

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of January 27, 2019

This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion.

LEADER NOTES

Things to Remember:

- Drinks when people arrive
- Nametags

Goals for the Evening:

- Continue to build relationships
- Pray together
- Start talking about plans for your social
- Talk about service project options



90 Second Leader Tip

lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/leader-guide-winter-week-3

ANNOUNCEMENTS

⇒ COVENANTS

Go over the Covenant with anyone who missed the first week. Remind anyone who hasn't signed the Covenant to do so. Email it to your [Life Group Admin](#), turn it in by mail, or drop it off at the office or Welcome Booth on your campus by Sun, Feb 3.

⇒ MAKE PLANS FOR YOUR SOCIAL & SERVICE PROJECT

Check our Community Service website for some options: northcoastcommunityservice.org You can also check out the Leader Tools page for social ideas. lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/suggestions-for-socials/

MEETING NOTES

⇒ ATTENDANCE

Submit your group's attendance online at northcoastchurch.com/attendance. If you're not sure how to post attendance, you can check out the guide here: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/how-to-post-attendance

Mark Reading Challenge

- Read Mark in one sitting (takes about 1-2 hours)
- One chapter per day – read through Mark twice in a month
- Bible Apps w/ Text or Audio – Bible Gateway App or The Bible App by YouVersion

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

- As Chris pointed out in the sermon, the disciples had previous interactions with Jesus which prepared them to respond to this life-changing invitation to "follow me." Can you think of one or two significant encounters you had with Jesus or a Christian that influenced your decision to follow Jesus?

Additional Question: What was it that finally got you to give your life to Jesus and start following him?

- As you think of one of your favorite bosses, coaches or teachers, what was it about them that made it easy to follow their advice or example?

Additional Questions:

- *What is it about Jesus that makes it easy (or hard) to follow him?*
- *Jesus invites everyone to follow him. Why do you think some people choose not to follow him?*
- *Before you began to follow him, was there a major obstacle keeping you from following him?*

DIGGING DEEPER

HOW TO USE THIS WEEK'S DIFFERENT FORMAT IN YOUR GROUP: As always you're going to need to decide how much time your group is going to spend on each question as you most likely won't have time to have each person give their answers to the three suggested things to look for in the passage.

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS:

- **Asking the Questions:** Have each person share their circles or highlights as well as their underlined verses.
- **Divide into three groups option:** This is another way to change up your group flow. It will also allow plenty of process time to go through each person's responses. They can close their small group time together taking prayer requests and come back together with everyone at the end and share a highlight, or come back together for prayer time. Again, it's your decision to do what works best for your group.

This weekend Chris explained what the “kingdom of God” is, and how the term “kingdom of God/heaven” is used over 100 times in the Gospels. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells several parables to help us understand what the “kingdom of God/heaven” is like. As you read Matthew 13:24-46, mark up the passage and then answer the questions below it.

1. **Circle** / **highlight** any words or phrases that catch your attention.
2. **Underline** the verse you see as most important to remember.
3. **Put an X** next to anything that confuses you.

Note: Some people may be tempted to try to find meaning for all the characters or elements in each of these parables. This is not how we are to interpret the parables. Here's some thoughts Larry shared in the introduction to our 2016 series on the parables. You may want to read this to your group as you prepare to talk about these parable to help minimize this tendency.

In the introduction to our 2016 series on the Parables, Larry took some time to explain how to understand a parable. He mentioned that they always illustrate a central truth about the kingdom of God. Each one has a primary point Jesus is trying to communicate.

He went on to explain how parables are not allegories in which everything in them represents something. With an allegory, you spend time trying to figure out what each character and element means and what they each represent. The problem is that if we treat the parables as allegories, then we'll read into them meaning that Jesus never intended to communicate. In addition, we need to treat them like we do with all Scriptures; we need to compare what we think a parable says with what the rest of what the Bible says.

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

³¹ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

³³ He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one,³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Note: Spend some time having people share what they circled, highlighted, underlined, and put an “X” by in the passage.

What do you learn about the kingdom of heaven from these parables?

For more information about the kingdom of God go to:
<https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-of-God.html>

For more thoughts on Matthew 13, go to enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-13

Author John Piper defined the kingdom of God this way: “The kingdom of God is God’s reign — his sovereign action in the world to redeem and deliver a people and then at a future time finish it and renew his people and the universe completely.”

Chris talked about the *here and now* and the *not yet* nature of the kingdom of God. How do you see these parables revealing both aspects of the kingdom?

Mustard seed – when it is fully grown

Yeast – worked into the dough

Weeds – harvest is the end of days

How could a better understanding of the kingdom of God help us in our journey of following Jesus?

The now and later aspects of the kingdom of God explain why everything isn’t under God’s rule currently and why sin still has a huge impact on our world. We can live in the midst of sin knowing that in the future all will be different.

Additional Question: What difference could understanding the kingdom of God make in our daily lives?

What do you learn about what we need to give up or leave behind in order to follow Jesus?

Additional Question: *What do you learn about the three things a citizen of the kingdom (a disciple) is called to (follow, leave behind, and a task) in these parables?*

The treasure hunter and pearl merchant both gave up all they had in order to get what they desired. That's what Jesus is asking us to do.

Additional Question: *What concerns you or disturbs you about the kingdom of God as seen in these parables?*

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Hearing that we need to follow and obey Jesus can often feel like we're being asked to do something impossible. We can easily wonder, "How can we expect to be able to obey Jesus when we live in a fallen world and we have a sin nature?" What insights and encouragement do you find in John 15:1-8 as to why following Jesus is possible and not something we have to accomplish by sheer determination alone?

Note: *Our role is to remain (abide) in Jesus. His role is to produce the fruit through us. Remaining can be misunderstood to be a passive position. It's not passive, it requires "active dependency."*

Additional Questions:

- *How would you define what it means to "remain?"*
- *How does God provide the needed ingredients for us so we can be fruitful?*
- *What does a grapevine need to be fruitful?*
- *What happens when a grapevine has all of these ingredients?*
- *How does God provide similar things to us so we can be fruitful?*
- *What helps you consistently remain in Christ?*
- *Who are the three people talked about in this passage? How do their roles and responsibilities differ?*

Note: *People can confuse the fruit of the Spirit with the gifts of the Spirit. We have all been given different gifts (check out a list in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). Even though we are not likely to have all the gifts we can still bear all the fruit with help of the Holy Spirit.*

What are some challenges for you to consistently remain in Christ?

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back on this week's sermon and study, what's most important for you to remember?

PRAYER REQUESTS



COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPACT

Community Service is dedicated to being the hands and feet of Jesus and showing God's love in tangible ways through service to the community. There are many options for you to serve. For ideas, check out NorthCoastCommunityService.org

Welcome to the Kingdom of God

Mark 1:14-15

The kingdom of God is both the **present** and **future**.

- It is a **now** and a **later**.
- It is both a **position** and a **place**.
- A king's **rule** and **reign** determine his kingdom.

1:16-20

A citizen of the kingdom (disciple) is called to:

- **Follow**
- **Leave behind**
- **A task**

1:21-28

WARNING: This will be **different** than you **think**.

Looking back at 1:1-28

God has **invaded planet earth**.