

Life Group Leaders' Guide: Restoration and the Restoring God

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by thanking God for bringing your group together and for being the Restorer of all things. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion about trusting the Lord, enduring hardship with righteousness, and partnering with His work of restoration in your lives, relationships, community, and the land.

Worship Song Suggestions (10 minutes)

"Graves Into Gardens" – Elevation Worship
"Goodness of God" – Bethel Music / Jenn Johnson
"Build My Life" – Housefires / Pat Barrett
"Great Are You Lord" – Zeo Worship

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Share about a time when you had to trust someone else's perspective over your own (like the suspension bridge story). What made it difficult? What was the outcome?

Key Scripture Passages

"3 We are not giving anyone an occasion for offense, so that the ministry will not be blamed. 4 Instead, as God's ministers, we commend ourselves in everything: by great endurance, by afflictions, by hardships, by difficulties, 5 by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger, 6 by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth,[a] by the power of God; through weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 through glory and dishonor, through slander and good report; regarded as deceivers, yet true; 9 as unknown, yet recognized; as dying, yet see—we live; as being disciplined, yet not killed; 10 as grieving, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet enriching many; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.." — 2 Corinthians 6:3–10

Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

1. God Restores Through Endurance

Restoration is rarely immediate. Patiently enduring hardship is itself a form of faithfulness. What we learn in suffering cannot always be learned any other way.

2. God Restores Through Receiving Righteousness

Through Christ, we have become the very embodiment of God's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). When we understand and receive this, it fundamentally changes how we relate to others and to our own identity.

3. God Restores by Cultivating Joy in the Midst of Suffering

Paul describes a tension in 2 Corinthians 6 where hearts ache, and joy coexists. This is not denial of pain; it is the fruit of leaning on God as the source of strength through grief.

4. Restoration Requires Pono (Righteous Action)

Restoration is not passive. It involves a partnership with God in which we align our hearts and actions with His character. Acting justly and righteously is a prerequisite for seeing restoration come.

5. We Are Connected to the Land.

Restoration is not only personal or relational, but it is also tied to the land and how we steward it. Disconnection from the land reflects a broader spiritual and communal brokenness that God desires to heal.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Opening (15–20 Minutes)

1. When you hear the word "restoration," what is the first thing that comes to mind? A relationship? Your health? Your sense of identity? Take a moment to share with the group what area of your life most needs restoration right now.
2. Can you recall a specific time when God restored something in your life; a relationship, a sense of purpose, your health, or your faith? What did that experience teach you about who God is?

Part 2: Going Deeper (15–20 Minutes)

3. The sermon describes three ways God brings restoration: through endurance, through receiving righteousness, and through carrying joy in suffering. Which of these three is most challenging for you personally, and why?

4. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6 that he and his companions proved themselves by purity, patience, kindness, and sincere love rather than by strength or impressive speech. What does it look like in practice to wield righteousness as a weapon in your own life, in your home, your workplace, or your community?
5. In the sermon, Pastor Mark draws a parallel between Paul's appeal to the Corinthian church and the historical posture of Hawaiian leadership during times of crisis; choosing righteousness over revenge. Where in your own life are you tempted to respond to injustice or pain with bitterness rather than righteous endurance? What would it look like to respond differently?
6. Psalm 37:3–4 calls us to trust in the Lord, do good, dwell in the land, and delight in Him. What does it mean to you to "dwell in the land" in your specific context, the neighborhood, the community, or the place where God has placed you?
7. The sermon raises the idea that grief is spiritually significant because it teaches us how to cultivate joy in the midst of sorrow. Have you experienced this? What did grief teach you that you could not have learned any other way?

Part 3: Reflection and Application (15–20 Minutes)

8. In the sermon, Pastor Mark asks: "What do you need the Lord to restore?" Spend a few minutes in quiet reflection. Then, if you feel comfortable, share one specific thing with the group and allow others to pray over it with you.
 9. 2 Chronicles 7:14 describes humility, prayer, repentance, and seeking God's face as prerequisites for the healing of the land. As a group, what would it look like to take these steps seriously, not just individually, but together as a community?
 10. The huli, the top of the kalo plant that is cut off and replanted to produce new growth, was offered as a prophetic image of generational restoration. What are you planting now that you hope will become the foundation for the next generation? What does faithful stewardship look like in your life today?
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Practical Applications (10 minutes)

This Week, Try One or More of the Following:

- **Remember and record.** Write down at least three specific ways God has restored something in your life. Read it aloud to yourself or to someone you trust. Let it build your faith for what He is doing now.
- **Identify your weapon.** The next time you face a situation where you are tempted toward bitterness, revenge, or cold-heartedness, pause and ask: "What does it look like to respond with righteousness here?" Practice holding that posture, even if it is uncomfortable.

