

JESUS

FOLLOWING HIM THEN, FOLLOWING HIM NOW



LEADER GUIDE

J E S U S

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LEADER GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! You are here because you are a valued leader of one of the expressions of biblical community, Groups. This guide is to help you learn one of the basic building blocks of how we minister to people in groups within the Fearless Family of Churches.

We believe that life change happens best in intentional relationships within a group of believers. By leading one of these groups, you are partnering with the Fearless Network Churches to help people become Fearless Followers.

Our Groups are designed to be a place where we can grow as a family of disciples on mission. Group gatherings are intentionally designed to be safe, fun, relational, and life-giving environments where relational, spiritual, and missional growth happens.

We are, therefore, intentional about equipping you to lead, and helping you as you lead. We connect you with other leaders so you can learn from one another. We also bring a support system of Shepherding Elders who care for and pray with you as you lead.

So, enjoy reading, and enjoy the journey!

Fearless Family Groups

FEARLESS FAMILY GROUPS

Our mission statement is one short power packed phrase:

Following Jesus and fearlessly making Him known

Following Jesus includes accepting Him as our rescuer from sin, connecting us to a holy God who has now adopted us into His family, and pursuing Him as our living leader through the power and guidance of His Holy Spirit.

To fearlessly make Jesus known recognizes that it takes courage to share Jesus with a person or a culture that does not yet embrace Him. Yet the Holy Spirit empowers us to make Jesus known where we live, work and socialize.

How Life Groups Fit into our Mission Statement

The Fearless Family is a growing faith community that welcomes everyone, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. We are passionate about helping people explore, encounter, live and share the life-changing message of Jesus, by facilitating authentic spiritual growth among Jesus' followers and challenging and mobilizing people to serve – locally, regionally, and globally.

We believe that the best environment for spiritual growth happens in relationships, and groups are a catalyst for relationships. Our groups are a place where we practice activities that can form us in the image of Jesus. It is in a group that we turn our chairs inward to face one another, where we build relationships, know each other on a deeper level, and experience the ups and downs of life in community.

Why Groups?

We are designed for relationships. We thrive best when we are connected to one another. Relationships define us, grow us, challenge us, strengthen us, and bless us. Scripture requires relationships for spiritual growth.

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (Prov. 27:17)

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 Jn. 1:7)

Spiritual growth happens better in circles than in rows. Groups provide a community of in-depth study, application, and accountability for spiritual growth.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:25)

We have a greater missional impact when we go together than alone. Through groups we show godly love to one another and demonstrate that we are disciples of Christ. With the right curriculum and the right strategy, we can impact our neighbors and friends.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. (Jn. 13:34-35)

Groups Mandate

The mandate for our groups is to become *Families of Disciples on Mission*.

Family... Jesus made it clear during his ministry that the closest families on earth (biological or otherwise) would be those who are united in Christ (Mark 3:31-34). With that in mind we dare not miss the incredible opportunity to be the healthy functioning spiritual family that our small groups provide. Within a family we should find authenticity, safety, and encouragement.

- *Welcome Others* – Cliques are exclusive, healthy families are inclusive. There are times, of course, that a group should be slow to

add new people, but generally the attitude should be to include people who need a family. Jesus was constantly inviting all kinds of people into his family of disciples. (Mark 1:16-18)

- *Care for Each Other* – The best safety net for customized care for a person is the small group. Needs don't go unnoticed in a family and whether the family completely takes care of the need or calls for outside support, no one drops through the cracks. Jesus was not only aware of the needs of his followers, but He also took extraordinary measures to meet them. (John 13:1-5)
- *Have Fun* – Enjoying each other's company is not peripheral in a family, it is part of what makes a family a family. "Fun" is not always a virtue we connect with Jesus, but we should note that the very first miracle Jesus performed was to turn water into wine to keep a party going! (John 2:1-3)

Of Disciples... Jesus's mission was not just to make converts, but to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). Discipleship has to do with learning and obeying... not simply believing. Our journey to fully follow Jesus as disciples is best realized in relationship with a small group of like-minded believers.

- *Speak with God* – It is in both the safety and challenge of a small group that people learn to pray (at least corporately). Most followers of Jesus feel uncomfortable praying out loud and this is the environment to step into that practice. However, prayer is more than one-way conversation where we talk to God, it also involves listening. Jesus did both in his prayer life (Matthew 6:6-8)
- *Live the Bible* – While some of the most insightful and deep teaching may come during a weekend message, the most effective way for believers to learn and practice the Bible is in the context of a small group. People ingest truth most thoroughly when they actively discuss it, encourage each other to apply it, and follow up with accountability as they do in a group. Jesus' expectations of his followers is that they would live the Bible. (Matthew 7:24-27)
- *Pursue your Call* – Your calling is not your potential or your dream, it is what God wants you to do to extend his kingdom. For a few a calling is quickly evident, but for most of us it takes a while to discern. It flows from abilities and gifts, passions and experience, opportunities, and fruit. A primary role for a small group is to help

their members discover and step into their calling just as Jesus helped his disciples do the same. (John 21:15-19)

On Mission... Our calling and mission have similarities but are not identical. Our calling has to do with how we expand the kingdom either within or outside of the church, our mission is always outward focused. It is about reaching those who don't yet know Jesus and helping them to receive salvation and abundant life in Christ. We use the 3M process to go on mission as a family of disciples.

