



FINDING FAITH: Small Group Bible Study inspired by "Polycarp"

INTRODUCTION

Set in the mid-second century, Polycarp tells the story of Anna, a young slave girl rescued from a bleak future by a Christian family. Initially skeptical of their faith due to her life of hardship, Anna slowly begins to embrace Christianity under the patient guidance of her new family and the aged Bishop Polycarp, a direct disciple of the Apostle John. As Roman persecution against Christians intensifies, Polycarp becomes a target. The film's climax centers on his unwavering resolve to stand firm in his faith, ultimately leading to his martyrdom and solidifying Anna's belief in the God he served. The story is a powerful testament to the courage and conviction of the early Christian church in the face of immense hostility.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. FINDING GOD IN SUFFERING

Anna has a cynical view of life and struggles to believe in a loving God due to her past suffering and unanswered prayers. How does the kindness of her new family and the example of Polycarp's life challenge her understanding of God's character?

Read Romans 5:3-5. How can suffering, which seems to contradict God's goodness, actually produce perseverance, character, and hope in a believer? How does Anna's journey reflect the truth that our perspective on suffering can be transformed by God's love and grace?



2. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

- The Roman proconsul demands that all citizens declare "Caesar is Lord," a direct challenge to the Christian belief that Jesus alone is Lord. How does the film portray this conflict, and what does it reveal about the nature of true discipleship?

- Read Luke 14:26-27. Jesus teaches that following Him requires a radical commitment. In what ways does the early church's refusal to deny Christ serve as a model for our own discipleship today? What "idols" in our culture might require us to make a similar stand for Christ?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

3. THE POWER OF UNWAVERING FAITH



- When asked to deny Christ after serving him for 86 years, Polycarp's famous response is, "How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" How does his steadfast faith in the face of death impact those around him, particularly Anna?

- Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. How does Polycarp's martyrdom embody Paul's words about fighting the good fight and finishing the race? What does Polycarp's life and death teach us about the importance of finishing our race with faithfulness and integrity?

4. MARTYRDOM AS A WITNESS

- The film shows that Polycarp's death is not the end of his influence but a powerful catalyst for a renewed faith in Anna and others. What does this suggest about the role of martyrdom and suffering in the growth of the Christian church?

- Read John 12:24. How does this verse, which speaks of a grain of wheat dying to produce a great harvest, apply to Polycarp's martyrdom? How has the witness of martyrs throughout history served to strengthen the faith of believers and spread the gospel?



REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Consider a time when your faith was challenged. How did you respond?

What can you learn from the example of Polycarp and the early Christians' willingness to suffer for their faith?

How can you live a life of uncompromising faithfulness, knowing that true life is found in Christ alone?



PRAYER

Pray for the persecuted church around the world today, for their courage and perseverance.

Pray for our own hearts, that we would be willing to stand firm in our faith, no matter the cost, and that we would have the strength to live as a bold witness to the gospel.



CONCLUSION

The story of Polycarp is more than just a historical account; it is a timeless testament to the power of unwavering faith in the face of persecution. The film encourages us to embrace a faith that is not merely intellectual but is willing to endure hardship, trusting that a life lived for Christ is a life worth living, and a life lived for Him is a life worth dying for.