

REVOLUTION!

Gathering 2011
Small Group Material

Based on Isaiah 42:13

The LORD will march forth like a mighty hero; he will come out like a warrior, full of fury. He will shout his battle cry and crush all his enemies.

New Living Translation

The LORD will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.

New International Version

Introduction:

- Leaders introduce themselves and explain that small group sessions are a chance to get to know each other and express views in a welcoming environment.
- While it is a time for fun, it is also a time to reflect on your thoughts and ideas as a Christian.
- Your small group may break up into discussion groups of six to ten members at a time if this works better.
- Ask group members to introduce themselves. Ask them their age and what church and city did they come from.

Establish some basic rules:

- Your group is your group. Do not go into another group, but help to make this group as strong as possible. Be a contributing member.
- What is said in small group stays in small group. This is a safe, free environment in which to share ideas.
- Allow everyone to speak and be heard. Respect others' ideas and words. Don't talk while others are talking, but listen and focus.
- The small group experience can make it or break it for some youth. You are a crucial part of their experience at the gathering, so please take it seriously!
- Follow the curriculum, because the entire gathering is based around it, but when there is time...be creative and have fun with your group!!!! Yee Haw!

Laying the Groundwork (small group leaders):

- Explain that this *Gathering* deals with working for *God* in a world that has many competing and contradictory ideas.
- *We*, as *Christians*, are not just encouraged to revolt against what is wrong, we are required, charged by *God* with the task of setting things right.
- Over the next few days, we'll focus on our part in the revolution and how we can best affect those around us.

Discussion Groups or Whole Group:

- Small groups break up into discussion groups based on the number of small group leaders.
- Each discussion group will read the scripture and ask the questions.
- If it works better, you can do this as a whole group.

SESSION #1—GOD WANTS YOU!

Icebreaker:

- Say your name and do a movement relating to what you like to do (basketball, playing video games, piano).
- Go around the circle and have everyone say each person's name and do the movement associated with that person.
- People remember names better when there is movement attached to them.

Discussion Group Activity: (asked by discussion leaders)

- What does the word "revolt" actually mean? (pull out your dictionary cards)
- What is the difference between "revolution" and "rebellion?"
Jeff, a member of the planning team, gave us a great motto:
"Don't rebel, revolt."
- How do we want to use the word?
- The word "revolt" brings up strong feelings; that is one of the reasons we use it.
- The word promotes discussion.
- What are your thoughts when you hear it?
- What would you most like to change in your life?
 - In your school?
 - In your community?
 - In your church?
 - In the world?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Lesson: "God Wants You!"

Isaiah 42:10-13

A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE LORD

10 Sing a new song to the LORD!

Sing his praises from the ends of the earth!

Sing, all you who sail the seas,

all you who live in distant coastlands.

11 Join in the chorus, you desert towns;

let the villages of Kedar rejoice!

Let the people of Sela sing for joy;

shout praises from the mountaintops!

12 Let the whole world glorify the LORD;

let it sing his praise.

13 The LORD will march forth like a mighty hero;

he will come out like a warrior, full of fury.

He will shout his battle cry

and crush all his enemies.

Reflection on the Scripture:

- What do you think it means by "a new song?"
- "Join in the chorus" echoes the idea of the "unending hymn." We join in something that is continually going on, has been going on and will continue when we're no longer here, but part of the heavenly choir.
- Why is the image of a warrior so powerful?
- We often associate God with a shepherd, a more pastoral, peaceful view. How can we reconcile God as warrior and God as shepherd?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Questions for our everyday life:

- Do you sing God's praises? In what ways?
- Why is it so hard to talk about God and your faith?
- Does the image of God as a warrior comfort you or frighten you?
- Do you feel called by God to share your faith with others?
- In what ways do you show your faith?

Activity:

Come up with a recruitment poster: "God Wants You." We'll hang them in the halls!

