

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of May 2, 2021

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

LEADER NOTES

THE MEETING

⇒ Group Connection / Discussion Reminder

Continue to be aware of how the time in your group is being used and make sure you're allowing time to connect and pray for one another. If you spend most of the meeting one week answering the questions, make sure you allow plenty of time to connect and pray the following week. If you haven't done so lately and you're a male/female group, make sure you're getting time to break into women-only/men-only groups to take prayer requests. Sharing oftentimes goes up when you do this.

⇒ Anyone needing some extra attention in your group?

Just a quick reminder, if someone shares something, a text, phone call or note letting them know you're thinking about them later that week can be a big encouragement.

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

⇒ BEGINNING TO THINK ABOUT NEW GROUPS FOR THE FALL

As the COVID restrictions decrease and people feel more comfortable meeting, we foresee a significant need for additional groups in the fall. Please be praying with us as begin to see who might be able to lead those groups.

27: The Letters That Define Us – To help you make the most of this new series through the books of the New Testament, we encourage you to mark up your Bible and read each book along with us before we meet! When it comes to reading the Bible, everyone reads and learns in different ways. Here are a few helpful resources for us to engage in God's Word:

- [YouVersion Bible app](#)— for audio version of the Bible, taking notes and highlighting in the app
- [Enduring Word app by David Guzik](#)— for extra commentary and historical context
- [ReadScripture app by The Bible Project](#)— for short videos explaining themes and storylines

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. We're excited about starting our new series, 27: The Letters That Define Us! If someone asked you to describe the New Testament, what would you say?

You may get a variety of answers. This question is designed to get discussion going about the new series and to encourage pre-reading or listening to the books before the messages. You could use this as a marker question and ask the same question the last week of the quarter to see if any answers have changed. We may be finishing the series when we start up in the fall again, so it could be a good question to ask at that point again. You could also set up a reading/listening challenge for the next four meetings of the quarter. Remember to be aware that some people will learn much better through an audio Bible than reading.

2. This week we heard the theme verse for the book of Romans: "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Romans 1:17) Can you remember when you first began to hear and/or understand this concept of "living by faith" in regard to following Jesus? If so, explain.

Everyone may not have an answer, but most should. They may not have a specific event, but rather something they began to understand. Ask questions to find out how they heard and/or learned about it. (It could be they grew up in the church, family, etc.)

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The book of Romans is our foundational book of the Bible that clarifies our need for Jesus and defines what living by faith looks like. Romans 1-7 explains our need for Jesus, while Romans 8 is the pivot point in the book showing us the new life God's Spirit provides for us. As you read Romans 8:14-39, underline in your Bible all that has to do with what the Spirit offers us as followers of Jesus, then make a list below.

Romans 8:14-39 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. ¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. ²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For 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. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Discussion Tip: Have your group build this list together with each person sharing just a couple of their answers. They may come up with more than what is listed below.

(Note: Feel free to use [Romans 8:1-13](#) also. We used this passage for a question the first meeting of the quarter, but many may not have discussed it due to the potluck and social setting of that first meeting.)

- Do not need to fear (v. 15)
- Present sufferings are short term in light of eternity (v. 18)
- We can have hope we are saved (v. 24)
- Spirit intercedes for me (v. 26)
- All things can work together for good (v. 28) – see question #2 below to work this one out.
- The all-powerful God is for me; no one else stands a chance (v. 31)
- I am more than a conqueror (v. 37)
- Nothing can separate me from the love of God (v. 38)
- Other – you and your group may come up with more.

Additional Study– Digging even deeper with your group: Brainstorm with your group on questions that help evaluate if you're putting your faith in action and/or do a Bible search of other verses that reinforce or expand your understanding of what God offers us before you move onto the next sub-question.

