

GUTSY FAITH

LEADER'S GUIDE

The *Gutsy Faith Leader's Guide* is a FREE resource created for Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City for use in conjunction with *Gutsy Faith: Hard Conversations with God*. The *Leader's Guide* gives small-group leaders the tools they need to turn *Gutsy Faith* into a six-week study that will drive participants into a deeper level of communication with God.

This and other downloadable leader's guides for similar books are available through the following Web sites:

www.beaconhillbooks.com,
www.barefootministries.com, and
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This leader's guide is designed to take groups through *Gutsy Faith* in a six-week span of time. Each week participants will be asked to read three chapters in the book and to come back prepared to discuss what they read, their thoughts on the chapters, and to share what God is teaching them. Each week has the following sections to help the leader in his or her preparations.

- **CHAPTER SYNOPSES**

A brief overview of what each chapter covered for quick reference when leading the group.

- **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Enough discussion questions covering all three chapters from the week to take the group into a thorough, deep discussion of the topics at hand.

- **WEEKLY CHALLENGE**

Based on the discussion and chapters for the week, this section challenges the group members to dig further into the concepts throughout the week beyond just the daily readings and Scripture passages.

Additionally, free journal pages to accompany *Gutsy Faith: Hard Conversations with God* can be found at www.beaconhillbooks.com. These journal pages provide additional writing space that the book does not have for recording thoughts, questions, and insights and are perfect for those who will be using *Gutsy Faith* for small-group discussions.

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

- Raising the question of what it means to have a gutsy faith.
- It is never God's desire to say no to His children. On the contrary, it is God's desire to answer yes to our requests.
- The Father *always* gave Jesus everything He asked for.

1. Have you ever faced a life-decision that you struggled to know the right choice to make?
 - How did you go about making the right decision?
 - Did you seek to know God's will for your decision?
 - How did you know when you'd come across the right answer?
 - Was the outcome of your decision the right one? How did you confirm this?
2. After reading the first chapter, how did you define what it meant to have a gutsy faith?
3. Share some of the characteristics that you think are necessary for having a gutsy faith.
 - Share one characteristic that you really need to work on and tell why you think you need to work on that.
4. In chapter 2 we consider the idea that it's not really God's desire to say no to His people.
 - How hard is it for you to accept that concept?
 - Have you ever prayed for something and received a no answer?
 - Have you ever gotten angry with God because He answered no?
 - If so, share that experience with the group.
 - How have you resolved that situation with God?
5. Why is it that we get frustrated with God when He doesn't answer our prayers as we would like Him to answer them?
6. In chapter 3, share your answer to the question, "Do you think it is possible for God to have answered Jesus' prayers with a no?"
7. Chapter 3 points to the relationship between Jesus and God the Father for why Jesus always received a yes to His prayer requests.

- Intimacy with the Father is almost a scary thing. Why do you think that is?
- Why is it that we allow our society to drive us away from God?
- What safeguards are you prepared to implement in order to become more intimate with Christ?



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- In your personal time with God this week, spend time contemplating and praying about the one critical item that challenged you from this week's three chapters.
- Ask a family member, friend, or confidant to join you in praying that God would open up your eyes during this six-week small-group study to more of what God is calling you to tackle for His kingdom.
- For this week, choose one activity that you do on a daily basis that you can sacrifice and redeem that time by reading the Psalms.

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

- God truly desires to reveal himself to us. It is not God's desire to deny us that insight. Jesus promises all we have to do is ask for it, with guts, and we will receive.
- When God calls us to do something, if we ask for it to be done, believing in faith, then it actually will happen.
- We want to have the guts, the faith for God to use us to move mountains. But if we don't develop our prayer life, it will never happen

1. Chapter 4 begins to bring some light into how most of us pray the wrong way.
 - When you pray, how often do you pray the kind of prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray?
 - If you pray like that all the time, how did you learn to pray like that?
 - If you don't, what kind of prayers do you more often pray?
 - What does that mean to you to ask God to reveal His will to you?
 - Share your thoughts regarding the concept that God wants us to come before Him boldly, without fear?
 - Does that kind of freedom with God make you uncomfortable or more comfortable? Why?
2. Chapter 5 had as one of its thought questions, "Do you think God still calls His people to command seas to be parted, mountains to be moved, or any other such miracles?" Why do you believe the way you do?
 - Share your answer to those questions with the group.
3. We all have mountains that block our way, or fig trees that deceive us.
 - What are some of the mountains that block the way of the Church in today's culture?
 - What are some of the societal and social mountains we face? the economic mountains?
 - What are some of the deceptive fig trees that need to be removed?

