

FOUNDATIONS

HOW TO USE THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for your willingness to lead a group of people through this curriculum! The goal is that participants would use the daily reading plan and attend a group to discuss what they are learning, how they are growing, and to develop relationships with other Christ-followers. Having a firm foundation for faith is an essential starting place for everyone to grow as a fully devoted follower of Jesus.

The following are some best practices for you as the group leader:

- 1- Please spend time in prayer for each participant in your group and for yourself as you lead. Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom, and that He would fill each member of the group with all knowledge and power. (Colossians 1:9-12)
- 2- Prepare for each group meeting by using the daily reading plan and praying through the discussion guide. Be mindful of the challenges included throughout the reading plan. Do them! Be willing to share your struggles and your triumphs. [Note: the discussion guide is meant to *follow* the reading plan. For example, the week 1 discussion guide is used after your group has completed the week 1 reading plan.]
- 3- Challenge your group to follow the reading plan but maintain a gracious and encouraging attitude toward those who struggle to do so.
- 4- Prayer is a foundational discipline of the Christian life and an essential component of a LifeGroup. Please reserve time for prayer during every meeting. Remember, praying out loud can be very intimidating. How can you take steps to model prayer strategies?
 - a. Pray all together using the Lord's Prayer, sentence prayers, ACTS prayer method, etc.
 - b. Pray silently using journals, postures of prayer, etc.
 - c. Pray in pairs, allowing each person to pray for the other.
- 5- Group members will differ in personality and confidence, but it is important that no one member dominate discussion, nor than one member remain silent for an entire meeting. When you want scripture to be read aloud, asking everyone to read a verse is one way to hear every voice.
- 6- Don't be afraid of the quiet moments- when you ask a question and you're waiting for the answer. Jumping in to answer your own question is not always helping others gain confidence to share their thoughts. Consider reframing a question if it is not clear but be willing to let group members think for a few minutes if necessary.
- 7- Consider asking members of the group to participate in some leadership role: coordinating snack, preparing a worship moment, leading a portion of the discussion, or leading prayer time. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you who is ready to step up and be challenged to lead.
- 8- The primary resource for the content of this curriculum is Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology. It is a very readable text for anyone wanting to learn more about theology and a fantastic resource when you need to find answers to tough questions.

FOUNDATIONS: Week 1

There's Got to be More to Life

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- Introduce yourselves to one another
- Give a brief explanation of what group members can expect through this series.
- Have 2-3 group members share their story. Answer the questions: What led to your decision to follow Jesus? What was the experience like when you decided to give your life to him? What did he rescue you from?

Bible:

- What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about "Sin and Salvation"
- Read aloud: **John 3:1-21**
- Nicodemus came to Jesus in the middle of night under the cover of darkness. Why do you think he did that? How did you approach Jesus when you first came to him? What was your attitude and posture?
- In what ways does our sin battle against Jesus's offer of salvation?
- What language does Jesus use to describe salvation in v. 3? Why do you think he chose to use that specific phrase? How is being "born again" different from other phrases used to describe salvation like "believing in Jesus," or "following Jesus," or "inviting Jesus into your heart?"
- How does Jesus describe how people are "born of the Spirit" in v. 8? How does the illustration of the blowing wind describe how God works in salvation? If you were operating a sailboat – what role do you play and what role does the wind play, and how does inform how we should position ourselves to receive the work of the Spirit?
- What do verses 3:16-18 tell us about God the Father? Jesus the Son?
- Describe in your own words the stark alternatives that face each person in verses 3:18-21. What should this motivate us to do?

Prayer:

- Spend time thanking God for his individual salvation to each of us and rescuing us from our sin.

Action:

- One of this week's challenges encouraged you to weave a God-story in to your conversation with a friend or co-worker. Knowing that each person will face either condemnation or salvation
- I will ask every week – and by the end of this study our goal is that 1) every one of us would have shared our faith story with another person, and 2) invited one person to church.

Important Info:

- You can find the daily reading guide at whoisgrace.com/read. We will talk about the readings every week during our group time. This will help us to build the habit of finding our chair every day to meet with God in His word. How can we help each other commit to this?
- Encourage group members who have not had a significant, post-decision baptism, to consider being water baptized. More information about Water Baptism is available at whoisgrace.com/salvation-and-baptism.

FOUNDATIONS: Week 2

Who is God?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- Ask: "What small steps have you taken to know God better this week?"
- Have 2-3 group members share their story. Answer the questions: What led to your decision to follow Jesus? What was the experience like when you decided to give your life to him? What did he rescue you from?

