

choose JOY

Finding Hope & Purpose When Life Hurts

Small Group & Discussion Guide

Chapter 1

- What dreams for your life did you have as a child? How do your present circumstances look different than you imagined?
- Are you more likely to jump into a situation first and figure out how to swim second, or do you tend to research and problem-solve before stepping into the water?
- What are some of the blessings in your life that remain steady no matter your circumstances?

Chapter 2

- Do you ever struggle with unmet expectations? Think about a time when you adjusted or managed your expectations. How did that choice affect your experience?
- What is most often your immediate response to a loss or to pain? Do you find your feelings about the loss changing over time? Do you think it's okay to go through each of those emotional stages?

Chapter 3

- Which do you think is worse: physical pain or emotional pain? Why?
- Do unknown factors make pain more challenging? How do you manage anticipation or dread when facing a difficult situation?
- Do you think it's possible to experience pain without suffering? If this has been true in your life, what made the difference for you?
- How have the challenges you've faced in life changed you?

Chapter 4

- Does the belief that God is in control help you combat fear of the unknown or the future?
- Can you think of a time when you received exactly what you needed, exactly when you needed it? Does remembering that help you when facing new anxieties?
- What keeps you from trusting God?

Chapter 5

- Have you ever promised yourself that you'd never do something – and then ended up doing it anyway? How do you feel about that change?
- Are you holding on to old goals and standards that no longer fit with the reality of your life? What are some new goals you could set that are encouraging, rather than discouraging?

Chapter 6

- Have you ever felt ripped off, frustrated that life hasn't dealt you a fair hand? How did you respond to that feeling?
- Is there a way in which your life is abnormal compared to others or the normal you expected? How do you feel about that distinction?
- Do you have a plan for reminding yourself to choose joy despite your circumstances?

Chapter 7

- When life is hard, do you find it difficult to surrender to and trust in God?
- What do you think is the difference between adapting to difficult times and embracing them? How can you shift from one response to the other?

Chapter 8

- What are some things you're thankful for?
- Who are some people you're thankful for?
- How can you change your perspective from dwelling on the ugly truths of life to focusing on the beautiful ones?

Chapter 9

- Have your painful experiences ever equipped you to serve others better?
- Are your circumstances preventing you from helping others the way you'd like? Can you think of any other ways you could be helpful or generous in your particular situation?
- What is one way you could serve someone else today, despite or even because of your limitations?

Chapter 10

- Do you have any dreams or goals that you now realize will never come true or be met?
- Are you overlooking any opportunities to enjoy blessings placed in your life right now? What is one way you could begin living without regrets?
- Is there something – a dream, a relationship, an event – that you're upset to miss right now? Can you think of an alternate way to look at that loss, a way that leaves you with more joy and peace?

Chapter 11

- Do you have a life verse or mission statement? How does that change your perspective on life?
- Do you believe that your life has a purpose? Does that change how you live?
- How do you want to be known? How do you want to be remembered?

Chapter 12

- What does it mean to you to live fully in the middle of life's most challenging seasons?
- When you reach the end of your life, how do you think you will see the hard times you've experienced? Do you think you will be grateful for them or see them as valuable?
- How can you choose more joy in your life?