Small Group Time:

Gather again in small group if you've broken up into discussion groups. The leaders of the small group should conclude with thoughts such as:

Sharing our faith can be hard. We're called to do it by God, and as with many things God asks, it often takes us out of our comfort zone.

Sometimes we need to take that risk. If real change is going to happen, we have to be willing to change ourselves. Ask God to help you make the changes within yourself so that you can make changes in the world.

Through him all things are possible!

Ghandi said,

"Be the change you want to see in the world." During this Gathering, focus on what the change you want to see is. Define it. Own it. Change it.

Prayer:

Revolutionary God, thank you for bringing us together to work for you. Help us as we look at how we can change things in your world for the betterment of all. Guide us over the next few days as we come closer to you and each other. And all God's warriors said, "**Amen.**"

SESSION #2—EMPOWERED TO REVOLT

The story of Gideon

Judges 6 -7

Icebreaker:

Let's think of one....(foam swords?.....

Laying the Groundwork:

- Group leaders explain that we might be reluctant warriors.
- Maybe we don't believe we're being called, maybe we're afraid to be called, maybe we question that call.
- Gideon did all of these things. He was certainly an unlikely warrior.

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Discussion Groups or Whole Group:

Small groups break up into discussion groups based on the number of small group leaders. Each discussion group will read the scripture and ask the questions. If it works better, you can do this as a whole group.

Discussion Group Activity:

- The story of Gideon follows a familiar pattern in the Bible (and in life!).
- People do what they are not supposed to, the Lord gives them to their enemies, the people cry out to the Lord for help and the Lord sends a deliverer. (Idea taken from the Bible at the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans in 2009).
- When in your own life have you seen a similar pattern?

Lesson: Empowered by God!

Below are excerpts taken from the story of Gideon. He is called by God to fight, and although he feels inadequate and tests God, he is made a great warrior. These excerpts illustrate some of his thoughts and struggles that correspond to things we all feel.

Judges 6:11-16—The story of Gideon's call

Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior." Gideon answered him, "But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian." Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you." He responded, "But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family. The Lord said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them."

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Reflection on the Scripture:

- What was *Gideon* doing as he beat the wheat?
- What are you hiding from in your own life?
- What is *Gideon's* initial reaction to "The Lord is with you."?
- When or what makes you question *God's* presence?
- *Gideon* claims to be weak. What are your weaknesses?

Judges 6:25-27—*Gideon* does as instructed, but hides

That night the Lord said to *Gideon*, "Take your father's bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal (Baal was the Canaanite god of fertility) that belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred pole that is beside it; and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, in proper order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the sacred pole that you shall cut down." So *Gideon* took ten of his servants, and did as the Lord had told him; but because he was too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day, he did it by night.

Reflection on the Scripture:

- While we probably don't have an actual idol in our home, there might be things that displace *God* as number one. Can you think of some of the things that interfere with your relationship to *God*?
- *Gideon* does what he's supposed to do, but at night so that no one sees him. Think about your own life. Are you a "night-time" Christian?

- Do you do what you should, but on the sly? Why?
- Take that a step further: if we don't do it boldly, are we really committed to it? Discuss.
- Here's something else to consider: although Gideon did it at night, the effects of what he had done were visible. When is being a "quiet" Christian a good thing?
- How do people know that you're in God's army?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Judges 6:36-40—Gideon tests God

Then Gideon said to God, "In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, I am going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said." And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let your anger burn against me, let me speak one more time; let me, please make trial with the fleece just once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Reflection on the Scripture:

- Gideon tested God, not just this time, but many over the course of his story. Why?
- How often do we test God?

- Even after God has proven himself, we often doubt. Think about all the times in your life God has shown you he's there. Why do we still question?

Small Group Time:

Gather again in small group if you've broken up into discussion groups. The leaders of the small group should conclude with thoughts such as:

Fear and doubt are a natural part of life. There are times we all feel inadequate, especially when it comes to something as large as serving God. The important thing to remember is that, as is said in Judges 6:16, he will be with you. When you fear or doubt, call upon the Lord for strength and belief. He will empower you!

