

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Rehearse leading the Guided Imagery
- Encourage your group to listen to the podcast for this session (Share the link via email or social media)

Imagining Choices

Use the following scenario to get your group discussing the notion of making decisions. This scenario is obviously very limited in the amount of information provided. Allow participants to notice and protest this fact. This activity is not really about parenting decisions, but designed to help the group consider the role of knowledge in the choices we make

Scenario: Parent of teen who is a senior in high school. Teen asks to drive 3 friends to a nearby town to attend a concert. How do you respond?

After discussing responses for a few moments, ask questions like these:

- What sort of information did you need in order to make this decision?
- How is information and knowledge related to our ability to make decisions in life?

Garden Choices

Say something like this: "It is sometimes hard to hear familiar texts without also remembering interpretations we have heard across our lives. Today's text is a very familiar one - the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. You probably already have ideas about what the story means. However, as you hear the text again, please try to clear your mind of views of this text, and hear it again as if for the first time.

Read Genesis 3:1-21

View the Bible Background Video

□ *Two Trees — Guided Imagery*

Use this "guided imagery" to put ourselves in Adam & Eve's place (go here for tips on leading a guided imagery).

Invite the participants to relax and close their eyes. Provide the following prompts to guide their imagination, allowing time after each one for them to silently consider and respond.

Imagine a dark, thick curtain in front of you. Clear your mind as you look at the curtain.

After a few moments, the curtain slowly opens and you step into a lush, rich garden. Plants, trees, and flowers of all sorts are growing in the garden. A small stream flows nearby, and you can hear the sound of the water bubbling over the stones. Birds, butterflies and bees hurry about their work among the plants in the garden. Walk into the garden. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell?

(allow a few minutes of silence)

You find yourself hungry, and notice ripe fruits and berries growing nearby. You select a few and eat until you are full. What sort of fruits do you find. Imagine their smell and taste.

(allow a few minutes of silence)

Imagine several weeks have past. You enjoy days full of exploring the garden, always easily finding food and fresh water, always easily finding comfortable places to rest and sleep. Find a place to rest, and sit or lay down. What do you see and hear around you? How do you feel? After a bit, you think you hear God walking toward you. Imagine your conversation...

(allow a few minutes of silence)

Invite the participants to return their attention to your group and open their eyes. Invite them to share, if they wish, from their experience by asking questions like these:

- What was your garden like? What did you see, hear or smell?
- Where did you go in the garden?
- What feelings did you have?
- As weeks passed, how did your feelings change? What did you think about?
- If you could live in such a garden instead of this world, would you? Why or why not?
- What sort of conversation did you have with God? What feelings did it create?
- If there had been a companion in the garden with you, would that affect your decision?
- What would the disadvantages of living long term in such a garden be (if any)?

Recall the passage from Genesis that we read earlier.

- How do you think Adam and Eve experienced the garden?
- What would make a tree — even a forbidden one — such as a tree that gives knowledge, tempting? If you were in their place, would you have eaten of it, or avoided it? Why?

☐ *Optional Activity - Turning Points*

(Feel free to use this activity instead of the Guided Imagery activity).

Gather the group, play some quiet music, and make sure that everyone is comfortable and tell them: "I want to start today by thinking about all the turning points we have had in our lives. For the next few minutes, let us sit here and listen to the music while I will remind you of some popular turning points that people have. Take a moment for each of them, thinking about what happened, and imagining how it might have gone differently."

Begin once everyone is ready, inviting them to think about three to five events, such as:

Your first day at school

Your first date

A time you decided what you wanted to do with your life

A time when something a friend did made you cry

Your first day at work

Stop the music, refocus the group, and ask:

To what degree was this imagining easy or difficult and why?

If you can tell us, what do you think was your life's most significant turning point and why?

What kinds of things do you frequently think about, wondering if you've done the right thing?

If you could, why would or wouldn't you go back to a turning point and give yourself advice, even if you knew that would change the person you are now?

☐ *Growing Toward God*

Ask: How do our choices help us live more or less faithfully with God?

Close with prayer for wisdom and guidance as we embrace the freedom and responsibility God has given us in our ability to make choices.