A Canary in a Coal Mine

Group Discussion Guide

Pastors will find the book useful as a resource for a sermon series on Christian citizenship—especially during a year when so many important decisions are being made by citizens of the United States. Some pastors are using this as the study resource for their congregations on Wednesday evenings.

Sunday school classes might wish to study *A Canary in a Coal Mine* in a short-term study. Cell groups or other discipleship groups can also benefit from studying this resource. Men's and women's groups can use the book to understand the demands of responsible Christian citizenship in America.

When you are preparing to guide the study in groups, remain aware of the Learning Retention Scale. Educational researchers have determined that we retain roughly: 10% of what we hear; 20% of what we see; 50% of what we see and hear; 70 percent of what we say; and 90% of what we do.

This scale might vary by source. However, the point is clear—the more we are involved, the deeper the learning and the greater the retention. Your role as a leader is more of a facilitator, directing the groups to do their own work. That is when the greatest learning is taking place—when they are interacting with one another. You will orchestrate the experience and keep the process moving. You will find suggestions throughout the Guide to help you facilitate the group experience.

As you lead a group through the study of *A Canary in a Coal Mine*, design small-pod discussion into the session. The larger group can be asked to form small discussion groups for greater involvement. This will increase involvement, ownership, and retention. In the larger group some people could dominate the discussion or others because of fear of speaking before large numbers of people might hesitate from entering into discussion. Here are a few hints—

- Be sure to clarify what they are to discuss. You might find it beneficial to produce a "discussion Guide' with instructions and specific questions to be discussed. Simply adapt the format for each session below.
- Give a time limit for discussion.
- Designate a spokesperson to report conclusions or observations to the larger group and to be the facilitator of the discussion (this can be determined in a variety of ways by color or pattern of clothing, by birthday or age—youngest/oldest, and so forth). Reporting their conclusions serves a reinforcing function. Opinions and positions are strengthened within the larger group.
- Hold to the time limit—if necessary, more time can be given or further discussion can be resumed in the larger group.

As possible, use visual support. With technologies available, the potential is unlimited for charts, photos, video clips, and so forth. Nearly everyone has a phone and the world in their hand. Direct them to common sources that help your presentation.

This Guide is a starting place for you to lead the study of *A Canary in a Coal Mine* in a group setting. Please alter it as necessary to fit your circumstances and audience.

Let's get started...

Introduction (pages 23-27)

Why were canaries important in the early days of the coal mining industry?

Why is this analogy applicable for America at this moment?

Read the selection from Abraham Lincoln's 1838 "Lyceum Address" on page 28. What did Lincoln have in mind when he spoke in 1838? How does his words apply to the United States today?

Chapter 1: Looking Back, Facing Forward

Read the next to last paragraph on page 30. How does the judgment of God reveal His attributes?

Ask the group why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? Allow time for an answer or two. Then, direct members to read Ezekiel 16: 48-50. Ask them to suggest a list of the reasons God gave through Ezekiel? Ask them how this list of charges compares with America today?

Ask the group to form discussion clusters of three. Direct them to look at the list of reasons why empires collapse on page 34. Ask each group to quickly look at the list and draw any parallels or warnings they see facing our nation today. Have one member jot down key ideas to share with the larger group. Call on various groups to respond with their observations.

How do the founding leaders, documents, memorials reflect the relationship with God and America? Ask the small discussion groups to answer this question, "Where is America in its relationship with God today?"

Chapter 2: Dual Citizenship

As background for leading discussion of this chapter, read chapters 1-6 of the prophet Daniel.

Why have some Christians failed to or refused to participate in their governments?

How does the rise of Babylon and the demise of Assyria reveal that God is orchestrating history? Highlight Dr. J. Vernon McGee's comment about Providence (page 44). Stress to the group the last two sentences in this section.

How does the prayer of Daniel (2:20-23) reveal his understanding of the sovereignty of God as it relates to nations? How does the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream underscore the omniscience, transcendence, and omnipotence of God? Hindsight is 20/20. We can look back through history and perceive "the hand of God in the glove of human events." How do we perceive the hand of God in current events and nations?