- *Meet a Need* – Generally the best kind of need to meet is a felt need and not what we perceive to be a real need. It is when someone appreciates the need you've met that they open themselves up to friendship and the real spiritual need you are able to address. Healthy groups take practical steps to meet the needs of others in their neighborhood or community. Jesus almost always started by meeting the felt need of a person before moving toward meeting the real spiritual need. (Luke 5:27-28)
- *Make a Friend* – Whether a friendship is established first, and then needs are met, or vice versa, both steps in the process are important in establishing a context to share spiritual truths. Groups should provide opportunities for those outside their family to be included and invited into friendship. As Jesus embraced "outsiders" we see his followers, like Levi, doing the same thing. (Luke 5:29-31)
- *Move Toward Christ* – The greatest need met; the greatest result of a friendship would be to help someone far from God into a relationship with Jesus. A family of disciples on mission will think of ways they can move those outside the faith toward Jesus. In this way we truly follow Jesus as he came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 5:32)

Group Roles and Responsibilities

What Groups Do

- Meets together once a week (or every other week)
- Provides care for people.
- Serve in church or in the local community at least one a term, preferably more!
- Socialize together at least once a term, preferably more!

What Group Leaders Do

- Lead the group by promoting participation among group members.
- Monitor the group's growth as a family of disciples on mission.
- Lead the group in determining and practicing healthy and sustainable rhythms that help them become a family of disciples on mission.
- Delegate and practice shared leadership.

Marks of a Healthy Group

- Prioritizes spiritual growth.
- Prays together.
- Cares for one another
- Welcomes others.
- Stays committed to one another and to the mission.

HOW TO LEAD A GROUP

Thank you for your commitment to lead a group through the Jesus study. Being a leader has its own rewards. You may discover that your walk with the Lord is deepened through this experience. Throughout this guide, you will review study questions that encourage thought provoking discussions to help your group grow in your knowledge and understanding of Jesus. There are multiple components in this section to help you structure your discussion time, so make sure you consider each one.

Before you begin

Before you begin each meeting, make sure your group has read through the week's content. Every person should have his/her own study guide so they can follow along and write in the guide if they need to. Assign the reading as homework prior to the meeting so that you can use meeting time for discussion.

To ensure everyone can participate in the discussion, the ideal group size is 6-8 people. If there are more than 10 people, try to break the bigger group into smaller sub-groups. Make sure the members are committed to participating each week to create stability and help you better prepare the structure of the meeting.

Start each week's discussion with a question to challenge group members to think about the issues you'll be discussing. Participants can answer briefly, but the goal is to have an idea in mind as you go along so that they can be engaged and ready to interact. Initiate free-flowing discussion where you invite participants to bring any questions and insights they have discovered during their own reading.

Weekly Preparation

Here are a few ways you as a group leader can prepare for each meeting:

- Make sure you are familiar with the week's Bible reading.
- Make sure you understand the content for discussion, so you are prepared to lead discussion and know how to structure your group time.

- Decide ahead of time which questions you plan to discuss. Depending on how much time you have each week, you may not be able to reflect on every question. Select the questions bound to evoke the best discussion.
- At the end of discussion, take the prayer requests from the group and invite the group to pray together over them.

Structuring the Discussion Time

If you need help organizing your time when planning for the group study, here are the options for a 60-minute study and a 90-minute study.

Meeting Flow	60 Minutes	90 Minutes
Welcome: Members arrive and get settled	5 min	10 min
Gettings Started Question: Prepares the group for interacting with one another	10	10
Message: Review the week’s reading, what stood out	15	25
Discussion: Discuss group study questions	25	35
Prayer and Application: Application for the week and prayer before ending	5	10

As the group leader, it’s up to you to keep track of the time and keep things moving along as per your schedule. If the group is having a good discussion, don’t feel the need to stop and move to the next question. Remember, the purpose is to pull together relationally, share unique perspectives and grow together.

As much as you want everyone to participate in the discussion, notice that it is perfectly normal that certain participants to be quiet. They may be internally reflecting on the questions and need time to process their thoughts before they share it.

