The Point of Low Points
Facilitator's Guide

by Ken Gurley

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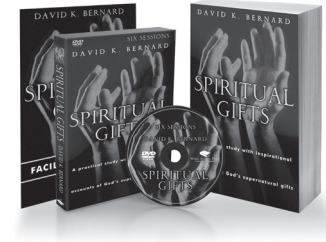

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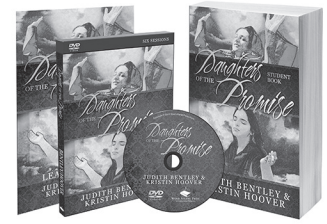

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Small Group
Facilitator's Guide

Purpose: *The Point of Low Points* studies the five low points in the life of Joseph to glean the meaning behind similar low points in our lives. This can be used for any small group, but especially for those who are struggling with grief, loss, confusion, and hopelessness.

Structure: There are six sessions in this study. Each of these six sessions corresponds to the six sections of the book. Prior to each session, students should reach the following sections of the book:

Point of Low Points Overview

Session One	Valley Fever *Read the author's preface and chapters 1-3 in Section I of the book before this meeting.*
Session Two	Facing Loss *Read chapters 4-5 in Section II of the book before this meeting.*
Session Three	Confronting Confusion *Read chapters 6-7 in Section III of the book before this meeting.*
Session Four	Meeting Betrayal *Read chapters 11-12 in Section IV of the book before this meeting.*
Session Five	Combatting Unjust Accusations *Read chapters 13-14 in Section V of the book before this meeting.*
Session Six	Reviving Dead Dreams *Read chapters 15-16 in Section VI and the closing comments before this meeting.*

Study Materials

This study utilizes *The Point of Low Points* material written by Ken Gurley. Each member of your group needs to have a copy of the book. As facilitator, you will also need the DVD of the six video sessions and this guide.

Launching the Study

Small group studies vary widely in methods. Several general considerations for launching this particular study are:

- Prayerfully seek God's guidance concerning the group's composition and location. Continually ask God to open up the hearts and minds of participants.
- Some "small groups" can ironically grow very large, but this material requires a smaller group (up to ten members) and not a medium-sized or larger group. It is highly likely that as this material is taught the results will attract more participants. Prayerfully consider how you will accommodate this interest either through more groups or modification of the sessions to permit new members.
- The room setting suggested is typical for small groups: a circular area that permits the participants to clearly see each other, the facilitator, and the DVD player/screen.
- As facilitator, you need to read the entire book in advance to absorb the lessons explored in each section. It is also recommended that you view the video sessions in entirety prior to the launch of the small group.
- Be certain that each member has purchased a book and instruct the group to read chapters 1-3 of Section I prior to the first session. At the close of each session, instruct the students to read the chapters associated with the next session.

Conducting the Study

This curriculum is versatile enough to accommodate any particular pattern of small group study you may use. It is structured according to the following pattern:

1. Opening with prayer
2. Reading of select Scriptures
3. Viewing of video session

4. Discussion questions
5. Closing prayer.

Additionally, these general tips for leading the group can assist in the flow of sessions:

- You may wish to assign the reading of Scriptures to different individuals. The book cites the King James Version, but you may choose to use another accepted version.
- Read the discussion questions over each week and think through possible answers that may be given. Prepare to lead the conversation. Not all of the questions need to be covered. There may be ample and profitable discussion following one of the questions, and it is permissible to explore only one or two. Yet, if you do omit some questions, it may be profitable for you to make mention of them and give your responses. You may also choose to paraphrase the questions in a different format.
- Exceptions to the above are found in the opening and closing sessions. At the opening session, you will ask participants to identify the lowest points of their lives and to write them on a piece of paper. Provide each person with an envelope in which to seal their answers. Ask them to write their names on the exterior and submit them to the facilitator. These will remain sealed and will be opened by the participants in the last session. Hopefully, the small group material and discussion will help them gain insights into their low points. By the end of the study they will look again at the low points and see if God has given them some understanding throughout the series.
- As with all small group meetings, watch out for the "conversation hogs" in the discussion. Be prepared to call on others to respond. The silent ones often have wounds that haven't healed and desperately need to be involved in the discussion.
- Be prepared as well to deal with the "conversation hijackers" who will take the discussion into an unintended direction. Your direct engagement in the discussion is imperative to keep the meeting's focus.
- At the close of each meeting, reinforce that although we do not always know the reason why low points occur in our lives, we do know that there is a "why." God knows why and in His own time and way, it will be revealed. Faith is quite often the distance travelled between the low point and the point of the low point.

A Word from the Author:

Thank you for selecting *The Point of Low Points* for use in your small group. This material is designed to equip each participant with the knowledge to navigate the low points of life. Due to the subject matter, your efforts are pivotal to guide the discussion while permitting each willing person the chance to participate, reflect, and ask questions on the material.