Why is it important to understand the three meanings of the concept of the "kingdom of God?"

Ask the members to form small discussion clusters. Have them discuss the following question—How did Jesus model for us what it is to be ruled by the Kingdom of God? After an appropriate time, call for some responses.

Remaining in their clusters, ask them to discuss this question--How does the submission to the will and way of God (the Kingdom of God) inform our understanding of how we are to live as dual citizens?

Chapter 3: Kingdoms in Conflict

How does the story of Daniel in the lions' den surprise you?

What is the essential teaching you take from this story?

How do the instructions of Peter (1 Peter 2:11-17) and Paul (Romans 13:1-7) inform us about how we are to live in this present world? (Remind the group that when these men gave these directives, the Roman Empire ruled the world. It was an autocratic tyranny. And this was not just a mental exercise—Peter was crucified upside down in AD 64 and Paul was beheaded in AD 67. Submission was a costly affair for both.)

Specifically, how does their instruction inform followers of Jesus in the United States about how we are to live as responsible Christian citizens?

State this: When our founding fathers established the government of the United States after the Revolutionary War, they established a different kind of government. Refer members to Benjamin Franklin's statement at the bottom of page 59 and say this: On the last day of the Constitutional Convention, Elizabeth Willing Powell asked Benjamin Franklin, "Well, Doctor, what have we got a republic or a monarchy?" Frankin responded, "A republic if you can keep it." Ask the group to define what it means to be a Republic. Allow for a variety of responses. If nobody hits the right explanation, be prepared to help the group define what it means to be a Republic.

Remind the group what Peter and Paul both said about followers of Jesus submitting ourselves to the authorities. Direct the larger group to form discussion clusters and tackle these questions—Who is the authority in a republican form of government? How do the writings and speeches of leaders like Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson as noted on pages 59-62 give us direction for living in the Constitutional Republic of the United States? (This will be an involved discussion. Allow plenty of time for the groups to discuss. And allow time for them to share their conclusions with the larger group.)

In conclusion, remind the group of the clarity Abraham Lincoln brought to the nature of the government of the United States in his Gettysburg Address. Have them turn to page 60 and read the selection from Lincoln's Address. Note for the group that in our Constitutional Republic, the citizens are the authority. Through our participation in the electoral process, we express our will. When we call our representatives to express our opinion on various pieces of legislation or state a particular direction we feel should be taken on a given topic, we are exercising or authority.

Stress the demand upon Christian citizens in the United States that we <u>educate</u> ourselves on issues, that we <u>engage</u> the process, and when possible, <u>enlist</u> others to our way of thinking.

Chapter 4: A Nation Under Supernatural Discipline

Read Paul's comments about spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-20. Comment that verses 18-20 are often omitted from the discussion about spiritual warfare. Remind the group of the hymn, *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*, written in 1858 by George Duffield. The third stanza of the hymn has an interesting directive. It urges Christians to "put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer." Prayer is an integral aspect of our spiritual warfare.

Ask the group, what are the evidences that we are engaged in a spiritual war? Have the larger group create small discussion groups of three. Direct them to the list at the bottom of page 68. Have them

discuss how this list is being revealed daily in our homes, on our streets, and in the halls of government.

Direct the members to read Amos 2:6-16. Amos details God's charges against Israel in his book. This is an early sample of the issues God has against Israel, the Northern kingdom. Ask them to compare how the Northern kingdom compared to America today. After a few minutes, direct the group to the list at the top of page 72. Continue by directing them to read the list at the bottom of page 72 and continuing through the top of page 73. In their small groups have them discuss this question: How does America compare today to these lists.

Direct them to find Psalm 106:15 in their Bibles. After they have individually read this verse, tell them that Billy Graham called this "the most terrifying verse in the Bible." Ask them to discuss in their small group why Graham would say this. Have them discuss the role personal choice plays in the collective destiny of the nation?