- **Tend something.** Whether it is a plant, a garden, a relationship, or a commitment to your neighborhood, find one tangible way to practice stewardship and care for something outside of yourself this week. Reflect on what it reveals about how God tends to us.
 - **Pray for endurance.** Choose one area of your life where you have been tempted to give up waiting on God. Commit to praying specifically for that thing for the next 30 days. Invite a group member to hold you accountable.
 - **Practice joy alongside grief.** If you are walking through a season of loss or pain, give yourself permission to grieve without guilt. At the same time, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal one small reason for joy each day. Journal what you notice.
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Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Pray Over These Three Things as a Group:

- **Personal Restoration:** the specific areas each person named where they need God to restore something.
 - **Righteous Action:** that each member of the group would have the courage to act justly and with a pure heart, even in difficult circumstances.
 - **The Land and the Community:** that God would continue His restorative work in Hawaii and in every place represented in your group, healing what has been broken and raising up people who will steward it faithfully.
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Leader Notes

- This message touches sensitive themes: Hawaiian history, sovereignty, overthrow/occupation, land, cultural trauma, and restoration. Create a safe space where people can be honest without feeling pressured to agree politically or emotionally.
- Be careful not to turn the discussion into a political debate. The sermon's main emphasis is God as Restorer and our call to respond with righteousness, endurance, humility, and trust.
- Some people may carry deep grief, anger, confusion, or defensiveness around Hawaii's history. Let people name those emotions without correcting them too quickly.
- Emphasize that restoration is both personal and communal: relationships, identity, bodies, families, land, culture, and spiritual life. Invite people to ask, "Lord, what do You want to restore in me?"
- Be prepared for people to wrestle with the idea of enduring suffering. Clarify that endurance does not mean passivity, denial, or accepting injustice. Biblical endurance means remaining faithful, righteous, and anchored in God while trusting Him to restore.

- Highlight the difference between revenge and righteousness. The message calls us to use righteousness as our “weapon;” purity, patience, kindness, sincere love, and trust in God.
- Some may struggle with the idea of joy in suffering. Make room for grief. Joy does not erase sorrow; it is cultivated with God in the middle of sorrow.
- The sermon connects people and ‘āina/land. For some, this may be new theologically. Encourage curiosity rather than argument. Scripture often connects God’s people, justice, worship, and land.
- Keep bringing the conversation back to Jesus. True restoration is ultimately under King Jesus and His Kingdom, not merely human systems or outcomes.
- Encourage personal application:
 - “Where do I need restoration?”
 - “Where do I need to act pono/righteously?”
 - “Where is God asking me to endure?”
 - “Where has my heart grown cold?”
 - “How can I trust the Lord and do good this week?”
- Be sensitive to ethnic and cultural dynamics in the group. Avoid asking Hawaiian members to speak on behalf of all Hawaiians. Let people share only if they want to.
- If discussion around historical injustice becomes heavy, gently guide the group toward prayer, lament, repentance, and hope rather than trying to “solve” everything intellectually.
- Emphasize grace: God restores through His power, not through our perfect performance. Our role is to trust Him, do good, walk in righteousness, and remain open to His Spirit.
- A strong closing prayer direction: ask God to restore what is broken in us, soften our hearts, teach us to act justly, heal the land, and help us trust Him as the true Restorer.

Additional Discussion Questions to Choose From

The sermon describes God as the author of a story being written through history and through our lives. In what ways have you seen God's authorship at work in your own story, especially during seasons of hardship or uncertainty?

In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul demonstrates that endurance through suffering is a mark of genuine ministry. How has your own experience of suffering shaped or deepened your faith in ways that comfort or ease never could?

Kauikeolei chose to yield sovereignty rather than shed blood, trusting that righteous action would lead to restoration. Where in your own life are you being called to lay something down in trust rather than fight for it in your own strength?

The sermon draws a connection between protecting the purity of your heart and creating the conditions for God to do restorative work. What practices or postures help you keep your heart warm and open toward those who have wronged or opposed you?

Justin Crespo highlights that the Hawaiian people were never meant to be disconnected from the aina, and that healing the land and healing the people are deeply intertwined. How does your relationship with the physical place God has placed you shape your spiritual formation and sense of identity?

The sermon points out that we are called to celebrate not just the outcome of restoration but the righteous means by which it was pursued. How does this challenge the way you typically measure success or victory in difficult circumstances?

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6 that he and his companions hold righteousness as their weapon in both hands. How does understanding righteousness as a weapon, rather than simply a moral standard, change the way you approach conflict or injustice?

The sermon describes how the story of Hawaii, its revival, its trauma, and its ongoing restoration, reflects the broader story of what God is doing in all of human history. How does situating your local community within God's larger redemptive story change the way you see the struggles and hopes around you?

