

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of February 3, 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
- Finalize plans for your social
- Talk about service project options



90 Second Leader Tip

lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/leader-guide-winter-week-4

ANNOUNCEMENTS

⇒ FINALIZE PLANS FOR YOUR SOCIAL & SERVICE PROJECT

Confirm with your group what project you would like to do. Check our 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

⇒ MID-QUARTER TRAINING

Make sure you attend the Mid Quarter Training session for Leaders and Hosts (Vista Campus based-groups only). Click the link to RSVP: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/mid-quarter-training

Arise – Mar 19	Parents of Kids, K-6 – Feb 24	Union 2535 – Mar 3
Empty Nest – Feb 23-24 & Mar 3	Parents of Teens – Feb 23-24 & Mar 3	Targeted – Feb 23-24 & Mar 3
General – Feb 23 & Mar 3	Senior Adults – TBA	Young Families – Mar 16 & 17
Grupos de habla hispana – Mar 3	Singles – Mar 16	Young Marrieds – Mar 16 & 17
Military – Mar 17	Special Studies – Feb 23-24 & Mar 3	

⇒ DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

- Remember you don't have to answer every question!
- Choose questions best suited to your group.
- Listen to the [Audio Guide/Podcast](#) for more discussion suggestions.

⇒ PRAYER

- Take prayer requests
- If you haven't divided into male/female groups already, you may want to do so for prayer.

⇒ 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

Find all of our leader resources online: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/leader-tools

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

1 How would you describe your experience with prayer growing up?

2 When it comes to prayer in your own life, do you...

- Prefer to pray silently instead of out loud
- Find your mind wandering when trying to pray
- Rarely think about praying
- Look forward to prayer time as a group
- Feel awkward about praying out loud
- Don't really know how to pray
- Other _____

Additional Question: *How might your answer to this question impact your experience of the prayer time during our Life Group?*

Note: *Here are a couple things you may want to mention just to put your group members at ease.*

- We don't ever force people to pray. We want to encourage people to learn to pray out loud but we'll never force them to. For some people praying is a lot like public speaking which is the #1 fear people have.*
- We would like people to pray short prayers. This allows more people to pray and it makes people feel more willing to pray. When someone in your group prays a long prayer, other people may not want to pray because they know they can't pray that eloquently or that long.*

DIGGING DEEPER

1

In the sermon this past weekend, Chris talked about the secret to prayer. In this week's study questions we're going to do another circle/highlight/underline study on the Lord's Prayer to learn more about how to pray.

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.

Matthew 6:5-15

⁵ "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS:

- **Asking the Questions:** *Have people share what they circled, highlighted, underlined or what they put an X by.*
- **Divide into smaller-groups option:** *If you didn't divide up into smaller groups last week, you might want to try it this week. If you did and it worked well, you might want to try it again. Breaking into smaller groups will allow plenty of process time to go through each person's responses. Then you can come back together to answer the follow-up questions.*

Note: *Some of your members who grew up going to church might ask where the traditional close for the prayer is (For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever). Most biblical scholars don't believe that phrase was in the original writing of Matthew so it has been left out of the NIV Bible.*

The Message version of the Bible has a helpful paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer you might want to share with your group.

Matthew 6:9-14

"With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven,

Reveal who you are.

Set the world right;

Do what's best—

as above, so below.

Keep us alive with three square meals.

Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.

Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.

You're in charge!

You can do anything you want!

You're ablaze in beauty!

Yes. Yes. Yes."

A Note about Forgiveness

Some people may struggle with verse 14 and the idea of being forgiven only if we forgive others. The Bible is clear that our forgiveness is based on Christ's work on the cross for us, but living in a state of unforgiveness will certainly impact our relationship with God and other people. If we don't forgive others then our fellowship with God will be damaged. Unforgiveness is serious and needs to be addressed.

Another way to look at this is that if we can't forgive someone else then it demonstrates that we haven't truly understood God's forgiveness of us.

This doesn't mean that forgiveness will be easy. But it does say that it is necessary. Forgiveness is often a process. Note what forgiveness is not – forgetting, trusting, or removing consequences. Moving toward forgiveness may start with just asking God to help you even consider moving toward forgiveness.

Jesus gave this prayer to the disciples in response to their request for him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). It was given to teach us how to pray, not as a prayer to be recited over and over again like some magic phrase. In the prayer Jesus gives us five components of what prayer looks like. See if you can identify all of them, and then in your own words write out what each one of them is about. (*Hint: Each verse contains one component. If you need help figuring them out, we put them on the bottom of the back page.*)

Matthew 6:9 – Praise, honoring & remembering who God is

Matthew 6:10 – Submitting to God's will w/ the confidence of his return

Matthew 6:11 – Bringing your requests and needs to God

Matthew 6:12 – Confessing your wrongdoings and sin

Matthew 6:13 – Seeking God's guidance and protection

Additional Thoughts on the Components

1. *God is our Father and is no longer our judge. We were once enemies of God, but now through the Lord Jesus Christ we have been reconciled to God and are made friends, even children of God. When we pray, we pray to him as beloved children. When we pray to him, we are talking to our dad.*

2. *This world is not what it is supposed to be, and so God is making us a new world. In the midst of suffering it might not feel like it, but God has a purpose for suffering and a plan to overcome it. He cares about justice and will right every wrong, making all things right.*

3. *God gives us everything that we need in both body and soul. He feeds us with the preaching of his Word and the administering of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as we gather together for public worship. He also cares for us by giving us work, using the church, family, friends, and even governments to provide for our immediate needs. God is to be thanked and praised as the ultimate source for our daily bread.*