Continuing in their groups of three, have them discuss the top concerns that our nation is facing in their personal opinion. Conclude with prayer in your small group for our nation and the leaders we have currently and those yet to be chosen. Pray for God's guidance in our electoral process.

Chapter 5: The Insanity of Fiscal Irresponsibility

Congratulate your group members. Tell them that they must be wealthy. Because each of their households owes a quarter million dollars of unsecured debt. Only wealthy people can carry that kind of debt.

Direct the group to use their phones to go to the National Debt Clock (https://usdebtclock.org). Direct them to take a screen shot or at least write down an approximate number. The reason for "an approximate number" is that the numbers are moving so fast they can barely read them in a glance.

Ask the general question of the group: Can someone list the three branches of our federal government? Ask the group what the role is of the Executive branch and the Legislative branch when it comes to the spending of our tax revenues? Ask how much money is generated by the federal government? (The answer to that is little or none—a few fees here and there, but otherwise, they gain their revenue from taking it from the earners in the citizenry through taxes.)

Direct members to look at the list of factors that can play a part in the collapse of an empire/nation on page 72. Ask them to form small discussion groups of three or four. Using the list as a guide, pose this question for them to answer: How is our national debt creating peril for the nation? Point them to the top of page 82. Using the information at the top of the page, ask them to discuss why the disbursements detailed there are alarming.

Having them remain in their small groups, ask them to read the two quotes by Alexander Frasier Tytler highlighted on page 87. Direct them to use these quotes and assess where they think our country is on the "bondage" scale. Allow time for them to process their answers. Then call for responses for the general group to hear.

Ask them to remain in their groups and using the four remedies outlined on pages 83-96, have them rank these four options as to effectiveness and probability. Call on a couple of groups to report their conclusions.

Conclude the session by having the group return to the national debt clock to see how much debt they have taken on in just the brief time of this group session. Direct the group to page 99 in their books as you read this section, "Our Rest of the Story..."

Chapter 6: Considering a New Paradigm

As a background for the next five chapters, urge the group members to read the Old Testament prophets: Amos and Micah. Explain to the group that a degree of confusion swirls around the term "prophet." Many use the term to mean a *foreteller*. They conceive the prophets as men who foresaw future events. However, the prophets were *forthtellers*. These were men who proclaimed the messages they received from God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Have the members find 2 Peter 1:21 in their Bibles and read it. Here's one of my favorite translations: *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God* (NASB 77). Often the prophets would introduce their prophecies with the words--hear the word of the Lord or the word of the Lord came or thus saith the Lord. They were stating that the word they proclaimed was God's not theirs.

Yes, at times God revealed future events—think of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2) or Isaiah's naming of Cyrus the Persian who would free the Hebrews from exile 176 years before he did (Is. 44:28). But do not forget that the omniscient, transcendent God is also concerned about the conditions of human beings in the dirty here and now. Both Amos and Micah address real moral and ethical issues facing people in their day.

With this background, let's get busy...

Direct members' attention to the terms listed on pages 101-102 of *A Canary in a Coal Mine*. Briefly go over these terms.

Ask members to form discussion clusters of three or so. Then, ask them to share their own stories of inflation, stagflation, and recession. Most have had some up-close-and-personal experience with these financial realities.

After a few minutes, ask the small groups to discuss the effects of inflation on a few specific topics: "shrinkflation" at the grocery store, the ability of young adults to marry and form families, and the ability of people to afford housing. After a few minutes call for a few responses from the groups to see some of the perspectives shared by the members in the smaller discussion groups.

Direct the members' attention to section, "Faithfulness" on page 104. Ask the small groups to develop a succinct statement about the concept of stewardship based on this section and be prepared to share their statement with the larger group. Allow two or three statements.

