseverance to "settle in" to what God is doing right now in your life. Is there a step He is calling you to take? Is there something He is calling you to that you don't want to hear? Pray for the ability to be open to what God might be nudging you to do

Share a prayer that you've nearly given up on because it's been so long that you've wanted it. Are you willing to pray it with an openness to how and when God might accomplish it? Grab a friend and pray this seemingly impossible prayer with the vision Ezekiel saw in the valley of dry bones.

Before Session 7:

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 30-34 in Laurie's book in preparation for the following week's study

Day 1: Habakkuk 3:17 Defiant faith

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: Matthew 1:6 Goodness not forgotten

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: Matthew 11:2-3 When Circumstances Bring Doubt

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Mark 2:5 The answer you weren't looking for

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: Luke 22:32 When you have turned back

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Additional Notes:

Icebreaker Question: Is there something happening (or not happening) in your life or the world around you that requires you to have faith in spite of what you see? If so, what is it?

Video Segment: Session 7

Key scriptures: Habakkuk 3:17-18, Matthew 1:6, Matthew 11:2-3, Mark 2:5, Luke 22:32

Discussion Questions:

1. Laurie shared in the video about a season where she had to share her testimony in the middle of the story- when she did not know how or when God would come through. Have you ever done that? Do you think we need more “middle of the story” testimonies in church? How do you think these testimonies speak to people outside of the faith?
2. Look at Habakkuk 3:17-18. Why do you think the book ends this way? What does this tell you about God’s desire for our faith? Can you think of a reason why God would want us to develop a faith that isn’t based on our circumstances? How do we develop this kind of faith?

3. Laurie talked about Matthew 1:6 and how it reveals that Uriah's name is grafted in to the genealogy of Jesus. Do you think it was intentional that Bathsheba is listed that way? How does this small verse show that people who do the right thing are not forgotten by God? Do you think our lives are measured by the amount of years we have or how we live those years?

4. In Matthew 11:2-3 we see how John the Baptist went through a season of doubt. Have you ever been through a season of doubt? What (if anything) caused it? Do you think it's okay to doubt? In what way does God use doubts to deepen our faith?

5. In Mark 2:5, the four friends who carry their paralyzed friend to Jesus initially get an answer they weren't looking for, How does this illustrate God's bigger agenda in our life? Have you ever had a prayer that was answered differently than you wanted- and then you eventually saw what God did with it? How does knowing God's story is bigger than yours cause you to think about praying differently?

6. Laurie ends the video by talking about Luke 22:32 and how Jesus believed in Peter even when he knew he would blow it. How does that shape the way you believe God feels about you? Do you feel God is for you? Do you believe He can use you- in spite of how you may have blown it? How might God use you to "feed his sheep"? Is it possible that He can use you even more now because you recognize the power is His and not yours?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 30-34)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

The middle of the story is the time to let our faith shine (p.132)

What is ultimately remembered is the part we had in God's story and the way we played our part (p.135)

When we move away from God in our doubts, we sometimes end up abandoning Him. God invites us to move toward Him with our doubts instead (p.139)

Just when we think we've got God down, something happens that either explodes or expands our faith (p.143)

The only thing that separates us from God's forgiveness is our own unwillingness to turn back (p.147)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

Is there an area of your life where you feel despair because you see nothing happening? Pray for the ability to hold on to your faith by praying Habakkuk 3:17-18. Substitute what Habakkuk doesn't see happening with what you don't see happening. Ask God to develop in you defiant faith.

Have you ever felt like you couldn't be used by God because you have blown it? Let Peter's story encourage you to know you are forgiven and that God can even use you more now that you have empathy for others. Pray for how God might use you to "feed his sheep".

Before Session 8:

Read the reflections (and questions to ponder) for chapters 35-40 in Laurie's book in preparation for the following week's study

Day 1: John 11:35 The God who weeps

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 2: John 20:21 Sent with our wounds

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 3: 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 The power of our thorns

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 4: Ephesians 1:18-19 The eyes of our heart

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 5: Philippians 1:12 Trusting the greater plan

What was the biggest insight you gained from this verse?

Day 6: 1 John 4:12 Making the invisible God visible (**BONUS VERSE THIS WEEK**)

Icebreaker Question: What do you think is the best way to be a witness to your faith? On a scale of 1-10, (10 being Mother Theresa or Billy Graham) what kind of witness would you say you are?

Video Segment: Session 8

Key scriptures: John 11:35, John 20:21, 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, Ephesians 1:18-19, Philippians 1:12, 1 John 4:12

Discussion Questions:

1. Laurie shared at the beginning of the video that sometimes we reflect faith through our pain and weakness. What might be a weakness or pain God could use in your life to reach others? Does the way Jesus commissions the disciples with his wounds outstretched (John 20:21) speak to how God might want to use you? Is there a person that you could reach out to where your pain or difficulty could be a connecting point?
2. Laurie talks about the sign in front of her house and how it has moved her to extend grace in complex relationships. Do you have complex relationships in your life where it is hard for you to extend grace? When Paul talks about “the thorn in his flesh” in 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, some scholars suspect that it is a physical ailment, but others say it might be a difficult relationship in Paul’s life. What would it look like for you to accept a difficult relationship that might be a thorn in your flesh, and be a witness by extending grace where it is not deserved?

3. In Ephesians 1:18-19, Paul talks about the eyes of our heart, and how it allows us to see all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. How can this awareness of our spiritual blessings help us in extending grace where it's difficult? Have you ever experienced God's love fueling you in a difficult relationship or circumstance? If so, when? If not, where in your life do you need this kind of fueling?

4. Laurie mentions in the video how grace happens as you practice it—and it begins by simply giving as much grace as you can, and letting God meet you as you take a step. What step of grace might God be calling you to take? Is there someone you need to forgive- or think about forgiving?

5. Toward the end of the video, Laurie says that sometimes you have to choose between fairness and forgiveness. Have you experienced this? Do you think it's true that we find it easier to accept grace that is unfair (from God) than it is to give it (to others)? Where in your relationships or circumstances do you have to choose between fairness and forgiveness when it comes to extending grace?

6. The video ends with the camera lifting above Laurie's house into the neighborhood and area around her. How is that an illustration for the way your life might be touching others? Who in your life (neighbors, family members, coworkers, friends) are you impacting right now? As you read Philippians 1:12, does knowing there is a bigger story around you change your perspective in your current circumstances? Can you think of what might be happening in the big story because of anything you are doing right now?

Quotes for reference (from chapters 35-40)

Circle the Quote that gave you a new and helpful insight for your faith journey this week:

Even when God knows joy is coming, He accompanies us in our grief.
(p.150)

It is often through our sufferings that God gives us our greatest reach
(p.154)

Paul encourages us to see the surprising ways thorns grow our souls.
(p.159)

Our eyes on their own are incapable of looking past the things in front of us to the spiritual realities around us. (p.162)

The impact we are having could be different and bigger than we might imagine (p.167)

The very person who deserves your love least presents you with your greatest opportunity (p.171)

Suggested Prayer Time - Pray as a group or in pairs:

How has God spoken to you in this study? Pray for the God moments you have had by studying these verses, and what God might want you to do with them. Is there a step you need to take? A person you need to forgive? A perspective that needs to be shifted or broadened? Where is God tugging on your heart?

Pray with someone who can support you and hold you accountable to take the step God has called you to take. If you are still struggling with the strength or courage or desire to take that step, pray that God gives you what you need. Remember the power is from God! And He promises that if He has called you to it, He will take you through it.

