

STRANGER - THINGS -

Sessions 1-4

Discussion Guide

SESSION 1

God turns up and picks a fight

There are Bible stories — the ones we read to our kids, the ones with the comforting lesson. And then there are Bible stories, the ones that leave us uneasy. They aren't predictable, explainable, or comfortable. What do we do with those? And what do they tell us about the God that is unfathomable, uncontainable, untameable? About what it means to wrestle with Him?

Jacob has lived a life of running. Running from God, running from his struggles. After being gone from home for many years, Jacob is ready to go back and face his brother Esau. He knows Esau is coming out to meet him with 400 men. Unsure, Jacob retreats and spends some time alone. That very evening, Jacob wrestles with God himself in the form of an angel. After this encounter, God gives Jacob a new name - Israel - which means "He struggles with God" or "God contends". God's great love for Jacob forces him to do what we all must do, confront our failures, weakness, sins, and all the things that are hurting us. We must face God.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What is (or was) your nickname? How did you get it?
- What is the best fight scene in a movie you have ever seen?
- Who is your favourite action movie star?

REVIEW

Together, open your Bibles and read from **Genesis 32:22-32**.

Share your favourite points from the sermon. What spoke to you? Share a phrase or moment that you related to the most, or a question you may have from the weekend.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- It's a hard thing to admit, but most of us are hiding because of something we are afraid to face. Is there anything you are hiding from today?
- Why do you think God chose to wrestle with Jacob? Why do you think God wrenched Jacob's hip?
- Share one struggle that you have had in the last year that you can see God was clearly involved. How have you discovered growth in your own character through your pains and struggles?
- God desires you to experience freedom, peace, and joy in your life. What are some things going on right now inside your life that you would love to be free of?
- What are some things you can do this week to keep from slipping back into past hurts, past failures, or past bitterness?
- How do these verses apply to your life? What will you do about it?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Share what God is doing in your life and spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests.

SESSION 2

God turns up too late

Sometimes people say things like “God is never late, His timing is perfect.” Nice thought, right? Makes sense if He’s really in control, but what about those times when you wait and He isn’t showing up? When the situation is going from bad to worse, and the only option available to you is beyond reach and beyond reason? What happens when God turns up too late?

God call’s Gideon to be Israel’s next judge or leader to bring back the nation to God. God wants Gideon to bring back Israel’s spiritual faithfulness as well as bring them out of oppression from the neighbouring nations. We learn that the least likely person can change a nation.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Which word comes closer to describing your personality - skeptical or gullible?
- You’re stuck waiting in a doctor’s office for two hours. Do you read magazines, watch TV, play a game, listen to a podcast, surf social media, or nap in the chair?
- What’s one of your pet peeves?

REVIEW

Together, open your Bibles and read from **Judges 6 & 7**.

Share your favourite points from the sermon. What spoke to you? Share a phrase or moment that you related to the most, or a question you may have from the weekend.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Judges 6

- Why do you think God was patient with Gideon's requests for signs and "fleeces"?
- What "signs" of God's working have you seen in your life?
- What is the hardest thing about doing God's will for you?
- In one moment Gideon is so sure of God, the next moment he is unsure. How are you like Gideon in this regard?
- If you stop and listen, are you able to hear God say as he did to Gideon "I will be with you"? How do you know God is with you?
- What happens when we step out in faith despite our fears?

Judges 7

- How does this story relate to you and the work you do?
- Why is it important that God gets the credit for winning our battles?
- Where are you feeling outnumbered and need God to show up?
- How do you feel about letting God fight your battles for you? What does that look like?
- How do these verses apply to your life? What will you do about it?

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Share what God is doing in your life and spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests.

SESSION 3

God doesn't turn up at all

You've done everything you know to do. You've waited, you've asked, you've initiated, you've waited some more and nothing is changing. Nothing is getting better. Bad has just gone to worse — and worst is right around the corner. You can't help but ask why? What you've done to deserve this. If God cares — and you thought He did — why on earth isn't He turning up?

In Ruth we read the story of a widowed lady who meets a stranger that turns her world upside down. We ask: if God is out of sight are we out of mind? Let's dig in and see!

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Were you an only child, the oldest, the youngest, or somewhere in the middle? What did you like about it?
- Have you ever worked on a farm? What was it like?
- When have you felt quite alone in the world, or most cared for? Explain.

REVIEW

Together, open your Bibles and read the book of **Ruth**.

Share your favourite points from the sermon. What spoke to you? Share a phrase or moment that you related to the most, or a question you may have from the weekend.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When have you experienced silence from God?
- How do you press on when you don't know how God is moving?

SESSION 4

God turns life upside down

Maybe for you, church has always been part of your rhythm. Oh, you may have missed a weekend here or there, sure ... but who hasn't? Surely your commitment is obvious, your devotion clear. You sing. You give. You say all the right things. You even volunteer. Surely it adds up to something? Surely your efforts merit some credit, some reward? What could you possibly have missed when God turns life upside down?

Isaiah has a vision and sees God for who He is. Isaiah is struck with awe and even terror in seeing the Lord sitting up His throne, high and lifted up. In a moment of reflection, Isaiah saw himself in the light of the God's infinite holiness. God turns his life upside down.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What volunteer organizations have you been a part of? Why did you join?
- What is one of your favourite deserts?

REVIEW

Together, open your Bibles and read **from Isaiah 6:1-10 and Isaiah 58:6-7**.

Share your favourite points from the sermon. What spoke to you? Share a phrase or moment that you related to the most, or a question you may have from the weekend.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Isaiah was clearly overwhelmed by God's presence. Read Hebrews 12:25-29, how does this help us understand Isaiah's reaction to being in God's presence?



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