Remaining in their small discussion group, remind them that the House of Representatives has the responsibility to originate appropriation and spending proposals for the nation. Their proposals go to the Senate for ratification, amendment, and negotiation, then on to the President who signs off on the proposals (or not) and has responsibility for administration of the funds. Have the groups rate the stewardship of our elected officials on a scale of 1 to 10 (1= poor; 10 = excellent). And...here's the kicker...have them give a few examples that justifies their rating. Allow a few minutes for their discussion. Then, call on various groups for a few of their responses with examples. (Be careful. This could turn into a free-for-all. Everyone has felt the squeeze of the inflation serpent.)

Refer the group to the list of factors on page 108 that nearly brought down the Roman Empire in the third century (A.D. 235-284). Point out to the group that debasement of the currency and hyperinflation are factors then and now. This is not a modern problem. It has happened again and again throughout history. Direct the small groups to locate Amos 8:4-6. Ask them to read the passage and draw the parallels to the American economy today. This might take some prompting. But it is also amazing what people can do and see. (If you need any priming, think of inflation as "the invisible thumb on the scale of trade." God was holding the elite merchants accountable for cheating the purchasers by giving false weights—the thumb on the scale.)

One of the greatest (if not the greatest) drivers of inflation is the National Debt. Ask the members to look at the chart on page 80. Remind them that this chart is for the fiscal year 2023 that ended just last September—and it is out of date by over a trillion dollars. Assign the groups one last point for discussion—have them see if they can identify who is driving the rise in National Debt. And then ask them to determine who has responsibility for holding these persons accountable and how that accountability might be exercised. Have a few of the groups share with the larger body some of their conclusions.

And to drive the point of accountability home, ask the members to read Amos 8:1-3; 7-14. Conclude with this statement: If we do not demand accountability, God will hold all of us accountable.

Chapter 7: The Accountability Factor

This session focuses on justice and injustice.

Leader Prep

Following is a brief background to help you navigate issues surrounding God's justice-Through God's interactions with humanity, He has revealed His character and attributes. Most
Christians are familiar with the triune "omni" attributes: omniscience, omnipresence, and
omnipotence. But theologians have identified other revealed attributes:

Absolute Attributes: Immense, Eternal, Immutable, Sufficient, Unity

Moral Attributes: Holy, Love, Just, Merciful

When we think about this chapter of *A Canary in a Coal Mine*, several attributes come into focus—God's holiness, love, immutability, justice, and mercy. <u>God is holy</u>. When we speak of God as *holy*, we mean He is absolutely free from evil. Sin is ever abhorrent to the First Person. Holiness is the supreme attribute of God.

God is love. We have heard this from infancy. While God's holiness reveals His moral government over the universe, His love declares Him to be the gracious Father to all those who trust Him. Every act of God is the consequence of His love. He is not sometimes loving and sometimes unloving. He does not love some people and hate others. Love is His divine nature.

<u>God is immutable.</u> By immutability, we mean that God does not change. What He was in the opening verse of Genesis is what He is in the last verse of Revelation. God is eternally the same in His character and attributes. <u>God is just.</u> We often want to stress God's love and mercy. But

for God to be holy, He must be just. His very nature demands justice. Yet, His dealings with people are always just and righteous. God is just in His love and lovingly just.

We should never open our Bibles to passages that deal with God's wrath and wonder if He really loves us. God's wrath is evidence of His moral integrity. He sets our sin and His wrath in the same frame. The divine moral dilemma is expressed in the question--How can a just God love sinners while maintaining His absolute holiness?

God satisfied that dilemma Himself. In the person of Jesus, the penalty for our sin was paid. God Himself provided His only Son to become our sin payment. The sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross satisfied God's holiness, justice, and love. How? Look at Romans 5:6-11. This revelation describes how the divine dilemma over justice and love was fully dealt with.

God is merciful. Mercy is understood as compassion or forbearance. The Hebrew word used for mercy is *hesed*, lovingkindness. The English Revised Version captures the idea in Psalm 26:10: *Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.* Mercy is extended by a person who has another person totally in his or her power or authority.

John Powers captured this idea several years ago: "Three phrases can clear up any ambiguity about mercy--

- Judgment is getting what you deserve.
- Grace is not getting what you deserve.
- Mercy is getting what you do not deserve!"