What are some activities you can do if you have more time that relate to fear and doubt? (trust falls, share childhood fears, open up about fears about God, have someone do an activity blindfolded with direction from another group member....)

Prayer:

Empowering God, thank you for the opportunity to serve you. Help us recognize your call, answer it and have courage to follow through with it. And all God's empowered people say "**Amen.**"

SESSION #3—INSPIRED TO REVOLT

The story of Deborah
Judges 4:1-16

Icebreaker:

Choose two people like in the game Cranium. One person will receive an action to illustrate on another person. That person will move the person while the person being moved guesses what he/she is doing. An example might be rock climbing. The person who knows the answer will stand behind the person they have to move and will manipulate the other's hands and legs to illustrate rock climbing. The person moving has to guess. There is no talking allowed. Do this a few times. Activities will be provided.

Laying the Groundwork:

There are times we all need someone else to lead us. We need someone to inspire and encourage us in what we are doing. There are times we are the inspiration for others. The story of Deborah is a powerful one of inspiration. Deborah was a great leader, but she in turn was lead by God. We need to look at what it takes to inspire us and how we want to inspire others!

Discussion Groups or Whole Group:

Small groups break up into discussion groups based on the number of small group leaders. Each discussion group will read the scripture and ask the questions. If it works better, you can do this as a whole group.

Discussion Group Activity:

Think of leaders who inspire you. Who are they? What makes them so inspiring?

Lesson: Inspired

Judges 4:1-16

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

At that time Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went with him.

Reflection on the Scripture:

- Why do you think Barak insisted that Deborah go with him?
- Look at Deborah's response. She's willing to go with him, even put herself in danger. She's a real example of what a leader should be. Think about your life. Do you always do all you can, never asking others to do more?
- Deborah tells Barak that the road he is taking will not lead to glory for himself. How often do we think our actions will bring us glory?
- When in your own life have you thought what you were doing would earn praise? How often has that motivated you? Should it motivate you?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Question for Everyday Life:

- What does it take to be a good follower? Why do we need followers? When you have been in charge, who has followed you? What qualities did they possess? When are you a good follower?
- Think about the phrase "To lead is to serve." What does that mean? Jesus said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve." How does that apply to us?
- How often do we do things while thinking, "How will this benefit the other person?" or do we often do things thinking, "How will this benefit me?" If so, how can we change our focus?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Small Group Time:

Gather again in small group if you've broken up into discussion groups. The leaders of the small group should conclude with thoughts such as:

By its very nature, a revolution is against something. Our challenge is to motivate by an act of love to change the behavior of others, helping them to find God's love. Ours is a revolution of love.

Activity:

Based on the book "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie," write another book as a group, "If You Give Someone God's Love."

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Prayer:

Inspiring God, help us to be inspired and inspire others with the love you have shown us through the death of your son. Keep us pure in motive and purpose. And all God's inspired people say: **Amen!**

SESSION #4—CREATED TO REVOLT

Stories of Jesus
The New Testament

Ice-breaker:

On name tags, write why Jesus loves the person to your left. Find one word to describe this. Go in a circle and describe to the others why you chose that word.

Laying the Groundwork (small group leaders):

Jesus came into a world filled with sin in order to save it. He reacted against the established order. From his humble birth (kings aren't born in stables and put in feed bins) to his agonizing death (kings aren't executed like common criminals) he "revolted" against the way things were.

Discussion Groups or Whole Group:

Small groups break up into discussion groups based on the number of small group leaders. Each discussion group will read the scripture and ask the questions. If it works better, you can do this as a whole group.

Discussion Group Activity:

- The stories of Jesus that we look at today show a man clear of purpose, inspired by love. Over and over again he reaches out to the "undesirables." How often do we go outside our comfort zone to include others?
- Why is that so hard? Maybe we're afraid of rejection or maybe we're afraid we'll be made fun of or become part of "that" crowd.

