

Before the discussion each week, encourage those in your group (and yourself) to share any WINS from last week on how they applied the passages to their life and any changes they experienced. Specifically, ask how they're doing with the spiritual disciplines discussed in previous weeks.

How to use this guide

Start with the key questions, include any optional scriptures and questions as needed, and conclude by determining your next steps. Be careful not to add too many passages, as it can create confusion. Make it a habit to continually direct the group back to the scripture you are studying.

Use this section (Main Idea) to set up the discussion. Remind everyone of the overall themes of the passage(s). Introduce this week's discussion using content from the "main idea" section below.

Main Idea, THE GENESIS WAY: (Genesis 1:1-3)

Last week focused on *perspective*—recognizing that our days are numbered. This week moves us from awareness to honesty. We want to confront the chaos so God can bring clarity. In Genesis 1, before God shaped creation, He confronted what was formless and empty. In the same way, we can stop rearranging life and start naming what's actually there. The goal is not guilt or immediate solutions, but clarity. "Dump It" is about exposure before transformation so I encourage openness, patience, and grace. Lots of grace. Progress, not perfection is our goal.

Most of us don't struggle because we lack discipline, we struggle because we've never stopped to see what we're carrying. We manage stress, juggle commitments, and feel overwhelmed without ever asking, "What's actually in my life right now?"

This week is about honesty before God. Genesis shows us that God brings order only after He confronts chaos. Today isn't about fixing anything...yet. It's about dumping everything into the light so clarity can begin. You can't shape what you won't name.

I first learned the power of this lesson while launching a new church. Every waking hour was packed with necessary tasks—building a launch team, planning services, meeting people, and solving problems. The work wasn't optional, but the weight of it all was overwhelming. One day, Beth sat down with me and asked a simple question: "Tell me everything you're carrying." As I listed the tasks, I realized I had been holding an entire organization in my head. No wonder I was exhausted. Step one was clear—we had to **Dump It** out. Once everything was on paper, clarity replaced chaos. Only then could we move to the next step—**Shape It**—because shaping is impossible until you first expose what you're actually carrying.

Leader Reminder: Do not rush participants toward solutions. Do not allow shame to dominate the room. Clarity comes before change. Next week will bring structure...this week brings truth. We want to encourage everybody to get everything out on the table. Most likely this exercise will be something people do when they are alone. Again, remind them that while dumping everything out can feel overwhelming, they do not have to solve or fix anything at this time. We just want them to clearly see what they are carrying.

When conducting a group discussion, it's important to give everyone a chance to respond to each question. Start by asking specific individuals "WHAT" and "WHY" questions, then move on to general questions for the entire group. Be sure to acknowledge and thank those who participate and include your own input to further the discussion. It's perfectly acceptable to have moments of silence to collect thoughts. By following these steps, you can maintain a focused and productive discussion.

Questions

Weekly check-in question: Use this question to start a conversation and help everyone feel at ease. Be sure to listen and acknowledge each person's response. There are no right or wrong answers.

Check-in Question: WHEN LIFE FEELS OVERWHELMING, WHAT'S USUALLY YOUR FIRST RESPONSE? DO YOU PUSH HARDER, WITHDRAW, OR REARRANGE THINGS AND HOPE IT GETS BETTER?

This question encourages participants to reflect on moments when they felt a deep sense of guidance or protection, similar to how Jesus portrays Himself as the Good Shepherd in the passage we will be studying. By sharing personal experiences of feeling guided, we can connect with the themes of John 10 and explore the significance of trusting in God's care and guidance in our lives. It also sets a tone of openness and vulnerability, creating an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing their stories and insights.

Have everyone open their Bible and move right into the scriptures after covering the Main Idea above. Encourage everyone to bring their Bible and to read along. Suggestion: depending on the amount to read, you might want to break it down into sections and have more than one person read. Either ask for volunteers or choose those who feel comfortable reading in front of others. Remember these two techniques: Don't give the participants the answers. Leave them time to discover.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: THE GENESIS WAY (Genesis 1:1-10)

Opening Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:1-10

1. WHEN LIFE FEELS OVERWHELMING, WHAT'S USUALLY YOUR FIRST RESPONSE? DO YOU PUSH HARDER, WITHDRAW, OR REARRANGE THINGS AND HOPE IT GETS BETTER?
2. READ Genesis 1:1-10

3. Fat Rabbit: MOST PEOPLE AREN'T OVERWHELMED BECAUSE THEY HAVE TOO MUCH TO DO—THEY'RE OVERWHELMED BECAUSE THEY'VE NEVER DECIDED WHAT THEY'RE ACTUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR.
4. In the beginning God "created"...He dumped everything out...and it was formless, chaotic, messy and empty. In other words, it lacked order. WHAT STOOD OUT TO YOU FROM THE IDEA THAT GOD BEGINS TRANSFORMATION BY CONFRONTING CHAOS, NOT IGNORING IT?
5. WHY DO YOU THINK WE'RE SO TEMPTED TO REARRANGE LIFE INSTEAD OF DUMPING IT OUT AND BEING HONEST ABOUT WHAT WE'RE CARRYING?
6. WHICH KINDS OF COMMITMENTS ARE HARDEST FOR PEOPLE TO NAME—ROLES, EXPECTATIONS, EMOTIONAL WEIGHT, OR TIME OBLIGATIONS? WHY?
7. Anchor to the discussion. How does this fit into my toolbox? We can't shape what we refuse to expose. PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: SET ASIDE 15–30 UNINTERRUPTED MINUTES. WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING THAT OCCUPIES YOUR: TIME, ENERGY, ATTENTION, AND EMOTIONAL BANDWIDTH. Do not organize, evaluate, or justify...just dump it. This is not a productivity exercise. It's an act of surrender. Dump everything on paper...no editing, no explaining. You can only shape what you're willing to expose. You can't shape a life you won't expose. Today give yourself a gift: Stop carrying what God never assigned. Choose honesty over hiding, clarity over chaos, and obedience over overload. Say "I will not manage a life I haven't exposed." NOTHING HIDDEN. NOTHING ASSUMED. NOTHING UNMANAGED. I DUMP IT...SO I CAN SHAPE IT.

"Check-out" question: Discuss some examples and ways you can apply this week's message and scripture to your life and name some definite next steps you can take in your mission. We'll provide some examples each week on your copy as listed below. The challenge applies to the scripture reading and prayer time mentioned below.

Next Steps/Challenge:

NOTHING HIDDEN. NOTHING ASSUMED. NOTHING UNMANAGED. I DUMP IT...SO I CAN SHAPE IT.

These scriptures should be read throughout the week. They can easily complement any other reading that each group member may be doing. There will only be a few scriptures assigned for each day. Each passage will relate to the Main Idea and will assist everyone in taking the next steps discussed or identified in your group. Instruct your group to meditate on these verses (not just read them) and to pray before, during, and after reading for the Holy Spirit to guide, encourage, and help each person apply them to their life.

Daily Bible Readings and Prayer Time

Read the following scriptures this week:

Day 1 – Genesis 1:1-2, Chaos before creation

Day 2 – Psalm 90:12, Numbering our days

Day 3 – 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Taking thoughts captive

Day 4 – Luke 10:38-42, Mary and Martha

Day 5 – Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, A time for everything
Day 6 – Matthew 11:28-30, What Jesus invites us to carry
Day 7 – Psalm 139:23-24, Inviting God to search us