

# LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of April 26, 2020

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

## LEADER NOTES

### THE MEETING

**SOCIAL / SERVICE PROJECT Plans!** Yes, you can do a social online and make an impact in our community even when you're "Stay @ Home!" We've got some great ideas!

**Online Group Social Ideas** – There are a number of ideas at the end of this leader guide. Go online to get more details and links that can help you figure out how to put them into action! Enjoy!



**WE CAN SERVICE: Canned Food Drive!** – Let's make a difference, North Coast! Several of North Coast's partners are in GREAT need of non-perishables in order to support the underserved populations that are struggling during this COVID Crisis. You CAN help by driving to your campus on Saturday, May 2nd between 9am-12pm and donating canned goods. Go to [North Coast Community Service](#) for all the details.

### MEETING ONLINE REMINDERS & "PRO TIPS"

- Resend your meeting link to everyone in your group.
- Continue to log on early if some are arriving a bit early. Welcome people in.
- DISCUSSION TIP / BREAKOUT ROOM REMINDER
  - **BREAKOUT ROOM PRO TIP Break into small groups to ensure you're hearing from everyone!** Zoom offers a breakout room option, but don't worry if you're using a platform that doesn't give you that option; we have a work-around below.
    - ⇒ **Zoom Breakout Room Tutorial**  
[bit.ly/lgbreakouts](https://bit.ly/lgbreakouts)
    - ⇒ **Breakout room work-around for other platforms** - Even if the platform you're using doesn't have the breakout room option, you can still do it by having another person in your group host and create an additional meeting at the same time on the platform you're using. Send the link to who you want in the other room, and now you have two rooms to meet in.
    - ⇒ **What to do in the room** - Before you break into smaller groups, remember to give the questions you want your group to answer, a general length of time they will be in the room and when they are coming back to meet with the group as whole. You can use room time to discuss a question and then join back together, divide into smaller groups for prayer time or divide into men / women only groups.

### LEADER INFO

#### ⇒ ATTENDANCE

Submit your group's attendance online at [northcoastchurch.com/attendance](https://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](https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/how-to-post-attendance)

Find all of our leader resources online: [lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/leader-tools](https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/leader-tools)

## QUICK REVIEW

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

## MY STORY

1. Christopher talked about the nine ways we can suffer. Looking back at that list, can you think of an example for at least four of the ways, when you or someone you know personally experienced the same kind of suffering?

**Facilitation Tip:**

- *To discuss this question, you could have everyone just talk about whichever way of suffering they want to talk about, or you could go down the list of each way and have people respond to the ones they've experienced.*
- *You could also "pass the baton" and have one person give their experience for one of the ways, and then pick the next person to answer the question.*
- *You could also break people into breakout rooms and give them more time to talk about these ways we can suffer.*

2. The responses people have when they face challenges, uncertainty and suffering can vary greatly. What are some ways you've noticed the people around you responding to difficult circumstances?

**Additional Questions:**

- *What are some ways you've responded to difficult circumstances?*
- *If you were honest, what would be some ways you're tempted to respond to suffering?*
- *Was there ever a point in your Christian life when you thought following Christ meant you got a free pass from having to suffer?*

Do you think people's responses differ if what they are going through is self-inflicted suffering as opposed to suffering that is outside of their control? If so, how?

**DIGGING DEEPER**

1. Christian author C. S. Lewis reflects what we heard this weekend about suffering when he wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." How have you seen the truth of this quote reflected in your experience?

How might the following passages help us understand the role of suffering in our lives and the attitude God wants us to have toward our suffering?

**James 1:2-4** *New International Version (NIV)* <sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**Hebrews 5:7-8** *New International Version (NIV)* <sup>7</sup> During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup> Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

**1 Peter 1:6-7** *New International Version (NIV)* <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

**Romans 5:3-5** *New International Version (NIV)* <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

**Additional Passage:**

**Romans 8:28-30** - *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* <sup>29</sup> *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* <sup>30</sup> *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

**Facilitation Tip:**

*To facilitate discussion on the follow-up questions, you could divide your group into breakout rooms. This would allow more people to answer the questions. A breakout room of 5 or 6 is a good number for discussion. Giving them a time limit of 10-12 minutes will help them keep the discussion moving. When you return to the large group, you could also ask each group to share one meaningful thing that came out of the breakout room discussion.*

Based on the above passages, what is most challenging for you to accept about hardship?

Is there someone in your life who has gone through great difficulty and lived out the truths taught in these passages regarding suffering?