Group Dynamics

Leading a group can be a rewarding experience for you and your group members. But that doesn't mean there won't be any challenges. Some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing questions they consider personal. Some participants may just be introverts and won't speak unless called upon. There may be some disagreement about some topics. To prevent these scenarios, consider the following ground rules:

- If someone asks a question that's off topic, suggest that it be discussed some other time, or ask the group if they are okay switching topics.
- If someone asks a question you don't know the answer to, admit that you don't and move on. If you feel comfortable, invite other group participants to share their opinions based on their personal experiences.
- If some people are talking more than others, direct questions to people who may not have shared yet. You could even ask the dominating members to help draw out the quiet ones.
- Where there's a disagreement, encourage participants to process the matter in an atmosphere of love. Let them evaluate their opinions and consider the ideas of others. Consider reading passages from Scripture that address the topic, looking for common ground.

When conflict arises, Scripture such as John 13:34 that encourage love for one another, Rom 12:18 that require us to live at peace with everyone help frame the conflict with a posture of mutual edification.

WEEK 1

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, AND BEGINNING OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

Introduction

This week's reading explores the early life of Jesus, from before His birth all the way to the start of His ministry. Highlights includes the visit of the Magi, the flight to Egypt, Jesus at the temple at the age of 12, His baptism, temptation, and the wedding feast on Cana of Galilee. The Sunday teaching will focus on Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, where Jesus first reveals His identity as the Messiah.

Before you start (30 min before group time)

- ATTEND THE LEADER MEETING/TRAINING.
- Find and make sure your meeting space/table is set up and ready with seats arranged in a circle, name tags, writing materials and extra books and study guides.
- Wear a name tag, welcome, and greet each person warmly and introduce yourself, and make sure they have a name tag. You will use name tags for the first couple of weeks to help us know each other's names.
- Use the **icebreaker question** below to get conversations going as you wait for others to join.
- Once everyone has settled in, introduce yourself and welcome everyone again. At this point, **you may open with a prayer and get the discussion started.**

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Pray that your group would have chemistry and bond together from the onset.*
- ✓ *Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal Jesus to you through this study.*
- ✓ *Pray that your group will be vulnerable and authentically share their walk of faith.*
- ✓ *Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you and give you insights on how to pray for each participant.*

Leader Note: Prayer not only unites the group but brings focus and aligns them to their purpose for coming. It also enables you to calm down, catch your breath and release the meeting to God's hand.

Getting Started (10 min)

- If this is a new group, participants may not know each other. Ask all participants to briefly share their name, profession, and how long they've been attending the church. *[Make sure you pass out the group attendance form to get the names and contact of everyone in the group]*
- Read out the group commitment section of the study guide and explain anything that's unclear. **Have everyone sign the group commitment.**
- Introduce the study:

“The purpose of this group discussion is that we may learn how to follow Jesus better today by studying how His life and ministry impacted those who followed Him when He walked the earth. Each week, we will read a section of the Gospels, do personal study and reflection, listen to weekend teaching, and attend a group discussion. In addition, we will also share stories of how we Jesus called us to follow Him and how the journey had been so far.”
- Share your salvation story or walk of faith modeling to your group how to share i.e. how you came to know Christ and the difference that has made in your life. Let the group know that every week, someone will share their Jesus story. **Pick the person to tell their Jesus story next time you meet.**

Leader note: Sharing real life stories enables people to get to know each other better. In-depth knowledge about a person makes them real and creates an environment where people can freely share their circumstances and needs. Pay attention to what is said – as well as what is not said - as your group shares so you can ask good questions.

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: Who is the most interesting person you've ever met or what is the most interesting conversation you've ever heard?

Week's review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Leader note: You can go round the group and let each person briefly share the most important thing they learnt this week. You can also ask questions about the readings, "which day did you like best", "which day challenged you the most" etc. or pick one or two questions in the daily reflections to use it as a basis for discussion.

Deeper Dive Discussion

*Leader note: This Week's focus passage is the Samaritan Woman in John 4. It may help to have someone read the passage out loud. You can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question and be the one to start with a response. You may also delegate leading this section. Remember, **the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.***

1. The Samaritan woman was guarded and deflective in her conversation with Jesus. What are the moments you find yourself instinctively "guarded and deflective" in relationship with others and with God? Why?
2. Jesus was not afraid to admit his thirst and ask for help. What are you thirsting for? Friendship? Acceptance? Community? Forgiveness? Healing? Boldness? Economic security? How is your thirst inviting you to open more deeply to God?
3. At the outset, the Samaritan woman refused to give Jesus a drink and turned down Jesus' offer of living water. Has pride or past wounds when being vulnerable kept you from receiving from others? Where do you need to ask for help? (from others? from God?)
4. Jesus, undeterred by the woman's past, chose to reveal His identity as the Messiah to her to highlight the fact that everyone is invited to a relationship with Jesus. As a result, she moved from invited to invitee. What practical steps can you take to become an invitee?
5. Jesus told the woman at the well that true worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. How do you understand this? What

is one practical thing you can do this week to live as a worshiper of God in spirit and truth?

