

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of October 24, 2021

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

LEADER NOTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

⇒ **COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS** – We have some high-needs projects. Check out our website for a variety of options to serve: northcoastcommunityservice.org

LEADER INFO

⇒ MEETING REMINDERS

- **NEED HELP / SUPPORT?** If you need support for your group, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Life Group Pastor – we're here to help! Find a list of who to contact online at lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/staff.
- It's okay to have some weeks that focus more on discussion, and some that focus more on prayer! If you haven't taken the opportunity to break into **men-only/women-only groups**, try it this week.

⇒ MID-QUARTER TRAINING

Make sure you attend the Mid-Quarter Training session for Leaders and Hosts for your Campus and Station in Life. Click the link for more info on dates / times: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/mid-quarter-training

⇒ 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: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/pro-tips/

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 weekend we heard about the difference between the gospel (what God has done for us through Jesus) and religion (what we can do for God). Can you think of any times you have pursued religion more than the gospel?

Additional Question: Was there a moment you realized the difference between religion and the gospel and that changed your journey with God?

2. God can use imperfect, broken things in this world to bring Him glory and make Him known. Is there a small, foolish, insignificant or imperfect thing you have seen God use in your life or someone else's life?

Everyone may not have an answer for this question. God can use anything from a movie, song, bumper sticker, etc. to change someone's life and make Himself known to them. This question is asking if anyone has a story of a small or broken thing God used to change someone's life or bring them closer to Him. For example, someone seeing a license plate number on a car (small thing) with a verse reference and then giving their life to God, or God using parents' divorce (broken thing) to push someone closer to God.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. A common theme throughout Scripture is the unearned nature of God's pursuit—that He loved us when we were yet sinners and searched for us when we were lost or had nothing to offer. The passages below depict God's pursuit of His people. What impact might these truths have on how we live as people pursued by God, whose affection we did not earn?

Luke 15:1-7 New International Version (NIV)

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." ³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 30-31 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. ³⁰ Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign LORD. ³¹ You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Revelation 3:20 New International Version (NIV)

²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Isaiah 65:1-2 New International Version (NIV)

"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;
I was found by those who did not seek me.
To a nation that did not call on my name,
I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'
² All day long I have held out my hands
to an obstinate people,
who walk in ways not good,
pursuing their own imaginations—

What does it look like to live like you were pursued by God but did not earn it? (Possible answers: it may produce humility, an accurate view of ourselves, a sense of freedom, and/or a fear of the Lord and obedience).

What assurances are there for the one who is pursued in these passages?

Possible answers: there is rejoicing when they are found; they will be rescued, guided, cared for and made strong; God will be theirs and they will be God's (relationship); they will eat with God—signifies relationship and bonding.

Additional Questions: *Why does God pursue us? What is His purpose or motivation for pursuing us?*

The fact that God pursues us even when we are broken and evil says a lot more about Him than it does about us.
What strikes you about God's heart or character from the way He pursues us?

Good question to have everyone answer.

Imagine if the script was flipped and humans were the ones to pursue God first while He waited to be found.
Can you think of any ways this might change His nature or the narrative of the gospel?

This question may be hard for some to answer because it requires imagination and abstract thinking. The general sentiment you will probably hear is that the gospel wouldn't be the gospel without God loving us and pursuing us first, and this is a deeply ingrained part of His nature.

- *Romans 3:11 tells us that no one seeks after God, so without Him seeking after us, would we ever find Him?*
- *What would it say about God's love if He didn't pursue us? Is pursuit a necessity of love? (Love requires action; it is not passive).*

2. Jonah was a rebellious prophet who ran away and made mistakes in fulfilling God's call, and yet God still used him to accomplish His purposes in the end. What can we learn from the following passages about God's purposes, His wisdom and His ways?

