

# GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL GOD SERMON SERIES

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

**29 & 30 MAY 2021**

### WORKING OUT IN THE LIGHT

**Scripture: Philippians 2:12-16, 1 Timothy 4:8-10**

Overview of this series:

The general intention of this sermon series is to encourage us to see and experience our God who is good and beautiful, even in times of darkness. The sermons and study guides will suggest a Spiritual Workout that is intended to help us be attentive to God's goodness and beauty in daily life at work and at home.

In this session, we look at the gift of salvation and the gift of being able to work out our salvation.

The recommended time allocation for your group meeting is:

**If you meet weekly :**

- Worship through song (10 mins)
- Discussion - 1 session worth of core questions (40 mins)
- Discussion - 1 session worth of additional questions (30 mins)
- Sharing, Prayer, Fellowship (30 mins)

**If you meet fortnightly :**

- Worship through song (10 mins)
- Discussion - 2 sessions' worth of core questions (60 mins)
- Optional - additional questions (10 mins)
- Sharing, Prayer, Fellowship (30 mins)

**Core Questions for Discussion**

(If your group meets fortnightly, combine Core Questions of two sessions and choose one Further Question from either session.)

Philippians 2:12-16 passage breakdown

Context	
- v1-5 - v6-11	v1-5: People of the gospel having the same mind, same love, united in spirit, with one purpose → the attitude Christ Jesus had to others in obedience to God v6-11: Hymn/poem of Jesus' gospel mission
Observation	
v12-13	Working out our salvation with fear and trembling because God works in us.
v14-16	Holding fast to God's word of life as lights in the dark world.

**1 Read Philippians 2:12-13. These verses start with the word “therefore”, which usually means that it continues from teaching or thoughts set out in preceding verses (vv.1-11).**

**1.A) List some of the key points in vv.1-11.**

**1.B) In light of those key points, what is the Bible trying to encourage and emphasise in vv.12 and 13?**

"The exhortation to work out their salvation is not mere idealism but rather viable "because God is working in their midst to will and to do." Were God and his grace not constantly working in the believing community in a powerful way, believers would not be able to obey this command of Paul's. [...] God's willing does not replace or supplant our voluntary willing but enables and increases our willing, power, and freedom to do what God requires. But we must work out what God has worked into the midst of the community. The Philippians should be exhibiting a healthy body of Christ which manifests the saving activity of God in their midst."

- Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, pp.160–161.

Let's ponder:

**Why does the Bible use “work out” to describe our Christian lives?**

"Christian ethics has nothing to do with rules that regulate conduct. [...] We are not those who have been begrudgingly caught by God, so that we obey basically out of fear and trembling over what might happen if we were to do otherwise. Rather, being Christ's means to be converted in the true sense of that word, to have our lives invaded by God's Holy Spirit, who creates in us a new desire toward God that prompts godly behavior in the first place."

- Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, p.105.

**2 In verses 14-16, Scripture indicates that working out our salvation would include being steadfast in several aspects of life so that the children of God can “shine like stars in the universe”. What should we do, and why?**

**3 Part of working out our salvation, as we have seen in Philippians, entails obedience. In 1 Timothy, another aspect is highlighted. Read 1 Timothy 4:7b, 8-10. What sort of training is Paul encouraging Timothy to participate in? Why do we need this training?**

1 Timothy 4:7b-10, 11-16

Context	
- v1-7a	Paul warns Timothy about false teachers advocating certain spiritual practices which is the “hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared”.
Observation	
v7b-10	Godliness (the Greek word connotes reverence or piety) has present and eternal value (our hope set on the living God); it is why we work hard and struggle
v11-16	Persevere in how you (Timothy) live and what you teach (the gospel); Timothy is a steward of the gospel of God’s salvation

**4 In this session, we have explored various aspects of the gift of salvation and the gift of working out our salvation. Consider and share in your small group:**

**4.A) What about the world makes it hard to be godly or obedient? When have you found it challenging to live in a godly manner? (For example, it might be the temptations we struggle with, or the challenges we face at home, at work, in school.)**

**4.B) Living a godly life can be hard work. How can you support and encourage each other, when it feels tough, to persevere in seeking godliness and obedience?**

### Further Questions for Discussion

(Optional question for discussion if time permits. Do allocate adequate time for prayer and fellowship.)

#### 5 When you think of the words “fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), what comes to mind?

What do we understand by the word “fear” used in verse 12?

#### 6 Suggested Spiritual Workout: SLEEP-WORKING

For each session in this sermon series, a spiritual workout will be suggested for you to exercise on your own or together as a group. We encourage you to try this spiritual exercise, then share at your next small group meeting how it has impacted you.

Sleep.

Psalm 127:2, the Psalmist states

In vain you rise early  
and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.

## **THE DISCIPLINE OF SLEEP**

(Extracted from *The Good and Beautiful God*, by James Bryan Smith)

At least one day this week sleep until you cannot sleep any more. If you need to, find a day when you can sleep in. Your aim is to sleep, or to stay in bed, until you can finally say, I am completely rested. I do not need to sleep or stay in bed a minute longer. You may need to solicit the help of others if you have family members who need your care.

If you are unable to do this exercise, try another: aim to get at least seven hours of sleep at least three times this week. This may require going to bed earlier than usual. The following are some tips to help you fall asleep:

- (1) Go to sleep at a consistent time each night.
- (2) Try not to engage in activities that increase stress (such as, perhaps, watching TV or spending time on the computer) right before bedtime.
- (3) If you are affected by stimulants (caffeine, spicy foods) avoid them in the evening.
- (4) Do not force yourself to fall asleep. If you do not feel drowsy, read a book, meditate on a psalm, listen to soft music, or sit up and gaze out your window until you do feel drowsy, and then go back to bed. Until your body is ready for sleep, tossing and turning in bed will not work.
- (5) If you awaken in the middle of the night, but do not have to get up, stay in bed. Give your body a chance to fall back asleep.

Even with these tips you might still have trouble getting sufficient sleep. If so, it might be helpful to consult your doctor to see if there is a medical explanation. You could also see a sleep expert for more advice, or perhaps visit a counselor or therapist to see if there is an underlying emotional problem that might be hindering you from sleeping.

## **Prayer Suggestions**

7 Would you consider praying for the following:

- a. Has God impressed on your heart or mind an area of your life in which you have not been “working out your salvation”? Share and pray with one another, that God may work in you in that area.
- b. If you are new to spiritual workouts, would you pray for God to open your heart to experience Him in a fresh way.
- c. For friends and family to have an opportunity to sleep this week. Perhaps you know of someone who has been feeling exhausted and tired. Pray specifically for them.