

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

excerpted from

living
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crazy love

**AN INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK FOR
INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL-GROUP STUDY**

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LIVING CRAZY LOVE
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NOTES FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

A small group working through this material will benefit from having a discussion leader. If that's you, don't worry—you don't need to have all the answers. This workbook is discussion driven, not teacher driven. All you need is the willingness to prepare each week, guide the discussion, and rely on the Holy Spirit to work in your heart and the hearts of group members. This study can give you hands-on experience depending not on your natural leadership abilities but on the Spirit. If you pray for His help, He will give it.

DISCUSSION LEADER'S JOB DESCRIPTION

The discussion leader's job isn't to have all the answers. He or she simply needs to:

- Keep the group on track when it's tempted to go off on a tangent.
- Keep the discussion moving so that it doesn't get stuck on one question.
- Make sure that everyone gets a chance to talk and that no one dominates. (It is not necessary for every person to respond aloud to every question, but every person should have the chance to do so.)
- Make sure that the discussion remains respectful.

PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION

As the discussion leader, you'll probably want to read the chapters from *Crazy Love* before each session. If you can view the video ahead of time, that's great. Try to work through your own responses to the discussion questions ahead of time as well. Just before the meeting, be sure the chairs are arranged so that everyone can see one another.

GUIDING THE DISCUSSION

A few ground rules can make the discussion deeper:

- *Confidentiality*: Whatever is said in the group stays in the group. Nothing is to be repeated to those who weren't there.
- *Honesty*: We're not here to impress each other. We're here to grow and to know each other.
- *Respect*: Disagreement is welcome. Disrespect is not.

The discussion should be a conversation among the group members, not a one-on-one with the leader. You can encourage this with statements like, "Thanks, Allison. What do others of you think?" or "Does anyone have a similar experience, or a different one?"

Don't be afraid of silence—it means group members are thinking about how to answer a question. Trust that the Spirit is working in the members of your group, and wait. Sometimes it's helpful to rephrase the question in your own words. Then wait for others' responses, and avoid jumping in with your own.

I recommend discussing the numbered questions in order. Read each question aloud, and ask the group to respond. Even if an answer seems obvious, have a few people share their thoughts—you never know what will spark a challenging conversation.

If you have a copy of the *Crazy Love DVD Study Resource* (I definitely recommend this for groups), stop and watch the appropriate video when prompted. After the video, work through the remaining questions. Feel free to read a section out loud if the group is unclear on what a question is getting at. There is also a segment at the end of this section that contains explanatory notes for discussion leaders. I recommend looking these up before your group meets.

I considered including a section with answers to the questions to help you in leading the discussion. Ultimately, I decided against it, because the most profitable aspect of studying this material in a group is the discussion itself. The destination is important, but you can't get there without the journey. Where specific answers are required, I've tried to point you toward Scripture. The answer may not always jump out at you, but at the very least your discussion will be headed in the right direction.

The answers are important, but I am most concerned that people may study Jesus and never *know* Him, never be *changed* by Him. With every session, keep asking yourself and your group, "How should this change us? If we really submitted our lives to Jesus and opened ourselves up to the power of the Holy Spirit, what would He have us do, where would He have us go?" At the end of the day, it's about laying hold of the power of the Spirit in order to accomplish what God has placed us on this earth to do. It's about advancing the kingdom of God. It's about His will being done on earth as in heaven.

Most of all, spend time praying for your group. You can't talk anyone into a wholehearted devotion to God. Pray that the Spirit of God would fill your lives and do the impossible in and through you. In the book of Acts, the human actors were just ordinary, weak people, but the Holy Spirit accomplished unbelievable things through these ordinary people as they prayed and submitted themselves to following His leading. May God accomplish the extraordinary in your lives as you seek to follow Jesus with everything you've got.

SESSION 1

Question 1. Obviously, this question is purely hypothetical. Who really knows what he or she would say? But this could be a good exercise in trying to help people consider what it might be like to stand before God.

Question 2. If your group didn't read chapter 1 of *Crazy Love* before your gathering, then obviously they won't have an answer to this question. That's okay. You can either move on to the next question, or you can take a minute to assess what changes each of you think you may need to make in your lives.

Question 5. If group members have a difficult time answering this question, you can have a brainstorming session that ends with different members resolving to test out different approaches to building times of reflection into their lives. You can ask for a report on how this went at the beginning of the next session.

Questions 7–8. With these two questions, I'm wanting people to look at the pattern of their lives. If someone were to look at every aspect of your life, what would they conclude about your God? Would they think He exists for your glory, or that you exist for His?

Question 10. Revelation 4, like any section in Revelation, can be difficult to interpret. Don't worry about explaining every detail of the passage or even being certain of what the passage is trying to convey. What I'd love to see is people reading Revelation 4 and being struck by the imagery of our great and terrifying God. Ask your group which aspects of Revelation 4 hit them the hardest. You may want to have someone read the passage aloud for the group so that others can listen to it freshly.

