

Walking with God

Group Study Guide

Some Guidance for Small Group Facilitators

Welcome to the Walking with God Group Study Guide.

How to Use This Tool

First of all, this is for you. This is for your heart and your walk with God. I have created a few other Walking with God Personal Study Guides. This is for you to begin walking with a small group of people through Walking with God. I'll ask you questions designed to take your group deeper, but ultimately it is God who will lead you further into relationship with himself and with others. He is waiting to be with you. He is waiting to move His people closer to His heart.

Hang on to this truth; the Enemy will try to steal this time from you, to distract you. You may hear lies such as, *God talks to other people, but not to me* or *I'm just not spiritual enough for God to speak to me*. Bind these lies in Christ's name and move forward into time with the Lover of Your Soul and with community.

What I recommend would be to have each person in the group read the entry in Walking with God that corresponds with the one pointed to in the group study guide that follows. Then follow the entry with this guide to further their contemplation and assist them with questions, ideas, and needs to bring to God before you meet. If you are a facilitator, you should do the same and that way everyone will be primed and ready to go before each appointed time to meet regularly as a group.

We've divided the study into sections for each entry. This guide corresponds with eight entries in Walking with God. They are indicated by title and page number. I think you'll find the format is both simple to navigate and spacious enough to follow where God might lead your group each time you gather....

Here is a framework that I would recommend you following to facilitate each time your group meets:

Begin with Prayer

First, begin each session in prayer. People in your group will be entering in on any given day with a variety of issues and concerns pulling at their hearts and

minds. That is why it is so important to begin with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide and reign in your time together and allow a pause of silence, in each prayer time, for each person in your group to (quietly to themselves) release their burdens and concerns to God and draw their hearts into the present moment.

Read the Entry / Watch the Video

Once you have prayed, take a few minutes to read the entry that corresponds with the study guide material. After that, watch the corresponding video. (Note: as the group facilitator, it will help prepare you to preview the corresponding video and entry before your group meets.)

Walk through the Study Guide Material

Slow Down

The intention for this section is to designate a set amount of time following reading and watching the video to sit together quietly and reflect on what God might be saying or surfacing. It might be two minute or ten minutes, your call. They might sit in silence or write down their thoughts. It might be helpful to put some background music on for this time. Note: Film soundtracks like *A River Runs through It* or *The Mission*. At the beginning, it may help people feel freer to rest in God by emphasizing that this is *their* time with God and to not worry about others in the group or that they will need to impress others with what God is saying to them. There is no pressure during this time, only a loving God waiting to be with them. At the close of this time, it might be great to ask the group what surfaced during the time.

Reflection Questions

Choose one or more of the questions to use as a catalyst for discussion.

Practice

This is a designated time for your small group to give it a try. Take a risk. Practice hearing His voice and believing and seeing Him speaking in your lives.

Walking With God

Where does your group go from here? The intention of this time is for each person to leave the gathering with some clear action steps. What is God asking of each person? Where does He want to take them? How is he going to guide them in the time between now and the next time you gather

together in hearing His voice? At the beginning of the next session, you may want to take a few minutes to hear from the group about what they experienced since then through these steps and their time with God.

Close In Prayer

It is very likely that when your time concludes it will often feel like you are just getting started. It is important to communicate that all of this is a process, a journey, a Walk with God. Encourage your group to stay in what God has surfaced personally until you meet again.

Introduction

Our reality

We have a lot to sort through in this life that we're living.

When you think of all the relationships and the opportunities, all of the decisions, all of the disasters that we want to avoid and we basically have two choices: we can figure it out on your own, try and master some principles, apply the tools, *or* we can learn to walk with God...as in hear His voice, follow Him intimately.

Really now, if you knew that you had the opportunity to draw near to the kindest and the smartest, the most generous and the most loving person in this world, wouldn't it make sense to become their close friend as opposed to slogging through on your own? In the end, I'd much rather have God. **Learning to live intimately with God, to hear his voice, to develop a conversational friendship with Him is the most important mission of our lives.**

Offer for Intimacy

So what I've done with walking with God is I've sort of opened my journals from a year of my own experience of learning to hear the voice of God. I've sort of created a tutorial, if you will, on how to develop a conversational intimacy with Jesus Christ, how to discern what he's up to, how to follow him through all that we have to sort through in our lives. Jesus Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice, they follow me and I lead them into the life that I have for them". It's that life that we're after and getting there requires that we learn to develop a conversational intimacy with God.

Session One – Does God Still Speak?

