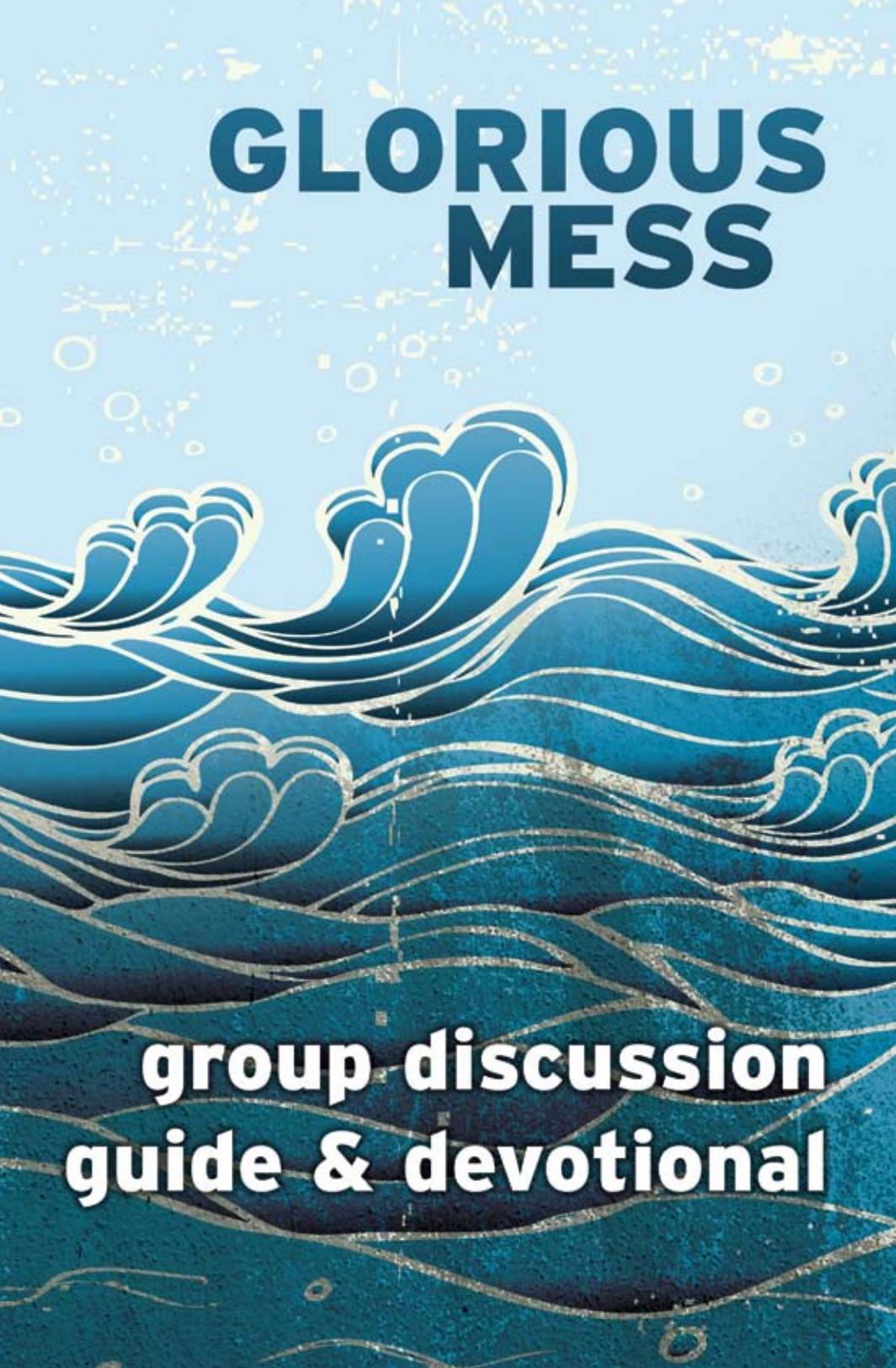


# **GLORIOUS MESS**

The background features a light blue sky with scattered gold speckles and circles. Below the sky, there are stylized waves in shades of blue and white, with gold outlines and speckles. The waves are layered, with some appearing as simple white outlines and others as solid blue shapes with white highlights.

