

Household Discussion Guide Chapters 11-20

Chapter 11 – WORSHIP

KEY VERSE: “Come Let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song” (Psalm 95:1-2).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

What is the hardest thing you ever trained for or worked towards? Was it a physical training, like for a sport? Was it for a job or occupation, like training in boot camp for the military? Was it mental and intellectual training, like at a school or university? What made the training so hard? Why was the training helpful and how did you push through some of the challenges and discomfort of the training?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

When we think of worship, we don't often think of “training,” but I think worship is—more than anything—“soul training.” Deep down, we are training our hearts and souls to worship and love God above all things. Again, worship literally means “to give worth.” So worship is really about training ourselves to value God more than anything else (read Colossians 3:1-2). Psalm 103:1-3 helps us see that we need to train our souls to really focus on serving and worshiping God alone:

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,

who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY: Here's my challenge. Just like any other sort of training, “soul training” (also known as spiritual disciplines or discipleship habits) requires work and discipline. What single daily and weekly discipline could your family do together in order to spend more regular time in prayer, worship, and reading scripture? Start small! Try five minutes over breakfast. Work your way up incrementally. Try a family prayer or sing a worship song together as you get ready for bed. Put verses on your fridge, mirror, or anywhere else you might see it on a regular basis.

Chapter 12 – PRAYER

KEY VERSE: “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld His love from me!” (Psalm 66:18-20).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:9-13).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

What’s your favorite kind of bread or bread-like item (think tortilla, sesame seed bun, or Indian Nan)? Why do we seem to gravitate towards bread and why do you think “breaking bread” was used as symbol for eating and fellowship for the disciples in the book of Acts?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

“What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.”

–Luther’s Small Catechism on the Lord’s Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer and this explanation of “daily bread” remains near and dear to my heart. I find a great deal of comfort and joy in this verse because as I was learning about it in seminary, I was struggling with providing for my family. I was out of money, out of food, and running out of hope. As I was studying this prayer and Luther’s commentary on it, I had an opportunity to live it out and experience it. I found myself regularly praying, “God why don’t you give me more [or better] daily bread? Why does it feel like we only barely have enough?” That’s when God did something unbelievable. Panera Bread Company originally began in St. Louis as St. Louis Bread Company and they had a partnership with Concordia Seminary to give students free day-old bread. A classmate of mine led me into the most heavenly room you will ever see. Table after table of free bread. The smell was simply divine. That summer I put to the test, “Man does not live on bread alone.”

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY: Bake some bread together as a family (or turn a French Loaf into garlic bread). Talk about all the ways God provides in your daily life (use the Catechism summary about as a starting place). Pray a prayer of thanksgiving about everything you discussed.

Chapter 13 – BIBLE STUDY

KEY VERSE: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

Have you ever lost power at your home? What was it like to be trapped in the dark with no electricity (and no internet!)? What did you do and how long did it last? What things did you use to have light and what do you remember about the experience?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

God uses many metaphors or analogies to describe how His Word, the Bible, functions in our lives. It is a lamp or light that helps guide our way and allows us to avoid the pitfalls of the world. Sin, death, and Satan want to trip us up with lies and half-truths, but scripture is meant to light up those dark thoughts and set them ablaze.

Speaking of battle, spiritual warfare is real. We need to see our lives as battlegrounds. The stakes couldn't be higher: our souls. When we listen to God's Word, we are allowing it to become a sword of truth that can cut down any lie the enemy sends our way (Read Ephesians 6 as well). My dad always told me to “never bring a knife to a gun fight.” Sadly, most of us approach our lives and spiritual warfare unarmed, without any offensive weapon because we don't have any scripture memorized for the Spirit to draw from.

When Jesus did battle with Satan, He was able to defeat the enemy with only words He had memorized from the book of Deuteronomy (Read Matthew 4). I don't know about you, but I don't like my chances if the only weapon I had was what I had memorized from that book. Also, notice how Jesus needed to know only memorize scripture, but know it in context. Satan regularly tried to misuse and misrepresent scripture by referencing it out of context. Jesus did not fall for it; instead, Jesus was able to speak scripture in context. Again, notice how Jesus says, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” This verse was originally about the Israelites in the wilderness receiving manna, miraculous bread from heaven. Jesus quotes this verse while also in the wilderness. Jesus not only knows scripture but knows its context and how to apply it to his present circumstance. This is why we study scripture: so we can be armed for the spiritual battles to come!