SESSION 2

Questions 1–3. The paragraph before these questions is very important. Try not to let the discussion move on to bashing all of the good things in each other's lives. If someone mentions a good thing that they feel is a distraction, ask them to clarify *how* that thing has become a distraction. Caring for your kids may be a distraction, but it can be a ministry in itself. It might be helpful to explain that most activities are not good or bad in themselves—what makes them God-glorifying or distracting is our heart behind these things and whether we are using these things as a replacement for God.

Question 5. Basically, this question is meant to help you consider how James 4:13–17 applies to your life.

Question 8. Some group members may be tempted to focus on some of the minor details in their lives—a few minutes spent watching television here or there, the cost of their haircuts, etc. Those things may be relevant and even important, but this question will likely come down to each person's priorities. Rather than focusing on occasional activities, try to help them assess what their lives seem to be devoted to. What fills their time? Where do they spend the most money? If you find that your lives don't seem to reflect a dependence on God's grace, then talk about what changes would be necessary to put this dependence at the center of your lives.

SESSION 3

Question 1. This has become a fairly common distinction in some circles. Even if you feel like the distinction is obvious, it may still be helpful to have a few people in the group explain the difference. Sometimes we learn better by trying to articulate truths that we believe but haven't tried to explain to someone else.

Question 3. This question may be difficult. For one thing, some members of the group may be harboring a lot of bitterness toward God. In their case, the trick will be encouraging them to be honest with their feelings while still maintaining an appropriate respect and caution in speaking about God. On the other hand, you may find that your group doesn't have any questions about God's love. If this is the case, it may be helpful to ask them to share about some difficult events in their lives and then explain why these things didn't make them want to question God's love.

Question 6. It would probably be helpful to also make provisions for this. That is, once you've discussed some ways in which you can help one another, try to take some steps toward actually putting these ideas into practice.

SESSION 4

Question 4. You'll have to decide how to handle this question during the group time. You may want to ask people to share the verses that hit them the hardest, and why. Or you might pick a few that shook you personally. If you have time, you might choose to read each passage and see how it affects the members of your group.

Question 7. This isn't suggesting that group members should change their answers to the previous questions. Instead, it's trying to get at their hearts. Why did they answer the way they did? It's helpful for each person to identify whether his or her obedience is motivated more by guilt or love. It's also helpful to identify why they think this might be the case.

SESSION 5

Question 1. It may be difficult for some people to identify themselves with a type of soil from the parable. If this is the case, then consider asking them to identify with some of the circumstances in the parable (such as the cares and concerns of this world). That direct and less abstract connection might help some people to identify with the parable.

Question 2. Don't feel as though you need to be an expert on Malachi to lead a discussion on this question. Just look for the things Malachi is speaking against, such as offering imperfect sacrifices.

Question 8. This question is important because it will help people avoid a legalistic sense that every Christian should be perfected immediately simply by trying harder.

Question 9. If someone in your group admits to having some doubts about their salvation, try to help them sort through what their next step ought to be. Try to avoid giving people a false assurance by simply saying, "Oh, it's okay. I'm sure you're fine." Help them wrestle with what is causing them to doubt and how they can address those issues. Also be sure to emphasize the fact that we are saved by grace through faith (see Eph. 2:8–9). As important as it is to follow God completely, we're not saved by our own efforts. We're saved by God's grace. It's the transforming power of God's grace that produces these good works in us (Eph. 2:10). This can be a difficult issue to walk someone through. Do your best, and be sure to pray for the person. If you feel you're not able to address these concerns appropriately, consider offering to accompany your group member in meeting with your pastor.

SESSION 6

Question 1. You might want to approach this question by reading each statement and then asking, "Does anyone identify with this?" After you've gone through each statement, you might also ask if anyone has a statement of their own that they think best describes them.

Question 3. Once again, don't worry about being an expert on this passage. Simply try to identify the things that Paul says about love and freedom, and then see if you can catch his connection between these two things and avoiding sin.

Question 5. This question might warrant some follow-up questions. If someone feels bound to obey a system of moral commands, you might ask how long they've felt that way, how they developed that view, and whether they think that is the correct view or if they know it's wrong but can't help feeling that way.

Question 7. This question could raise some pretty significant issues. If so, you might want to follow a similar process to what I've outlined above in the note about session 5, question 9. Do your best to walk with that person through the issue, but if, at the end of the day, you feel like there's a lot more that needs to be addressed, consider offering to go with them to meet your pastor.

Question 10. You'll have to decide how you want to approach this question during group time. You may want to read each psalm excerpt and ask people to share their thoughts on whether they relate to these statements. But you might find it more effective to ask each person to share a passage or two that either expresses their emotions or challenges them.

SESSION 7

Question 1. This could be difficult to assess. Maybe a good way to rephrase it would be, "If you truly believed in the hope of eternal life, then how should that change the way you live right now? Do you see this reflected in your life in any way?"

Question 4. For many people, this will likely include attempts to please God through self-righteousness, rigorous rule keeping, church attendance, giving money, etc.

Question 5. It's likely that you'll encounter a few examples of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 that you're unfamiliar with. If you want, you can find the Old Testament accounts of these people by looking up their names in a concordance, or by searching a website like www.biblegateway.com. But this probably isn't necessary. All you need to do is see what the author of Hebrews is praising about each character. Also keep in mind that in every case, the author admires these people because of their faith.

