

Island Group Discussion Guide

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Week of August 17, 2025

THRIVING IN BABYLON • WEEK 3

SPIRITUAL BOOT CAMP • JAMES 1:2-3

OPENING PRAYER TIME

Begin your meeting with 10-15 minutes of prayer using these prompts:

- Thank God for His presence with us today and His desire to strengthen us through all circumstances
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our discussion and open our hearts to His truth
- Pray for courage to embrace the challenges God allows in our lives
- Invite Jesus to show us areas where we need spiritual growth and toughening
- Ask for wisdom to see trials from God's perspective rather than our own
- Pray for endurance and faithfulness when difficult times come

DISCUSSION

- **Ice breaker:** Have you ever been through any kind of "boot camp" experience - military, sports training, or another challenging preparation? What was it like, and how did it change you?
- **Read James 1:2-3.** What is your initial reaction to the command to "count it all joy" when you face trials? How does this go against our natural instincts?
- Pastor Charlie said, *"If we don't go through some pain – we can't learn what we can do."* How have you seen this principle play out in your own life or in others you've observed?
- Pastor Charlie asked, *"Have you ever met a wimpy Christian?"* What are the characteristics of someone who has never really been tested in their faith? How might this leave them unprepared for real challenges?
- *"Those of us who have never been through challenging days in our faith are ill-equipped to face genuine persecution!"* Why do you think God allows His children to go through difficult times rather than making everything easy for us?
- Pastor Charlie mentioned that wimpy Christians often get mad at God when things don't go their way, or feel abandoned when they don't get what they prayed for. Why is this problematic thinking? What should be our motivation for following Jesus?
- Pastor Charlie outlined five essential qualities we need to thrive in difficult times. Let's walk through each one...

OBEDIENCE

- **Read John 14:15.** Jesus says obedience is proof that we love Him. How would you evaluate your own obedience level when God asks you to do something you don't understand or agree with?
- **Read Matthew 28:19-20.** How does this passage show that obedience is central to the Great Commission?
- Pastor Charlie shared Craig Groeschel's story about \$5 faith versus \$100 faith. **Application question:** Do you have "\$5 faith" or "\$100 faith"? What would it look like for you to trust God with something bigger?
- **Read Proverbs 3:5.** What does it mean to "lean not on your own understanding"? Give an example of when this is particularly challenging.

PERSPECTIVE

- **Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.** How does having an eternal perspective change the way we view our current struggles?
- Pastor Charlie said when we lack perspective, "*we evaluate and extrapolate without putting God into the equation.*" What happens when we try to solve problems or understand situations without considering God's role?
- **Application question:** When something difficult happens in your life, what's your first instinct? How can you develop the habit of asking "Will this matter in 100 years?" or "How might God use this?"

ENDURANCE

- **Read Romans 5:1-4.** How does this passage show that suffering has a purpose in building our character?
- Pastor Charlie emphasized that "*Endurance reaps great rewards! But it's no fun getting there!*" What helps you keep going when you want to give up?
- **Application question:** What's one area of your life where you need to set a "don't quit" goal? How can you commit to stick with it for 30 days with no exceptions?

CONFIDENCE & COURAGE

- Pastor Charlie explained that "*Confidence comes from knowing we've been there and done that*" while "*Courage comes from having seen God show up in the past.*" How do past experiences with God's faithfulness help us face new challenges?
- **Application question:** What's one thing that scares you spiritually that God might be calling you to do this week? How can you step into that fear with His help?
- **Application question:** If God is putting you through a spiritual boot camp right now, what do you think He's preparing you for? How can you cooperate with His work rather than resist it?

CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Share prayer requests and concerns with the group. Be sure to write these down and send them to all group members so everyone can pray throughout the week, including those who were absent today.