Wrapping Up (15 min)

Leader note: Each week the group will take time out to pray for one another. Explain that praying may be difficult in group settings, but it is also one of the easiest ways to participate as a group member.

- Start a prayer journal or use prayer sheets to track requests.
- Ask group members to share prayer requests.
- Pray for the group including their requests.

Big Question

Leader note: Next week we will follow Jesus' example in Baptism. Discuss baptism with your group.

- Have you been baptized? Why not?
- What is stopping you from being baptized next Sunday?

In Preparation for Next Week (5 min)

Leader note: Ask participants to look at meeting days and block out group meeting days until the last meeting. This is a part of the commitment to attend regularly.

- Reminder to read the Gospel Book
- Reminder to work through the personal reflection questions.
- Make sure you have everyone's contact information to set up an email/text group for ease of communication.

Additional Resources

Scan the QR code for this week's additional resources:

- Understanding the *Magi*
- The 30 silent years of Jesus' life
- The meaning and purpose of Jesus' temptations.
- Jesus' Surprising First Sign: Water into Wine.
- What does it mean to be born again?



WEEK 2

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (MIRACLES, SIGNS AND WONDERS)

Introduction

Jesus' ministry is off to a great start. Jesus demonstrates His divine power through healing and presents the manifesto of the upside-down Kingdom of God. All these show that Jesus' entry will change the way we relate to God. This week's teaching will focus on the calling of the disciples (later known as apostles), and the fact that following Jesus requires us to leave something behind.

Leader note: It is important that every group member does their weekly reading and devotions ahead of time. It is from the readings that they will come out with the questions, concerns and takeouts to be raised and or shared in the group session. This is also what will enable them to begin to establish the spiritual discipline of a daily quiet time. Send reminders during the week and consider establishing a system of accountability.

Before you start (30 min before group time)

- ATTEND THE LEADER MEETING/TRAINING.
- Wear a name tag. You will use name tags for the first couple of weeks to help know each other's names.
- Use the icebreaker question to get conversations going as you wait for others to join. Be gracious if people walk in late as they may have lost direction.
- Once everyone has settled in, ask one of the participants to open with prayer.

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Pray that people will be excited to come back, connect and want to share openly and authentically.*
- ✓ *Pray that God will give you divine wisdom, knowledge, understanding and discernment as needed to lead the group and to minister personally to each one.*
- ✓ *Pray that God will give you an open and non-judgmental heart to love and understand each person.*
- ✓ *Pray that each participant will find time to read and reflect on God's word throughout the week.*

Getting Started (10 min)

- Start by introducing yourself again and be intentional in welcoming everyone, especially newcomers in which case, have everyone briefly re-introduce themselves.
- In case there are new members, re-introduce the study in summary.
- Have the assigned person share their story of how they came to believe in and follow Jesus.

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: Are you a planner or a go with the flow type. Has it worked to your advantage?

Week's Review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Leader note: You can go round the group and let each person briefly share the most important thing they learnt this week. You can also ask questions about the readings, "which day did you like best", "which day challenged you the most" etc. or pick one or two questions in the daily reflections to use it as a basis for discussion.

Deeper Dive Discussion

Leader note: you can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question and be the one to start with a response. You may also delegate leading this section. Remember, the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.

1. This week's message focused on Jesus' invitation to follow Him. As you begin your time together, take a moment and share a few stories of how you came to know the Lord. What was your "call" like?
2. Do you recall a time when Jesus called you out of something into something new? Did you accept? How was the transition for you?

3. In following Jesus, we are also leaving something behind. What habits, relationships, possessions, dreams, or desires do you need to leave behind to follow Jesus? Where are you in the process of leaving?
4. When Jesus calls us, He invites us to join Him in the work of the Kingdom in our respective fields. Where has God called you to be? How do you see His call on your life playing out in your family, work, community?
5. The cost of following Jesus is high, but the disciples left what was temporary (even if valuable) for what was infinitely more valuable and lasting. This should be great news for us, but often it's not. Why do you think this full surrender to God and pursuit of Him is so difficult?
6. Jesus doesn't simply call the disciples to go and do ministry, He also calls them to be with Him. As you think about what it means for you to be a disciple of Jesus, is it true for you that discipleship is a relationship before it's a task? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Wrapping Up (10 min)

Leader note: Each week the group will take time out to pray for one another. This week, have them share and pray in twos or threes.

- Share requests based on this week's personal and group studies, or on other areas of life. Feel free to pray using any of these passages: Matthew 16:24, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:7-8

In Preparation for Next Week (5 min)

- Reminder participants to stay on track with their readings. If anyone has fallen off, have them pick up from where the study currently is.
- Reminder to work through the personal reflection questions.
- Let the group know that you will share communion next week.
- Remind the group to scan the QR code for additional resources every week.

