

**YOU
DON'T
HAVE
WHAT IT
TAKES**



A BIG IDEA DISCUSSION GUIDE



SESSION 1 – You Can't Be Good Enough

SESSION 2 – You Can't Please Everyone

SESSION 3 – You Can't Handle It All

SESSION 4 – You Can't Control the Future

KEYSTONE

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DISCUSSION GUIDE INTRODUCTION

The BIG Idea Group Study Guide

This study guide and commentary are designed to help you facilitate a discussion on the BIG Idea. Please use it as a guide to your discussion while bringing in personal experiences and examples to enhance the discussion. The commentary is another tool to help you by giving additional thoughts and insights to the study guide questions.

Tips for Leading a Discussion:

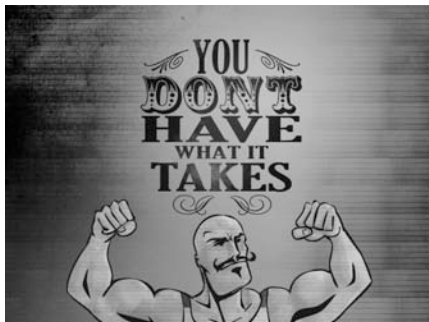
Here are a few things to help you facilitate a good group discussion and help others feel comfortable, be able to share, and take next steps spiritually.

It's a good idea to have the group recap the message so that everyone is thinking about the topic. This will help a person who may have missed the service to get their head in the game.

Start by making sure everyone gets a chance to introduce themselves. The first question of the study is designed to be "safe" so that everyone can answer without feeling uncomfortable.

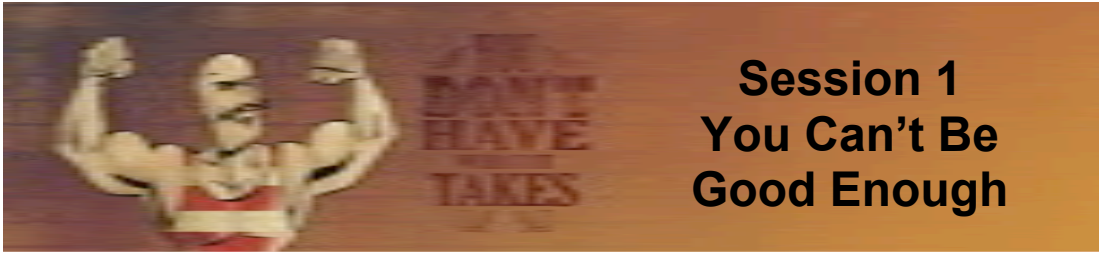
Total overall participation in a group/team decreases with increasing group/team size. As the group continues to meet, it is very helpful to distribute the responsibility of reading verses, bringing a snack, praying. This will help to duplicate leadership so that as your group grows, a new group can form.

In any group, people will be on different spiritual, social, and conversational levels. Be sure to encourage everyone to speak when appropriate. In private, you may have to encourage the "talkers" to allow others to speak. Don't be afraid of silence and pauses in dialogue.



Series Introduction

It is easy to feel like we don't have what it takes to be successful, to get everything accomplished, to make everyone happy, or even to be worthy of love. The facts are that we don't have what it takes. It is a relief to know that God is more than enough to make up for our shortcomings. The bottom line is that with God in our lives, we do have what it takes.



Big Idea

Trusting in God's unconditional love for us brings comfort in the areas we feel unworthy.

Icebreaker

What is something that you worked hard on or had high expectations for that didn't work out the way you planned?

Introduction

Trying to juggle everything life throws at you can feel like a three-ring circus. No matter how hard you try, you'll never be able to handle it on your own.

At first glance, this seems like bad news. When we begin to look at things with a God perspective we can be relieved knowing that we don't have to measure up. If we can learn to live with the peace of not having to measure up, we can be free to better serve God, not out of an effort to gain His approval, but instead, out of the approval that we have through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

1. Whose approval do you seek most?

Read Galatians 2:19-20 (The Message)

Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me.

