



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: "God Is in Control"

**Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington
Week of May 8, 2011**

Icebreaker	<p>Two options, choose one:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Have you ever experienced a power outage? How did you cope with the lights and electricity being out? 2.) Have you ever explored the heavens at night by looking through a telescope or going to an observatory? How interested are you in astronomy? Note: this is not the same as astrology (horoscopes, etc.).
Big Idea	<p>Despite how things may appear at this passing moment, God is in control.</p>
Sermon Text	<p>Psalm 118: 24-29 (New International Version, 1984)</p> <p>²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.</p> <p>²⁵ O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.</p> <p>²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.</p> <p>²⁷ The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.</p> <p>²⁸ You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.</p> <p>²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.</p>

Learning more about the lesson

Our text begins with an exhortation to rejoice and be glad because this is a day the Lord has made (v. 24).

1. In what sense has God “made” this day? What is your initial response to this statement?
2. Have you ever had an experience that reminded you never to take each day for granted? What was the experience, and what did you learn from it?

LEADER’S NOTE: Often people find that a serious illness or accident shakes them out of complacency and reminds them never to take life for granted.

The worshipers singing this ancient Psalm petition the Lord, “grant us success” (v. 25).

3. What does “success” mean to you?
4. Close your eyes for a moment and listen carefully as your group leader reads our church purpose statement aloud to the group. Now imagine that the Lord “granted us success” in every way as we fulfill His purpose for us. What images come to mind? What do you imagine our church family would be like?

(Northwest Baptist Church purpose statement: “Our purpose is to wholeheartedly love God relying on His power and presence to enable us to lead others to become disciples of Jesus Christ.”)

Leaders Note: Read the purpose statement aloud to the group.

5. Is it easy or difficult for you to speak up for yourself and ask for what you need?

6. Exercise: Read Matthew 7:7-8

Jesus tells his followers to do three things and three corresponding results will follow. In the blanks below, write what he tells us to do and what he promised will result from that action:

Jesus' Instruction	Promised Result of that Action
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

7. Share about a time when God provided what you needed, and more. What did you ask for, and what did you receive?

8. Is there a specific need in your life at this time? Whether or not you choose to share it with the group, write it down in the space below and ask God for what you need:

9. "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). In a world of so much darkness, what does it mean to you that "God is light?"

10. Exercise: Light in the Old and New Testaments. Divide into two groups. The Old Testament Group should read Psalm 119:130, Psalm 27:1, and Isaiah 5:20. The New Testament Group should read Romans 13:11-14, 2 Peter 1:19, and 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. What do these scriptures teach about darkness and/or light?

LEADER'S NOTE: "In the Old Testament 'light' is used in an intellectual sense to symbolize truth (where 'darkness' is error), and in a moral sense to represent righteousness (where 'darkness' is evil)." [See for example Psalm 119:130, Psalm 27:1, and Isaiah 5:20. This carries over into the New Testament too – see for example Romans 13:11-14 and 2 Peter 1:19.] "The declaration, 'God is light' is a penetrating description of the being and nature of God: it means that he is absolute in his glory (the physical connotation of light), in his truth (the intellectual), and in his holiness (the moral). ... As such, God is infinite, transcendent, and 'wholly other;' the source of all *life* and renewal (see 2 Corinthians 4:4-6)." – Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* pp. 19-20.

11. What are the attitudes and behaviors of a person who is NOT looking to the light? Write them down in the space below:

12. What are the attitudes and behaviors of a person who IS looking to the light? Write them down in the space below:

Taking it Home

How will I live it? Apply it?

1. Which of these needs seems most pressing in your life at this time?
 - a. I need to remember that each day is a precious gift of God, and learn to be glad in it!
 - b. I need to ask God for what I need, trusting his provision.
 - c. I need to look to the light, trusting that God is indeed in control.

2. Am I having trouble reconciling the statement that God is in control with the assertion that he has given us freedom of choice (a choice to follow or reject him)? If so, with whom could I speak this week for guidance and understanding?

Looking Ahead

How can I prepare for the next Small Group meeting?

- Invite your group members to attend "Community," 9:00-10:00 Sundays in the

	fellowship hall. • The text for next week is Psalm 118: 22-23. The theme is “God Has a Plan.”
Prayer Focus	How can I connect with God and others through prayer? Each member of your group is invited to share their response to the “Taking It Home” section above. Pray for each group member to take the next step in developing a “God is in control” mindset.
Updates	Announcements from: Care Coordinator Outreach Coordinator, Social Coordinator