From the outset, it is important to help participants grow comfortable with the format to be followed and to become better acquainted with the participants in the group. Few individuals find themselves able and adept at expressing their innermost thoughts and feelings. Life's low points further restrict a person's best efforts to explain their sense of isolation, confusion, and hurt. If pressed too closely, those who could benefit the most from the study will fall away from the group. As facilitator, pray for a spirit of discernment and the gift of empathy to sense those who are struggling the most.

I hope something of merit can be found in the book and videos. I realize, however, that this material serves only as the launching pad for what will happen over the six sessions in your small group. The greatest insights will emerge when the Spirit leads you or someone else to minister to another member of the group. These flashes of sanctified understanding will be the moments most remembered and valued. The book and videos are the catalysts for the process of healing and discovery endemic to small group ministry.

The Good Samaritan was moved with great compassion when he saw the wounded man on the Jericho road. Others passed by with nonchalance and a business-as-usual attitude. But not this man. He determined to make a difference, and our Lord took note of his actions. May our Lord witness your heartfelt efforts to assist someone through a similar low point.

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul in his most intimate letter to the Church of Corinth. He said that God: "…comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Corinthians 1:4). In the divine cycle of consolation, God comforts us that we may comfort others. The comfort God gave you in your low points will be called upon in this small group study. While none of our low points entirely resemble those of others, there are enough similarities to feel what others are going through and to find Gilead's balm for their needs.

Your service reminds me of the role Moses gave to the Tribe of Dan. As Israel moved eastward toward the Promised land, the Danites followed the other tribes through the wilderness collecting the stragglers (Numbers 10:25). Life's adversity can at times leave us stunned, staggering, and straggling. As a facilitator for this group, you can help members turn from their past and focus again on the new day awaiting them.

May God be with you as you plumb the depths of those low points that define and guide our lives. On the other end of this study, may you look back and say, "God has helped me to minister to those in life's valleys."

Session One

Valley Fever

Author's Preface and chapters 1-3 of Section I

Objective

This session introduces the biblical perspective of low points. Its objective is to show that the low points serve a divine purpose in our lives. God is seen often in the valleys of life.

Scripture Passages

Genesis 30:1, 23-24
Philippians 3:7-8
Romans 8:18-31

Watch Session 1 Video:
Valley Fever

Discuss the following questions:

1. The Book of Genesis spends far less time on the Creation than on the life of Joseph. Why do you think God placed more emphasis on Joseph's life than the beginning of life itself?

2. Joseph is sometimes called the "Jesus of the Old Testament." What are some of the parallels between the life of Joseph and that of Jesus? How do these parallels apply to your own life?

3. Consider John Ortberg's quote: "God isn't at work producing the circumstances I want. God is at work in bad circumstances to produce the me He wants." Discuss how such a statement affects your view of life's low points?

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4. Discuss the validity of the symptoms of a spiritual valley fever: disorientation, anger, irritability, depression, isolation, self-pity, and hopelessness. Are there any other emotions experienced in life's low points?

5. With the paper provided by the facilitator, please write down three or four of your life's lowest points. Seal this in the provided envelope and write your name on the outside. You will open it again in the last session. Before you give your envelope to the facilitator, pray that God will help you in the next few weeks to discover the meaning behind these low points.

Assignment

Read chapters 4-5 of Section II before the next meeting.

Behind each and every low point in our lives is a loving God working His will.

If you're in a valley, it doesn't mean you made a wrong turn.

It may mean that God has something for you.

God shapes His best and chosen ambassadors in the valleys of affliction.

Session Two

Facing Loss

Chapters 4-5 of Section II

Objective

Joseph's loss of his mother, Rachel, brought him closer to his father, who possessed great promises from God. Our losses can cause us to draw closer to our heavenly Father and to abound in fruitfulness. What we call loss may actually be pruning.

Scripture Passages

Genesis 35:16-20
Ecclesiastes 3:1-9
John 15:1-8

Watch Session 2 Video: *Facing Loss*

Discuss the following questions:

1. Rachel named Joseph "God will add." Discuss the power of speaking and praying in faith.

2. What percentage of our prayers do you think focuses on addition? What percentage of our prayers do you think focuses on subtraction?

3. Joseph lost his mother at a young age, but he was drawn to his father as a result. Can you think of a time in your life when a loss brought you closer to God?

4. The study called *Cradles of Eminence* reveals how renowned figures often compensated for their losses by excelling in

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other areas. Do you know of any personal examples of such compensation?

5. Pruning causes a fruit tree to yield more fruit. Describe any instance where the Lord permitted pruning in your life and the results that came from it.

Assignment

Read chapters 6-7 of Section III before the next meeting.

Joseph's loss of his mother brought him in nearer proximity to his father and to the fruitfulness promised to his father. Our God is a giver; our enemy is a taker. God does, however, work through our losses to help those affected the most move toward a certain future.

Session Three

Confronting Confusion

Chapters 6-7 of Section III

Objective

This session describes the potent low point of confusion and how Joseph confronted it: with a word from God. Confusion often opens us up to fresh insights from God.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 53:6
Genesis 37

Watch Session 3 Video: *Confronting Confusion*

Discuss the following questions:

1. Jews believe the "certain man" who appeared to Joseph was actually God. Discuss how God often appears to people when they are confused.

