



# weekend

## resource guide for the week of 7 January

*Psalm. 126.1 It seemed like a dream, too good to be true,  
when GOD returned Zion's exiles.*

2 *We laughed, we sang,  
we couldn't believe our good fortune.*

*We were the talk of the nations—  
"GOD was wonderful to them!"*

3 *GOD was wonderful to us;  
we are one happy people.*

4 *And now, GOD, do it again—  
bring rains to our drought-stricken lives*

5 *So those who planted their crops in despair*

*will shout hurrahs at the harvest,*

6 *So those who went off with heavy hearts*  
*will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.*

Many people take numbers very seriously. For some, a number can create fear. Consider the number, 18. The fear of the number, 18, is called "Octodecaphobia." Some say the fear springs from people scared of turning 18 years old. Others say the fear is a derivative fear spawned by "hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia" — the fear of the number, 666 — as the sum of digits in 666 is 18. Regardless of the origin or cause, it plagues women and men, rich and poor, educated and uneducated... Octodecaphobics avoid the 18th floor, street addresses, and some sufferers only play 17 holes of golf to avoid the number 18!

For others, a number can inspire expectancy. The number 18 has long enjoyed special status for the international Jewish community. In Jewish liturgy, the daily prayer known as the Amidah is also called the "Shmoneh Esreh" ("the 18"). This refers to the number of separate blessings that originally comprised the prayer. In the Jewish numerological tradition of gematria, the number 18 has long been viewed as corresponding to the Hebrew word "chai," meaning "alive" (derived by adding the eighth and 10th letters of the Hebrew alphabet, chet and yud). Jews writing checks as gifts will frequently use a multiple of \$18 because it is synonymous with "mazel tov!" (lit. "good fortune"). This act of giving in multiples of 18 is known as "giving chai". They are an expression of "giving life."

How do you respond to the number, 2018? Are you expectant? Are you anxious? Are you ambivalent? Regardless, we shall have to live with it for the next 50 weeks!

2018 is not a clean break or fresh start independent of 2017... there is continuity whether we like it or not! But a new year does afford us the opportunity to pause, reflect, pray, and be open to God's prophetic word in order that he might align us with His promises, assuage any fears, and catalyze our expectancy. Let us not waste this opportunity to be an extended community of people who desire to be alert to His presence and Word... There is no better place to celebrate this and share this than a LifeGroup!

Let us pray Psalm 126 over each other: that this year ahead will "bring rain to drought-stricken lives so that those who ended 2017 with heavy hearts will, along with all of us, come home laughing."

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

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## Getting to know one another better...

What was your favorite book or movie of 2017? Why?

## Reflecting on 2017...

If you could choose one word to describe 2017 what would it be?

Describe 3 ways you experienced God's faithfulness in 2017 whether in victory or through disappointment...

Describe 3 prayers you saw God answer in 2017— they don't have to be your own!

What Scripture readings did God speak to you in 2017? Was there a consistent theme? If so, what?

How do you think God wants to grow your faith and trust in 2018?

If you could choose one word to describe your hopes/aspirations for 2018 what would it be? Why?

As you consider 2018, are there any Scriptures, promises, or people that God is putting on your mind and heart?

## **Reviewing our commitment together...**

We are all different! We have different temperaments, experiences, gifts, and strengths. Yet, Jesus wants to bring us together to experience genuine community that includes friendship and authentic spiritual growth. Community does not “just happen”. It requires intentionality. LifeGroups are for those who want to build and experience community that gathers in expectation that Jesus is present and we will be too! Therefore, we have created the following expectations for our LifeGroups so that, together, we might experience:

**a common call/story  
a common set of values  
a common expectancy  
a common vision  
and a  
vibrant community of friends**

We will meet on \_\_\_\_\_.

We will arrive between \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ and we will meet from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

We will make a 12 week commitment to our LifeGroup.

We will express our commitment by attending weekly, completing the Resource Guide beforehand, praying, participating in the discussion, and relationally engaging. We recognize that these are key to a healthy group!

We will make a commitment to pray for one another in our gatherings and outside of our group meetings.

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## Anticipating our future together...

What are your hopes and aspirations for participating in a LifeGroup?

What is one way that you would like to grow spiritually this Winter?

**My prayer requests** (write in advance what you want your group to pray for...)

**Praying for my group...**