2. Why do we sometimes feel like we need to earn God's approval?

3. What are some things that you have done or that you have seen people do in order to try to earn God's approval?

Jesus is the best example of living for God. Some might think this is an obvious statement but Jesus gave up His deity, His "God status", when He came to set the ultimate example. Jesus regularly stated that He was dependent on God. Most of the time, we find ourselves doing things of our own accord and wondering why we fall short. In our daily lives, we can live with the freedom that we don't have to measure up so that we can focus on living for God.

4. Are there areas in your life where you have been trying to make yourself feel more acceptable to God?

Read Hebrews 9:15 (The Message)

Through the Spirit, Christ offered himself as an unblemished sacrifice, freeing us from all those dead-end efforts to make ourselves respectable, so that we can live all out for God.

5. How does this verse give you confidence for your daily life?

6. Does this confidence come from trusting yourself or from trusting God?

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 (The Message)

Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!

7. How would you define grace?

God's riches at Christ's expense (G.R.A.C.E) is a good way to remember and live out the idea that we can't be good enough on our own. Anytime someone says that salvation comes with some sort of works is not Biblical. Bradford Hoel in his book *Grace by Faith* says, "Its grace plus nothing!" We don't clean up before taking a shower, although some of us do clean before the cleaning folks come to our house. A lot of people get the salvation piece right but then struggle to live it out. We understand on an intellectual level that Christ died for our sins but then we shift to trying to live out a life that deserves it by our deeds. If we can get to a place where we live knowing we can't be good enough and let God work through us, we can do anything.

Read Galatians 2:21 (CEV)

I don't turn my back on God's undeserved kindness. If we can be acceptable to God by obeying the Law, it was useless for Christ to die.

8. How have you seen grace play out in your life or how do you see it playing out in your future?

What's Next?

Pray for God to help you understand His gift and accept His unconditional love for you in every area of your life. In your personal time this week, read Galatians 2:17-21 and ask God to give you confidence through His unconditional love. Think through who you can share the message of God's grace with this week.



“What’s Next?” Follow Up

Take a moment to revisit last week’s “What’s Next?” to see and hear how people have grown or have been challenged.

Big Idea

Choose to find validation and acceptance in God rather than people.

Icebreaker

What is one of the craziest/funniest things you have done to win someone else’s approval?

Introduction

Most of us know intellectually that you can’t please everyone, but we still spend a lot of time trying to please others. We derive our self worth from the approval of others which distracts us from our relationship with God because it means we love praise from people more than from God.

This isn’t a new problem by any means. In the book of John there is a story about a time when Jesus had just finished explaining how some of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah were actually about Him. The story goes on to tell of the people’s reaction.

Read John 12:42-43 (The Message)

On the other hand, a considerable number from the ranks of the leaders did believe. But because of the Pharisees, they didn't come out in the open with it. They were afraid of getting kicked out of the meeting place. When push came to shove they cared more for human approval than for God's glory.

1. Often our desire to please others is the fear of _____. What are some of these fears?

2. Who in your life do you most often feel the pressure to please? Why?
3. Which one of these 4 indications of being a people pleaser do you most often struggle with?
- You take criticism very personally.
 - You have an extraordinary fear of rejection.
 - You have a hard time expressing your true feelings because you are afraid of hurting others feelings.
 - You have a hard time saying no.

Here are some examples of what the Bible says about who we should aim to please:

“Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant” Galatians 1:10 (NLT)

“Be assured that when we speak to you we’re not after crowd approval—only God approval.” 1 Thessalonians 2:4 (The Message)

“Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you’ll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you’re serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being a follower of Jesus doesn’t cover up bad work.” Colossians 3:23 (The Message)

The fear of human opinion disables; trusting in God protects you from that. Proverbs 29:25 (The Message)

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.” Proverbs 29:25 (NIV)

People-pleasing is basically the fear of people, the fear of what they are going to do or say about you. Proverbs 29:25 uses the word *mowqesh* (mo-kashe') for snare. The literal translation is a noose that's used for animals, or a hook in the nose.

