

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of May 17, 2020

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

LEADER NOTES

THE MEETING

⇒ IMPORTANT UPDATE ON LIFE GROUP FEEDBACK FORMS

It has come to our attention, at the end of the Life Group feedback form emailed to you today, "Survey Monkey" is randomly selecting people to take a second survey asking about your opinions on COVID-19. Please disregard this second survey as it does not come from North Coast Church. We apologize for the confusion. Thank you!

⇒ DISCUSS THE SUMMER AND FALL PLANS FOR YOUR GROUP

What We Don't Know About This Summer:

- We don't know when things will open up for groups of people to meet again.

What We Do Know About This Summer:

- Your people need to be cared for. Continue to stay in touch with your group members and find out what their needs are during the summer.
- As you know, this summer is a unique time. Even though Life Groups are officially ending, we have heard from many groups that they are still planning on meeting in some capacity over the summer (weekly, every two weeks, or monthly). We think it's important to be in regular communication with each other because of the current stay-at-home orders, so we are encouraging each group to decide how they want to continue to care and support one another during this time of social distancing.
- As you heard in Chris Brown's sermon last weekend, if things open up for groups of people to meet and your group feels comfortable meeting together, we will encourage people to watch the sermons together.
- The Life Group team will write "Food for Thought," which historically has been written as a personal devotion, however, this summer the questions will be more discussion driven for any groups wanting a discussion guide for the summer.
- Whether your group decides to continue meeting, take a break, meet socially, or gather in person for a sermon watch party, our hope is that each one of us will stay connected to and care for each other throughout the summer.
- Although we are not completely sure what the fall will look like for all of us, we are planning for our next official Life Group quarter to begin on September 14.

⇒ ONLINE FEEDBACK FORMS WILL BE SENT THIS WEEK

Here's how the online forms work:

- Everyone in your group will receive their own personal email with a link to their Feedback Form on Monday of this week. (Look for an email with, "Tell us about your Life Group!" in the subject.)
- Each unique email link is designed for that specific person and isn't meant to be shared.
- In the event that someone in your group can't find the email, you may share a generic link listed here with them.
lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/feedback
- Please take the time in your Life Group to have everyone complete the form if they have not already done so on their own.
- It's just a couple of questions and should take less than two minutes to complete.
- We will be emailing you the results of your group's feedback in the coming weeks.

⇒ PRAYER FOR LEADERSHIP AND STAFF AS WE MAKE PLANS FOR OUR FUTURE IN THIS NEW REALITY

Take some time to also pray for new Leaders and Hosts to launch new Life Groups in the Fall.

⇒ EVENTS & CLASSES COMING THIS SUMMER

Next week we're beginning to unveil some online class opportunities for the summer. You may want to consider making one of these events a summer social for your group!

LEADER INFO

⇒ 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

Don't forget to let us know of any roster updates that you know of, or changes to your meeting day, time or location for the Fall quarter when you submit your attendance.

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. This past weekend we heard the story of God framed into the components of a movie. When you think of your life, or a season of your life, is there a movie, show, series, book or character that best represents your story?

Discussion Note: This is a fun opener to help learn a little more about each person in the group while also connecting back to the sermon.

2. Chris described the daily battle between GOOD vs. EVIL as something we all encounter. What are a few choices we could make daily in order to help us choose God's script over our own?

Discussion Note: The question is asked as choices "we" could make, rather than "you," to soften the answers and not make them so pointed to people on the spot. Some answers here could center around personal devotion and prayer, or relationship building with a spouse, child, family member, friend, co-worker or neighbor. Others may be intentional habits of saying no to a cigarette, alcohol, or other substance, or choices made to not be involved in pornography or other sexual sin.

DIGGING DEEPER

There are three Digging Deeper questions this week. Feel free to pick and choose which question(s) work best for your group. (More questions = more choices to help personalize your group discussion) The third question is a timeline activity designed to help bring perspective to a situation in our lives when we feel helpless or hopeless. It really is an extension of the verses in question #2.

1. This weekend we learned how the conflict in our stories will be about making the choice between our script and God's script. After God establishes a covenant with Abraham, he and Sarah come up with their own solution to fulfill God's promise of having an heir. Read Genesis 16:1-4. In your opinion, what thought process led to their decision?