**Additional Questions:**

- *What stood out the most about their lives?*
- *Why do you think they were able to view suffering the way they did?*
- *What was the outcome in their lives for having this kind of attitude toward suffering?*

Why do you think some people can go through hardship and come out better, while some go through it and come out bitter? *There is the classic illustration of the difference between an egg and a potato when you cook it in hot water. The egg becomes hard; the potato become soft. God's plan is to use hot water to soften us.*

**Additional Question:** *Can you think of a time when you went through suffering and came out better? Or bitter?*

Christopher listed four “gifts” we can receive from suffering. Can you think of a time in your life when you’ve experienced one or more of these gifts? *Great question to have everyone answer.*

**Additional Question:** *Summarizing all that we’ve just talked about, what do you think it takes for someone to be able to look at suffering as being beneficial?*

2. The Book of Psalms has a lot to say about our response to suffering. In fact, over half of the 150 Psalms are classified as “lament” psalms because they express concern or sorrow over a difficult situation the author is facing. Each lament psalm has at least three similar elements – description of the present need or situation, a call for help and a commitment to praise God despite the circumstance. Read Psalm 86 and identify each of these elements.

**Psalm 86** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>1</sup>Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

<sup>2</sup>Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God;

<sup>3</sup>have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long.

<sup>4</sup>Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you.

<sup>5</sup>You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.

<sup>6</sup>Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.

<sup>7</sup>When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.

<sup>8</sup>Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.

<sup>9</sup>All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

<sup>10</sup>For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.

<sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

<sup>12</sup>I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.

<sup>13</sup>For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.

<sup>14</sup>Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me— they have no regard for you.

<sup>15</sup>But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

<sup>16</sup>Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength in behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did.

<sup>17</sup>Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

What else do you notice David included in this lament?

*He talks a lot about the different aspects of God's character that are important to him in his current situation – he lists God's forgiveness, goodness, abounding love, greatness, compassion and grace.*

Because of this structure, these psalms provide a great model for us on how to pray when we're suffering due to difficult circumstances. In light of what we're all currently going through, jot down one or two thoughts about yourself or others under each of the elements.

**Facilitation Tip:** *This would be another good time to move into breakout rooms so more people can share. You can ask people to share what they wrote for all four of the elements at once or ask everyone to share about the first element before moving on to the second element. Be sure to let people know how you would like them to discuss these before they go to the breakout room and how much time they have.*

Description of a present need (How is this situation affecting you or others?)

**Example:** *I'm not sure how we are going to pay all of our bills. Or, this current situation, where everyone is home together, is starting to cause a lot of friction.*

Call for help (What would you like God to do for you or others?)

**Example:** *God, provide somehow for our family; provide more work for me. Or, give me more patience with my kids when they get on my nerves.*

Commitment to praise (What is true about God that you can praise Him for?)

**Example:** *Despite my concern about our finances, I will still praise you God for caring about us and always providing in the past. Or, God, I praise you for the family you've blessed me with and this increased opportunity I have to love and influence them.*

Reflection on who God is (What aspects of God's character are most important to you in the midst of this?)

**Example:** *You own the cattle on a thousand hills, and you take care of the birds and lilies, so you'll take care of us (Luke 12:22-31). Or, You are a God of patience, and your Holy Spirit came to give me self-control.*

Now use those thoughts to express your own lament prayer to God.

**Facilitation Tip:** *You could come back to this idea when you begin your prayer time. Ask a few people to put their thoughts about each of the elements into a prayer.*

**Facilitation Tip:** *If you broke into breakout groups to share about the elements, you might want to bring everyone back together to discuss the next two questions.*

How free do you feel bringing your "laments" to God?

**Additional Question:** *What can we learn about expressing our honest emotions to God from Psalm 13?*

### **Psalm 13**

<sup>1</sup> How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?

<sup>2</sup> How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

<sup>3</sup> Look on me and answer, LORD my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

<sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

<sup>5</sup> But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

<sup>6</sup> I will sing the LORD's praise,  
for he has been good to me.

What is most challenging for you to praise and thank God for in the midst of a difficult season in life?

*This question could be used during your prayer time to let people know how to pray for one another.*

## TAKING IT HOME

1. Psalm 23 has been a source of comfort and hope for many going through difficult times. Take a few moments to meditate on the points of hope in this psalm that could be of help in the midst of our current situation.

**Facilitation Tip:** *Have someone read this psalm as the whole group listens. It's short enough that you could have a few people read it in different translations. You can then ask people what stands out to them in this psalm.*

**Option:** *Here's a link to a 4-minute video of a pastor in Israel explaining what sheep lying down in green pastures looks like. The first 30 seconds is mostly just an intro that you can skip. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlrS3h7cH\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlrS3h7cH_A)*

### **A psalm of David. New Living Translation**

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd;  
I have all that I need.

<sup>2</sup>He lets me rest in green meadows;  
he leads me beside peaceful streams.

<sup>3</sup> He renews my strength.  
He guides me along right paths,  
bringing honor to his name.

<sup>4</sup>Even when I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will not be afraid,  
for you are close beside me.  
Your rod and your staff  
protect and comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a feast for me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.  
My cup overflows with blessings.