Read *Does God Still Speak (Prelude, pg.8)* and watch corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

The Bible is not a book of exceptions; it's a book of examples of what it looks like to walk with God. Over and over again we read examples of times when God speaks to his people. We are his sheep. Jesus says that his sheep hear his voice.

Slow Down

Use this time to quiet yourself and let yourself rest in his presence. This is time for you to be with God, to rest. You do not need to achieve anything, there is no pressure. You do not need to take care of other people right now. This is time for you and each person in your group to have personal intimacy with God. He loves you. He longs for this time with you. Let the stillness come. If you want, feel free to ask God if there is anything he wants to say to you. Perhaps you will feel, hear, or experience a stirring, a leading, his voice in your heart. Perhaps not. Don't be discouraged if this is simply a time for rest. He wants that for you, too.

Reflection Questions

You just spent some time individually resting and stilling yourself. You may or may not have asked God to speak. Do you have concerns or what are you afraid of as you consider listening to/learning to hear the voice of God?

Has the practice of listening to God been a part of your spiritual experience? If not, what would make you hesitant or concerned to accept the fact that God does speak to his people?

Have there been any Scriptures or experiences that could help you hold onto the truth that God does speak to his people?

Practice

As a group, spend some time in prayer practicing listening to God. You may want to first start with a time of gratitude, thanking God, putting words to your belief that God does speak or asking for faith to believe he wants to speak to you. Then, allow for time in prayer where each person is actively listening and asking God if he has anything to say to them, to the group, or to any person in the group. Sometimes a single minute of silence can feel like ten; it may initially feel awkward. There may be pressure to break the silence. Don't. Let the silence linger for five to fifteen minutes. Afterwards, your group will discuss what surfaced for each person.

Walking With God

Before your next session, give yourself as many “slow down” moments as possible. Ideally, it would be great to have a daily 10 minute time where you still yourself—no distractions—and bring yourself to God. Like you just did at the beginning of this session, let it be a time to rest in him, to communicate with him, and wait expectantly for his leading. Your group will love to hear how this time has been for you the next time you meet. If it helps, write down what you experienced.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Two – Learning to Listen

Read and watch *Learning to Listen* (Summer, page 28) corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

We seek God for counsel, for comfort, for direction. We want to hear his voice. As we learn to listen to God three things are helpful to keep in mind: start with small questions, quiet yourself, and surrender. It's only when I'm yielded that I hear the voice of God. I have to be in a posture where I'm willing to hear whatever it is God wants to say.

Slow Down

This is again, time for you and God. You may practice what was just taught in the video or you may need this time to rest and enjoy the stillness of being in his presence. Take this time to commune and connect with God.

Reflection Questions

How did your "slow down" moments go? Did God speak to you on anything? Are you struggling with anything?

What is a small question you could bring to God?

Practice

Sit quietly, surrendering your heart, your will. Then, ask your small question. If you don't hear or sense a direct answer, try on the different answers and see if the spirit of God confirms or guides you deeper. Another practice you could try is asking on behalf of someone else in the group. Perhaps after some time spent on personal questions, you might try asking if God has anything to say to you about anyone else in the group. He may want to encourage or edify a person in your group through you. Afterwards, your group will discuss what surfaced for each person.

Walking with God

Before your next session, continue with your slow down times. Allow yourself time to surrender and be open to what he has to say. Ask him if there is anything he wants to tell you. Ask the smaller questions and wait for God to speak. Remember he may not. And this is not to be a concern. For reasons unknown to us, he doesn't always speak. It's not a crisis. He still loves you dearly. You may also want to ask on behalf of people in your group or others you love. If it helps, write down what you experienced.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Three – Do It Now

Read and watch *Do It Now* (Summer, page 53) corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

Yes, God wants you to have intimacy with him, life to the fullest, BUT there is a thief who wants to kill, steal, and destroy all this. You are going to have to deal with the Enemy. You can't find the life Jesus offers unless you hold the same assumptions he does about life, about reality, about the word, about humanity or hearing from God and its availability or about the Enemy and how you have to deal with the Enemy. In fact, James 4:7 tells us to submit and resist.

Slow Down

This is again, time for you and God. You may practice what was just taught in the video or you may need this time to rest and enjoy the stillness of being in his presence. Take this time to commune and connect with God. If you are finding it difficult to focus or feel distracted or accused, like something is coming against you, try asking God, "What is coming against me and this time with you?"

Reflection Questions

Have you had times when you have sought God through prayer and found it extremely difficult to tune in to or be present to him? Have you felt distracted? Despair? Confusion? Accusation? What did you assume was going on? What did you do?

How might you respond differently when this happens to you again?