Discussion Note: For greater context on the life of Abraham (previously named Abram), read Genesis 12-25. As you read Genesis 16:1-4, you may need to set the context for your group. Sarah (previously Sarai) and Abraham, in their 90's, have a calling from God that He will make a nation from them, but they do not have any children. In Genesis 15:9-21 (right before Genesis 16), God makes a covenant with Abraham. Culturally, a covenant was made between two people for life. They would cut an animal carcass in half and both walk between the carcass. This represented what would happen if either person did not hold up their end of the deal, (they would be cut in half). The uniqueness is God passed through the pot and Abraham did not (Genesis 15:17). This signifies that the covenant is dependent on God, not mutually dependent on God and Abraham. In light of this covenant, the very next thing Abraham and Sarah do is in Genesis 16:1-4. Their thoughts might have been, "let's take this into our own hands," or "maybe they saw the maid servant as an opportunity they thought God brought for them." Other potential answers could have been fear-based decisions by Abraham or Sarah. It could have been a guilt decision because Sarah couldn't get pregnant. There are many other potential ideas. The goal in the remaining sub questions is to lean into our thinking pattern, so we can relate it to ourselves.

Genesis 16:1-4 New International Version (NIV)

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ²so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

Have you ever tried to take a promise made by God into your own hands like Abraham and Sarah did when they had a child with their maid servant?

Discussion Note: Possible answers could be forcing a job opportunity or making a purchase when we could have waited on God to provide. Maybe it is a dating or relationship situation. Another answer could be becoming impatient with a friend, family member, neighbor or coworker who hasn't yet made a decision to follow Jesus. It could be a lack of forgiveness for someone who has harmed you, instead of forgiving and letting God enact His own consequences. Maybe it is choosing to worry over uncertainty versus trusting the peace of God.

Did you learn anything from that experience?

Additional Questions:

- What was the result of that decision?
- How did that work out?
- Is there anything you would do differently?
- What reminder about God's character do we need after we have asked forgiveness for actions?
- Do you know of anyone who has ever tried to take a promise made by God into their own hands?

Note: Reflecting back on past mistakes is often where wisdom is learned. Wisdom can also come in learning from others' mistakes, which can be powerful in a group discussion.

Discussion Note: There is the potential for a group member to be vulnerable as they answer this question. Be sure to thank them for their vulnerability and courage to share. This is one of the best ways to show empathy as a leader and help foster a more vulnerable group discussion. This is not the time to try to solve someone's issues. Be on the lookout for other group members who may want to offer their advice to someone's problem.

How might someone know the difference between trusting God's promises and taking the promise into their own hands?

Note: Great potential to discuss knowing the difference. You could ask for examples from experience in this question. This could also be a follow up from the question above.

If you had a friend, family member, co-worker or neighbor ask you for advice on trying to discern the difference between trusting God's promise and taking it into their own hands, what advice would you give them?

Note: This question is similar to the question above, but it asks it from the vantage point of someone who is seeking advice. Sometimes the best thing we can do is take our own advice.

2. This weekend we reflected on the life of Abraham and the covenant made between him and God (Genesis 12:1-3). Three chapters later we see Abraham, a man with no children, struggling with the idea of God fulfilling His promise of creating a nation through him. Read Genesis 15:1-6. Make note of God's promise and Abraham's response. How do you think you would have responded to God's promise if you were in Abraham and Sarah's position?

Discussion Note: This question is pointing to the hopelessness and helplessness Chris mentioned in his sermon. Try to help your group members put themselves in Abraham and Sarah's shoes. This thinking can help lead into the sub questions below.

Genesis 15:1-6 *New International Version (NIV)*

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,
your very great reward."

² But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

What can we learn about faith, trust and/or God's character from Abraham and from God's response in Genesis 15:6?

Discussion Note: Verse 6 can bring us great hope. It shows that we can believe whenever we feel helpless and hopeless. It is belief and trust in God that He counts as righteousness. This puts the ball in God's court to show up when we are in these situations. It is a reminder that we don't have to force the hard things in life; we can lean in and trust God. Often times, hopeless and helpless situations are where God shows up the most.

What do you think it might look like to believe and trust God's promises when your present or future situation might seem helpless or hopeless?

Additional Question: Have you ever been in a situation where you thought, "there is no way that could ever happen," but you saw God make it happen?

3. In Genesis we were able to see how God was at work by looking through the rear-view mirror into Sarah and Abraham's seemingly helpless and hopeless situation. Similarly, when we look through the rear-view mirror in our own lives, it can help us see where and how God has been at work. Can you think of a helpless or hopeless situation you have experienced? If so, follow the steps to use the time line below.