<sup>6</sup>Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

2. Looking back on the three-part prayer Christopher ended his message with, which one of the three is the biggest challenge for you with all that is changing in your world?

*Here is a link to a video of our own Andrew Polfer singing a song inspired by Psalm 23. You could use it to begin your Life Group as a moment of focus and worship. You could also use it as a transition to prayer. Now that we're doing virtual Life Groups, sharing a video like this is easier and seems more natural than showing it on a TV in your hosts' home.*

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/B\\_WNF9UBWYr/?igshid=1tdynhdpiozsu](https://www.instagram.com/tv/B_WNF9UBWYr/?igshid=1tdynhdpiozsu)

**Facilitation Tip:** *My group is enjoying splitting up into men and women groups for prayer. It was definitely clunky the first time we did it because all the couples needed a second device for the prayer time, but it's getting easier each week.*



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For resources during quarantine, visit the [COVID-19 Resources](#) page for a variety of options.

## If God Is Good, Then Why Is There Suffering?

### How we suffer:

1. Self-**INFLECTED**  
Romans 7
2. **INFLECTED** by others **DIRECTLY**  
Genesis 4:1-16
3. **INFLECTED** by others **INDIRECTLY**  
Genesis 16; Psalm 83:1-6
4. **FALL** of **NATURE**  
Matthew 14:30
5. **FALL** of **BODY**  
Luke 5:17-26
6. **EMPATHETIC**  
Luke 19:41-44
7. **PREVENTATIVE**  
Numbers 22:25
8. **DISCIPLINE**  
Romans 5:3-5
9. **MISSIONAL**  
2 Corinthians 11:21-29

### The gifts of suffering:

1. Leads to **REPENTANCE**
2. Causes us to rely on **GOD DEEPER**
3. Points to a need for **REDEMPTION** of ourselves and our world
4. **SANCTIFIES** us

### What do I do? Pray Jesus will:

1. Help me to **ENDURE** the suffering I can't **FIX**.
2. Give me His **SPIRIT** to **CHANGE** the suffering I can **FIX**.
3. Grant me the **WISDOM** to know the **DIFFERENCE**.

**GAMES****Never Have I Ever**

- ⇒ Each group member holds up five to ten fingers on camera. Everyone takes a turn saying something they have never done. If anyone *has* done what was said, they put a finger down. Once all your fingers are down, you're out. The last person with fingers up, wins!

**Bingo**

- ⇒ This classic game can be played virtually! You will need to find individual bingo cards and send them to each member of the group to use in advance. Write all the possible numbers on pieces of paper, and draw them from a bowl one by one (or use the automatic number caller linked below). The first person to get bingo wins!
  - [Here](#) is a great resource for free bingo cards.
  - [Here](#) is a fun automatic number caller that you can use and screen share with your group.

**Pictionary**

- ⇒ Play this classic game by using the whiteboard feature on Zoom. Have everyone take a turn drawing something on the screen while the rest of the group guesses what they're drawing.
  - Click [here](#), to learn how to use the white board on Zoom.

**Him or Her? (Great for couples' groups)**

- ⇒ Each individual member of your group needs a piece of paper that says Him on one side and Her on the other. Ask questions to the group about the couple. Group members answer by showing to the camera the side of the paper that corresponds to their answer. Have some fun seeing how couples respond!
- ⇒ To find some examples of questions to ask, look at these websites for inspiration: [here](#) and [here](#).

**House party**

- ⇒ House Party is an app on your phone that allows you to group chat and play games. They have games like HeadsUp, Trivia, Pictionary and more. To download the app and learn more, click [here](#).

**OTHER SOCIAL IDEAS****Virtual Cooking Class to benefit Outside the Bowl - \$40 donation**

- ⇒ Chef Rees from Key To The Kitchen is doing a virtual cooking class that benefits Outside the Bowl. The event is taking place on Saturday, May 2 at 6:00 from the comfort of your home. When you sign up, you will get the ingredient list and Zoom link to join live.
  - Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Date Night**

- ⇒ Have couples dress up and eat dinner together while making small talk or asking ice breaker questions.

**Dress Theme for Group**

- ⇒ Have everyone in your group dress in a theme, like tropical or pirate. You could even make a contest out of it!

**Virtual Background Contest**

- ⇒ Who can come up with the most creative background on Zoom?
  - To learn how to utilize this feature, click [here](#).

**Watch a concert together or "tour" a museum on Zoom**

- ⇒ Pick one of the many free live virtual concerts or virtual tours online. Have everyone pop popcorn and enjoy together!
  - [Here](#) is a great list of free virtual museum tours around the world.

**Art project**

- ⇒ Send everyone in your group a template of a project and a list of supplies. Have everyone do the project together while on Zoom (i.e.: paint a canvas, make a mask, decorate cards, etc.)