God in His supreme wisdom aligns His justice, His love, His holiness, and His mercy.

Now, to the session...

To open the session, lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

State that at the end of the last session, we touched on accountability. We were focused primarily on the debasement of our currency through the immense accumulation of our national debt, inflation, and the need for accountability for those who have driven us into the fiscal ditch. This session picks up on accountability. However, it does so through the avenues of justice and injustice. Note that the Pledge of Allegiance ascribes "liberty and justice for all" as provisions of and for being an American.

Direct the members to form small discussion clusters of three or so. Ask them to read the first paragraph under the pledge of Allegiance at the top of page 118. Then have them continue reading the portion of the 14th Amendment printed there. Direct them to list and discuss some recent actions taken across America that reveal the amendment is being violated. Allow several minutes for their discussion and call for reports.

State to the group that the framers of the Constitution grounded the Constitution and many of the amendments in biblical authority. Ask the members to use their Bibles to find the following passages in their small groups:

Amos 5:24 Micah 6:8 Isaiah 59

Have them read the verses from Amos and Micah. Ask them to look at the five images Isaiah used as detailed in *A Canary in a Coal Mine* on pages 120-121.

Make this statement to the group: God is immutable, He does not change. He is as concerned about justice today as He was in the days of Amos, Micah, and Isaiah.

Ask them all to read Isaiah 5:20-25 beginning at the bottom of page 121. Again, in their small discussion groups, have them discuss this question: How are conditions in America right now reflecting what Isaiah said in 5:20?

Direct them to use as background material for their discussion the sections of the book beginning with "Too big to fail; too big to jail" on page 122 through the top of page 128. (Since we dealt with the border crisis in two places, direct the groups to also use the material on page 140-142.)

Allow several minutes for them to discuss this in their small groups. Then, call for a few responses from the small groups to the larger group. Try to get various groups to comment on different facets of topics. Avoiding repetition will keep the group moving along in their process.

Again, direct the small groups to use the material on pages 130-139 under the heading "The Absence of Leadership" as basis of analyzing four key areas where leadership is required if justice is to be restored in the nation. In this section, the Cloward and Piven Strategy is mentioned. Ask the groups to answer this question regarding that strategy: How is this strategy being used to "fundamentally" change America? (You might note for the group, that this strategy was developed specifically aimed at the welfare system but that it has expanded exponentially.)

After the groups have had enough time to develop their responses, allow them to share some of their observations with the larger group.

Conclude the session by directing the small discussion groups to look at the last three paragraphs on page 142. Ask them to consider these questions: How does funding the current spending of the Federal government contribute to the destruction of America? How does Lincoln's Lyceum Address on page 28 relate to the issue of funding?

In dismissal, tell the group this: Before the House of Representatives approved the latest 1,050-page massive spending bill passed on March 22, 2024, Representative Charles "Chip" Roy of Texas stated, "You fund it, you own it." What Chip Roy was calling for was accountability for the reckless or, maybe, the intentional destruction of America. We should be as responsible as Roy in holding our government representatives accountable for their actions.

Educate. Engage. Enlist!

Chapter 8: When a Nation Turns Away

Ask the whole group: What happens in a culture where no accepted norms or absolutes exist? Read Judges 17:6 and 21:25 and state that the vacillation of the Israelites from obedience to disobedience to discipline to repentance occurred again and again for 450 years. This occurred because *everyone did what was right in his own eyes*. When no authority exists in a society except what is right in your own eyes, chaos and anarchy thrive and life is miserable.

Direct the larger group to form again into small discussion clusters of three—no more than four. Provide them with the following directives and questions to consider.

Look at the five charts depicting the rise of transgenderism. In every chart the pattern is the same. And note that this is not restricted to a particular nation. These charts represent countries from around the world. Why? What causes can explain such a pattern? Include in your discussion the meaning of the chart on page 149.