Additional Resources

Remind participants to scan the QR code for additional resources every week including:

- The Sermon on the Mount from the Bible Project.
- The One Minute Pause app.
- John The Baptist's doubts



WEEK 3

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (TEACHING AND PREACHING)

Introduction

The teaching and healing ministry of Jesus continues to expand. Jesus again demonstrates His power by calming the storm, casting out demons, feeding multitudes, and walking on water, climaxing in the transfiguration where Jesus' glory is revealed. At the same time, some of Jesus' followers become disillusioned by the demand of following Jesus and rejected Him leaving only the twelve. This Sunday's teaching will explore how as followers of a rejected Lord, we will also face rejection.

Before you start (30 min before group time)

- ATTEND THE LEADER MEETING/TRAINING.
- Use the icebreaker question to get conversations going as you wait for others to join.
- Once everyone has settled in, **ask one of the participants to open with prayer.**

Getting Started (5 min)

- Have the assigned person share their story of how they came to believe in and follow Jesus.

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: What is your favorite type of bread (e.g., bagels, rolls, doughnuts, pretzels, sourdough, banana, etc.)? Why?

Week's Review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Pray that the group will understand Jesus' great desire to have a personal and intimate relationship with them.*
- ✓ *Pray that as you celebrate Holy Communion as a group, you would have a special time to celebrate the work God in your lives.*
- ✓ *Pray that people in your group will make time for personal study and weekend meetings.*
- ✓ *Pray over the prayer requests submitted over the past week.*

Leader note: You can go round the group and let each person briefly share the most important thing they learnt this week. You can also ask questions about the readings, “which day did you like best”, “which day challenged you the most” etc. or pick one or two questions in the daily reflections to use it as a basis for discussion.

Deeper Dive Questions

Leader note: you can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question and be the one to start with a response. Remember, the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.

1. Rejection is a painful feeling, especially when it comes from those closest to you. In fact, fear of rejection can produce a sense of anxiety, and cause us to do things we shouldn't just to please people. Do you agree or disagree and why?
2. Have you ever felt rejected? Share the story. What does it tell you about the importance of belonging?
3. When you feel rejected, how do you tend to respond? How do you cope with rejection?
4. In the teaching, we landed on the calling to live for the audience of one – God. Whom would you say you're trying to please daily? God? Your co-workers? Spouse? Friends?
5. How much more of your potential do you think you could reach if you sought the approval of God and no one else?
6. No one is immune to rejection. We all experience it to some degree. But we can overcome rejection by putting God first. What can you do this week to seek God's approval other than those of men?

Wrapping Up: Holy Communion (10-15 min)

Leader note: We will end today's discussion by celebrating Communion and praying together. Use the guide below to prepare and take the group through. You may recruit participants to help as needed with reading scripture or distributing the elements.

Communion is a symbolic way to show we belong to Jesus and to remember what He did for us. We're forgetful people, so it's a regular remembrance and celebration of Jesus' sacrificial death. The breaking and eating of bread has to do with Christ's body being broken on the cross. The drinking from the cup has to do with the shedding of Christ's blood, by which we are cleansed.

Prepare: Get your communion elements and plan ready. There should be some type of bread element and some type of juice element. Think about what you are going to say or read to lead your group. Know how you'll pass these out to your group. Prepare the atmosphere. Communion can be a reflective time, but it can also feel celebratory. Communion may need a little explanation - don't expect everyone to know what to do. Use Matthew 26, Luke 22, and 1 Corinthians 11 to explain the origin and meaning of Communion. Communion is meant to be personal, yet a shared experience. If it works for your group, you may want to sing a song together.

Pause: A big part of communion is remembering and reflection. Remember the sacrifice and promise that Jesus has made. Communion should also involve personal reflection. It's a time to examine our relationship with the Lord and with others.

Read: Read the passage below before partaking Communion.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

Pray: Thank God for what he has done and his promises to us with prayers of gratefulness, joy, and hope. It's great to pray individually, but there is something special about leading a prayer out loud with any size group.

Partake: Give instructions to your group about what to do and when. Don't leave people guessing. Following the example in Scripture, we eat the bread, followed by the cup. Feel free to offer prayers or praise in-between.

Praise: Communion should lead to praise. Jesus has made a way for us to receive forgiveness and life! We don't have communion because of obligation. We have communion as a proclamation of Jesus' promise of salvation. End with a prayer or song of praise

Additional Resources

Remind participants to scan the QR code for additional resources every week including:

- The Parable of the Sower (*The Chosen*)
- The sending of the twelve (*The Chosen*)
- How is Jesus the Bread of Life.



WEEK 4

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (THE GOD-LED LIFE)

Introduction

Opposition begins to mount against Jesus. Undeterred, Jesus continues to heal and preach, often running into debates with religious leaders about one religious practice or another. Jesus challenges us with the invocative story of the Good Samaritan and highlights the cost of following Him. This weekend's teaching will focus on Jesus' countercultural teaching on forgiveness. Why does God ask, no, demand that we forgive others?

