

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of January 31, 2021

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

LEADER NOTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

⇒ NEED HELP WORKING OUT HOW YOUR GROUP IS MEETING?

No matter how your group is meeting, whether it's online, in-person or hybrid, we realize people's preferences or comfort levels in how your group is meeting could change. Due to COVID, people may feel less comfortable meeting in person, or the opposite could happen, and they no longer want to meet only online. We want to give grace to anyone experiencing this and understand that life and how we respond is just not normal right now. Remember to be flexible with people if this occurs in your group. We realize people may want to change or drop out of groups more than usual because of this. If this happens, please let your Life Group Pastor know about it. Know they are there to help. We want to make sure everyone is being cared for during this crazy time.

⇒ CONTINUE TO MAKE PLANS FOR YOUR SOCIAL & SERVICE PROJECT

Begin to think about what service project you would like to do. Check our website for some options: northcoastcommunityservice.org

SOCIAL OPTIONS

Online Social Ideas: <https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/group-socials/>

In-person Social Ideas: <https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/suggestions-for-socials/>

**Please adapt in-person social options to comply with County social distancing guidelines for COVID-19.*

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

⇒ ONLINE GROUPS

Check out our Tips and Tutorials for Online Groups here: <https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/pro-tips/>

Find all of our leader resources online: 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. What creative ability would you most like to have that you don't already possess?

Discussion Note: This question is designed as a classic "getting to know you" question. It's provided for you to use especially if your group is relatively new or you have new people in your group.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a book | <input type="checkbox"/> Draw/paint/sculpt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook/bake | <input type="checkbox"/> Invent/engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choreograph/perform dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Write songs/create music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create graphic design | <input type="checkbox"/> Write/direct/act in a screenplay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design/create clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

2. Larry talked about forgiveness not being an extra-credit option but something we are called to extend to all people. Can you think of a time in your life when you've been challenged to forgive someone you didn't want to forgive? What made forgiving them so hard?

Discussion Note: We are potentially dealing with very painful situations here. This question isn't asking them to describe the situation, only to talk about the challenge of forgiveness.

3. We heard this weekend that no person is too broken to be redeemed. Can you think of a person you know whom you would be surprised to hear had become a Christian?

Note: This is not meant to be a time where people go into extended detail about how bad one of their friends is. Pastor Chuck Swindoll once described Luke 15:17 where it talks about the Prodigal Son “when he came to his senses...” as the most hopeful verse in the Bible because it holds out the possibility of anyone, no matter how lost, coming to Jesus. This could be an emotional discussion for some because the person they mention is someone they love dearly who seems far away from Jesus.

How might your attitude and actions toward them change if you were to more consistently think of yourself as an ambassador with a clear assignment rather than prosecutor or judge?

DIGGING DEEPER

Discussion Note: In our new leader Essentials training, we talk about the small to large group principle. This principle encourages the use of one-to-one discussion, three or four-person discussion, and whole group discussion as a way to involve everyone. Whether you're meeting in person or virtually, we encourage you to make use of this principle on a regular basis to keep things fresh and to help keep people engaged. Any of this week's study questions would be suitable to use with smaller sub-groups during your meeting.

If your group is meeting virtually, making use of the Zoom breakout rooms is a way to do this. We would suggest you make use of the breakout rooms at least once a meeting, if not more often. When you go to the breakout room, be sure to clearly spell out what you want them to discuss and the amount of time they will have to talk. For more information on using Zoom breakout rooms, please view the tutorial at lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/pro-tips/ or talk to your Campus/Life Group pastor.

The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-31 is arguably the most well-known and beloved parable Jesus told because of how well it reflects the heart of God. The parable also does such a great job of illustrating so many points from Larry's sermon that all of the study questions this week will focus on this story.

Before we jump into the questions, take a couple of minutes to read this entire passage and soak in what Jesus is telling us about God's heart. As you read, circle or highlight where you see any of the points from Larry's sermon reinforced in the story.

Luke 15:11-31 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’

Discussion Note: Take some time for people to identify where they saw the points in the sermon reflected in this parable. This parable is the third one in [Luke 15](#) (the only place in the Bible where three parables are listed in a row). They all have to do with something being lost – Luke 15:3-7, one lost sheep out of 100; Luke 15:8-10, one lost coin out of 10; Luke 15:11-31, one lost son out of two. In all three stories, we see something of value being lost and a great celebration happening when the lost thing is found.

What can we learn about the heart of God from this story?

Possible Answers: The father seems to be waiting with anticipation for the son to return (“while he was still a long way off, his father saw him”); the father’s response is compassion, and he runs to his long-lost son and welcomes him with open arms. There is no judgment of the son or lecture about bad choices. The value the father has for the son is reflected in the party he throws because “he was lost and is found.”

Can you think of a time in your life when you could relate to one or more of the three characters in the story – the younger son, the older brother or the father?

Additional Questions

- Is there someone in your life you need to respond to like the father responded in the story?
- What are some behaviors and attitudes that might indicate someone is responding like the older brother?

1. The major lesson of this parable is forgiveness – God’s forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others. The father in this story is a great picture of God’s love and forgiveness for each of us. Understanding His love and forgiveness for us can be of great help in motivating us to forgive and love others, including our enemies. What do you notice about the extent of God’s love and forgiveness from Psalm 103:8-13?

Discussion Note: This question would be a great one to break into smaller groups to discuss. Utilizing the breakout room function on Zoom is the way to do this if your group is meeting virtually.

