

## **G-A-S-P!**

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### **STUFF YOU WILL NEED**

- a large sheet of paper
- a marker
- pens
- paper
- Bibles

### **CHECKING IN**

Before you meet together, take a few minutes to be still and to pray. Pray for each person in your small group.

Open the session with the exercise below; then talk together about the questions that follow.

Begin the session with some fast-paced, high-energy games. Choose some of your group's favorites, or invite the group to play Freeze Tag or to run a relay race. After 15–20 minutes, stop the games. Ask these questions while people are still out of breath:

**How do you feel?**

**What words describe how you feel right now?** (Write on a large sheet of paper their answers—“*exhausted*,” “*hot*,” “*short of breath*,” “*energized*.”)

**When does life make you feel this way?**

**What do you do when you feel this way?**

**How do you return to a normal breath pattern?**

**Do you ever slow down?**

### **EXPLORING THE WORD**

Before the session, write on a separate sheet of paper each of the following Bible verses with instructions:

- “God cares for you so turn all your worries over to him” (1 Peter 5:7, CEV). Read 1 Peter 5.
- “I will satisfy the weary, and all who are faint I will replenish” (Jeremiah 31:25, NRSV). Read Jeremiah 31:1–26.
- “Refresh my heart in Christ” (Philemon 20b, NIV). Read the letter to Philemon.
- “You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone” (Exodus 18:18, NRSV). Read Exodus 18:13–23.

The scripture verses which guide this week's meditations offer wisdom and rest in God. If we explore the context of each of these verses, we discover that God is present in a variety of settings to satisfy the weary and to refresh the hearts of believers.

Invite people to form four small groups. Ask each group to read one of the four scripture verses and its context (the longer passage) and then to answer these questions:

**What is going on in the scripture passage?**

**Who is gasping? Why?**

**What relief does God offer?**

**What modern-day situation is like the one described in the scripture passage?**

Bring the groups together to discuss what they have learned. After each group presents its scripture passage, invite the rest of the participants to consider this question:

**In what situations in your life would this scripture be helpful?**

### **SHARING IN PRAYER**

In her meditation in **devozine**, Nicole Jonas suggests a way to evaluate and pray about stressful situations. Read aloud what she says about taking "a gasp of fresh air."

**Stressed? Take a G-A-S-P of Fresh Air:**

**G**o somewhere you can be alone with God.

**A**ssess the situation; look at your life from God's perspective.

**S**trength comes from God; depend on God to help you.

**P**ersevere; take one step at a time, and God will lead you through.

Distribute paper and pens. Ask people to find a place in the room where they can be alone and quiet. Invite each person to think about a stressful situation in his or her life and then to reflect on these questions:

**Where can you go to be alone with God?**

**How would you assess the stressful situation from God's perspective?**

**What strength does God offer through scripture? through other people?**

**What is at least one step you can take to persevere, trusting God to see you through?**

Ask everyone to choose a partner. Invite the partners to talk about the situations that are stressful for them and then to pray for each other.

Close the session by reading aloud Philemon 1:3–7.

### **TAKING IT FURTHER**

Take one step this week to reduce your level of stress and to rest in the peace and comfort that God offers to you.