Pleasing God is the best antidote for people pleasing. If people in your life are bigger than God, it can become a problem. We need to honor God because when we have His approval, we will have all we need. But we can't do this on our own. It takes faith in God to believe that He is enough.

4. How can being obsessed with pleasing people become a “noose” or a “snare” in someone's life? How would you best describe what people-pleasing can do to someone?

5. Share about a time when you could really sense God being pleased with you. Describe how this makes you feel.

God is pleased with us more often than we realize. However, it is easy to feel the pressure of “measuring up.” God is pleased with us but when we don't recognize it we seek approval elsewhere.

The Bible tells us that God delights in His people. We have to remember that our performance is not the reason he delights in us.

*Those who fear GOD get GOD's attention; they can depend on his strength.
Psalm 147:11(The Message)*

The LORD is pleased with his people, and he gives victory to those who are humble. Psalm 149:4 (CEV)

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. John 3:16-17 (The Message)

He led me to a place of safety; he rescued me because he delights in me. Psalm 18:19 (NLT)

*He stood me up on a wide-open field; I stood there saved—surprised to be loved!
Psalm 18:19 (The Message)*

6. What can we do to “recognize” and even “enjoy” God’s love and delight in us?

7. How do you see God’s love and delight in others?

What’s Next

Spend some intentional prayer time right now (and then for at least 10 minutes each day this week) focused on these two things:

- Reading the above verses and really “accepting” that God delights in you. Thank Him for doing that, and for the times you’ve seen/felt that.
- Think about those you feel the most pressure to please—turn that desire over to God, and even spend time praying for those people (since praying for others often changes our attitudes towards them).



“What’s Next?” Follow Up

Take a moment to revisit last week’s “What’s Next?” to see and hear how people have grown or have been challenged.

Big Idea

God’s plan is for us to surrender our busyness and burdens to Him.

Icebreaker

If you were granted an extra 20 hours each week to devote to just one activity, what would it be? (Besides work or sleep—too easy of an answer)

Introduction

There are four basic areas of our lives we neglect when we are too busy: Physical, Emotional, Relational, and Spiritual. We are going to focus on the spiritual. A lot of us believe in God, but we really don’t make time for Him. The culture we live in lends itself to busyness with two income families, kid’s sports, exercise, etc. In fact, some of us are so used to being busy all the time that when we rest we feel guilty. We tell ourselves that we are not too busy and we justify that busyness by believing we can handle it all. Our busyness is often at the expense of our spiritual lives.

1. What are the signs in your life that you are too busy or feeling overwhelmed?

2. Where are you on the “busyness” scale right now?
 - a. Things are real slow right now and I actually feel relaxed.
 - b. I’m right at the perfect amount of busyness for me.
 - c. I’m feeling a little too busy and overwhelmed, where I know I need to change something.
 - d. I am really burned out right now and desperately need something to change.

We could be missing out on walking with God if we are too busy: too burdened to have a relationship with Him. Many of us struggle in our relationship with God because we don't have time or make time for Him. We say that God is important in our lives, but our actions and schedules communicate otherwise. Just like other relationships can't thrive if we don't put time into them (like marriage and parenting and friendships), we cannot expect our relationship with God to grow if we don't make it a priority.

3. Describe a time when you were too busy for a relationship and that relationship suffered?

4. Describe a time when you were able to give your full attention to a relationship and what were the results?

God's intention is not for us to be constantly overwhelmed, over burdened and stressed out. God wants to give us rest. Many of us are going faster and doing more than Christ would want us to do alone. God wants us to be connected with Him so that we go at His pace, and He wants us to share our burdens with Him.

God wants us to make a radical change in our lives and stop what we are doing to try and fix everything ourselves and instead turn to Him.