What is the significance of the observations made in the section, "The Last Stages," on page 150? Ask the smaller groups to share with the larger group some of their conclusions from these previous questions.

Who are the shapers of mass opinion and perceptions?

Why is language so important?

What penalties are being imposed upon citizens, especially pastors, in Canada for exercising their free speech? Why is this so significant? What are some indicators that the impositions in Canada are coming to the United States?

Why is the role of social media so important in our culture? How has social media been used to control speech? How did the control of speech on social media impact the elections? Think especially about how government entities such as the FBI or some of the intelligence departments influenced Facebook, Twitter (now X), YouTube and others in recent years. Why did they want to do this? Pause to allow the smaller groups to share what they concluded regarding the importance of language and freedom of speech.

State that on page 157, the section entitled "2. The rejection of authority" begins. Ask the various small discussion groups to develop a summary of the three areas of authority mentioned in this section. Direct the groups to develop a statement of importance for each of these areas. After an appropriate period, have them share their ideas with the larger group.

Ask the small discussion groups to continue by answering this question: How does the truth of Proverbs 12:15 reflect itself in our current American culture? (You might direct them to look at the three failures outlined by Josh McDowell listed on page 165.)

Conclude the session with a summary from the section, "No Surrender," on page 166.

Chapter 9: Wake Up to Woke!

Because of the nature of this chapter, we need to approach it a bit differently. To this point the small discussion clusters have all considered the same questions. And often they have been asked to share their thinking with the larger group. As we consider the effects of the Woke agenda, it touches us in at least 14 different ways. This was a section that John Powers focused on in particular. These 14 areas reflect John's thinking. To deal with that many areas is beyond the time limits of the session if each discussion group tried to cover all the areas.

(And as an aside.... We have not delved deeply into the areas. We were not trying to be encyclopedic with our approach. Otherwise, the book would have been twice the number of

pages. Our goal is to motivate engagement. If individuals want to explore any of these topics more deeply, the little computer in their hands can lead them to more information than they want in most instances.)

Our challenge is to deal somewhat appropriately with this volume of material in the allotted time. Here's an approach for you to consider:

Assign to each small discussion group two or three topics. Let them see what they can develop. They might even use their phones or devices to seek out more information on these topics than we have provided. Consider our work as a signpost pointing you in a direction. Then, after they have developed their topics, call on them to share with the larger group their findings and thoughts.

Begin the Session

Explain the origins and use of the word, *woke*. Read to the group (and have them follow along in their copy of the book if they have them) the interview between Dr. Thomas Sowell and Ben Wattenberg from 1995.

Highlight what Thomas Sowell stated about <u>evidence</u>. This is found in the middle of page 168. And go on to illustrate with the material on Black Lives Matter, also on page 168. Woke doesn't require evidence. This is proven by the data from the Washington Post's database of police shootings—one of the more thorough compilations in the country. *Woke* operates off "perceived wrongs." And these are used to splinter and divide the nation.

Use Vivek Ramaswamy's explanation of woke on page 169 to crystalize the thinking of the group. Vivek boils the issue down to the <u>oppressed</u> and the <u>oppressors</u>. Conclude your opening remarks by pointing the group to the comments at the bottom of page 169: "Woke culture has made victims of us all.... Woke touches everything in America at this time."

To bring a dose of reality to the moment, direct the group to find Proverbs 6:16-19. Ask them the question: "What does it take to get on God's bad side?" Then, read the passage and invite them to follow along in their Bibles. God hates the one who sows discord in a family (v. 19). *Woke* sows discord in our American family. This is an abomination to God. The Woke culture needs to be addressed and excised like a cancer from the body if health, healing, and wholeness is to be had in America.

Assign the various small discussion groups the various topics for consideration and exploration. (One consideration you might make relates to group organization--often people sit in the same

locations in rooms or groups. And in this extended study, they might have always been working with the same people. But in this session, because so many topics are being considered solely by different groups, you might allow people to trade based on a special interest they might have in some of the topics. Give opportunity to see if any of them want to swap topics and groups.