Practice

From the previous questions, your group should be aware of how each other is or has struggled against the Enemy's attempts to thwart your walk with God. You may need to specifically ask more details before beginning to intercede for one another. By now your heart is hopefully more familiar and ready to use this time to communicate with God.

The group may want to start by asking God what he wants you to pray about. Listen. Discuss. Additionally, you may use this time to pray for each other against warfare. You may want to start with something like:

Father we come under your authority now and we give our lives, our bodies, our souls, our spirits to Jesus Christ. We cover ourselves again with the blood of Jesus and we bring the kingdom of God and the authority of Jesus Christ over us. We bring the fullness of the power of his cross and the power of his shed blood against our enemies in the name of Jesus Christ. We cut this off (name it—or you may want to pause here and ask, what is coming against us? Teach me how to pray against this and pause to listen) and we bring the work of Christ against this enemy and we bind it in the name and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Walking with God

Continue in your slow down times with God. Pay special attention to any feelings, thoughts, or situations that attempt to interrupt or steal from your communion with Christ. If they seem to be from the Enemy, practice praying something like what is written above. If it helps, write down what you experienced.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Four– On Elk and Elisha

Read *On Elk and Elisha* (Summer, p. 70) and watch corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

“Elisha was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” James 5:16-18

Slow Down

Ahhhh. It is time for you and God again. As always, there is no pressure to hear from God. Simply let yourself come to him, into his presence. Feel free to ask him a question, to ask him how you are doing, or if there is anything he wants to speak to you. Try beginning this time by taking it captive in the authority of Jesus Christ. Is there any warfare you need to deal with first?

Reflection Questions

Is there something that you have been struggling with that you’ve prayed over, but still just feels stuck? Or that nothing is changing?

What have you believed about this unanswered prayer?

Practice

Based on what people have shared about their current struggles, use this time to pray for one another and commit to praying for one another during your slow down times.

Perhaps you'll start to pray for someone's struggle with something like this:

*Father, what are you saying about this? Is there a reason for this stuck feeling? Or are we not praying what you want? Give us understanding. Pause. Listen. And then let the group offer what they've heard before you start to pray; this gives the prayer a little direction. So oftentimes if I'll stop and ask God, *how should I pray?*, he redirects what I was going to pray. You know, sometimes I just want to pray comfort and mercy and God says: *No, what I want you to do is pray directly against their enemy.* Okay, so we do that. Now, something else about praying like Elijah, don't just pray once. How many times did it take Elijah to get it done in the story of the monsoon? Seven times, seven times. Okay? So again, so many Christian prayers look like, *Lord, pour your blessing and your comfort on Nancy and we just bring the favor of God on her life today and peace in Jesus' name.* That's good, that's good. You're just getting warmed up. Do to again. Several of you do it. Stay at it for a little while and you'll begin to see those prayers begin to have some effect.*

Walking with God

Before your next session, continue to pray like Elisha, for someone's struggle in your group during your times with God. Check in with that person to see if his/her situation has changed.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Five– God?

Read *God? (Fall, p. 83)* and watch corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

Now as a group this is where you need to be very kind and very tender with one another's hearts because what we're talking about here is those places of deep struggle where we may have made agreements with our enemy, where we may have left our hearts without a shepherd and sort of unprotected through a difficult time and where we may have insisted on understanding and clarity and *God, why didn't you speak?* and our hearts are still tender there. Okay? But we need to go back; you can't just leave these things unattended.

Slow Down

This is your time with God. Your heart may be well primed to already ask him about those places—recent or distant—that need his healing. You may feel nervous or anxious about going back to painful memories. You may need to just rest in him. Talk to him about how you feel. Ask him for help. Receive his grace and mercy.

Reflection Questions

What have been painful experience(s) in your life?

Did you make any agreements with the Enemy about God? About yourself?

Practice

Take time right now as a group to privately and individually seek the Lord. You may want to move around to have more space and let each person have some privacy. Ask him individually, to reveal to you any places where you have made agreements.

Next, ask God to reveal to you the agreements that you may have made during that time--agreements like *I blew it*, agreements like *it was all my fault*. You know, *when I lost my Father to alcoholism as a boy and I experienced abandonment, it was a deep time of trauma for me. I didn't know how to process that. So I made a very deep agreement that day, I said it's my fault, my fault, I did something wrong, and then that just sat there for 20 years until Jesus said time to deal with that.*

Okay. So we make these agreements and sometimes God has to be the one to show us because we don't know so we listen and we ask God privately, quietly each one of us about you or about life or about myself in this struggle. And then you need to break through. It's not enough just to understand that we do this, that we leave our hearts without a shepherd, you need to break the agreements. Okay? So you pray and you renounce it. For me it went like this: *I reject the agreement that losing my Father was my fault. I break that agreement. It wasn't my fault and I give my heart in this place to Jesus Christ for your love and your comfort. I break this in Jesus' name.*

Afterwards, people in the group may request additional prayer for areas that have been stirred and may want the prayer support of those in the group.