Before you start (30 min before group time)

- ATTEND THE LEADER MEETING/TRAINING.
- Use the icebreaker question to get conversations going as you wait for others to join.
- Once everyone has settled in, **ask one of the participants to open with prayer.**

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Pray that God will give you a spirit of discernment, revelation, and wisdom to enable you guide and help the group share in a way that is sensitive, confidential, and honoring to God.*
- ✓ *Pray for softening of hearts, humility and brokenness that will bring about confession and repentance for areas that are a stronghold in group member's life.*
- ✓ *This week we tackle the difficult topic of forgiveness. Pray that God would give us the grace to forgive ourselves and others and the strength to move on.*

Getting Started (5 min)

- Have **the assigned person share their story** of how they came to believe in and follow Jesus.

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: If you could travel back in time, where would you travel to and why.

Week's Review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Deeper Dive Questions

Leader note: you can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question and be the one to start with a response. Remember, the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.

1. What are some of the reasons why you might find it difficult to forgive someone who has wronged you or hurt you in some way?
2. Rabbinical law said that you are to forgive a person three times when they have wronged you, so Peter looked very generous. What do you think about Jesus telling us to forgive a person so many times?
3. To illustrate extravagant forgiveness, Jesus told a story of an unforgiving servant. What do you think it would have felt like to have that large of a debt forgiven? Share about a time someone extended wild forgiveness to you.
4. Have you ever experienced difficulty in accepting the forgiveness of God? How you ever experienced how failing to forgive impacts your relationship with Jesus?
5. God forgives us because of what Jesus has done for us; but then he obligates us to forgive ourselves and others because of what Jesus is doing in us. Do you feel stuck in the process of forgiveness? Share if you can.
6. Many people think that getting revenge will make them feel better. Studies show that the opposite is true. What is one thing you will do this week to extend mercy and forgiveness to another person as you've received it through Christ? How can your group or others pray for you and support you in this through the coming week?

Wrapping Up: Forgiveness Exercise (10 min)

Leader note: forgiveness is a hard but necessary part of following Jesus. This exercise allows participants to release forgiveness. Expect that it may be hard for some people to do this. Create room for them to share and have the group surround and pray for them.

As the Holy Spirit leads, decide to forgive and write it on rice paper, then drop it off into the water as a symbolic act of releasing it to Jesus. The close in prayer.

Group's Next Steps

Leader note: this study is about to end. It is time to think through the next steps for participants. Will you go on as a group? This is the time to have that conversation.

Next week

Leader note: Ask participants to go through the process below if they haven't. Then ask them to come with 2-3 names of neighbors you plan on inviting to the Easter service.

We all have neighbors whether they live next door or are in our broader circle of influence. God has placed us where we are so that we can come around our neighbors in creative ways and show them the love of Jesus. The following are six steps to take to be a good neighbor to those who live around us.

- Step 1: Determine who your neighbors are.
- Step 2: Meet your neighbors.
- Step 3: Show a creative (and safe) act of kindness.
- Step 4: Make a connection, develop a friendship.
- Step 5: Seek an opportunity to share the Gospel.
- Step 6: Expand your neighborhood and repeat!

In your neighborhood, what step are you on according to this list? What steps can you take to move just one more step this week?

Additional Resources

Remind participants to scan the QR code for additional resources every week including:

- Why Jesus compared Himself to a shepherd.



WEEK 5

THE YEARS OF GROWING OPPOSITION

Introduction

As He approaches the end of His life, Jesus emphasizes that His mission is not to teach, or heal or cast out demons. His mission is to seek and save the lost. Jesus tells three parables to show God's heart for the lost: the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son. The underlying message is that God will stop at nothing to save His people. Not even the most humiliating death on a cross. The weekend's teaching will focus on Jesus' zeal when He cleansed the physical temple in Jerusalem. This was symbolic of Jesus cleansing us by His blood.

Before you start (30 min before group time)

- ATTEND THE LEADER MEETING/TRAINING.
- Use the icebreaker question to get conversations going as you wait for others to join.
- Once everyone has settled in, **ask one of the participants to open with prayer.**

Getting Started (5 min)

- Have **the assigned person share their story** of how they came to believe in and follow Jesus.

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: What kind of things get you angry? Can you think of the last time you reacted to something because you were angry? Was it the appropriate way to react?

Week's Review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Pray over any specific prayer requests about forgiveness and forgiving.*
- ✓ *Pray for continued consistency in reading, and attendance, that no-one will fall off.*
- ✓ *Pray for the lost, especially those named in the group that they would respond to the call of Jesus.*
- ✓ *Pray for the people who are being invited to the Easter service, that they would be receptive to the invite and come to the service.*
- ✓ *Continue to pray over all other prayer requests from the group.*

Deeper Dive Questions

Leader note: you can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question and be the one to start with a response. Remember, the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.

