SMALL GROUP BIBLE DISCUSSION

FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 5, 2014

TOPIC: FOR THE JOY…

Lesson in a Line:
Godly sacrifice leads to great joy and fulfillment.

Points to Make:

- In our minds, the word sacrifice usually has negative connotations – something to be avoided if at all possible!
- But what, really, is 'sacrifice'?
- For our purposes, we will use the Oxford definition: "an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy".
- This brings a change in perception. Sacrifice is no longer a bad thing; it becomes a means to a better end.
- When we contemplate Isaiah's famous prophesy of Christ's passion, we see a detailed account of pain and suffering that is almost unthinkable:

"His appearance was marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14b).

- Chapter 53 tells us He was despised, smitten of God, afflicted, pierced, crushed, scourged, cut off and in anguish.
- Jesus gave up something of tremendous value – His own life – to gain something He saw as more important and worthy to possess – our lives!

… for the joy set before Him [He] endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2b).

- So as we enter this Year of Sacrifice, we need to insert the adjective "Joyful" before the word "Sacrifice" so we always remember that our sacrifices are not pointless or frivolous, but godly, worthwhile, fulfilling, of eternal value and joy-giving.
- As a mother sacrifices her sleep to feed her child; as parents sacrifice their own relationship-building time to teach, train and develop their children's character; our sacrifice is for a worthy end – it is not wasted time.
- As we sacrifice our desire for a bigger house today in favour of investing for a more secure retirement tomorrow, we exhibit wisdom and foresight that leads to a better future.
- As we sacrifice an extra hour of sleep to pray for the salvation of our family, friends and neighbours, we give up something good in the hope of something better.
- For what do you stay up late at night or get up early in the morning?
- What is it you are willing to pay a lot of money to own, or give money to support?
- Who are the people you teach, train and love at the expense of your own leisure?
- What are the hard things you do and practice that give you great joy?

Key Scriptures:
Isaiah 53; Hebrews 12:1-3

- What are the things you willingly give up for the sake of providing for others?
- If the answers to these questions only revolve around things that pertain to our present life on Earth, we are missing a great opportunity.
- We need to be engaged in sacrificial living that will have an eternal impact on our families, our church, our communities, our schools, our workplaces and our world.
- No doubt there are things we have told ourselves we really want to do, things that will require sacrifice, hard things that will stretch us and build our spiritual muscles.
- It is now time for us to get off the couch, put on our overalls, pick up our tools and get to work!
- Tools like prayer, fasting and Bible study
- Tools like teaching, mentoring, giving, helping others
- Driving, visiting, shopping, cooking, cleaning, providing company and a listening ear.
- We do not do these things in an aimless manner, but we work and sacrifice for the *Joy* that is set before us.

Discussion Tools

- How can others benefit from your sacrificial giving of material goods, time, or self?
- Discuss biblical examples of those who selflessly sacrificed much. What resulted?
- What are some things of great personal value that would be extremely difficult to sacrifice? Why?
- Why do our sacrifices sometimes feel like wasted time or effort? How can we overcome these negative feelings?
- Identify one area in which you will strive to make a sacrifice this week.

PRAYER TIME

Lord, help me to remember the purpose and joy of sacrificial giving.

Ice-breaker: Talk about a purchase that you made sometime in your life that you regret.

NOTES