1 Corinthians 1:25-31 New International Version (NIV)

²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. ²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

Isaiah 55:8-11 New International Version (NIV)

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the LORD.
⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Isaiah 46:9-11 New International Version (NIV)

⁹ Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.
¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say, 'My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.'
¹¹ From the east I summon a bird of prey;
from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.
What I have said, that I will bring about;
what I have planned, that I will do.

Isaiah 14:24, 26-27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁴ The LORD Almighty has sworn,
"Surely, as I have planned, so it will be,
and as I have purposed, so it will happen.
²⁶ This is the plan determined for the whole world;
this is the hand stretched out over all nations.
²⁷ For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him?
His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

God's purposes, ways and wisdom are different than ours- He doesn't do things like we would do them. What He sets out to do will come to pass according to His desires and His purposes, not ours. Nothing can stop His purposes or plans if He has set out to do them. He does what He pleases—but what is pleasing to Him also has our best interest in mind.

Sometimes, we can lose sight of the work God intends to do with us and write ourselves off from being used by Him because of insecurities, hurts or actions from our past that make us think, “I am not the person for this job.”

Use the chart to make a list. In the left column, write the thoughts, actions or fears that make you “not good enough” to be used by God. In the right column, write what you think God’s response to those would be, given the message we heard this weekend and the passages you just read.

This exercise will produce a variety of answers and it can be as specific, as personal or as general as people choose. “I am ‘not good enough’ to be used by God because...” answers could include: this thing I have done in the past, my background or where I come from, my fear or insecurities, my place or status in life. The “God can use me anyway because...” answers could correlate directly to the items in the left column or could be very generalized (i.e., if God can use Jonah, He can use me. If God can speak from a donkey (Numbers 22), He can speak through me.)

I am “not good enough” to be used by God because...	God can use me anyway because...
1. <i>this thing I have done in the past</i>	1. <i>God has forgiven me and made me a new creation in Christ</i>
2. <i>my background or where I come from</i>	2. <i>If God can use Paul, a persecutor of Christians, He can use me.</i>
3. <i>my fear or insecurities (I am too shy/quiet, I am too loud/unfiltered, etc.) or my lack of experience (I don’t know the Bible enough)</i>	3. <i>God used Peter, who put his foot in his mouth frequently; God used Moses, who had a stutter/speech impediment.</i>
4. <i>my place or status in life (i.e., I am too young, etc.)</i>	4. <i>God uses young people all the time and tells us not to let anyone look down on us because we are young</i>
5.	5.

Additional Questions:

- Is there a time you felt God was calling you to do something and you thought, “I can’t do it”? Did you go through with it anyway? If so, what helped you be able to do it? If not, is there anything you wish you could go back and say to yourself in that moment to encourage you?*
- God doesn’t have the same hang-ups about people that the world does. This is good news, because He also doesn’t have the same hang-ups about us that we do. Is there a “hang-up,” insecurity or reason you have written yourself off from being used by God that He may be wanting to help you see past or heal from?*
- Take Home Challenge for the chart above: You may encourage your group members to make a third column in the chart and find Scripture to correspond to each thing they wrote, as a way of showing how they know what God’s response would be. They could also meditate on those verses or character qualities of God this week, and you can check back next week in group to see if anyone has an update to share.*

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back on this week's sermon and study, what's most important for you to remember?

PRAYER REQUESTS

→

→

→

→

→

→

→

→

RESTORE WORKSHOP: Step-Parenting with Grace

Saturday, November 6, 9am-12:30pm at the San Marcos/Escondido Campus

Presented by Laurie Polich Short, a speaker, author and associate pastor in Santa Barbara, CA. She has spoken to more than 500,000 people at conferences, colleges and churches around the country. Blended families, you won't want to miss this event on step-parenting and co-parenting with grace! Register at northcoastchurch.com/restore.



When The Word Of The Lord Comes To You (Jonah)

Jonah 1:1-6:

Who God Uses (v. 1)

What He Says (v. 2)

The Gospel vs. Religion (v. 2)

The God who Pursues