Question 7. Doing something that requires faith means you're pursuing something that doesn't seem to make sense in and of itself, but you're doing it because God commands it, and you're trusting that God will enable you to do it. Maybe it's investing in a person who seems beyond all hope. Maybe it's giving to your church or to a neighbor even though you don't have a lot of money. Ultimately, something requires faith when it requires more than merely human motivation (anyone would help someone if they were getting paid to do it, or if they knew they would receive something in return).

Question 10. Make sure this doesn't degenerate into a discussion about the ways in which everyone else wastes their money. It's easy to criticize the way other people spend their money, especially if you don't understand the heart behind it.

SESSION 8

Question 2. Make sure everyone understands that we're not advocating skydiving or drinking poison. This is about putting God's will above your desire for comfort and safety. Maybe things like feeding a homeless person, forgiving someone who harmed you, or giving a little more money than you think you should are risks that God is calling some of your group members to take.

Question 3. As you discuss this session, watch for people who become defensive. Sometimes the people who feel the most convicted are the most vocal about why God would never call someone to do this or that.

Question 7. This is a fairly long list. I recommend asking your group to share the statements that they find most helpful or challenging, and why.

Question 9. This would be a great question to follow up on. If your group begins to make plans about how they can join together in this, encourage them to follow through on this, and then bring up the subject again at your next couple of meetings. Ideally, invite someone other than you to take the responsibility for leading this effort. But if no one else is likely to lead, then you do it, but be sure to delegate as much as possible to others so that the whole group owns the initiative.

SESSION 9

Question 1. If nobody can think of any examples, you could consider reading through a couple of the examples in chapter 9 of *Crazy Love*. But it also might be a good opportunity to ask them why they don't have any examples. Maybe it's because no one in your church is very remarkable. More likely, it's because either they haven't gotten to know the people around them well enough or they tend to see the negative in people and not the positive. This shouldn't be a lecture, but it's good food for thought.

Question 3. You might have some people who make big statements, such as, "I want to lead a thousand people to the Lord." There's nothing wrong with that, but make sure people are comfortable with saying things like, "I want to be remembered as someone who loved everyone around me."

Questions 4–5. There are a couple of good answers to these questions. For one thing, James is referring to Elijah as an example of a godly man. But he's specifically referring to Elijah as an example of what faithful prayer looks like. Elijah is definitely being held up as a powerful man of God in this passage, but James' statement that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours makes Elijah a relatable role model. It gives us confidence that God can use us in a similar way.

Questions 6–7. Be sure that no one is ridiculed or even looked down on for expressing fears like this. Try to affirm that these fears are legitimate. Question 7 should launch a discussion on how those fears can and should be overcome.

Question 10. After someone shares an excuse they've used before, it might be helpful to ask, "Has anyone else used a similar excuse?"

SESSION 10

Question 1. If your group can't think of anything specific, it might be helpful even to review the titles of each session. That may help them remember what you discussed, which may help them realize ways in which they've been affected and changed.

Question 4. This would be a good time to talk about the future of your group. Should you continue meeting together? What might you choose to study next? More importantly, what activities can you pursue together, and how can you continue to pray for each other?

Questions 5–7. It would also be helpful if people point out talents they recognize in the other members of the group and suggest ways they might pursue these things to the glory of God. An outside perspective is often helpful in assessing our giftedness.

Question 8. For those members of your group who don't have a specific "calling" that they feel they should pursue, it would be appropriate to pray that God would lead them. At the very least, encourage them to take question 9 seriously.

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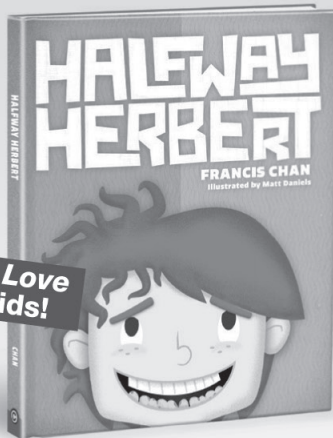
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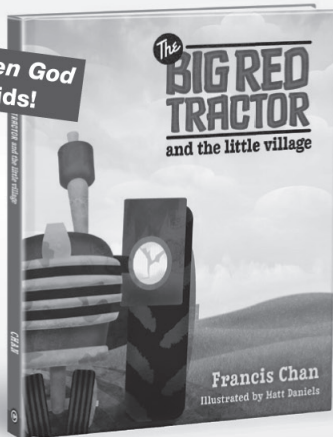
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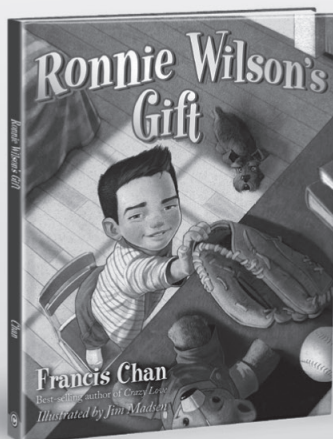
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