

Bible Study Outline & Leader's Guide: A God Who Knows and Cares

This study is designed for a 60-minute small group session to delve deeper into Pastor Jeremy's sermon "A God Who Knows and Cares," focusing on Isaiah 53 and its relevance to our lives.

Study Objectives:

- To understand the prophecy of Isaiah 53 concerning the suffering Messiah.
- To explore the key themes of Jesus' identification with human suffering and God's care for us in our pain.
- To foster open discussion and personal reflection on how the sermon's message applies to individual experiences of suffering and hardship.
- To identify practical ways to rely on God's presence and care in daily life.

Suggested Time Breakdown (60 minutes):

- **Welcome & Icebreaker (10 minutes):**
 - Begin with a brief welcome and allow members to share a highlight from their week or something they are grateful for.
 - **Icebreaker Question:** Share a time when you felt truly understood and cared for by someone. What impact did that have on you?
- **Sermon Review & Scripture Reading (10 minutes):**
 - Ask group members for their initial takeaways or anything that stood out to them from the sermon.
 - Read together the key Scripture passage from the sermon: Isaiah 53:1-12.
 - Briefly review the context of the passage as presented in the sermon (the promise after the Fall, the Jewish and Greek expectations of the Messiah).
- **Discussion (25 minutes):**
 - Facilitate discussion using the points and questions below. Encourage everyone to share, but do not pressure anyone who is not ready to speak. Create a safe and non-judgmental environment. As the leader, be prepared to share briefly from your own experience if appropriate, but keep the focus on group participation. Guide the conversation back to the text and sermon themes if it wanders.
- **Application (10 minutes):**
 - Transition from discussion to personal application with focused questions.
- **Closing Prayer (5 minutes):**
 - End the session with prayer, inviting members to share requests related to the study's themes.

Discussion Points & Questions:

1. The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53):

- The sermon highlights Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah, emphasizing that He "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him", was "despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering and familiar with pain", and was led "like a lamb to the slaughter".
- **Questions:**
 - What aspects of Isaiah's description of the Suffering Servant challenged your preconceived ideas about the Messiah or God?
 - How does the sermon's explanation of Jesus fulfilling this prophecy, despite not meeting the world's expectations of power or appearance, deepen your understanding of His sacrifice?
 - The sermon mentions that Jesus' suffering included the pain of separation from the Father. How does this specific aspect of His suffering speak to you?

2. Jesus Understands Suffering:

- The sermon emphasizes that Jesus "understands suffering" and our pain because "He's been there". It states that Jesus "doesn't observe our lives from a distance as one who's detached from all of our pain".
- **Questions:**
 - In what ways does knowing that Jesus understands your pain bring you comfort or hope in difficult times?
 - The sermon challenges the idea that faith means we will never suffer. How can we reconcile the reality of suffering in our lives with the truth of God's care and presence?
 - The sermon shares a personal story of experiencing rejection and feeling misunderstood. How can Jesus' own experience of rejection and being held in low esteem help us navigate similar feelings?

3. A God Who Knows and Cares:

- A central theme is that God "sees, he knows, he actually cares" about our plight and stands with us in our pain, grief, and challenges.
- **Questions:**
 - How does the message that God knows and cares impact your perspective when you are facing difficulties or unanswered questions?
 - The "Footprints Poem" shared at the end illustrates God carrying us in our lowest moments. How have you experienced God carrying you through a difficult season in your life?
 - What does it mean for you practically to live with the assurance that Jesus walks with you today, even when life is hard?

Key Scripture Passages for Study and Discussion:

- Isaiah 53:1-12
- Genesis 3:15 (briefly mentioned in the sermon regarding the promise of a deliverer)

Guidance for the Leader:

- **Preparation:** Read Isaiah 53:1-12 and the sermon transcript thoroughly before the study. Familiarize yourself with the key themes and the pastor's main points. Pray for your group members and for the Holy Spirit's guidance during the study.
- **Facilitation:**
 - Start and end on time.
 - Encourage participation from everyone, but do not force anyone to share.
 - Listen actively and affirm contributions.
 - Be comfortable with silence, allowing space for reflection.
 - Handle different viewpoints respectfully, guiding the discussion back to the Scripture and sermon's message.
 - Share your own reflections or experiences appropriately, but keep it brief and focused on supporting the discussion.
- **Handling Different Viewpoints:** Acknowledge and validate different perspectives without letting the conversation derail. Gently steer the group back to the biblical text and the sermon's themes. If a point is outside the scope of the study, you can suggest discussing it further after the session or at another time.
- **Ensuring Focus:** Keep the discussion centered on Isaiah 53 and the sermon's message about God's knowledge, care, and Jesus' identification with suffering. Use the provided questions as a guide, but feel free to ask follow-up questions based on the group's responses.

Emphasis on Practical Application:

After discussing the theological points, guide the group towards practical application. Use questions like:

- What is one specific way the message of "A God Who Knows and Cares" challenges or encourages you in your current life situation?
- How can remembering that Jesus understands your suffering change your perspective or response the next time you face a challenge?
- What is one concrete step you can take this week to live out the truth that Jesus walks with you today? (Examples: spending time in prayer, reading Scripture, reaching out to a trusted friend, serving someone in need).

Closing Prayer:

Gather the group for a time of prayer. You can open by thanking God for His understanding, care, and presence in our lives, as highlighted in the sermon. Invite group members to share any prayer requests related to personal struggles, finding hope in suffering, or seeking God's guidance. Pray for the requests shared, reinforcing the truth that God knows and cares. You can conclude with a prayer for strength and faith to trust in God's presence through all of life's circumstances.

This outline and guide provide a framework; feel free to adapt it to the specific needs and dynamics of your small group.