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Hey small group leaders! In our current series, “**Navigate**”, we’re discovering that in an age of endless information, true wisdom is not always available. This series is about discernment: learning to filter voices, making wise decisions, and aligning with God’s truth. Through passages about the life of Solomon, we’ll explore how to think critically, seek wisdom, and renew our minds in a noisy world. When we cultivate discernment, we don’t just survive—we thrive in the amazing life God has for us!

Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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**“He that takes truth for his guide, and duty for his end,
may safely trust to God’s providence to lead him aright.”**
[Blaise Pascal]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!

- **Passage Summary**
 - Writing from prison, Paul illustrates contentment with a difficult providence in his life. When we are somewhere we didn’t expect or plan to be, what then? God’s purposes remain in play and are not threatened in any way, shape, or form.
- **Philippians Ch. 1 Commentary & What Is Divine Providence?**
 - Use the commentary and short article for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share before you gather.
- **Blessed Inconvenience**
 - This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.

Share about a time when something unplanned turned into a memorable moment (i.e. ran into a friend you hadn’t seen for a long time; made a wrong turn while driving and found a cool spot).

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

“Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I’m not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd’s crook makes me feel secure.”
[Psalm 23:4, The Message]

BIG IDEA || Leader Note Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.

How do we navigate the unexpected, unplanned, and unprayed for? We actively fight unbelief and embrace the beautiful providence of God!

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

Have 2-3 people read portions aloud Philippians 1:12-30.

1. In the sermon we heard, *"We must confront or be alert for a spirit of unbelief."* Where in your life are you currently experiencing a spirit of unbelief? This is a good opportunity to go first!
2. In v. 12-14, Paul speaks about his imprisonment. How does he view his circumstances? What does this reveal about his perspective on suffering? *Paul views his imprisonment as an opportunity for the gospel to advance. Rather than focusing on his hardship, he sees it as part of God's providence, leading to the spread of the gospel and encouraging other believers to preach boldly.*
3. Providence is the way God arranges and allows things in order to achieve His purposes. What is a recent example of God's providence that you are thankful for?
4. Paul's imprisonment was not part of his plan, yet he trusted God's purpose. How can we live out this mindset when facing unexpected challenges? *Answers will vary: we can choose to see difficulties as opportunities for growth and avenues for God to work through them. Trusting in God's providence helps them navigate life's detours with faith and perseverance.*
5. Suffering can lead to greater boldness in faith). How have you seen or experienced suffering resulting in your spiritual growth?
6. Paul maintained joy and contentment in suffering. How can joy be cultivated even when circumstances are difficult? *Answers will vary: joy is cultivated through prayer, gratitude, focusing on God's promises, and maintaining an eternal perspective. Surrounding oneself with a community of believers for encouragement also helps.*
7. Paul had an unwavering commitment to the gospel despite opposition. How can we stand firm in our faith, especially in a culture that may be hostile to it? *Answers will vary: by staying grounded in Scripture, engaging in prayer, and finding support in Christian community, believers can remain courageous and steadfast when facing challenges for their faith.*
8. Paul's perspective transformed his imprisonment into an opportunity. What difficult situation in your life might God be using for His purposes? This is a good opportunity to go first!
9. Paul experienced an internal conflict between wanting to be with Christ and continuing his ministry on earth. How do you balance the desire for heaven with the responsibilities of this life? *Christians can maintain this balance by living with a sense of purpose and service while longing for eternal life with Christ. This mindset brings urgency to fulfill God's calling on earth.*
10. We should constantly be on guard for our tendency to respond to suffering with unbelief or self-pity. How have you battled this in the past and seen God's goodness? What practical step(s) can you take to develop a mindset like Paul's during times of hardship? *Answers will vary: steps*

include prayer, recalling God's faithfulness, seeking wise counsel, and focusing on God's Word. Intentionally choosing gratitude also combats negativity.

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || **Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Paul demonstrates how to embrace God's providence in unexpected and challenging circumstances. His unwavering commitment to the gospel and to see suffering as purposeful serves as a powerful example for us today. *As we add providence to our perspective and recognize that God is always working in our circumstances and in people,* here are a few questions to consider ...

- Will you choose to **look up** more than you look out?
- By faith, will you **connect** God's providences to His promises?
- How can you **relocate** your joy and **seek** a fresh sense of God daily?
- How might God be **putting you** in position for people to see the inexplicable?

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question.

PRAYER FOCUS || **Leader Note** *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. You can pray for one another as well as the prompts below!*

Trusting God's Providence in the Unexpected

- Life often brings moments that are unexpected, unplanned, and even unprayed for. In those times, it's easy to let unbelief and fear take root. As followers of Christ, we are called to actively fight unbelief and embrace the beautiful providence of God. His sovereign hand is always at work, weaving even the surprises and hardships into His perfect plan.
- Let's ask God to strengthen our trust in His providence and surrender our anxieties, knowing He is faithful and good. May we see His presence in every twist and turn, believing that nothing is beyond His loving care.