

Choose Wisely

Description: small group discussion and Bible study

Aim: show how essential it is for Christians to have a Bible in their own language

Audience: teenagers through adults, minimum 4 people

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: Bibles, pencils, discussion sheet copies

Scripture to Study: various listed within



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Bright Ideas!

Leader's Instructions:

1. Photocopy enough of the four different discussion sheets so that you have a sheet for every 4-6 participants.
2. Divide participants into small groups of 4-6 each.
3. Read out the Audience's Instructions.
4. Give each group a Bible and one of the four discussion sheets on which they will work.
5. After 10 minutes, bring the groups back together to share their conclusions using the Discussion and Application section below.

Audience's Instructions:

For this discussion, you need to imagine you are Jur young people living in Sudan. The Jur number about 40,000 and live way out in the country with no towns or shops anywhere, no electricity and no city water supply. Their work involves growing food, hunting for meat and gathering honey and edible plants in the woods. Their social life revolves around family and consists of talking, making music together, visiting friends and going to church.

I will give each group a Discussion Sheet and Bible. The sheet describes real situations faced by Jur young people. Read the scenario aloud, putting yourself in the shoes of the person described. Then discuss the questions which follow. The Bible references will help you decide what to do. Try to agree upon a course of action in your group. What would you do? What would Jesus do? Choose wisely!

Discussion and Application:

1. Invite each group to briefly summarize their situation and explain why they made the decision that they did. Then discuss the following questions:
 - What did you notice about the situations that the Jur young people face? (Hint* Is it so different from issues you face?)

Alcoholism, fortune telling, sexual impurity and slander are as relevant to teenagers in the United States as they are to Jur young people. Do you find it amazing that the nature of man is so consistent no matter where you go around the world?

Notes:

- What factors did you consider when you made your decisions? Mature Christians, as well as mature churches look for answers in the Bible.
- How do you think a Jur person would go about making similar sorts of decisions?

Discussing these issues was easier for us because we have Bibles which tell us how to apply our faith to everyday situations. The root problem for the Jur people was that when they faced these issues, they did not have the Bible in their own language. They could not find out what God wanted them to do. They could either base their decision on the advice of a foreign missionary or copy what they saw other Christians doing. But they could not study the Bible and make their own decision based on God's wisdom.

- Could certain things be wrong for Christians of one country, but permissible for Christians of another?

Take the song singing, for instance. In another country where traditional songs involve no coarse jokes, fighting or injury, then the Jur people should not insist their brothers in Christ stop singing.

Closing Prayer Time:

We who have the Scriptures often take for granted all the wisdom and spiritual blessing it has brought us. Encourage the group to take turns thanking God for some portion of Scripture or some concept the Bible has taught them. Short sentence prayers work best and free everyone to quote a verse or name a blessing without having to be too eloquent!

Update:

The Jur church began in 1955. With the Scriptures, a strong and growing church has quickly expanded into areas of the country where previously no known Christians lived. The New Testament and parts of the Old Testament have now been translated into the Jur language. At long last they, too, can choose wisely!

Discussion Sheet 1

Bitter Choices

Wisley does not know what to do. Tea costs so much these days and he hardly has any money left. Soon all his relatives will come to visit for Christmas and expect him to entertain them for several days. How will he find money to buy enough for his guests? Where will he find sugar? All Jur people take lots of sugar in their tea, but with the shortage at the moment he cannot find any in town. The arid land cannot grow tea or sugar and import fees raise the cost.

Before becoming Christians, all Jur people drank beer. Drunkenness plagued them and fights would often break out.

To prevent this, the Christians started serving tea instead of beer. Wisley can easily make beer from the grain which he grows in his fields and it won't cost him anything. Even though he is a Christian, maybe this would be his best option since apart from water, there are no other drinks available. No one would dream of only serving water to their guests!

1. What should Wisley do? Choose wisely! (No pun intended!)
2. What good reasons can you see for not serving beer? (Romans 14:13-17)
3. What should a Christian's attitude toward alcohol be? (Ephesians 5:18)



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Discussion Sheet 2

Change of Fortune

Eliya does not know what to do. His three-year-old son is seriously ill with no doctors or hospitals nearby. As a result of the civil war, he can find no medicines for sale either.

The Jur people believe that many spirits in the world cause both good and bad fortune. They always consult fortune tellers when they need magic power for successful hunting, or for safety on long journeys. The Jur also believe that only a fortune teller can tell them which spirit is responsible for a particular illness and how

to get rid of it. Eliya's wife wants him to take their son to a well-known fortune teller in the next village, but Eliya has become a Christian and hesitates to take his son.

1. What should Eliya do? Choose wisely!
2. What does the Bible have to say about fortune telling? (Deuteronomy 18: 9-13)
3. If he doesn't take his child to the fortune teller, what could he do instead? (James 5:13-14)

Discussion Sheet 3

Boys Like Girls

Maria doesn't not know what to do. Three young men have arrived in her village from a village 25 miles away. Everyone knows what that means. Jur cannot marry someone to whom they are related, however distantly, so men often have to look for wives in far-off areas. Jur custom has the older teenage girls host a party for the visitors. They clean out a room, put several beds in it and invite other girls from their village to come along. In theory these parties only provide opportunities for young people to get to know one another. However, very often they lead to more activities and girls end up pregnant.

Some of Maria's family have become Christians and teach the young people that these kind of parties do not please God. Maria doesn't want to upset her family, but on the other hand, if she doesn't go, how will she meet a husband? Not getting married will shame her, as a Jur woman, more than anything else.

1. Should Maria go to the party? Choose wisely!
2. What does the Bible say about sex between people who are not married to each other? (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)
3. What should a Christian be looking for in a future husband or wife? (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)



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Discussion Sheet 4

To Sing or Not to Sing

Some young Jur Christians in the Domeri village don't know what to do. They cannot agree about the traditional Jur songs that they sing when crowds gather together for events like weddings or funerals. On such occasions, the young people from different villages take turns performing songs they make up. These songs boast about successes in hunting and make coarse jokes about people of other villages. Naturally the rival villagers respond with even more insulting songs. Quite often this makes people angry enough to start a fight.

Since the Jur people always carry spears for protection against wild animals, fights can result in bloodshed and even murder.

Many of the Christians think they should give up their traditional songs for this reason. Others say, "How can we give up something which everyone does? It would be unsociable not to join in. We just have to make sure to prevent the fighting."

1. What should they do? Choose wisely!
2. What does the Bible say about making jokes at other people's expense? (Colossians 3:8)
3. How could the Jur Christians better spend their time together but still sing? (Ephesians 5:19-20)