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY:

First, I strongly recommend the movie, “War Room.” I would encourage you to find it at Red Box and watch it as a family. It is a great example of what it means to study scripture, pray and take spiritual warfare seriously. Second, try this “phone replacement therapy.” For one day, take a small physical paper bible everywhere you go and use it in the same places/times you would for your phone and see what happens.

Chapter 14 – SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

KEY VERSE: “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

Have you ever done a construction project (like around the house, on a mission trip, or for Habitat for Humanity)? What was it like? Have you ever watched a home-improvement show and wondered what it would be like to work on something like that?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

Have you ever sanded wood? If you have, you know it messy and really hard work. I will never forget the labor-intensive process it took to sand all the wood we used for my patio furniture. And we used an electric sander! My forearms were sore, and my back was stiff. For a couple of hours after sanding I would still feel residual vibrations in my hands. But, the thing I learned is how to sand WITH the grain of the wood. I got to know the simple pine we were using and I became really familiar with how it felt to sand each part and even smooth out the knots and cracks in the wood.

Here's the point. God has created us and know us better than we know ourselves. When we focus on Him and His Word, single-mindedly, we start to live WITH the grain of how He created us to live. When we ignore God and His Word, it's like sanding against the grain. Our lives get warped and can even be broken if we ignore Him for too long. How can you bring your life more into alignment with God and His Word, how can you live with the grain of how God created you?

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY: I would encourage your household to go to Lowe's or Home Depot and buy a small piece of un-sanded wood and a single piece of sanding paper. Take them home and have everyone (carefully so as to avoid splinters!) feel the wood that is not sanded. Next, go outside (or place down some paper on the floor inside) and sand that small piece of wood. Hopefully, you will eventually start to feel and recognize the grain of the wood (if you are struggling, you can always YouTube a how-to video). This tangible activity should allow your kids an opportunity to understand why I talk about “living with grain of the universe” that God has created to live within.

Chapter 15 – TOTAL SURRENDER

KEY VERSE: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “He [Jesus] said to another man, ‘Follow me.’

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59-60).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

Jesus’ words above do not seem “nice” as we might define “nice” in our modern PC world. Do you think Jesus was always nice? Do you think we should rethink how we use the word, nice? Why do you think Jesus so bluntly challenged this potential disciple in the passage above? How might Jesus challenge us in a similar manner?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

I feel like we get the wrong idea about Jesus. We usually fashion Him as a free-love-hippie that just wanted everyone to get along and be happy. Nothing could be further from the truth. With a majority of people, Jesus was offensive. Jesus offended every group that thought themselves “elite” (politically, financially, religiously, or socially). Jesus associated with those many of those “elites” called “lowly,” making the “elites” hate him all the more. Jesus even frustrated his family and hometown buddies. Jesus was not perceived as “nice” most of the time.

So why did Jesus preach an offensive message like “total surrender?” Why did Jesus say that you had to lose your life or take up your cross to follow Him? Why wouldn’t Jesus want to share a more palatable and friendlier message?

The answer is that causing discomfort is not always equivalent to evil, wrong, or being “not nice.” These days we value our independence, comfort, and control so much that we perceive any threat to these things as mean and wicked. Jesus wanted something better for those who followed Him. He desires to give all of His disciples the abundant life. Jesus knows that the idols and addictions that steal our attention from God will eventually let us down and leave us feeling empty and alone. I pray that you hear Jesus’ call for surrender as good news, a trumpeting sound of freedom.

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY: I would like to encourage your household to make your own “white flag” to symbolize your “total surrender” to Jesus (white flags were used in the past by surrendering armies). Get a stick or dowel and attach a white piece of cloth to it and place it somewhere prominent in your home (fridge, near front door, etc.). Let it be a reminder of Jesus’ call for us to “total surrender.”

Chapter 16 – BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

KEY VERSE: “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and at together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “And Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:19-25).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

How often do you have other people in your household (like how often do you have friends or neighbors over for dinner or to watch a game)? Do you think your household has anyone in it with the gift of hospitality? How could you as a household plan to use your home as a tool for God to create more community? How could you find community in other places as well?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

You may have heard of “FOMO,” (fear of missing out), but you probably haven’t heard of “JOMO” (joy of missing out). JOMO is when you do absolutely nothing on a weekend and you relish in the laziness (like “Office Space”). We value having time to ourselves and we value entertainment time so much that spending time with others often gets shifted to the back burner. We are so busy and tired that going out sounds exhausting.

Things aren’t so different today as they were in biblical times. Hebrews mentions that many were in the “habit” of not meeting together. We allow so many other things to be a priority, but God tells us that we are not created or meant to be alone (Genesis 2). We are meant to live in community. A majority of New Testament commands require you to serve or do this command with another person. Again, we cannot simply live the Christian life alone.