Bible:

- What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about "Who is God?"
- Read aloud: **Isaiah 40:25-28**
- What attributes of God are described in this passage? You can reference a specific word or phrase. Why does God want us to know his greatness? What attributes of God do you tend to lose sight of or struggle to comprehend?
- Read aloud: **1 John 4:8-14**
- This passage describes all three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. What shared attribute of the Trinity is John highlighting throughout this passage? Why is this attribute of primary importance in order to know God?
- What does this passage tell us about the unique role of God the Father? (v.9) God the Son (Jesus)? (v.10,14) God the Holy Spirit? (v.13)
- Why is it significant to understand that the Father, Son and Spirit are each unique and yet all fully God? What about the Trinity is difficult for you to understand?
- How did the parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son help you appreciate God the Father's heart toward you? (See Luke 15 if needed)
- Read aloud: **Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:14-18, 4:14-16**
- What descriptions and actions attributed to Jesus in these passages demonstrate His divine glory?
- Jesus is merciful and able to sympathize with our human weaknesses. How does that affect the way you approach Him in prayer? How is He uniquely able to help us in our time of need?
- Read aloud: **John 14:12-28, 15:26-27, 16:5-15**
- What titles does Jesus use when referring to the Holy Spirit? (14:16-17, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7, 16:13) What do these titles tell you about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- Have you experienced help like this from the Spirit? What are you eager to experience?
- How does knowing the Spirit of Jesus dwells inside of you change the way you approach your day?

Prayer:

- Spend time praising each member of the Trinity for their love for you and their unique role in your life. And then ask the Father, Son or Spirit for help in the area of your life you need it most.

Action:

- As a reminder, our goal is that by the end of this study 1) every one of us would have shared our faith story with another person, and 2) invited one person to church.
- One of this week's challenges encouraged you to ask the Holy Spirit to give you boldness to tell someone who doesn't know Jesus why you think Jesus was/is more than just another religious teacher.
- Who took a step this week to tell someone about Jesus or invite someone to church?

Important Info:

- Encourage group members who have not had a significant, post-decision baptism, to consider being water baptized. More information about Water Baptism is available at whoisgrace.com/salvation-and-baptism.

FOUNDATIONS: Week 3

What Does it Mean to Be a Christian?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- Ask: What small steps have you taken in your faith this week? Has anyone had the opportunity to share your story or invite someone to church?
- If everyone has not had a chance to share, have 2-3 group members share their story. Answer the questions: What led to your decision to follow Jesus? What was the experience like when you decided to give your life to him? What did he rescue you from?

Bible:

- What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about what it means to be a Christian?
- Read aloud: **Romans 8:1-17**
- Paul's words may seem confusing and that's okay! Just as growing in Christ is a lifelong process, so is reading and discovering truth in God's Word. We don't have to "get it" all in one sitting.
- Let's just look at the first two verses: what does this say about being a follower of Jesus?
- Think of the word "flesh" as representing your life without Jesus. Look at verses 5-8, what does this say about your life before you decided to follow Jesus? How does this ring true for your "old" life?
- In verses 10-17, what does it mean to have a life in the Spirit? Do you recognize God's Spirit already transforming your heart and mind?
- Read aloud: **Romans 8:38-39**
- While we are in the world, we will continue to sin, even as we pursue a life of following Jesus. What encouragement can we take from Romans 8:38-39?

Prayer:

- Spend time thanking God for his Spirit who works in us to transform us to be more and more like Jesus. Consider using the Lord's prayer to guide the prayer time.

Action:

- One of this week's challenges encouraged you to find a Christian mentor- I want to encourage you to ask God to lead you to an individual who can speak life and love and truth to you.
- Remember, I will ask every week – and by the end of this study our goal is that 1) every one of us would have shared our faith story with another person, and 2) invited one person to church.
- Has it been a challenge to do the daily reading? How can we help one another stay committed?

FOUNDATIONS: Week 4

How will God guide me? (Part 1)

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- Open up in prayer this week. Invite God to speak to and through you as a group, asking for discernment and wisdom to guide everyone to a deeper understanding of truth.
- Ask: "What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about how God guides through the Holy Spirit? What newfound insight did you gain? What are you still a bit confused over?"

Bible:

- Read aloud: **Acts 4**
- These Jewish rulers are the same ones who recently condemned Jesus to death. Additionally, the Sadducees would be greatly disturbed that Peter and John preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead; they did not believe in the afterlife or resurrection at all. Knowing this, what strikes you about the words contained in vv 7-13?
- How does this encourage you in reading this? In what ways have you experienced the boldness that is described in these verses?
- What strikes you most about Peter and John's response starting in v 19?
- After they are released what is the first thing that Peter and John do? What is the response of those that hear of their report? Would you have reacted in the same way? Why or why not?
- What surprises you about the apostles' prayer and how it is structured? How can you apply what you have learned through your readings this week to this passage and the outcomes listed started in v 32?
- Do you have a sense from time to time of the pleasure or displeasure of the Holy Spirit as a result of some course of action you have recently taken? Is there anything in your life right now that is grieving the Holy Spirit?
- In what way could you each strengthen one another in boldness about being a Christian in your places of work, neighborhood, or family?

Action:

- One of this week's challenges encouraged you to ask the Holy Spirit for his guidance and respond when you felt Him leading you. Take some time now to share your experiences with this so that you all can share in praising Him for using you to share in His glory.

Prayer:

- Spend time thanking God for the gift of His Holy Spirit. Use the P.R.A.Y. acronym to guide you through a very intentional time of prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead the group.