2. How difficult do you think it was for Joseph to trust in the word of an unknown stranger? How does his obedience relate to our trust in God?

3. Why do you think God's Word frequently compares us to sheep?

4. What conclusions can you draw concerning God and His house from the fact that the columns gracing the entrance of Solomon's Temple were called Boaz ("God gives direction") and Jachin ("God gives strength")?

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5. How often do you think people give up on a dream because they encounter low points of confusion and despair? What advice would you give to them?

Assignment

Read chapters 11-12 of Section IV before the next meeting.

Confusion is that low point in life when the Father's word runs out.

We've done what we know to do and what God has told us to do, but we haven't received the desired or promised result.

Session Four

Meeting Betrayal

Chapters 11-12 of Section IV

Objective

Joseph learned that the most surprising and painful hurts do not come from one's perceived enemies, but often through one's friends and loved ones. In this session we see that God gave Joseph the grace and means to protect his dream and future.

Scripture Passages

Genesis 37
Song of Solomon 7:6

Watch Session 4 Video:
Meeting Betrayal

Discuss the following questions:

1. What feelings do you commonly experience when someone has betrayed you?

2. How do you practice forgiveness of those who have hurt you even when you are still hurt by their actions?

3. The author compared the first of two wells in Dothan to the idea that people—even those who hurt you—do change with God's help. Do you find it difficult to believe that people who hurt you really can change? Like Joseph, must they prove themselves to you before you believe they have changed?

4. The author compared the second well of Dothan to the idea that God works all

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things for good. Discuss how betrayal can work for good in a person's life.

5. The fanciful story, "The Way of the Prophet," describes the mysterious ways of God. How has God taken betrayals or other hurts in your life and used them to change you?

Assignment

Read chapters 13-14 of Section V before the next meeting.

This deepest low point in Joseph's life happened in the place of two wells. Life's pits come equipped with wells. If you're in a low point and look carefully enough, you will find a fountain to sustain you.

Session Five

Combatting Unjust Accusations

Chapters 13-14 of Section V

Objective

The unjust accusations of Potiphar's wife seemed to have arrested Joseph's forward progress in Egypt. His integrity and behavior, however, kept him and repositioned him for the dream to be fulfilled. Applying the lessons of Joseph can assist us in enduring unjust accusations.

Scripture Passages

Genesis 39
Isaiah 53:7

Watch Session 5 Video:
Combatting Unjust Accusations

Discuss the following questions:

1. What motivations do you think prompt a person to make a false accusation against another person?

2. Using Joseph as an example, how should a believer respond to unjust accusations?

3. Discuss the validity of this statement: unjust accusations say more about the accuser than the accused.

4. Discuss any instance in your personal life where an unjust accusation resulted in the accused not only being vindicated, but advancing past the accuser.

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5. Joseph's patience in the arena of unjust accusations permitted iron to enter into his soul. Why is a person made stronger when he responds correctly to unjust accusations?

Assignment

Read chapters 15-16 of Section VI and Closing Comments before the next meeting.

The only way the accuser wins is if we let go of our integrity and divine destiny. Joseph refused to do this. He moved into the next station of his life, even though he had been wrongly accused and convicted. He didn't nurse grudges or dwell on the past. He was confident a higher Power was at work in his life and that God would, in His own time and way, make things right.

Session Six

Reviving Dying Dreams

Chapters 15-16 of Section VI and Closing Comments

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Objective

To witness how each low point in Joseph's life served to fulfill a dream that appeared dead or dormant. God permits us to endure life's valleys so His purpose can be fulfilled.

Scripture Passages

Genesis 39; 41:15-16
John 12:24

Watch Session 6 Video: *Reviving Dying Dreams*

Discuss the following questions:

1. Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphnath-Paaneah, meaning "God still speaks; God still lives." What in your opinion causes unbelievers to see Jesus in us?

2. The Harvard study cited in the closing chapter indicates that a person who can respond well to life's hardships will more than likely succeed at what they're doing. Discuss how important such a quality is in life.

3. Consider the author's statement in the book: "Your experiences in life may not be caused by what you did or didn't do, but by what God is seeking through your life and longing to show others." How have you found this to be true in your life?

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4. As we draw to the close of this study, let's return to those envelopes we sealed at the first session. Please open your envelope. Take a moment to look at the low points you listed and think about why God may have permitted each of these to come to your life. Based on what we've learned in this study, would you please share one of these low points with the group and why you believe God permitted it to happen and how you've grown stronger because of it?

5. If God gives you a dream to bless many others, you will experience a number of low points. Pray that God will give you the strength to see that dream realized.

God-given dreams may appear to be buried, but they are actually only planted.

A divine purpose may disappear from sight for a while, but it will arise again.

And when it comes back it will be increased thirty-, sixty- and a hundredfold.

Joseph's dream was planted so that he would multiply to fill the earth.