After the groups have had time to process their topics, call for each group to share their perceptions with the larger group. This can take some time with as many topics and number of small groups. Do the math and give them a time allotment. This would allow all groups to report.

Provide a summary statement. The top two paragraphs of page 182 can provide the core ideas for you to use. Remind the group of the Cloward and Piven Strategy. The point of fragmenting the society is to overload the weakened structures. Without cohesion, the society or culture will fail. Then, it can be remade according to someone else's agenda and design.

You might remind the group of the unofficial motto of the United States—*E pluribus unum (out of many one)*. It is on our Great Seal and on our coins—nickels, dimes, quarters, and half-dollars. While it was probably applied simply to mean out of many colonies, one nation, it could also apply as out of many people, one nation.

Ask the small discussion groups to use the text of the book in the last section, "The Sanctity of Life and Liberty," on pages 182-184 to answer the following questions:

- 1. How do our founding documents affirm that all lives matter? Why does the government of the United States exist? (Scan these quotes from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and make a list of what government, "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," are to do.)
- 2. Read the text of the next to last full paragraph at the bottom of page 183—beginning with the phrase, "Our government...". Answer this question: What does it mean when God pronounces "woe" upon a people or nation? Refer to Isaiah 5:20-25 to develop a response.

Ask a couple of the small groups to share their conclusions.

Dismiss the group with the challenge from the three philosophers at the top of page 184. Silence is not an option if our country is to continue to exist. "Now is the time to speak. Now is the time to act."

Chapter 10: "There's Nothing New Under the Sun"

Leader's Note:

This session is similar to the previous one in that the subject matter in the text covers a large number of facets related to (in this instance) AI. This section of *A Canary in a Coal Mine* is a bit different because we cannot state definitively what the effects of AI will be on our culture or individual lives. But because the possibility is for huge impact, we felt that a word, however brief, was warranted.

Our challenge is to deal somewhat appropriately with this volume of material in the allotted time. So, let's repeat the process we used in the last session:

The area that will be more complex is the negative aspects of Artificial Intelligence. When we come to that section, assign to each small discussion group a couple of the topics. Since there are eight areas, this would accommodate up to four small discussion groups of 3-4 people in each group. If your total group is larger than that, duplicate the assigned topics to multiple groups. When the reports are given to the larger group, allow time for each group to give their perspectives on the same topics back-to-back. Then, move on to the next assigned topics.

Because much of this is speculative at the moment, they have both restrictions and a lot of latitude. Restrictions--because not much is known for sure to the general public. Latitude—because not much is known for sure. (They might want to record their responses to see in five years if they were correct in their prognostications.) Let them see what they can develop. They might even use their little AI-assisted smart phones or devices to seek out more information on these topics than we have provided. Consider our work as a signpost pointing you in a direction.

Let's get into the session...

Use the material in the section, "Artificial Intelligence," to highlight the warning that Dr. Geoffrey Hinton has made concerning the potential effects of AI on humanity. This comes not from some Luddite. But from the man called "the godfather of AI." You might mention the line uttered by Dr. Ian Malcolm, the "chaos theoretician" in *Jurassic Park*: "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should." State that this same sentiment might be applied to Artificial Intelligence developers today.

Ask the members to form themselves into the smaller discussion groups. Ask all of them to consider the positive aspects of Artificial Intelligence. The text on page 187 might provide a

launching pad for their discussion. Direct them to compose a list of potential positive contributions. After a few minutes call for responses from the group.

The next dimension to consider is the potential negative effects of Artificial Intelligence. Assign the topics as previously detailed in the Leader's Note at the beginning of this session. Then, after they have developed their topics, call on them to share with the larger group their findings and thoughts. Be sure that the topics they address are mentioned by name or number. (Follow the sequence of issues outlined on pages 188-201 for both assignments and responses. And—whoever is assigned #6 might wish to explore the images produced by Google's AI Gemini for the Founding Fathers, Nazi soldiers, Senators from the 1800s, the Pope. These images can inform the idea of who is programming AI and the biases they might bring to the design input of Artificial Intelligence.)