Here are a few examples:

- Is there a fear that is regularly weighing me down? ([2 Timothy 1:7](#))
- Are there any long-term difficulties I am going to have to live with?
- Am I questioning my salvation? If I am, why is that? Is it a struggle with sin? (see [Romans 7:14-25](#))
- How can I recognize God is at work in this difficult situation?
- Do I know God is listening to me more than I realize? Do I ever use this as an excuse not to talk to Him (aka pray) about what's going on in me?
- Is there a reason I believe God is not for me? Is it because there's something I need to stop, change or confess?
- Do I ever feel separated from God? Is that because of Him or me? How do I seek God? ([Matthew 6:33](#))

Looking back at your list, which one or two are the most affirming for you to live out your faith confidently? *Good question to have everyone answer. Encourage personal examples of how it is encouraging. You may want to include the next question also.*

Is there one that is more challenging than the others?

Read Message Translation: *After everyone shares their answers, you could then read through the [Message translation](#) and see if there are any other helpful perspectives. [Click link](#) or see the end of the Leader Guide.*

“Living by faith” is an action statement. In light of what the Spirit is doing or wants to do in your life, is there anything you need to move forward on, pause, rest in or stop doing, in regard to your list?

Everyone may not have an answer to this. You could also use this for your closing question. Divide into groups of four, or men-only/women-only, etc.

2. One of the benefits of a Spirit-led life is that God is still at work during difficult times. Romans 8:28 is one of the most misunderstood verses when life is difficult. How do Romans 5:3-5 and the rest of what you just read in Romans 8 help us to better understand this verse?

Romans 5:3-5 New International Version (NIV)

³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And 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 verses to add to this discussion: [Eph. 4:29](#); [Gal. 6:2](#); [John 11:33-35](#); [Heb. 10:32-39](#)

Additional Questions:

- How could this be taken out of context and used to actually hurt, more than help in difficult situations?*
- How would you want someone to show you empathy in a difficult situation? When and who would you want to share this verse with you?*

Showing empathy and acknowledging a person’s difficult situation is crucial. This verse is often used to imply bad things are good or that everything is going turn out “good.” Bad things are not good and everything does not turn out “good.” What this is saying is that God can bring good out of bad, but it does not make the bad good. As followers of Jesus, we live by a greater purpose and know that God is at work even when we may not see it. More explanation at this link: bibleref.com/Romans/8/Romans-8-28.html

Is there a situation in your life where you need help seeing how God is at work even though it may seem He is not?

Use this question for your closing time together. Again, breaking into small groups may be helpful to allow everyone to share their thoughts.

TAKING IT HOME

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

As mentioned, if you have not broken into smaller groups in a while, it is recommended (groups of four, or men-only/women-only, etc.) Use this time to answer the questions above and take prayer requests.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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MEN'S BREAKFAST

Join us for a manly breakfast, great worship, fellowship and an inspiring message from Chris Brown. Men of all ages from all campuses are invited to join us on Saturday, May 15 from 8:15-10:00am. Free breakfast with tons of pancakes and Lil' Smokies in the Vista Plaza! RSVP at northcoastchurch.com/mens-breakfast/.

Romans (Part One of Two)

The problem:

Romans 1-4

All of humanity is **BROKEN** and **LOST**.

We cannot be saved by our:

RELIGION
MORALITY
FAMILY

The answer:

Romans 3:21-26, 5:8-10

Jesus' death **PAID** our **DEBT**, and His life gives us a new:

SELF
STATUS
RELATIONSHIP
FAMILY
FUTURE

The response:

Romans 7-8

We now have an old life to **LEAVE** and a new life to **LIVE OUT**.

[The Message: Romans 8](#)

⁹⁻¹¹ *But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!*

¹²⁻¹⁴ *So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!*

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ *This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!*

¹⁸⁻²¹ *That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.*

²²⁻²⁵ *All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.*

²⁶⁻²⁸ *Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.*

²⁹⁻³⁰ *God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.*

³¹⁻³⁹ *So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:*

*They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.
We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.
None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us.*

I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

¹ Peterson, E. H. (2005). [The Message: The Bible in contemporary language](#) (Ro 8:9–39). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.