**group discussion  
guide & devotional**

Dear Life Group Participant,

I just finished reading a sneak preview copy of *Glorious Mess* – what a great book! More so, what a GREAT author! We are so blessed to be under the leadership of a man who actively listens to God's voice, constantly casts vision, and models an authentic walk with Jesus. Never be shy to encourage him with a big smile, energetic high-five, or huge bear hug!

I'm so glad you've decided to not only read *Glorious Mess*, but are preparing to engage in discussion with others about what God is teaching you through this book. One encouragement I have for you: Don't hesitate to participate! It may feel a bit awkward to respond to the questions at first, but it'll be so worth it. We're in this together!

Excited for what this Glorious Mess teaching series has for your group, and for your spiritual life!

Pat Swanson  
Pastor of LifeGroups at OCC

## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This guide is loosely based upon the five sections of *Glorious Mess*, and each week's guide contains three parts: a verse to *read*, some questions to *respond* to, and a challenge or prayer to *reflect* upon. Approach each lesson with an open heart to the things God might teach you in dialogue with others along the journey.

Each small group session is followed up by two sections written for you to do on your own. They are called "*Looking into Yourself*" and "*Looking into the Word*." These are to help you take a deeper look inside yourself and into the Scriptures.

# WEEK 1: LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## READ:

*For nothing is impossible with God.  
Luke 1:37 NLT*

*The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."  
Jonah 1:1-2 NIV*

## RESPOND:

1. Were you already familiar with the book of Jonah? What were your previous impressions?
2. Is it difficult to believe that this story actually took place? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that nothing is impossible with God? Point to one example in your own life.
4. We looked at a few examples of men and women who had been called by God. What was going through your mind when we looked at God's call for them? How were their calls similar? How were they different?
5. How do you think God is calling you? Have you audibly heard His voice? If not, then what are some other ways that God calls us?
6. The great commandment (love God and love people; see Luke 10:27) is for all believers. How does this general call cover all others?
7. How will God's call require you to take a step of faith? Have you ever experienced this? What happened when you stepped out in faith? How did you grow?

## REFLECT:

God is calling you to something great, and what He calls you to He will empower you for. Nothing is impossible with Him.

**Close by praying for one another.**

Pray that God clarifies a glorious obsession that you can pursue with joy.  
Pray that God gives you the faith to pursue it with expectancy!

# **WEEK 1: LOOKING INTO YOURSELF**

1. Who are the people who give you wise counsel?
2. Have you ever gone against the advice of trusted friends? What happened?
3. Have you ever withheld information from trusted friends because you didn't want their advice? What happened then?
4. Write down three reasons that it is important to humbly listen to the advice of trusted counsel:
5. What are your goals?
6. What are you passionate about?
7. Are you challenging yourself right now?
8. Are you making a contribution?
9. How does it make you feel to know that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you? If you really believed that for one day, how would that day look? What would be different about your actions? About your conversations? about your daydreams?
10. Why is humility an important attitude to have when listening to God?
11. What does God's character have to do with God's call on our lives?
12. What is God calling you to do with your life? What is God calling you to do this year? How about this week? How about right now?

# WEEK 1: LOOKING INTO THE WORD

Take a look at the following responses to God's call:

## **Jeremiah 1:4-9**

Imagine this scene as if God were speaking directly to you. What fears would He be calming for you? Write out your own response to God's call:

## **Luke 1:38**

How did Mary respond to God's call? What was the result of her obedience?

## **Matthew 26:42**

How did Jesus model obedience for us? Can you pray the same prayer that He prayed?

The following verses all have something to say about clarifying God's call on our lives. Write in your own words the lessons found in each one.

