



Life Issues Part 4 of 5: Living God's Best Life

Voyage of Discovery

Opening up! Connecting with each other: Discuss how you have been influenced and have influenced others in the past week. Were you able to show love to someone who you would not normally have given a second thought to? How challenging was it? Be honest!

Listening in! If we truly seek to live God's best life, we need to think about our lives in the context of God's plan and provision for us. Psalm 139:16 tells us that God knows our lives ahead of time. We could fall into the trap of believing that this means the course we will take through life is predetermined, that God has some highly detailed secret plan that we must uncover accurately if we are to thrive. However, it is clear that God wants us to be in an active relationship with Him. To understand this, we can look to the Old Testament. Abraham, Moses and many others spoke with God directly, and even argued with Him. These faithful witnesses understood that in relationship with God, anything is possible! Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, begins his book with the affirmation that we were created for God's pleasure and the only way to understand our lives is to have God firmly at the centre, rather than ourselves. Relationship with God is the beginning of an adventurous journey during which God will encourage us to participate in the decision making – how exciting!

Activity: A map for the perplexed. You will need a large sheet of paper for each member and pens, pencils etc. Play quiet music to encourage a reflective atmosphere in which members can make a map of their life's journey. The aim is to reflect on the direction and purpose of our lives in the light of God's love. Encourage creativeness and individuality. As you make the maps, it may help to answer the following questions: Where are you in your life now? Where have you come from? What path have you taken? Where there any obstacles en route? How did you cope? Where were the resting places along the way? What does the journey ahead look like? Finish the activity by reading **John 14:4-6** together. God is not just interested in our journey - he *is* our journey! Jesus is our travelling companion, our guide, our resting place, and our final destination. Conclude by saying a brief prayer together to bless the maps which have been made:

'Lord Jesus

Travel with us through life and bless the journey we make,

Guide us when we are lost and forgive us when we try to find our way alone

Bring us home safely to be with you

Amen'

Read Genesis 2:2-3 the Seventh Day. On the seventh day, God rested from all the work that he had been doing. Rest, the absence of work, is an essential part of God's creation and He devotes one seventh of His time to it. God models the importance of rest. It is part of God's plan for us. Discuss as a group whether you feel that your time is completely filled with activity: are there many gaps? Are you getting enough rest?

Read Mark 1:32-37. Jesus often retreated from people to rest and pray. He understood that he needed to be with God to refresh himself for the work of healing and preaching that filled his days. He went away and made time to be alone, despite his busy schedule. What are the things in your life that use up most of your energy? How do you rebuild that energy? **Now read 1 Samuel 3:1-10** In this story, God calls Samuel when he is resting. Notice that Samuel is not praying, or asking for a vision from God, he is simply resting. God still speaks today but unless we are prepared to rest in quietness, we are unlikely to hear him. How do you feel about silence? It takes practice to rest in His presence, in silence and to listen for His voice.

Looking Out: Now and Later To live God's best life, we need to make space for the important things in our lives first of all. Rest and spending time with God should be a priority. Our everyday worries and concerns can then be made to fit around the core values of our life, instead of the other way around. Consider how you can make space to rest and be with God in the coming week. If this seems daunting, start small, perhaps with 10 minutes, and just see what happens as a result. At the heart of God's intention for us is the principle of 'shalom'. This Hebrew word is commonly translated as 'peace' but its true meaning is far richer than that. The word comes from a verb which means 'to make complete'. The Jews understood 'shalom' to mean a wholeness of person which only God can bring about. 'Shalom' encompasses our healing, both physical and emotional, and the full development of all the latent skills, abilities and qualities that God has endowed us with. Pray that you can experience 'shalom' and become the person that God always intended you to be.