

Life Trails Small Group Study Guide

Lesson 29 – Wilderness Guide 2

From Sunday, May 8

Note:

Realizing that a discussion specifically on parenting may not be overly helpful in each small group, most of the questions deal with broader applications of the text and message. And the end of the study guide you will find additional questions about parenting and family life if you wish to use them.

Warm Up:

Ask every person in your group to share a time when they got a big surprise (hopefully, something good – but doesn't have to be). Talk a little bit about what the experience was like.

Discuss

- Do you enjoy surprises or not – and why?
- Can you think of a time when God surprised you with something? What was that like?

Debrief:

Truth only transforms us as we take action. A small group discussion can help us think more clearly, but we also need to challenge each other to take steps of faith. Taking time to debrief reminds us that faith needs to be lived out every day.

From April 24

Sin and self.

1. What is an area in your life where sin keeps tripping you up? How can you take steps to confront and overcome it using God's power? What would that look like?
2. Ask God to make you more aware of the "self" issues in your life – and then deal with them. How can you trust God more in your life?

From May 1

- What is the faith step that you need to take, but you have been hesitating? First ask yourself why, but then identify a step that you can take to get you moving in the right direction. Then share with your group what your plan is, and check back on everyone's progress the next time you meet.

From the message:

- Have you had experiences where you have hoped and prayed for something, but thus far you have not received it? How does this affect your faith? What do you think God is up to?
- Do you sometimes view your faith as transactional (if I do “A,” then God will reward me with “B”)? What is wrong with this type of thinking?
- What are some of your responsibilities in life? Do you ever feel overwhelmed or inadequate? What might be some ways that you could address those feelings?

From the passage: *Luke 1:5-25; 57-66*

- We are told that God both saw (vs. 6) and heard (vs. 13) Elizabeth and Zechariah – but it is doubtful that they felt seen and heard? Have you ever had the experience of feeling unnoticed by God? What was it like? How did you navigate it?
- The Hebrew conveys the idea that when the angel told Zechariah that his prayer had been heard, he was talking about a specific prayer. While we assume it is the prayer from the past for a son, it could also represent his current prayer as priest that day – which would have included asking for the Messiah to come. (So John the Baptist could have been the answer to either prayer.) How can we line up our prayers with the greater purposes of God?
- Two songs of praise are recorded in this chapter; one by Mary and one by Zechariah. How can we be more deliberate about praising God, especially when he blesses us in unusual and unexpected ways?

For discussion:

- What does it mean to live a righteous life?
- Have you had the experience of really wanting / hoping / believing God for something – only to be disappointed? How did it affect your faith? How did you get through it?
- John the Baptist’s purpose was very clear – he was to announce the coming of Christ. If someone were to ask you your purpose in life, what would you say?
- What are some ways that we can make God our top priority in life? What are some of the things that sometimes take His place?

- What are you praying for right now that thus far has not happened? Is it something you can share – and that everyone can pray about?
- Where have you seen God's grace in your life? Have you set up any reminders – or how could you do so?

Activation:

In the message there were eight suggestions shared about parenting in the wilderness, but most of them (with a little imagination) could be applied to simply living in the wilderness. Which one hits home to you – and what can you do to live it?

Questions in regards to parenting:

- What might be some ways that we can help our kids embrace the idea that God has a plan/purpose for their lives?
- What are (or should be) some of the things that you are praying for your children?
- Do you ever feel inadequate for the task? How can you find some encouragement, or even strength?
- In what ways is God a part of your parenting?
- Parenting can feel like the wilderness. What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced or are facing? How did you navigate them? Or how do you plan to?
- How can we support each other in this role of parenting?