

The Ishbane Conspiracy

Selfishness

Ice Breaker/Game:

Book Study:

Uprooting Selfishness

Time: about 60-90 minutes

Students will learn about the themes of "The Ishbane Conspiracy" by Randy Alcorn, more specifically how to look beyond themselves and see how selfishness is impacting their lives.

Supplies: Bibles, *The Ishbane Conspiracy* by Randy Alcorn, several dollar bills, pens, white board, paper, index cards, and masking tape.

Before your meeting, partially hide several dollar bills around the room where teenagers will see them. When students arrive, note their reaction to the money. If they ask about the money, just shrug.

(Illustration based on Innovative Tools by Group Publishing)

Start the study out in a big group and discuss the students' reactions and insights of chapters 39-43. Allow time for discussions and questions. **(20min)**

Ask: **What did you think about the story this week?**

Was there something that Ishbane or Foulgrin said this week that really stood out to you?

What did you think about what happened to Ian at the party in Chapters 40?

Ask: **What do you think about all this money lying around the room?**

Did you have any feelings of temptation to take it?

If you had been able to gather all the money, what would you have done with it?

Say: **Today we're going to talk about the thing that is usually at the root of all the other things that we have been talking about... and that is Selfishness.**

Form groups of no more than five. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pencil. Have groups write a definition of selfishness on their paper. Have the students then take turns telling their groups about times they experienced selfishness. It could be a time they were selfish or a time someone was selfish toward them.

(20min)

Ask: How do you feel when someone acts selfishly?

Do you always realize when you're being selfish? Why or why not?

Say: It's easy to live selfishly, thinking only of what would make us happy. If we are really being honest, most of the sin in our lives is because we want to only do what we want. But God requires a different way of living in his kingdom.

Have the students read *Matthew 25:31-46*.

³¹ "But when the Son of Man^[a] comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations^[b] will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' ³⁷ "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters,^[c] you were doing it to me!' ⁴¹ "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.^[d] ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?' ⁴⁵ "And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.' ⁴⁶ "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."

Ask: What are some examples of unselfish actions in these verses?

Why does God ask us to be unselfish?

What do you think would happen if you were to change your focus, day to day?

Come back together as a big group.

(35min)

Say: **Does anyone have a testimony of how God has shown them selfishness in their own lives?**

Let a few students give their testimonies.

Say: **Our nature, as humans is to always be thinking about ourselves. We see it all over in our culture and are even told that it's what we are supposed to be by our teachers and friends. But God has a better way and can help us get rid of selfishness.**

Give each person a pencil and an index card.

Say: **On your card, write one area where you have a tendency to be selfish, an area you want God to help you with—for example, taking for granted your home or your parents.**

While teenagers are writing, draw a large cross on the white board. Tape the definitions that the groups came up with for selfishness at the top part of the white board, above the cross.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud *Philippians 2:5-8*.

⁵You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶Though he was God,^[a] he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷Instead, he gave up his divine privileges^[b]; he took the humble position of a slave^[c] and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,^[d] ⁸he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Ask: **What does this passage say about Jesus' unselfish example?**

Say: **Let's choose to give up the areas of selfishness you've written on your cards. One at a time, tape your card to this cross.**

Pause while teenagers do this. Then have students close their eyes while you end in prayer.