5. Describe a time when you really needed help but you didn't ask for it or didn't accept it. Why?

6. Why is it sometimes difficult for us to ask for help from God?

Check out just a few of the many promises God offers us in our burdens and busyness:

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

So be content with who you are, and don't put on airs. God's strong hand is on you; he'll promote you at the right time. Live carefree before God; he is most careful with you. 1 Peter 5:6-7 (The Message)

God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven! Matthew 5:3 (CEV)

You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. Matthew 5:3 (The Message)

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light. Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Philippians 4:6-7 (The Message)

7. What burdens are you carrying right now that are heavy and exhausting?

8. Which of these above promises from God resonates the most with you right now?

God has also provided an incredible and tangible help for every one of us no matter our burden, one we often over-look: community. In fact, carrying each other's burdens is Biblical:

You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand. Galatians 6:2 (CEV)

9. Share a time when you got to help carry someone else's burdens, or a time when others helped carry yours.

10. Who is one person in your life right now that could greatly benefit from you helping carry their burden? What would that look like?

What's Next?

What ways this week will you ask God for help with your busyness?

What is one tangible way this week that you can allow someone else to help carry one of your burdens?



“What’s Next?” Follow Up

Take a moment to revisit last week’s “What’s Next?” to see and hear how people have grown or have been challenged.

Big Idea

We experience peace with the future by trusting God’s plan.

Icebreaker

As a kid, what thing did you most hope would exist in “the future” (by the year 2010)? Does it? What thing do you most hope gets invented in the next 30 years (by 2040)?

Introduction

When we think about “the future,” it can bring all sorts of emotions. There is often a sense of great anticipation and excitement about both the short-term and long-term future: a holiday, a big vacation, getting married, becoming a parent, moving into adulthood, taking the next career step, etc. But for many of us, one of the strongest emotions that comes with thinking about the future is anxiety. We can do very little to control the future, and its human nature to fear the unknown or things out of our control.

1. What do the people around you seem to worry about the most concerning their future?

2. Which of these “future fears” do you feel the most right now in your life?
 - a. Fear of someone close to you dying
 - b. Fear of not being financially secure in your retirement
 - c. Fear of nuclear war or some worldwide disaster
 - d. Fear of being abandoned by spouse/close friends/family
 - e. Fear of getting too far into debt or bankruptcy
 - f. Other (name it!)

3. In what ways do you try to control the future?

4. What “future fear” did you used to have that you no longer struggle with and why?

Read Matthew 6:23-24 (The Message)

What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

5. Which of the following truths from the teaching of Jesus do you find the most difficult to believe?
- That God already knows all of my needs
 - That God really will provide for all of my needs, even daily
 - That I need to keep my primary focus on God's Kingdom
 - That Jesus acknowledges that I will face troubles in this life (rather than promising it will be trouble-free)
 - That I need to be more focused on today and less caught-up in the future

There are several times in the Gospels when people actually brought their "future fears" to Jesus.

After Jesus crossed over by boat, a large crowd met him at the seaside. One of the meeting-place leaders named Jairus came. When he saw Jesus, he fell to his knees, beside himself as he begged, "My dear daughter is at death's door. Come and lay hands on her so she will get well and live." Jesus went with him, the whole crowd tagging along, pushing and jostling him.

While he was still talking, some people came from the leader's house and told him, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher any more?"

Jesus overheard what they were talking about and said to the leader, "Don't listen to them; just trust me."

He permitted no one to go in with him except Peter, James, and John. They entered the leader's house and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and neighbors bringing in casseroles. Jesus was abrupt: "Why all this busybody grief and gossip? This child isn't dead; she's sleeping." Provoked to sarcasm, they told him he didn't know what he was talking about.