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY:

Find someone on Sunday morning or during one of your small group gatherings and commit to eating a meal together. Most examples of biblical community involve simply eating together. So, pick a restaurant, or order a pizza (or make a meal if you’re feeling really ambitious) and hang out with another household this week!

Chapter 17 – SPIRITUAL GIFTS

KEY VERSE: “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, for one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us” (Romans 12:4-6).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: When Peter saw him [John], he said to Jesus, “Lord what about this man? Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” (John 21:21-22).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

When have you been tempted to compare yourself to someone else? What one thing has a person had that made you jealous? Was it an attribute (being smart, attractive or athletic)? Was it an accomplishment (a job, a grade in school, a trophy/award, or other milestone)? Was it financial or material success (amount of money, cool car, beautiful house, or fashionable clothes)? How might we also be spiritually jealous (wanting the preaching ability, counseling ability, teaching ability, gift of hospitality, or being patient/merciful)?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

Too often, we allow comparison to become the thief of joy and contentment. The context for the above John passage is after Jesus restores Peter back to the ministry by asking him three times if he loved Jesus (to mirror the three times he denied Jesus). After Jesus gives Peter unbelievable grace, Peter gets distracted by curiosity about John’s potential ministry and spiritual gifting. Jesus warns him not to worry about it and simply invites Peter to “follow me!” Jesus’ time with Peter ends the same way it begins: a miraculous catch, a call to ministry (to be “fishers of men”), and a call to follow Jesus.

Jesus has the same simple invitation for us: “Follow me!” We are called to follow Jesus by sharing whatever gifts that God gives us and we don’t have to worry about what gifts He gave other people.

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY: Try out this spiritual gifts inventory:

<https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>

See how each of your results turn out and discuss it as a household and see how your results

Chapter 18 – OFFERING MY TIME

KEY VERSE: “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION: There are two ways we can use the word, “season.” We can mean the literal season, like Spring or Winter. What’s your favorite season and why? What is beautiful, or memorable about that particular season for you (share a story, like playing in the snow or going to the beach or laying in wildflowers)?

We can also mean a period or chapter of our lives, a portion of time defined by a single theme or feeling, like a season of growth, a season of loss and pain, or a season of celebration and accomplishment. What seasons are most memorable for you? Where did you see God working in the midst of these seasons (again, share a story about a particular memorable story)? What season do you think you are in right now?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

I don’t need to remind you that time is your most valuable commodity. In fact, the amount of faith and faithfulness required to simply read this sentence in your chaotic week is truly miraculous. I am thankful for you and your household joining me on this devotional journey and don’t take your weekly sacrifice of time lightly.

Here’s my challenge. By now, you have hopefully been doing this for eight weeks or eighteen weeks. That means you have at least a couple of months practice working this into your schedule. Most studies show that it takes around this amount of time to form a new habit.

New habits like this can be life-changing! Let me tell a quick story. One of the first couples I did pre-marital counseling with was super busy. They were both higher up executives at the same large company. They were both stretched very thin and their schedules were very demanding. So, it was a challenge to coordinate both of their schedules in order for us to meet for our counseling session. But, I told them that it was the only requirement I have for officiating weddings and they finally relented and made the time each week for us to meet on Wednesday evenings. We met every Wednesday for the few months that led up to their wedding. After a while, their coworkers just stopped trying to get projects or meetings done on Wednesday afternoons or evenings. By the time of their wedding, they had inadvertently trained their entire staff to leave them alone on Wednesdays. So, after their wedding and honeymoon, they simply turned Wednesdays into their date night, which they still have every week to this day. A slight change in your schedule can transform your household’s life trajectory forever. I pray that you indeed take the time to meet as a family weekly around God’s Word and make it a habit for a lifetime.

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY:

Make a “Captain’s Log” of all the things you do this week. In sci-fi shows like Star Trek, the captain and leader of a starship would keep a “captain’s log” detailing everything that happened on a regular basis. I would like to encourage your household to do the same (some suggestions on how to keep a log of your schedule are on yellow book pages 140-141).

Make it fun. Be creative. Younger children can draw their schedule, depicting their week’s experience through drawings. You can even make yours into a captioned comic strip so that it’s easy to share with your family.

The process of creating a log of what you actually do in a given week should be eye-opening. If you are able to be truly honest and detailed about what you actually do in a given week.