4. *God offers us forgiveness, even though we do not deserve it and have done nothing to earn it. In fact, we have done everything to earn God's wrath. Yet in Christ, God gives us the opposite: mercy, grace, peace, and love. He washes us with the shed blood of the lamb who was slain for us. He feeds us with the broken body of the Lord who was crucified for us.*

5. *God has forgiven us of our sins, and because of this we are enabled to readily forgive others when we are wronged. When we have been made right with God through the work of Jesus Christ, we learn the way of forgiveness. If God can show us forgiveness, we can begin to show forgiveness and mercy to others who don't deserve it. Reconciliation can begin to take place in all of our fractured and broken relationships.*

6. *Life is hard and bad things often happen, but God is faithful to bring us through to the end. We live in a world full of hostility, violence, oppression, disease, illness, and death. In our lifetime, we will face tough times and have challenging days. But God has dealt with evil by triumphing over it through the suffering of his Son on the cross of Calvary. Because he left and forsook Christ on that dark day, he will never leave nor forsake us on the last day.*

Taken from corechristianity.com

Looking at the components, most of us probably spend more time on the "asking for our needs" component than any of the others. While Jesus wasn't telling us that we have to include all five components every time we pray, it makes sense to include the other four at

various times. As you look at the different components in the prayer, what is your experience with including each one in your prayer time?

Additional Questions:

- *Have you tried including that component in your prayers? What was it like?*
- *What did you do to include that component?*
- *Have there been seasons in your life when you included one of the components in your prayer life more than you are now?*

How would you rank the five components from most used to least used in your prayer life?

There may be quite a bit of similarity in the answers people have but you'll probably have a few that rank things differently. You might want to go through each component and ask how people rated it or ask if anyone rated that component #1 or #5. Have people explain why they rated it what they did for the components they rated #1 or #5.

2

In the letters Paul wrote to the churches he started, he included a number of prayers for the church and its members. From these prayers we get great insight into what God's will and desire is for our lives. As you read each passage, jot down what stands out to you most about what Paul prays for in Ephesians 1:15-19 and Colossians 1:9-12.

Additional Question: *How do these prayers compare to what people normally tend to pray for?*

Ephesians 1:15-19 – ¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength...

Colossians 1:9-12 – ⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹²and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

What stands out to you most from these prayers about what Paul considers most important about spiritual maturity and growth?

Paul doesn't spend any time praying for material needs. One possible reason for this is that this was a general prayer for a large group of people. But another reason is that Paul cared more about their spiritual health than anything else.

Additional Question: *What is absent from Paul's prayer?*

Which of the things Paul prayed for would you most like others to pray for you?

Good question to have everyone answer. Their answers could become a part of what you pray for at the end of the meeting for everyone.

TAKING IT HOME

As you look back on the sermon, the study questions, and the prayers we read in this week's study questions, is there anything you'd like to stop, start or do differently in regard to personal prayer?

Using the Lord's Prayer as a Guide for Life Group Prayer

It's easy to let our group prayer time become a time to just collect prayer requests from our group members and then spend time praying for them. What we saw from the Lord's Prayer is that there is more to prayer than just praying for our needs. Here are instructions for using the five components we look at in the Lord's Prayer as a guide for your Life Group prayer time.

One suggestion is to walk your group through this guide at the end of tonight's meeting. Another suggestion is to include one of these components in your prayer time for the next 5 weeks.

Read Matthew 6:9 and pray for God's reputation – Thank God for who he is and for his character qualities – love, grace, forgiveness, power, etc. (You can use Psalm 33 & 34 as references here.)

Read Matthew 6:10 and pray for kingdom expansion and God's will – Pray for any missionaries you know and for your part in helping God's kingdom grow. Ask God that his will be done in your life and in the lives of others. Pray for North Coast and our mission to reach people for Jesus.

*Read Matthew 6:11 and pray for provision – Ask God for any specific needs you have at this time (physical, relational, financial, etc.). **Note:** You may want to get prayer requests for this component before you start praying.*

Note: *Due to the sensitive nature of the next two sections, it would be wise to have people pray silently for any forgiveness they need, or to forgive someone, and for any temptations they are facing.*

Read Matthew 6:12 and pray for forgiveness of sins – Is there anything you need to confess and ask forgiveness for? Is there anyone you need to forgive? Thank God for his forgiveness in your life.

Read Matthew 6:13 and pray for protection – Ask God to help you avoid temptation (name any specific temptations you're facing) and to flee from it when it comes. Ask him to protect you from the attacks of the enemy.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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Components: Praise for God's character; prayer for kingdom expansion and God's will to be done; prayer for material provision, prayer for forgiveness and a forgiving spirit; prayer for protection.

The Secret to Prayer

Mark 1:29-39

Three dangers at the start of the journey:

- ❶ **Religion** can actually keep us from **Jesus**.
- ❷ Chasing the **miracles**, not the **message**.
- ❸ Seeking God for **success**, not **surrender**.

The secret to prayer:

The secret to prayer is simply having **secret prayers**.

Prayer is:

- ✓ Not something **we do**, it's someone **we're with**.
- ✓ Not about getting what **we want**, but connecting with who we are **talking to**.
- ✓ Both **talking** and **listening**.
- ✓ The key to **union** with God, and **separation** from the enemy.
- ✓ More about changing **our lives**, not changing **God's mind**.

Two things to consider:

- If we are only coming to God to get **what we want**, he may be **running** from us.
- Prayerlessness may be our greatest **sin**, because of what it says about who we really think is **in charge**.