



Discussion Guide Life Tools — Part 1 LEADER GUIDE

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Hey small group leaders! We began our NEW sermon series, “[Life Tools](#)”, this week! In this series we’ll explore practical tools that make following Jesus simpler in everyday life. These aren’t rules or formulas—they’re real-life habits and insights that made a difference in someone’s walk with Christ. Growing in faith doesn’t have to be complicated—it just takes the right life tools!

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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**“It is not a matter of trying, but of trusting;
not of struggling, but of resting in Him.”**
[A.W. Tozer]

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**
 - God directs Israel onto the path of self-despair so they can learn the power, peace, joy, and freedom of total dependence upon Him. God’s intentional actions set up a situation where Israel had no choice but to begrudgingly trust Him for their salvation. Despite their preference for Egypt, God kept them on the path toward His promise.
- **Exodus 14-15 Devotional**
 - Use the short video (or blog) for background and encouragement. This would be a good resource to share before you gather.
- **The Lord Will Fight**
 - 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.*

What is one thing you are really looking forward to about the summer? (i.e. being outside longer, family get together, more cookouts, eating popsicles)

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!

“I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.”
[Psalm 16:8]

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

When we accept the gift of despair, we can move forward in dependence on 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!

There are a few passages for the discussion today. First, have someone read aloud Exodus 13:17-18.

1. Why did God lead the Israelites through the wilderness instead of the shorter, easier route? *God led them that way to protect them from war and because He knew they weren't ready. It was a deliberate act to prevent fear and retreat. God's path often prioritizes spiritual formation over efficiency.*
2. In the sermon we heard, *"Apparently, quicker and shorter does not mean better."* Share about a time that you chose the quicker or shorter way, but it was not what God wanted for you. *This is a good opportunity to go first!*

Now have someone read aloud Exodus 14:10-14.

3. What does this passage reveal about the Israelites' mindset when they saw Pharaoh's army approaching? *They were terrified, despairing, and longing for Egypt, even preferring slavery to death. Their response shows how fear can distort our memory and make bondage seem safer than an unfamiliar freedom.*
4. How did Moses respond to their fear? What did he instruct them to do? *Moses called them to be still and trust in the Lord, reminding them that God would fight for them. He redirects them from self-reliance to divine dependence.*

Finally, have someone read aloud Exodus 15:1-2 and 11.

5. How does this describe the Israelites' response after their deliverance? *Their despair turned to worship and awe. They praised God's power, strength, and uniqueness. It demonstrates how despair, when met by God's deliverance, can lead to profound worship.*
6. What are some common ways we as Christians try to "fix" despair through self-effort instead of turning to God? *Answers will vary: through distraction, control, overthinking, people-pleasing, or seeking comfort from worldly things. These methods delay transformation by avoiding dependence.*
7. How can despair be a merciful gift from God? *It is a mercy because it exposes our limitations, clears false hopes, and positions us to receive God's supernatural help, which we'd ignore if we were comfortable.*
8. What are your default reactions when life feels like it's moving backward? What would dependence look like in those moments? *Answers will vary: many of us respond with anxiety, withdrawal, control, or frustration. Dependence means turning to prayer, waiting, and seeking God's promises instead of panic or striving.*
9. In the sermon we heard, *"We would rather live in the comfort of the familiar than live by the promises of faith."* How is God inviting you to live by a promise of faith in this season of life?

10. How can we support one another when we feel trapped between “Egypt and the sea”, stuck with no easy way forward? *Answers will vary: honest confession, prayer, encouragement, and reminding each other of God’s past faithfulness. Community becomes a place where despair is met with hope.*

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.*

God sometimes leads us into despair—not to destroy us, but to free us from self-reliance. Like Israel, we often want comfort or control, *but God wants our hearts.* Self-despair isn’t the end—it’s a gate. On the other side is joy, freedom, and worship. *As you consider your next step, here are two questions to reflect on:* 1) What is one area of your life where you are relying more on yourself than on God? 2) How would your perspective change if you saw a current hardship as a gate to deeper grace?

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. The possible next steps of faith below are not for discussion, but simply a resource for your group members.

Possible Next Steps of Faith

1. Write a short prayer of surrender this week, naming one area of struggle where you're ready to move from self-effort to trust and dependence.
2. Share with a friend (or the group) one past moment of despair where God showed up. Create a memorial of His faithfulness.

PRAYER FOCUS || **Leader Note** *Be intentional about saving at least 5-7 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. THIS SUMMER, we will share creative and unique ways for your group to pray together. Give these a try or simply pray for one another’s personal requests!*

I Praise You Because ...

Praise is not simply a thank you, but an acknowledgement of who God is. We must constantly and regularly remind ourselves that God is awesome and glorious. When we do that, our hearts are molded to a way of living and loving. Let’s end our time together by praising God for who He is by completing the sentence, “God, I praise you because ...” Here are a few examples:

- “I praise you because you are able, and you can do anything, anytime.”
- “I praise you because you are the creator, the maker of the heavens and the earth.”

Once everyone has had an opportunity to praise God, close with a short prayer.