## **James 1:13**

## **James 2:15-16**

## **Matthew 17:20**

## **Proverbs 15:22**

## **Philippians 4:13**

## **Psalms 37:4**

## **James 4:7,10**

## **1 John 3:22-23**



## WEEK 2: LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### READ:

*But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.  
Jonah 1:3 NIV*

*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

*Psalms 139:7-8 NIV*

### RESPOND:

1. When Jonah ran from the Lord, he fell asleep – he tuned out spiritually. What are some ways that people “tune out” or “fall asleep” spiritually?
2. What are some things that you have done to tune out in the past?
3. Are you still doing those things?
4. What does God’s omniscience mean for your life?
5. What does His omnipotence mean for your life?
6. How about His omnipresence?
7. What does it mean to be convicted by the Holy Spirit?
8. Have you ever experienced His conviction? How did you experience it?
9. What was going on in your life? How did you respond to that conviction?

### REFLECT:

How ironic is it that there are areas of our lives where we are trying to run from God – when what He wants for us is our best!

**Close by praying for one another.**

Pray that God reveals His best for your life.

Pray that God gives you the faith to fully embrace His best!

## **WEEK 2: LOOKING INTO YOURSELF**

1. Is it encouraging to think that we can't outrun God? Is it depressing? What are some motivations that people have for hiding from God?
2. When our relationship with God is out of alignment, we see the results in all of our other relationships and activities. Have you found this to be true?
3. Have you also found that there are seasons when it is possible to fake it? How does it feel to be in the middle of a season where you are pretending?
4. What does it take to get right with God? What is difficult about this? What attitudes do we need to overcome?
5. When Jonah was thrown overboard, people ended up praising God. What had they experienced? How are nonbelievers moved to praise God?
6. How can your life encourage others to praise God?
7. What are ten words that come to mind when you think about God's love?
8. How do you interact with God's love on a daily basis?





# WEEK 3: LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## READ:

*When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I, with a shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, "Salvation comes from the LORD."  
Jonah 2:7-9 NIV*

## RESPOND:

1. Have you ever been in a totally stuck place?
2. What is the worst mess that your choices have ever put you in? (Or the worst mess you feel comfortable sharing)? How did you feel?
3. What was the precise moment that you realized you really were in trouble?
4. What is the healthiest response to finding yourself in a messy situation?
5. Most of humanity knows deep down that pursuing the world's way leads to pain. Spend a moment reaffirming that truth in your group. How have you seen this in your own life?
6. Why is Jonah a great example for us in this area?
7. What are some things that strike you about his prayer in Jonah 2:7-9?
8. How do those who cling to idols miss out on God's love?
9. Look at verse 9. How is Jonah able to claim that salvation comes from the Lord? What does Jonah model for us here?

## REFLECT:

"Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that on the cross, you paid the price for my glorious mess!"

**Close by praying together.**

Pray thanksgiving to God for what He has done in your life.

## **WEEK 3: LOOKING INTO YOURSELF**

1. Do you believe that God gives us what we need most? Why or why not?
2. Because the Lord gave a ram to Abraham to sacrifice on the mountain, Abraham names the place Yahweh-yireh, which means, "The Lord will provide" (see Gen. 22:14). Write down some ways that God has provided for you. Then spend some time being thankful for His provision.
3. Have you been running from God in any part of your life? Where? Why? Where has it led you?
4. Are you ready to come back, to come clean, to give it all, to surrender the fight against a God who wants your best?
5. Read Proverbs 2:3-5. Are you ready to pursue wisdom with this intensity?
6. Is it difficult for you to trust God? Why or why not?
7. One of the tragedies of the temptation of Adam and Eve is that Satan planted a lie in the human heart that has lived there ever since. It's the lie that "God isn't good. If he was good, he wouldn't deny you that forbidden fruit." Do you think that lie is affecting your faith today? How?
8. What are some constant areas of doubt for you?
9. Do you trust that God works for your best?
10. Are you experiencing the joy of His salvation?
11. What will it take for you to walk in joy with Him?

## **WEEK 3: LOOKING INTO THE WORD**

Read **1 Samuel 3:10-11** and **Psalm 9:10**.

Together these verses describe the attitude that we seek to have when God calls.

1. Repentance is an essential concept when we think about getting out of our glorious mess. What does repentance mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does it mean to God?

Read **Acts 2:38-42**.