4. How do you respond to the idea that if God calls us to do something, if we ask for it believing in faith, it will be done?
 - Is that hard to believe?
 - Why or why not?
5. If we were all honest, most of us would have to say we have a mediocre to poor prayer life.
 - Why do you think that's the case?
 - Do you fear prayer at times? Why?
6. Many of the mountains and fig trees we've already discussed are the same issues that war against our prayer lives.
 - What methods do you use to ensure you are in prayer often?
 - Are they effective?
 - If not, why do you think that's the case?
7. Consider for a moment that whatever God might be calling you to do in the Kingdom, and your ability to accomplish it, might be directly related to your prayer life.
 - Based on your prayer life, how prepared are you to accomplish your calling?
 - If you're not prepared, what concrete things can you do to bolster your prayer life?



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- If you keep a journal, diary, or even a blog, write about your prayer life and what you need to do, if anything, to improve it.
- Solicit responses from family, friends, and even coworkers for their insights on prayer and how to improve one's prayer life.
- For this week, choose one activity you do daily that you can sacrifice and whose time you can redeem in prayer.
- Surf the Internet for blogs, articles, or other media containing the insights of others on prayer. What do others have to say about prayer? Are there common themes throughout? What misconceptions do others have about prayer?

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

- Jesus promises that when we do what we've been told by the Holy Spirit to do in His name, it will be granted because we are doing what God wants us to do, not necessarily what we want to do.
- Asking the right questions is the key to getting a yes from God all the time. The more we recognize the voice of the Spirit in our lives, the easier it becomes to always ask the right questions.
- Even when we may not hear the voice of the Spirit clearly, we can still ask the right questions, assuming we can truly accept what God's will is for us; even when it differs from what we want, willing acceptance of God's will for us is critical for a gutsy faith.

1. Describe what it sounds like to you to hear the Holy Spirit talking to you?
 - Do you have problems hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit? If so, why do you think that is the case?
2. People often close their prayer times saying, "In Jesus' name. Amen." But if our prayer requests have not been conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit as what we should ask for, should we ask for things in Jesus' name? Why or why not?
 - Is it wrong for us to pray that way, even if our prayer isn't self-motivated?
 - If we don't always know what the Holy Spirit wants us to pray, what then should we pray about, and how should we close our prayer times?
3. Chapter 8 introduces the idea that the reason why our prayer requests are denied is because we ask the wrong questions. If that's the case, is it possible to always know what the right questions are?
4. Consider the last time you prayed for something and God's answer was no. Do you now know what the right question you should have been asking was? Share the circumstances around this situation and what happened as a result.

5. Like Paul, we all have some sort of thorn in the flesh.
 - Have you ever prayed for God to remove your thorn?
 - How has God's grace overlooking your thorn shaped your spiritual life?
 - Or, do you think your thorn is too big for grace to overlook?
6. Sometimes we just need to beat on the chest of God because of our thorns. Share a time when you've done just that. What was God's reaction?
7. Chapter 9 talks about praying for God's will to be done. When you really think of it, isn't it sometimes scary to pray for God's will to be done? Why or why not?
8. Share something you're praying for that you do not know whether it's God's will for you to be praying about.
 - What are you asking God to do in this situation?
 - What if it doesn't turn out as you're praying? Will you be mad at God?
9. Have you ever gotten mad at God? If so, for what reasons?



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- This week, be vulnerable with a close family member, friend, or confidant. Share with him or her what you're learning this week about how we should ask for things in prayer and then ask him or her to join with you in prayer about something specific you've been praying for.

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

- Without effective prayer—including significant amounts of silence—we will have no faith and our Christianity is fruitless. We will never get to the place where we are always asking the right questions if we never allow God His time to tell us what we need to be asking for.
- If loving God with all of our being and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves is not where we are at spiritually, the primary prayer we should have when we present our requests to Him should be that God will change our hearts to match up with what He's said in His Word.
- God is looking for those who will allow Him to prove just how powerful He actually is. He desperately seeks those who will free Him to display His perfected power during times of weakness.

1. This week's chapters are some of the most difficult to deal with because the material they cover is very difficult to employ in our lives or to deal with. In chapter 10 we dealt with the issue of silence in our prayer times.
 - Ask how many of the group really incorporate a large amount of silence into their prayer time?
 - How much time is a lot? 5 minutes? 10 minutes? 15 minutes?
2. Read the paraphrased Lord's Prayer from chapter 10 and then do a 2-minute time of silence, not praying, just listening. At the end of the time, ask these questions:
 - Did that seem like a long time?
 - If so, why do you think that is the case?
 - How many of you tried incorporating more silence into your time with God this past week after reading chapter 10? Did you find that a difficult thing to do? Why?
 - Silence does take guts, doesn't it?
3. What about the idea of loving God with everything?
 - Our society tends to minimize the level to which we are to love God? Why is that?
 - Why is it so difficult to love God with everything that exists within us?

4. What about loving others as we love ourselves?
 - Unless they are our family or loved ones, it's a very difficult thing to love others as we love ourselves, right? Why?
 - Let's lump those who have hurt us and anger us into the "enemies" category. How hard is it to love our enemies then?
 - Why is it that God wants us to love others the same as we love ourselves?