Walking with God

Before your next session, during your time with God if there are further agreements that come to mind, renounce them in the name of Jesus. You may ask, *Lord, are there any other vows I have made?*

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Six– The Next Day

Read *The Next Day* (Fall, p. 97) and watch corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

We are vulnerable as we navigate through this dangerous world where we know we have an enemy and we know the world is full of indifference and seduction and our hearts you see are not yet healed fully and we are not yet as holy as we might be. And so we are vulnerable especially when we refuse to deal with the deeper things of our lives. What I'm suggesting is that when the disruption comes you're welcoming when suddenly there are tears and you don't know why or you listen to a song on the radio or someone tells you a story and it provokes things in you, go with it.

Slow Down

This is your time with God. Rest in him. Let things surface as they may. What is on your heart? What do you need to ask or say to God?

Reflection Questions

Individually, spend some time with God asking him about these questions.

Where is God disrupting me?

Where are things not going well? What is this stirring in me? What is this provoking? What is surfacing?

Where is the truth of God in this? What has God spoken that would be helpful? What are truths that you can hold onto in the midst of the disruption?

Practice

As a group, you may want to share what has surfaced for each person. Then, you can pray for one another and listen for anything the Lord wants to communicate.

Walking with God

At some point, during one of your times with God, ask the Lord to reveal more to you about your disruption. Perhaps you need to ask him what to do? How to work on it? Who to talk to? Ask him if there is more he wants to tell you.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Seven– Dreams

Read *Dreams* (Fall, p. 104) and watch corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

God talks to us in numerous ways—dreams, situations, or a check in our spirit. Okay. Let me give you one of the most helpful little questions you can hold on to just about every day as you walk with God and it goes like this: *Lord, what's that about?* I mean, as I said, I found myself asking that all the time. You know, as different things are taking place that I don't understand or I don't know how to interpret or, you know, I'm quick to interpret and my interpretation may be wrong and I'm jumping to conclusions. I often ask, *Lord, what's that about?*

Slow Down

This is again, time for you and God. You may practice what was just taught in the video or you may need this time to rest and enjoy the stillness of being in his presence. Take this time to commune and connect with God.

Reflection Questions

Have there been any situations, conversations, events, or dreams lately that have left you wondering either *why did that happen* or *what is that about?*

Practice

Using everything you have learned thus far, as a group, enter into time with God. You may want to use the previous question as something to bring to God individually or on behalf of each other.

Walking with God

During your times with God throughout the day, as events or situations or dreams from the night come to memory, ask God, "*what was that about?*" and wait for his response. You may want to write down his response.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Session Eight– Hawks

Read *Hawks (Fall, pg. 117)* and watch corresponding video at walkingwithgod.net.

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1). God is speaking to us all the time. Sometimes he uses words. Other times he uses dreams. And he loves to use the ever-changing, unfolding beauty, drama, and presence of this creation.

Slow Down

Rest in God. Is anything surfacing? Is there anything either of you need to communicate? Take your time under his authority. Are there any questions you want to ask?

Reflection Questions

Now, the conversational listening hearing may still be more of a growing hope, but it may not be the primary way that you hear from God, so how is he speaking, have you noticed?

What's God brought into your life recently that kind of caught your attention or was so reassuring or was something that was so exciting and intriguing you just knew God was in it? Was it the song, the movie, the hawk, the semi truck going by? Perhaps it was the hundred different ways, the scripture just jumped off the page to you. How is God speaking to you personally, uniquely?

Practice

Take time to share about each other's experiences and answers to the above questions. Turn to God with praise for the ways he speaks. What else does your group want to bring to God?

Walking with God

During your times with God, ask him to give you eyes to see and ears to hear the ways he is speaking to you.

End your group time in prayer for each other, blessing one another as you continue to learn to hear from God.

Where to go from here...

Whew! It has been eight solid sessions of practicing and journeying together to hear from God. How has it been for you? What do you long for? What has been a delightful surprise? This is a great time to assess where you have been and what you hope for. I hope you continue to practice, to spend time with him. May you know how deeply he loves and delights in you!

If you have any feedback on what your experience was like or how we might improve this in the future, we welcome your suggestions at mystory@ransomedheart.com.