



Leader Guide – Weekly Gathering

Exodus 17:1-7; Romans 5:1-11 • March 11, 2007

by Kathy Watson & Diane Fawver

Opening (5 minutes)

Take time as leaders to welcome people and set a tone of joy and openness in community.

Check-in Time (15 minutes)

Share with the group a driving story from your past. (It doesn't have to be your own.)

Centering Worship (10 minutes)

Center this week by reading Romans 5:3-5. "We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Leave a few moments of silence after this has been read.

Sharing (15 minutes)

Questions you might use during this time:

- What stood out to you as you used the exercises this week?
- Ask group members to look back over their journals and share some things that catch their attention.
- Ask group members to look back at the last worship gathering on Sunday. Where did they experience God?
- Ask group members how they have been intentional in creating space to listen to Christ this week.

Group Listening Practice (40 minutes)

Need: enough copies of Amanda Watson's painting for each group member. Song "Hope of the Nations" from *You Shine* by Brian Doerksen.

The group listening practice is a meditation on Isaiah 53:2-6. The verses on the painting are a paraphrase. Before passing out copies of the painting, ask participants to close their eyes and listen while you read the verses from your own Bible or from the Christian Holman Standard Bible here:

2 He grew up before Him like a young plant
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no form or splendor that we should look at Him,
no appearance that we should desire Him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.
He was like one people turned away from;
He was despised, and we didn't value Him.

4 Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses,
and He carried our pains;
but we in turn regarded Him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.

5 He was pierced because of our transgressions,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on Him,
and we are healed by His wounds.

6 We all went astray like sheep;
we all have turned to our own way;
and the LORD has punished Him
for the iniquity of us all.

Hand out the painting and invite participants to take 15 minutes for silent meditation without giving any direction.

At the end of the meditation time, ask people to pair up and take turns sharing their thoughts and feelings during the exercise with this painting and Scripture. Allow 5 to 10 minutes as needed.

Gather the group back together.

Facing into the suffering of Christ who took on the suffering of the world (our suffering) is a heavy thing; heavy but necessary as we move through Lent toward Easter. Remind the group of our verses in Romans this week: Trouble leads to perseverance, perseverance leads to character, and character to hope that does not disappoint. Christ's heroic life and death on the cross under the weight of the world brings hope in the morning, hope to us all.

Play Brian Doerksen's "Hope of the Nations" from his *You Shine* album or another song of hope.

Closing (5 minutes)

Encourage people to be intentional this week to continue to wrestle with what they believe—study Scripture, read, talk to people, and do what it takes to continue to grow in their faith.

Close with a prayer of your own.