2 Chronicles 7:14 is cited as a reminder that humility, prayer, and repentance are prerequisites for the healing of the land. What does genuine corporate repentance look like for a community seeking restoration, and what role do you personally play in that process?

The sermon holds in tension the reality that our hearts can ache over loss and injustice while still carrying joy rooted in the hope of restoration. How do you personally navigate that tension, and what does it look like in practice to grieve and rejoice at the same time?

5-Day Devotional: Restoration, Righteousness, Endurance, Identity, and Joy in Suffering

Day 1: God Is the Author of Your Story

Reading: Hebrews 12:1–3

Devotional:

God is not a passive observer of your life. He is the author and perfecter of your faith, actively writing a story that includes your hardships, your valleys, and your moments of breakthrough. Just as a farmer tends the soil before anything grows, God is at work in the unseen places of your life. The mud and the muck of your current season are not signs of His absence. They are evidence of His presence. Trust that the story He is writing for you has a purpose beyond what you can presently see. Stay in the field with Him.

Reflection:

What chapter of your story feels unfinished or broken right now? Can you surrender that chapter to the Author today?

Practical Application:

Write down one area of your life where you sense God is still at work. Pray over it and commit to trusting His authorship for the next five days.

Day 2: Endurance Is the Path to Restoration

Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:3–5

Devotional:

Paul did not prove the validity of his ministry through eloquence or power. He proved it through patient endurance of troubles, hardships, and calamities. Restoration rarely arrives all at once. More often, it is the slow, steady fruit of remaining faithful through seasons that feel unbearable. Psalm 23 reminds us that even in the valley of the shadow of death, the Shepherd does not abandon us. He walks with us through it. What you cannot learn in a Bible study, you learn in suffering. The school of endurance produces a depth of character and a closeness to God that comfort alone never could.

Reflection: Where in your life have you been tempted to give up before the restoration arrived?

Practical Application: Identify one long-standing prayer you have nearly abandoned. Return to it this week with fresh resolve, trusting that God restores through endurance.

Day 3: You Have Become the Righteousness of God

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Devotional:

This verse contains one of the most staggering truths in all of Scripture. God made Christ, who had no sin, to become sin on your behalf, so that in Him you might become the righteousness of God. Not merely declared righteous. Not merely forgiven. You have become the very embodiment of one of God's core attributes. This is your weapon against bitterness, against revenge, against the slow erosion of a cold heart. When the enemy attempts to rob you of your identity, your peace, or your dignity, you do not fight back with force. You stand firm in who you are in Christ. Righteousness is your weapon, held in both hands.

Reflection:

Are there areas of your life where you are still fighting battles with the wrong weapons, relying on self-effort, bitterness, or control rather than righteousness?

Practical Application:

Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:21 this week. Each morning, declare aloud that you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and allow that truth to shape how you respond to conflict and difficulty throughout the day.

Day 4: Keeping a Warm Heart in a Hostile World

Reading: Matthew 24:12–13

Devotional:

Jesus warned that in the last days, lawlessness would increase and the hearts of many would grow cold. The great danger is not only external hostility but internal hardening. When we are wronged, overlooked, or oppressed, the natural response is to build walls. But a cold heart cannot be used by God for restoration. Purity, in the deepest sense, means maintaining a warm and tender heart toward God and toward others even when the world gives you every reason to harden. This is the posture that invites God's restorative work. Keeping your heart soft is not weakness. It is the most courageous act of spiritual warfare available to you.

Reflection:

Has a past wound caused your heart to grow cold toward God, toward a person, or toward a particular community?

Practical Application:

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal one area where your heart has hardened. Take a concrete step this week toward softening that area, whether through prayer, a conversation, or an act of intentional kindness toward someone who has hurt you.

Day 5: Joy and Sorrow Can Dwell Together

Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:9-10; Psalm 37:3–6

Devotional:

Paul describes a life of radical paradox: beaten but alive, sorrowful yet always rejoicing, owning nothing yet possessing everything. This is not denial of pain. It is the supernatural capacity to hold grief and joy simultaneously, a gift that only the Holy Spirit can produce. Grief is not the enemy of joy. It is, in many ways, the soil in which deep joy is cultivated. As you dwell in the land God has placed you in, trust in Him, do good, and delight yourself in Him. He promises to give you the desires of your heart. Restoration is not only coming. For those rooted in Him, it has already begun.

Reflection:

What would it look like for you to carry both honest grief and genuine joy in your current season, without suppressing either one?

Practical Application:

Spend time today in Psalm 37:3–6. Write out what it would mean practically for you to trust, dwell, delight, and commit in the specific circumstances of your life right now. Bring that written prayer before God as an act of surrender and expectation.