Lesson: Created to Revolt

John 7:53-8:11

The Woman Caught in Adultery

Then each of the disciples went home, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Reflection on the Scripture:

- What is adultery and why was it condemned?
- Why would the people be so anxious to put her to death?
- What do you think Jesus was doing by writing in the sand, not responding right away?
- Why is his response so powerful? He doesn't get angry and yell.
- How is this revolutionary act?

- How often do we lift up sins of others and not look at our own? What is an example of this?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Reflection on the Scripture:

- Why were people so upset by Zacchaeus?
- By staying with Zacchaeus, Jesus is actually honoring him. In a very human way, the people are jealous that this honor would go to a man they think little of. How is this revolutionary on Jesus' part?

Luke 22:63-23:6

Mocking of Jesus

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept hearing many other insults on him.

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.

Reflection on the Scripture:

- Why does Jesus respond the way he does? He has so much power to show those people, why doesn't he?
- Hearing those accusations, knowing they are twisted, we get angry for Jesus, yet he remains passive. Why is this the ultimate "revolution?"

Questions for Everyday Life:

- Jesus refuses to condemn the woman who has committed a sin. Others are most anxious to do just that. How often do we side with the popular opinion? Why do we do that even knowing it may be wrong?
- Sometimes life feels unfair. The people who were "good Jews" were angry that Jesus would honor a man they considered beneath them. What does the story of Zacchaeus tell us about human nature? When have you felt slighted? When have you felt like Zacchaeus?
- The Bible is interesting in its ability to make us take both sides.
- What do you think you can learn from that?
- Jesus accepts what is happening to him and, rather than destroy his persecutors, later asks that they be forgiven. This is a very "revolutionary" idea indeed. What does it tell you about a revolution? Why might that be the hardest revolution?

Notes for Small Group Leaders:

Small Group Time:

Gather again in small group if you've broken up into discussion groups. The leaders of the small group should conclude with thoughts such as:

Che Guevara said, "Let me say, at the risk of seeming ridiculous that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love."

By that definition, we see that Jesus was the ultimate revolutionary. Our challenge is to "be like Christ."

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." In our "revolution" we must put the love of others first in our hearts and minds.

Prayer:

Creating God, fill us with the power of love so that we can show the world your power. Help us to see people as Jesus did: created and loved by you. Keep love in us as we deal with the issues of everyday life and encounter situations that are difficult. And all God's created people say: **Amen!**

SESSION #5—CHALLENGED TO REVOLT

Various Passages

Ice-breaker:

Do something meaningful for your group as it is your last time.

Suggestion: Have everyone write their name on a card or piece of paper and pass it around to the group. Have each person write something kind about that person on the paper.

Laying the Groundwork:

In our time together, we have looked at the idea of revolution. Revolutions are exciting and energetic, especially in the beginning. It's easy to get fired up here at the Gathering. Now, we need to keep the revolution going. It may take some time; it may not always seem as exciting and possible as it does now. How are you going to keep it going?

(Rather than break up into small groups, you might want to stay together for your last small group)

Lessons and reflections:

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

Reflection and Question:

When have you been ashamed of the gospel? How will you now meet that challenge?

2 Timothy 1: 7

For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Reflection and Question:

- What does it mean to have a spirit of power, love and self-discipline?
- Why are the three aspects of the spirit stronger than one?

Hebrews 13:6

So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Reflection and Question:

- Think about a time God has helped you. Did he help you at this Gathering? Did you sense his presence strongly at some point?
- Share those times. What is that feeling like?

As you leave this place, remember:

Psalm 31:24

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.

- Take a moment to share your thoughts about this. How does it feel to be a revolutionary?
- How can this group help you be strong and remain committed? How can you help them?

Prayer:

Revolutionary God, all praise and honor to you! Thank you for being with us at this Gathering. Help us to remain strong in love so that we may revolutionize our world. And all God's revolting people said: **Amen!**

Leave your group with this thought:

Judges 6:12

The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior!

Spend time taking pictures and giving each other encouragement as you say your good-byes.