Note: The hope/goal of this question is to help us gain perspective on our hopeless and helpless season. It is often easier to see God at work in the rear-view mirror or down the road after time has passed. Be prepared for people to not be able to see see God at work or be unclear how He will use the season.

Discussion Note: As with Digging Deeper #1, there is the potential for a group member to be vulnerable as they answer this question. Be sure to thank them for their vulnerability and courage to share. This is one of the best ways to show empathy as a leader and help foster a more vulnerable group discussion. This is not the time to try to solve someone's issues. Be on the lookout for other group members who may want to offer their advice to someone.

Additional Verses:

- **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.
- **James 1:2-12** - Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. ⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. ¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.
- **Romans 12:15** - Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.
- **1 Peter 5:10** - And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
- **John 16:33** - "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

1. Underneath **EVENT** on the timeline below, name the helpless or hopeless season you experienced. Sometimes the season is caused by choices we make (i.e. job change, big move, ending of a relationship), and sometimes we have no control over entering the season (i.e. loss of a loved one, illness/sickness, job loss, deployment of a loved one).

Note: Use these prompts to fill in the space below the timeline. See the example below about a job change and a move across the country.

2. In order to help us gain perspective on a helpless or hopeless season, sometimes looking through the rear-view mirror at things that happened before and/or after an event can be helpful.

Note: There can be clarity of God at work before, after or both before and after the event. It may depend on whether it was the person's choice: job change, enlisting in the military, starting a business, ending a relationship, choosing to go to a certain college or trade school, etc., or something outside of their control: cancer/ illness, loss of a loved one, deployment cycle, etc.

- If it was a season that took place because of your choice(s), underneath **BEFORE EVENT** list what went into making the decision (i.e. a conversation with a friend or mentor, a prompting of the Holy Spirit, sermon or devotional, a change in your job/company, emotional mindset) **If it was out of your control, list how things in your life were going prior to when the season of helplessness/hopelessness arrived, or how your life was changed by the arrival of the season.*

Note: See the examples below, lines numbered 1-3 to the left.

- Underneath **AFTER EVENT** describe a few key insights or lessons you gained after the helpless or hopeless season (i.e. receiving a positive medical diagnosis, the eulogy of a loved one, a faith conversation with a friend or co-worker, seeing God's provision in your current situation).

Note: See the examples below, lines numbered 1-3 to the right.

|----- **BEFORE EVENT** ----- **EVENT** ----- **AFTER EVENT** -----|

Note: See an example below:

1. <u>sensing God calling us to make a change</u>	1. <u>job change and move across country</u>	1. <u>seeing layoffs at my previous company due to COVID-19</u>
2. <u>conversation with a mentor</u>		2. <u>finding a great local church with friends after the move</u>
3. <u>job opportunity with another organization</u>		3. <u>having faith conversations with family members about why we moved</u>

Is there anything you might be able to learn from this process that might help you in future helpless or hopeless seasons?

Note: This is a great place to point people back to how God has worked through a hopeless or helpless season.

TAKING IT HOME

Which point from this weekend's message or Life Group study is most important for you to remember?

PRAYER REQUESTS



RESOURCES DURING QUARANTINE: Check out these links, also available on our homepage: northcoastchurch.com.

- Need some extra help or are you looking to serve in the midst of this crisis? Visit the [COVID-19 Resources](#) page for a variety of options.
- Also, check out our [Daily Doses](#) to help encourage you while dealing with the potential health, financial and relational challenges COVID-19 may cause.
- Many of the current projects and needs change rapidly. For the most up-to-date information and ways to volunteer:

FOLLOW OUR COMMUNITY SERVICE TEAM



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Abraham: Becoming A Part Of God's Story

The story behind the story:

Acts 7:1-8 & Genesis 12

God loves to work in the most **HOPELESS** and **HELPLESS** situations.

How to become a part of His story?

- The plot:** To make God's name **GREAT**, not **OURS**
- The scenes:** We will be **BLESSED** to bless **OTHERS**.
- The conflict:** A daily battle of **GOOD** vs. **EVIL**
A choice between our **SCRIPT** or **HIS**
To use our blessings for **OURSELVES**, or for **HIS KINGDOM**
- The resolution:** The Gospel = Christ gave **HIS LIFE** for mine, in order to take **MY LIFE** for Him.
- The Great Ending:** **EVIL** is defeated; **HEAVEN** is forever; **REWARDS** are given.