But when he had sent them all out, he took the child's father and mother, along with his companions, and entered the child's room. He clasped the girl's hand and said, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, get up." At that, she was up and walking around! This girl was twelve years of age. They, of course, were all beside themselves with joy. He gave them strict orders that no one was to know what had taken place in that room. Then he said, "Give her something to eat." Mark 5:21-24, 35-43 (The Message)

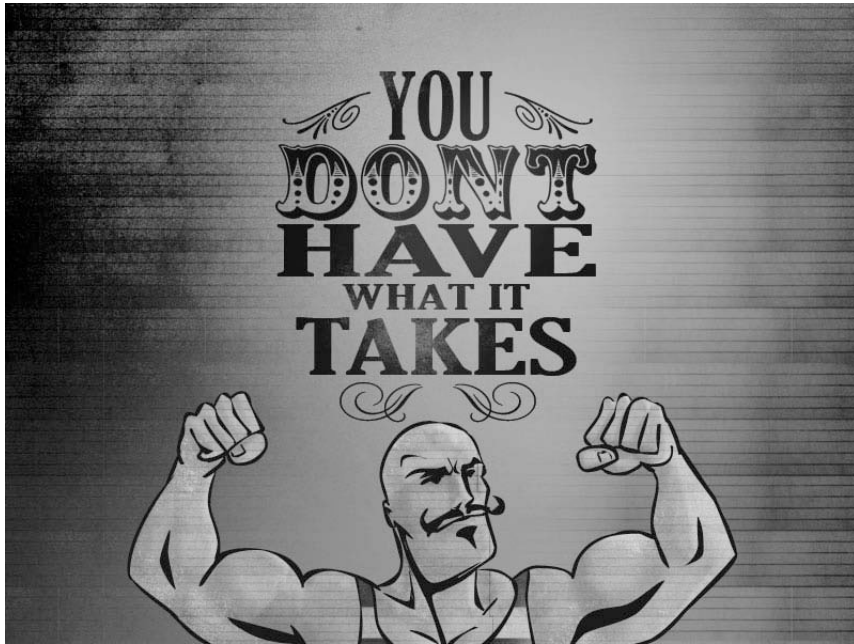
9. Which of these versions of this definition of faith speaks to you the most?

What's Next?

Which of these practical steps to increase your faith in God about the future, do you most need to practice this week?

- a. Spend more time recognizing and remembering God's provision in your past.
- b. Learn and understand more about what God actually promises to do in your life (through studying the Bible, learning it from others).
- c. Bring your fears to God by spending real time praying to Him about them.
- d. Exercise your faith by taking a risk, by stepping out in faith to do something that scares you and requires you to trust God.
- e. Other

"Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life." Philipians 4:7 (The Message)



LEADER COMMENTARY



SESSION 1 – You Can't Be Good Enough

1. Answers will vary but may include our parents, spouses, kids, friends, ourselves, and God.
2. It's difficult to answer this question. It may be because we are so used to trying to please people that we don't know how to act in relationship with God. We may also feel so overwhelmed with the free gift God has given us that we want to do something to earn it.
3. Church going in the most obvious answer but others may include giving, serving, etc. These things are good and part of a healthy relationship but only when we realize we don't need to do them to earn God's approval and that doing them only brings us closer to God because we want to be closer to God.
4. There are many areas where we try to measure up. We try to clean up our act with our language, actions, commitment to prayer and reading the bible.
5. There can be a sense of freedom when we don't have to prove anything to God. God gave His son while we were still sinners without expectations.
6. The obvious answer is trusting God but help people to dig into this and not just answer "correctly."
7. Answers will vary. Words like forgiveness, a gift, and undeserved may be used to describe grace.
8. Answers will vary.

SESSION 2 – You Can't Please Everyone

1. Some examples may include acceptance, being an outcast, having people mad at you, etc.
2. Answers will vary.
3. Answers will vary but be sure to get the why along with the answer.
4. People-pleasing is a never ending battle. You can never get out of the trap. Just like a referee, every call will only please half the people. People pleasing can wear you down and make you angry spiteful person, it can cause you to be overcommitted and lose character, and it can cause you to live for everyone else but God.
5. The point of this question is to help other recognize that God IS pleased with them, and to learn how to see that and even celebrate that. Be careful with people's answers though that they don't end up being entirely performance-based, like "I did something really spiritual or was really successful at something, so God was more pleased with me." Help people see that it's ultimately because of His grace, and that our part is about obedience and faithfulness, not success or being "spiritual."
6. A response to God's grace would be communicating our excitement in celebration. We can share our peace and enjoyment with others and share our newfound freedom with them.
7. Answers will vary.