Their exploration might take a few minutes longer than usual. After an appropriate time, call for reports for the benefit of the larger group.

To conclude the session, direct the small groups to explore some of the biblical/theological aspects that could inform our reactions to the topic of Artificial Intelligence. They will find assistance in the section entitled, "Deception of the First Couple and Cultures," on pages 201-203. Call for a group or two to share their perceptions about biblical directives when it comes to Artificial Intelligence.

It is a brave new world (to coin a phrase) that we are moving into. Many of us are struggling to keep up with the past techno breakthroughs. We generally have no idea where we are heading. But we must remember that God who created the universe is not taken by surprise by any of this. He is immutable and will not allow Himself to be replaced by the next golden calf. We must find the way forward as His followers. We must determine if AI is a tool to be used by us or if it is to rule over us. Dr. Geoffrey Hinton's warning might have come too late.

Chapter 11: "Is There Any Hope?"

This chapter is in many ways the more crucial of the book. This is the "so what?" chapter. "So what" do we do to challenge and change the direction and destiny of our nation? Following are three movements that guide the members to process the content of this chapter focused on hope. For the greatest effect, each of the small discussion groups need to experience the whole of the chapter. To facilitate the groups' process, make copies of the directives so they will have them to refer to as they work.

Ask the members to form into their small discussion clusters of 3-4 people. Assign them the following tasks.

First Movement

Ask the groups to discuss the following questions--

How is our culture being destroyed? How is the culture's population conditioned or desensitized to moral and ethical changes?

Why do we need to think in terms of incremental change—both negatively and positively? What are some illustrations of incremental change?

Allow the groups to process the questions and call for reporting to the larger group. It might take too long to have all report. Select a couple of the groups to respond. In the next movements, be sure to call on other groups to allow everyone to participate.

Second Movement

Ask the groups to discuss the following questions or conduct the following actions--What does God require of us? Read Leviticus 5:1 to create a statement of God's demand upon those who become aware of the critical situation our nation is facing?

Explain the meaning of Keith Green's statement on page 209.

From God's perspective, what is the initial demand for change to occur?

Explain in simple terms what repentance (*metano*) means. Give some examples to illustrate what we must change our thinking about. On pages 211 through 213, several biblical passages refer to the need for personal and national repentance. Several of these relate to the covenant nation of Israel. But the Assyrians are also touched with God's demand for repentance. What is the recurring demand and action in each of these instances? And how do these illustrate the essence of the meaning of repentance (*metano*)?

Look at one of the great statements in the Bible calling for revival among the people of God in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Although this is a specific demand upon the Israelites, the passage outlines the requirements necessary for God to heal any land. Spend time creating an outline of those requirements.

How did the First and Second Great Awakenings affect the future of the United States? (For an expanded understanding of this, consider doing a quick overview of some of the articles you can find easily through an online search.)

Allow the groups to process the questions and call for reporting to the larger group.

Third Movement

Direct the groups to discuss the following questions or conduct the following actions--How does the experience of Gideon offer hope and strategy for Christians in America today?

How are "canaries" to be equipped? Discuss the steps detailed beginning at the bottom of page 221 through the bottom of page 223. Expand the ideas you find there with concrete actions that can be taken in your area of influence.

A key question is asked at the bottom of page 223—<u>How do we effect change?</u> Explore the three areas mentioned on page 224. Pay particular attention to the two models or examples described in the second action—"Participate in change." How do we harness the power of the 1%? How do they network their influence to ever-expanding circles in their areas of family, friends, church, and work?

After an appropriate period of time, ask the groups to report their responses.

Commission

To conclude the study, read to the group the last four paragraphs on page 225 beginning with "Remember...." Ask them to follow along in their copies of *A Canary in a Coal Mine*.

If the members are seated, ask them to stand. Commission them by prayer for them to be filled with the power of God Himself and go forth to stand in their place as the Army of God—an Army of Canaries!