There are many aspects of the repentance found in this passage.

3. List some of the implications. How did repentance change the lives of the believers? Has it changed your life in a similar manner?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What areas of your life still need to be submitted to God's love?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does it mean to be a saint?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What does it mean to be one of God's kids? Does it mean that you'll live a perfect life? Why or why not?



## WEEK 4: LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### READ:

*Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it.*

*Jonah 3:1-3 NIV*

### RESPOND:

1. What is one area in your life that you have experienced God giving you a second chance?
2. What is one area that you've seen him give you second chance after second chance?
3. Is this an area you're still struggling with? How can this life group support you in the midst of it?
4. Do you believe that God is the one who does the work of changing hearts? Why or why not? What else might be necessary?
5. If God alone can change hearts, then why did Jonah need to go to Nineveh at all? Could God have done it without Jonah?
6. Why did God want to partner with Jonah in this work?
7. Why does He want to partner with you?
8. Are you committed to absolute obedience? If not, what is holding you back?
9. If so, have you invited safe friends to challenge you? Are you allowing your life group to hold you accountable in this kind of radical obedience?
10. What God did through Jonah was incredible, and it's nothing compared to what God can do through your obedience. Read that statement again. Do you believe it?
11. Are you ready to do whatever God calls you to?

### REFLECT:

God has good things in store for you God will be with you to accomplish more than you could ever dream on your own.

**Close by praying together.**

## **WEEK 4: LOOKING INTO YOURSELF**

1. Why is our attitude important as we move to obey God?
2. What does our attitude communicate to the world?
3. Give yourself an attitude checkup:
  - Where is my attitude towards obeying God?
  - Why do I feel that way?
  - Have I thanked God for saving me today?
  - Have I thanked God for blessing me richly?
  - Have I taken an inventory of His blessings lately?
4. Do I have a vision for where God is moving me?
5. When I look back at my life, can I identify where growth has taken place?
6. Have I praised God for that growth today?





## WEEK 5: LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### READ:

*So he prayed to the Lord, "Lord, isn't this what I said would happen when I was still in my own country? That's why I tried to run to Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, patient, and always ready to forgive and to reconsider your threats of destruction. So now, Lord, take my life. I'd rather be dead than alive." The Lord asked, "What right do you have to be angry?"*  
Jonah 4:2-4 GW

### RESPOND:

1. Describe why Jonah became angry. What was he concerned about? Were his concerns legitimate?
2. How did God view His concerns?
3. What do you want the foundation of your life built upon?
4. Are you a "people pleaser?"
5. Do you change who you are depending upon what social circle you are in? Are you different at work, at home, at school, social settings?
6. Are there times when those fluctuations are appropriate? How do you know?
7. Paul says that he strives to become all things to all people so that he might win some. Is that a priority in your life?
8. What are some healthy priorities that cause people to morph their personality to match their surroundings?
9. At the end of the book, it is a bit incredible that Jonah is still caught up in judgment. But many believers are still focused on God's judgment. Are you?
10. What are the issues in your life where it is easier to respond with judgment than grace? What are you going to do about those things?
11. Do you believe there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ? If that's what God offers you, doesn't it make sense that we would offer that grace to others?

### REFLECT:

Commit to becoming God's agent of grace! **Close by praying together.**

## **WEEK 5: LOOKING INTO YOURSELF**

1. Describe in your own words the lesson of the vine (or the lesson of the worm). What was God trying to show Jonah? What is God trying to teach you?
2. Why do you think God isn't all that concerned about his "reputation?"
3. Read Philippians 2:5-11. This passage says ultimately all will bow before the awesome glory of God. What does this verse say about God's "reputation?"
4. We don't know ultimately how Jonah responded to God's incredible grace. We can guess, because he's probably the one who rats himself out. But you are the one who determines how you respond to it. Are you in? Do you get it? How are you responding to his call to share grace with a world that starves for it?
5. What do you need to do to ensure that your "reputation" won't prevent you from responding?











To get the most out of this Discussion Guide & Devotional, be sure to pick up a copy of the book, *Glorious Mess*.

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