Psalm 103:8-13 New International Version (NIV)

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him...

This passage continues to talk about God’s love in verses 14-18, so you may want to have people turn and read these verses as well.

Psalm 103:14-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
the Lord’s love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children’s children—
¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.

Additional Question: What is your response to the statement, “He does not treat us as our sins deserve?”

What is most encouraging or comforting to you from these verses?

Great question to have everyone in your group answer.

Why do you think people struggle with understanding and accepting God's love for them?

Have you ever struggled with accepting that God loves you? If so, what has helped you better understand and accept His love for you?

Discussion Note: *Probably the number one reason people struggle is that they don't feel worthy of God's love because of something they've done in the past or they don't think they've done enough to earn God's love. So be sensitive as you discuss this question, and let people share what they feel comfortable sharing.*

Additional Question: *What would you say to someone who told you they were struggling with accepting God's love for them?*

2. As we heard this weekend, forgiving others is not an option for Christians. However, it's easy to get confused about what biblical forgiveness is. Forgiveness isn't pretending something never happened, immediately starting to trust again, immediately removing all the consequences or letting someone continue to hurt us over and over again. Forgiveness is about refusing to seek revenge, giving others what God gave us (grace and mercy) and not allowing ourselves to be consumed by the past. If you had a friend who was struggling to forgive someone, what might be some of the hurdles they would have to overcome to get to the point of being willing to forgive?

Additional Questions:

- *Which one of the things that forgiveness is not do you think is most common for people to believe?*
- *Which definition of what forgiveness is do you think people struggle with the most?*
- *Which hurdles have you had to deal with in forgiving someone?*

What encouragement might you offer to help them be able to forgive?

Additional Question: *What has helped you to forgive someone you were struggling to forgive?*

What are some signs that your friend may not have forgiven the other person even though they say they have? Can you think of any signs that would suggest they *have* forgiven the other person?

Possible Answers: *They continue to talk about the person negatively; they avoid talking about the person or situation; or they continue to experience strong anger toward the person.*

Additional Questions

- *Often, we think of forgiveness in the context of some big wrongs, like betrayal or injuring someone. But we also face issues of forgiveness in our daily life. What are some of the small things that happen to us where we also need to ask for or offer forgiveness?*
- *What do you think "forgive as the Lord has forgiven you" ([Colossians 3:13](#)) looks like in real life?*
- *Can you think of a time when you were forgiven by someone for something you did? If so, what did that feel like? (See Psalm 32 and 51 to understand how David felt to be living in sin and then experience forgiveness.)*
- *Why do you think it's often so hard to ask for forgiveness?*

TAKING IT HOME

1. Are there any past hurts or injustices that continue to be a challenge for you to extend forgiveness to someone? If so, how could the points from the sermon or study questions help you deal with that situation?

Take a few moments to pray this prayer based on the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

Heavenly Father, thank You that You love me unconditionally. Thank You for seeking me out when I go astray. There have been times when I have related to each character in this parable. I have been the prodigal – running as far and as fast from You as my legs will carry me. And yet You wait for me, with open arms. Father, I confess, I have been the eldest entitled son – feeling dejected by You despite my faithfulness. In these moments, help me see how much You love me for who I am so I will not be blind and miss out on Your celebration. Lord, help me strive to be more like the father, always responding in love and grace, no matter the cost. In Jesus' name, Amen

From Cortney Whiting at ibelieve.com

Additional Resources on Forgiveness

reengage.org/blog/what-is-forgiveness-re

crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/powerful-steps-toward-truly-forgiving-someone.html

hopeforthebrokenhearted.com/forgiveness



FAMILY SUPPORT MINISTRY

North Coast Family Ministry offers families support, encouragement, prayer and hope that will help you make it through these challenging times. We have an amazing team of people who are here to walk with you as you navigate the ups and downs of work, life, school, marriage and more.

northcoastfamilysupport.com/

Cancel Culture Please Don't Drink The Kool-Aid!

Setting The Context:

The Text:

A Powerful Defense That Didn't Work Very Well

Acts 22:1-25

Cancel Culture:

Please Don't Drink The Kool-Aid! It Will Kill You.

- (1) Jesus came to cancel **SIN**, not **PEOPLE**.
John 3:17 & 19:30/ 1 John 2:1-2/ Revelation 12:10 & Job 1-2

- (2) Jesus calls us to be **RECRUITERS**, not **PROSECUTORS** and **JUDGES**.
2 Corinthians 5:20/ Matthew 28:19-20/ Matthew 7:1-5

- (3) Jesus died for His **ENEMIES**; all He asks is that we **LOVE** our **ENEMIES**.
Romans 5:8-10 & Colossians 1:21-22/ Matthew 5:43-47 & Romans 12:17-18

- (4) Forgiveness is not an **EXTRA-CREDIT OPTION**.
Matthew 18:21-35/ Matthew 6:12-15/ Luke 17:3-4/ Ephesians 4:32/ Colossians 3:12-13

- (5) It's bad enough when I won't forgive someone for what they did to **ME**.
It's ridiculous when I won't forgive someone for what I think they did to **SOMEONE ELSE**.
Proverbs 26:17/ Proverbs 29:7, Micah 6:8, Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 82:3-4/ Romans 12:19

- (6) No one is too **BROKEN** to be **REDEEMED**.
There is no unforgivable sin (except this one).
Mark 3:28-29 & Matthew 12:22-32