1. Jesus' confrontation with the religious leaders of the day was because they were taking advantage of those coming to see God and preventing them from gaining access to Him. Where do you see people exploiting or preventing others from accessing God, does it make you angry?
2. Is there anything that you've done to distract people from connecting with God? How can you encourage people to connect with God in worship?
3. What do the actions taken by Jesus in this interaction inform us about what He values? How do you find yourself responding to the way He acted?
4. Jesus' biggest problem with the religious leaders was that they were blocking "outsiders" from worshipping in their rightful place in the temple. Where and how do you find yourself wrestling with including "those outside the church."
5. Jesus was upset over misguided zeal, selfish intent, and blatant disregard for the foreigner. What does true desire for God look like? How is that exhibited in your life?

Optional: Digging Deeper

Elsewhere in the Scriptures, it is said that our bodies (both individually and corporately) are the temple of God. God no longer lives in a structure; He resides with His people. How is this made possible? How does this impact the way you view yourself? Your actions? Participation within the church? Do you live as though you have direct access to God?

Wrapping Up: This Week's Challenge

Leader note: Ask participants to share the 2-3 names from last week of people they intend to invite to the Easter service.

- End the session praying for the names on the list and for the participants for the opportunity and courage to invite them.
- **Note about next week:** *Next week is the last group meeting session before Easter. One of the activities recommended is to practice foot washing. Come ready to get your feet washed!*

Additional Resources

Remind participants to scan the QR code for additional resources every week.

- The parable of the lost son (Bible Project)
- The story of the rich man and Lazarus.
- Why Did Jesus Let Lazarus Die? (John Piper)
- 12 ways to discern if something is becoming an idol.



WEEK 6

THE FINAL WEEK

Introduction

With Jesus' eyes resolutely set upon Jerusalem and His mission of death there, His teaching and instructions towards preparing His followers for what is to come. He gives them the Great Commandment to love God and love each other. He promises to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. Finally, He institutes a new covenant represented by the sacrament of Holy Communion. Though great and mighty, Jesus came not to be served but to serve us by giving His life for our sins. This weekend's teaching focus on Jesus washing His disciple's feet.

Leader note: This is the last group meeting before Easter. There will be no group meeting on Easter Sunday. Your group can agree on a day to meet to discuss week 7.

Before you start (30 min before group time)

- ATTEND THE LEADER MEETING/TRAINING.
- Use the icebreaker question to get conversations going as you wait for others to join.
- Once everyone has settled in, **ask one of the participants to open with prayer.**

Getting Started (5 min)

- Check in on how Easter invites are going.
- Discuss how to do week 7 now that it will fall on Easter Sunday.
- Have **the assigned person share their story** of how they came to believe in and follow Jesus.

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Pray about the future of the group, that God would make your next steps clear.*
- ✓ *Pray for continued consistency in reading, and attendance, that no-one will fall off.*
- ✓ *Pray for the people who are being invited to the Easter service, that they would be receptive to the invite and come to the service.*
- ✓ *Continue to pray over all other prayer requests from the group.*

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: When it comes to house chores, what's the last job you'd pick?

Week's Review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Deeper Dive Questions

Leader note: you can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question and be the one to start with a response. Remember, the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.

1. Is it easy or difficult for us to serve others? Does the ease or difficulty of the action depend upon the "others" that are being served?
2. Is it easy for you to receive being served? How would you react if say The President of the US came to wash your feet? Would you refuse, question His motives, accept because you deserve it, or receive it as a gift? Why?
3. This week's teaching showed Jesus stooping low to do the menial task of foot washing. Why did Jesus do it? To humble them? To show them an example of servanthood? To illustrate His mission? To show the true nature of leadership? To show them how deeply He loved them? All of these? None of these? Others? Please brainstorm.
4. Who is the one person you can think of who most clearly demonstrated what it means to "wash feet?" What did they do, and how did it impact you? What task or responsibility you currently do is most like washing feet?
5. It is impossible to be a servant if we are self-focused. Are there areas in your life where self-absorption is hindering your ability to serve others? How do we become a person who looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others"?
6. What would it mean in your life to practice foot washing daily? Take care of someone? Let someone take care of you? Spend

quality time with your family? Show more appreciation or affection? Practice patience and forgiveness? Serve others with no strings attached? Do things that are “not my job”? Write it down, reflect on it, and put it into practice this week. Discuss with your group.

Group Activity: Foot Washing (20 min)

Leader note: the material for this activity will be provided for groups that meet at the church. If you are meeting at home, see the list below for materials and preparation instructions.

