

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
LONG WALKS & SHORT PIERS
WEEK ONE



Week One: Stuckness

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Loving and Eternal God, please set us free from what has us stuck so that we may freely live the abundant life that you have for us. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

**How have you seen God at work in your life this week?
What good have you done for someone else this week?**

.....

.....

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Luke 8:49-56

“While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer.’ When Jesus heard this, he replied, ‘Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved.’ When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John, and James, and the child’s father and mother. They were all weeping and wailing for her; but he said, ‘Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and called out, ‘Child, get up!’ Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astounded; but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.”

REFLECTION:

RJ, my six-year-old son, shared that he was frustrated because he was stuck on level 20 of a video game that he enjoys playing. He quickly advanced through the previous levels but now, he cannot seem to master level 20. He said, “Dad, level 20 is super hard.” I told him to keep trying and eventually he would master level 20 just like he mastered the 19 other levels. Later, it occurred to me that there had been so many times in my life when I felt stuck. I am sure that I am not the only person. Take a moment and consider the ways and the times you have felt stuck. The good news is that this new year gives us a new opportunity to breakout, break through, and break away from the people, things, places, and ways of thinking that are keeping us stuck.

In the eighth chapter of Luke, we see four examples of the power of God in Jesus. Jesus commands the winds and waves to be still and they obey, which saves everyone on the boat. Jesus commands the evil spirits to leave the demoniac, Jesus heals the woman who was hemorrhaging blood, and finally, in our sermon and study text, Jesus restores life to Jairus’ daughter. All these people seemed to be stuck in impossible situations: a storm, demoniac possession, chronic sickness and death. The demoniac, the hemorrhaging woman, and the dead body of Jairus’ daughter were all considered unclean by Jewish law. Anyone having physical contact

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

LONG WALKS & SHORT PIERS

WEEK ONE

with them would be considered unclean too. Jesus did not allow the law to become an obstacle to His ministry of healing and restoration. Otherwise, Jesus would have been stuck too.

In our scripture lesson, Jesus sees the mourners and tells them that the girl is only sleeping. The mourners' shouts of lament turned into laughter. During Jesus' day, people who could afford it hired professional mourners. These people were hired to weep and wail loudly. Today, we might think of this as just a performance that would only upset the family more, but in Jesus day, loud wailing demonstrated how much the deceased was loved by their family. Jesus did not allow the crowd to enter, only Peter, James, John, Jairus, and the girl's mother. Those who laughed were stuck in their way of thinking because they could not imagine that the girl would be restored to life. Jesus takes the girl by the hand and commands her to get up.

IDEA BEHIND SERIES:

As we enter each new year, it seems that all of us begin with a passionate desire, with a driving hope that things can be different, that we can be different... but are we willing to do more than just hope and wish? Are we willing to take those areas of our lives that need to change on a long walk off a short pier? During these four weeks, we will take an amusing-but-poignant look at what it takes to live the life God created us to enjoy.

In an age of "mailing it in" and "phoning it in," as we're over-committed and under-performing, we will take a self-evaluative look at our lives, jobs, families, and, most importantly, our faith to discover (and pare back) all the distractions that abound. In fact, what we will see is that quitting some aspects of our lives (stuckness, cynicism/complaining/negativity, numbness/disengagement, meanness) actually leads to growth, health and success in others (trust, courage, peace, grit, etc.). Simply put, the life of faith demands that we make sacrifices, that we stop doing some things that are natural/instinctive/easy in order to step into deeper levels of following Jesus.

From Drs. John McKellar and Todd Renner

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter the Head:

What is resurrection? Are there any accounts of people being raised from the dead today? If not, then why not?

.....

.....

Why does Jesus say the girl is only sleeping?

.....

.....

What is the most impactful thing that you learned from the sermon, podcast, scripture or the sermon discussion guide?

.....

.....

Encounter the Heart:

Which are you today: the mourners/ crowd, stuck because they lack faith in what Jesus can do, or Peter, James, and John? Or maybe you feel like the grieving parents, hoping that God can perform what seems impossible?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What are the stuck areas of your life? Finances, career, faith development, relationships?

.....

.....

Encounter the Hands:

What are you going to do differently in 2020 to get unstuck?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

.....

.....

DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

.....

.....

What broke your heart or made you sad today?

.....

.....

What good thing did you do for someone else today?

.....

.....

What are you thankful for today?

.....

.....