SESSION 3 – You Can't Handle It All

1. Encourage people to really self-examine to see if they can notice the signs. Some examples might include: having trouble sleeping, not eating well, getting short-tempered, getting more emotional more quickly, losing perspective/motivation, etc.
2. Encourage everyone to choose one of the options, to explain why they feel that way. If they're overwhelmed, try to get at the real cause of their feelings. If they are feeling relaxed, celebrate it and let them know to NOT feel guilty about it! We need seasons of that, and God gives us that sometimes.
3. Encourage people to share their story for this. The point is not to beat people up, but to help them learn from it in retrospect—why they wouldn't accept, why that's not healthy, how they'd handle it differently next time.

4. Answer will vary. Help draw the connection between giving full attention to God to experience such positive results.
5. Answers will vary but encourage everyone to answer.
6. Again, there are a variety of reasons, but most of the time it comes down to pride. We are raised in a very independent, individualistic culture that emphasizes self-reliance, and frowns upon being dependent on others. It often takes a lot of humility and even vulnerability to let others help carry our burdens.
7. Encourage everyone to answer. For those who have none right now, celebrate that and affirm that sometimes God gives us those seasons of “peace”! People might open up and share something deep, emotional, and personal—let that happen, let the Spirit work through that moment. And make sure the group is encouraging and helpful in it.
8. Challenge everyone to answer—this is all about taking “words from the Bible” and teaching people to really accept them as true promises of God that are meant to actually affect our everyday lives.
9. Answers will vary. If there are no examples talk through some times when people could have used somebody to come alongside them.
10. Encourage people to be tangible/practical about this—maybe it’s hanging out with someone for coffee or dinner, maybe having them pray daily for you or with you, maybe having them take the kids so you can have a break, etc.

SESSION 4 – You Can’t Control the Future

1. Try to help people learn to be observant about culture and their lives in noticing this stuff. Answers can vary, but some things we often see around us: people hoarding money obsessively, people being obsessed with fear about their health, people spending excessively on “security” systems to protect everything they own, people getting plastic surgery because of the fear of looking older and un-attractive, etc.
2. Encourage everyone to pick at least one of these options, and have them explain why. Make sure nobody feels embarrassed about any option they choose—these are all OK fears to have. If somebody says “none of them,” push them to name a different one.
3. Answers will vary.
4. The point here is to help people see that they have overcome fears in the past, and to help them learn from how they did this, to see if there’s anything that might be able to apply again.
5. Answers will vary but encourage everybody to answer.
6. If we spend more time dwelling on/pondering/meditating on God’s faithfulness to us in the past, that can greatly help increase our faith and peace about the future. This seemed to be the key for the authors of the Psalms, as many of them begin overwhelmed and fearful, then the psalmist remembers what God has done in the past, and ends up rejoicing and praising Him. This is possible for us too. So how do we do it?
7. It’s one thing to pray about something and still walk away full of fear and doubt about it. It’s another thing to ask God and then really trust that He’ll actually do something about it, and let His peace fill us as a result (see James 1 and Philippians 4).
8. Challenge everyone to answer—this is the real life-application question. Sometimes God is calling us to take a risk and step out in faith, or to wait and trust Him, or to just make the decision on something, or to have the conversation with someone, etc.
9. Encourage people again to not let this just be Bible-speak, but real promises that they believe and live by. Have them explain why their translation of choice speaks most powerfully to them.

Coming October 25



We are all held hostage by something...what is your captor? Maybe it's fear, pride, lust, or even jealousy. The good news is that our ransom has been paid in full. Join us for Hostage and discover how to truly break free, once and for all, from the ties that bind.