- Liquid soap, preferably ecologically friendly
- Large basins, one for every three participants
- Paper towels for wiping the basins.
- Washcloths, one per participant
- Hand towels, one per participant
- Unscented lotion

In Preparation

- Identify a water source near the meeting space where you can fill, empty, and refill basins.
- Shortly before beginning this activity, fill the basins with hot water so the water will be comfortably warm for use.
- Set each basin in front of a chair. Next to each chair, place three washcloths and three hand towels.

Description of the Activity

In this activity, participants experience giving and receiving love and care by washing one another's feet. Before you begin, explain the meaning of this experience.

The Bible tells a story about how Jesus washed the feet of his apostles. Jesus did this to show them that greatness in the Kingdom of God was about serving each other. He wanted people to realize that none of us is more important or valuable than another. Because of this, foot washing is a Christian ritual. When we wash each other's feet today, it is a way to show humility, love, care, and service.

Foot Washing Experience

- Have one person read John 13:2-17
- Have participants take off their shoes and socks. Then, form trios by counting off ones, twos, and threes. Ask all the "ones" to sit in a chair and the "twos" and "threes" to sit at the seated child's feet. If your group is made up of couples, you may want to have couples wash each other's feet. You may also do gender specific foot washing.
- If in groups of 3, have each the person wash one foot of the person in the chair, using the soap and washcloth. After a few minutes of washing, one foot-washer should towel the feet dry with a towel and rub lotion on both feet. The other foot-washer should dump out the dirty water and fill the basin with warm, clean water. If the water source is far away or the basin heavy, co-leaders should do this job.
- Once there is a second basin full of clean water, one of the foot-washers should now sit in the chair. Repeat the process until everyone in the trio has had an opportunity to have their feet washed.
- If any in the group are especially ticklish, unable to feel their feet, or squeamish about the foot-washing ceremony, have the children wash one another's hands instead.

Debrief the Experience

- What were you thinking while you washed someone's feet?
- Was it difficult to wash the feet of someone you love?
- How much harder would it be to wash the feet of someone mean to them or someone who is homeless, a leper or a criminal?
- What were you thinking while having your feet washed? Why do you think you thought/felt that way?
- How does it make you feel that Jesus would wash our dirty feet?
- Why do you think Jesus wants us to do this?
- Brainstorm ways you can practice the posture and lifestyle of serving others.

Wrapping Up (2 min)

Close with a pray of gratitude for the love of God shown to us through the sacrificial service of Jesus, and that He entrusts us to share that love with others around us.

Additional Resources

Remind participants to scan the QR code for additional resources every week.

- Watching for the Return of Christ (Tim Keller)
- How do you know you have the Holy Spirit in you?



WEEK 7

A SHAM TRIAL, A CRUEL DEATH, AND A GLORIOUS RESURRECTION

Introduction

Finally, Jesus' enemies catch up with Him, or so they think. Jesus is not defeated. He willingly surrenders Himself to human authorities. He did this so that we could be saved. So, Jesus is arrested, falsely accused, put to death on a cross, and is buried. But Jesus does not stay buried. After 3 days Jesus rises from the dead. His mission is complete. But that of His followers is just about to begin.

Leader note: since this week is Easter Sunday, we recommend that:

- *Meet online or find another time to meet in person to go through this week's discussion.*
- *Plan a celebration dinner/party event to celebrate Easter. You may invite those you invited to the Easter service to your celebration.*
- *If your group intends to continue meeting as a Life Group, simply have this as your first meeting discussion post Easter.*

Prayer Points

- ✓ *Thank God for the last 6 weeks of this study and for everyone who participated.*
- ✓ *Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to reveal Jesus to us.*
- ✓ *Pray that God will see to completion the good word He has begun through this study.*
- ✓ *Pray for the next step your group is taking.*

Group Discussion (45 min)

Icebreaker: Have you ever been caught off guard and later realized you should have seen what was going to happen?

Week's Review: What encouraged or challenged you from the teaching and/or daily devotions this week?

Deeper Dive Questions

Leader note: you can read the questions and let people respond or you can assign a question to each person and have them read the question

and be the one to start with a response. Remember, the goal is not to get through all the questions but to get people interacting in a meaningful way with Jesus words and actions.

1. We often jump from Good Friday to Easter, without thinking about the day in-between. What do you think were some of the thoughts and emotions the disciples felt after Jesus was crucified?
2. Why did the women and the disciples shocked that Jesus had been raised?
3. What sorts of situations might we be in that can make it especially difficult for us to believe and take Jesus at His word? Why?
4. What easily drowns out or blunts our spiritual senses and makes us forget God Word, promises, and calling to us?
5. Consider the anxiety, fear, suffering or unfulfilled desire that you might be wrestling with at this present moment. How does Jesus' resurrection ultimately address and speak into that?

Wrapping Up (2 min)

Thank God the Father for sending his son to die. Thank Jesus for dying and rising again. Ask God to help us grasp the impact of what he has done and is doing.

Additional Resources

Remind participants to scan the QR code for additional resources they may have missed.