Chapter 19 – GIVING MY RESOURCES

KEY VERSE: “But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

Scripture and even Jesus discuss money more than often that we would probably like. In fact, 42% of Jesus parables involve the management of possessions and 10% of the verses of the gospels talk about money. Over two thousand verses of the bible speak about money, while only five hundred on prayer. God knows that, “where our treasure is, there our heart will be also.”

Talk about a profound experience you had with money. It could be the first time you lost gambling in Vegas. It could be what you did with your first paycheck. It could be the first time you saved up for a really nice treat for yourself, like a new TV or even a new car. It could also be the first time you tithed or gave to a charity.

Read the following devotional reflection together:

As a pastor, I am just as uncomfortable talking about money as you are. Honestly, I wish God had devoted considerably less verses to the subject, so I could more easily avoid it. Instead, God knows our hearts better than anyone (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Here’s my challenge for today. Consider three ways you can start to honor God with your financial resources a little more today. First, if you aren’t giving or tithing on a regular basis, what is standing in the way? Is it fear, debt, or poor financial management? Make steps to overcome each of those obstacles and invite a friend or mentor to help you with these. Second, do you keep enough liquid savings to be able to bless people with small “random acts of kindness?” Do you have gift cards to Wal Mart or the gas station that you could give someone who is struggling? Third, have you established a legacy plan to give some of the proceeds from your will to missions or charity? I ask these questions so that we can invest our resources into things that will last for eternity. I would encourage you to read this passage, where Jesus tells us about rich fool (Luke 12:13-21).

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY:

Go to Mint.com and register your primary credit or debit card there. Then, allow it to categorize all of your expenditures for the past month. You may have to adjust some of the settings and recategorize a few things for it to be truly accurate, but even the default results should be sufficient. The goal is not to create a budget for every penny. Instead, talk with your households

about recent trends and patterns (there's some good questions on yellow book page 148). Am I eating out too much? Do I pamper myself to excess? Do I spend too much money on toys my kids barely use? Do I have monthly charges for goods or services I don't even use any more? How could I bring my spending into alignment with how God would have me use my resources?

For more practical help in budgeting and managing your finances and getting out of consumer debt, please check out Dave Ramsey's financial peace university. Water's Edge hosts a class every few months if you would like to take the course with others.

Chapter 20 – SHARING MY FAITH

KEY VERSE: “Pray also for me, that whatever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (Ephesians 6:19-20).

DEVOTIONAL VERSE: “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

HOUSEHOLD DISCUSSION:

Read Romans 10:14-17. Talk about who first introduced you to Jesus and the Gospel. When was it? How did you receive it? How has your understanding of Jesus and the Gospel grown over the years? Have you ever shared your faith with someone else? How did that go? Why do you think we associate fear and anxiety with sharing our faith?

Read the following devotional reflection together:

I love telling good stories. The story of Jesus rescuing us from sin and death is truly best story ever told. I have become really passionate about telling the “old, old story” in creative and interesting ways, in ways that make sense to our culture. I want the story of Jesus to be lively, interesting and captivating. The greatest tool I ever learned was the phrase, “That reminds me of a story Jesus told...” I have made a deal with God that anytime I sense the Spirit prompting me to say that phrase, that I will say it out loud under one condition: that God would tell me which parable (story with a point spoken by Jesus) that He wants me to tell in that moment. Now, sometimes I have to linger on each syllable as I pray for God to reveal the proper story to share. So, it sometimes comes out, “That...re-minds...me...of...a...sto-ry...Jes-sus...told...” Even still, God has always revealed the perfect parable for the moment and I could tell you of countless instances where I got to share the beauties of the gospel and the Kingdom with strangers and friends alike.

But, to be able to try this for yourself you have to be willing to do two things. First, you have to be prepared (see the 1 Peter verse above). When people present an opportunity to share, we need to be ready to seize the moment. Being prepared to tell a paraphrase a parable in a moment’s notice means you need to meditate on the approximately 40 parables that Jesus told. Study them. Practice writing them out in your own words. Imagine what the parable might look like if a modern director was trying to translate it into a modern setting. What things would need to change without changing the point and message of the parable? Second, you have to spend a lot of time in prayer. If you are going to try to share Jesus with others, Jesus should be someone you spend a lot of time with. You can’t share what you don’t already have.

TANGIBLE FAITH ACTIVITY:

Research the duties of an ambassador. You can even pick the present ambassador to a favorite country and look into what he does on a daily basis. What things are ambassadors responsible for? What is their role? How do they approach their daily life?

Paul regularly describes believers as ambassadors for Christ. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Here's one way you can become a great ambassador for Christ. Get better at telling your testimony (your spiritual autobiography). There are some great tips in the yellow book on page 153 about how to keep your testimony concise and focused.