5. Have you ever wrestled with the issues of why God allows atrocities or natural disasters such as the events of 9/11 or the tsunami of 2005 to occur?
 - What has been your conclusion?
 - What is your response when people make the statement regarding tragic events that "God meant it for a purpose"? How do you feel about that statement?
 - Does God cause the tragic events? Or does God bring healing and future purpose from the tragedies?
 - If God exists and is not constrained by the flow of time as it says in chapter 12, why do you think God doesn't just fix all the problems, tragedies, and pains humanity faces? Wouldn't that show His great compassion, love, and benevolence toward humanity?

6. In light of the discussions we've had for the past couple of weeks, and what we've discussed today, how do we reconcile those times when we feel clearly that God is calling us to accomplish something for His kingdom and then it fails?



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- Ask friends and coworkers to answer this question: If God is a compassionate and loving God, and He has the ability to prevent certain tragedies from occurring, why does He allow them to happen?
- In your quiet times this week, begin incorporating more silence into your prayer times. Consider setting a timer on yourself to ensure you don't give up too quickly on your listening time.

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

- Like Samuel, our job is to say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,” and then simply obey. God will work out the details if we truly will obey after He reveals His will.
- Sometimes discerning God’s voice from other influences can be difficult. During those times we should always compare what we think is God’s will to:
 1. His written Word
 2. the historical interpretation of Scripture
 3. logical rationale
 4. experiential understanding
- God calls us to put away the debauchery of the world and embrace the serenity of the Almighty. If we will not do that, we will always struggle to hear God speaking to us.

1. Chapter 13 points out that God’s gift to us of His Spirit living in us was so that we could clearly hear Him speaking to us.
 - Share the biggest hurdle you face in hearing the Spirit speak in your life.
 - Share the biggest hurdle you face regarding obedience to what the Spirit calls you to do.
2. What does God’s Spirit sound like to you when He speaks?
3. Have you ever heard the Spirit speak in your life so clearly that it was as if His words were audible?
 - Describe the circumstances surrounding that situation.
 - What was your reaction to what He said or what He called you to do?
4. Share what processes you have traditionally gone through in verifying what God might be calling you to do.
 - Has that been a successful process for you?
 - Do you use any of the processes outlined in chapter 14?
5. How did you answer the question from chapter 15 that said, “What do you think it means to delight yourself in the Lord?”

6. Do you think the answers to our woes of life could be as simple as truly delighting ourselves in the Lord?
- What are the life obstacles that keep us from that?
 - What do you think would be the results in your life if you spent more time simply delighting in the presence of God?



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- This week challenge the group to go on a media diet. Try to give up all television, radio, MP3 players, and Internet influences. Redeem a good bit of that time listening to God's voice and delighting in His presence.

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

- Time with God, in His Word, always takes guts. It takes guts to obey what He communicates to us during daily quiet times. Very few of us are willing to meditate on the Word day and night, as Joshua did, praying and then obeying.
- We are not called to work out everything. We are simply called to be obedient. It is God's job to work out what is impossible.
- Release what fears you may have, what insecurities might be holding you back from a gutsy moving forward with God's plan for your life.

1. This past week you were challenged to go on a media diet and redeem some of that time praying and listening to God.
 - Share some from your experience. Was it a difficult thing to do?
 - If you feel comfortable in sharing this, what kind of things did God tell you during your time with Him?
2. God told Joshua to spend time meditating on the Word day and night. As you were on your media diet this week, you had more time to do just that.
 - Did you take advantage of your media diet time to meditate on God's Word?
 - Do you see yourself in the same class as Joshua or Mother Teresa? Why or why not?
 - Do you think it's possible for God to use you and your gifts in the same way as that of Joshua or Mother Teresa?
3. Can you recall a time when you felt called to do something, and yet you didn't act upon it because you thought the goal was too big, the details too complicated for you to achieve?
 - Did you let the details stop you?
 - If not, what was the result of your moving forward, trusting God?
4. We spent this last week focusing on the dreams God may have placed on our hearts.
 - What are some of your dreams?
 - What are the barriers you'd need to overcome in order to achieve those dreams?

- Do you think your dream is a God-given dream? If so, what measures are you taking to be faithful to God moving you to achieve that dream?
 - What barriers must God overcome in order for that dream to come true?
5. Having gone through these six weeks, do you feel more assured that God might actually achieve those things for the Kingdom through you?
- What one item that you've learned during this time together has helped you the most?
 - Do you find yourself doing a better job of asking more of the right questions during your prayer now?
 - Do you find yourself more effectively hearing God's Spirit speaking to you as well?
6. As a result of this six-week study, is there one thing that you feel clearly that God has called you to do? What is it?



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- Commit to God to be obedient to His dream for your life, and to allow Him to work out the details to fulfill that dream.
- If you have a journal, diary, or a blog, write about your experience and what God has called you to do for the Kingdom.