FOUNDATIONS: Week 5

How will God guide me? (Part 2)

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- Ask: "What small steps have you taken to let God guide you this week?"
- We're nearing the end of this study and our goal was that 1) every one of us would have shared our faith story with another person, and 2) invited one person to church. ASK: "Have we all done it? And how did it go? What is hard about doing this?"

Bible:

- What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about "How God will lead you: Part 2"?
- Read aloud: **2 Timothy 3:10-17**
- Paul makes a list for Timothy in verses 10 and 11. What has Timothy followed? Does this list seem attainable? How does this list support the main point of the passage?
- What does it mean by the statement in verse 16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God"?
- According to this passage, how is a man of God complete and equipped to do every good work? How does this speak to the truthfulness of Scripture? Share examples of being equipped and doing a good work.
- Read **Proverbs 30:4-6**
- Think about advertising, social media, news, etc. How does the world teach us to be self-sufficient? How do you try to live a self-sufficient life?
- How does Proverbs 30:4-6 let us know the word of God is sufficient?
- Do you believe reading God's Word and asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit is enough for you to navigate life?

Prayer:

- Spend time thanking God for the truthfulness, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency of Scripture

Action:

- One of this week's challenges was to identify who you could ask to come along with you to read scripture and discuss what you have read. Who have you asked?
- There is a creative organization called The Bible Project that has created short video introductions to every book of the Bible. You can access them for free on RightNow Media (whoisgrace.com/rightnowmedia to register for free). Leader- consider showing one of these videos to the group.

FOUNDATIONS: Week 6

How can I avoid falling back into my old life?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- We're nearing the end of this study and our goal was that 1) every one of us would have shared our faith story with another person, and 2) invited one person to church. ASK: "Have we all done it? And how did it go?"
- ASK: "Have any of you ever fallen away from your faith for a time? What brought you back to God?"

Bible:

- What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about "How Can I Avoid Falling Back into My Old Life?"
- Read aloud: **Hebrews 10:19-25** (the ESV if possible)
- The writer of Hebrews says "since" certain things are true – then "let us" do certain things in response. In verse 19 and 21 – what are the two truths that are introduced with the word "since?"
- He says "let us" 5 times and they all point to character issues or ways to grow in our faith. What are the 5 "let us" statements (there is one each in verses 22, 23, and 24 and two in verse 25) and what are they saying (in your own words)?
- To "stir up" one another (:24) literally means to "agitate or provoke" and when we do this we will get better at love and good works. Why do you think that's true? When have you seen it work?
- Verse 25 tells us to "not give up meeting together." What are the encouragements and benefits of meeting together as Christians that we cannot get on our own? Satan often uses fears, insecurities and a busy schedule to lure us away from Christian community. What typically tempts you to avoid "meeting together"?
- To "encourage" means to "give courage" to someone. Talk about a time in your life when someone else's encouragement protected you from turning away from God? When have you encouraged someone else?
- What do you think it means when it says, "all the more as you see the Day approaching"? Why "all the more"?

Prayer:

- Break up into groups of 2 or 3 and share with each other something that you could use accountability or encouragement for when it comes to your spiritual life. Pray for each other.

Action:

- One of this week's challenges encouraged you to weave a God-story in to your conversation with a friend or co-worker.

Discuss – what's next for our group? [Leader: Consider the suggestions for L.I.V.E. and rhythm in the LifeGroup Leader Handbook. Contact a member of your site's LifeGroup Team if you have any questions.]

FOUNDATIONS: Week 7

How should I talk about my faith with others?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction

- Ask: Over the last 7 weeks, who has had the opportunity to share a part of their story with someone else?
- Ask your group members about the challenge of condensing their story to 2-3 minutes. Have one or two of them share their story now in the shortened format, and then ask the group to respond—what was great, what felt missing? Was there anything they added they wouldn't have needed in a shortened version?

Bible:

- What is one key takeaway from your daily readings this week about "sharing your faith"?
- Read aloud: **Revelation 5:1-14**
- Why does John weep? (all have fallen short, no one is free from sin and so the scroll, which has God's sovereign plan for redemption, cannot be opened)
- Why is Jesus shown as both a Lion and a Lamb? What qualities does He possess of each?
- Read verses 9-10 again. What is the result of Jesus dying on the cross? (purchasing people for God from every tribe and language and tongue and nation) Why is that significant?
- Since we know that what we see in Revelation will come to pass (people from every tribe and tongue will worship him), how does that encourage us in sharing our faith?
- What is the primary motivation for sharing our faith to all people groups and cultures on earth? (because He's worthy). Why is this a better motivator than the fact that people are lost? (it's based on God's character, rather than our ability to drum up passion for people and cultures we don't know)
- John Piper says, "Mission exists because worship doesn't". What do you think this sentence means in light of this passage?
- What would it take for you to see God as so worthy that he deserved the praise of every people group on earth? If you believe he's worthy of that, what does it mean for your life and what you're called to do?

Prayer:

- Spend time praying for unreached people groups around the world and worshiping and praising Jesus because he is worthy to break the power of sin and death and lead us into salvation.

Action:

- Download the app "Operation world" and begin to pray for a different people group every day.
- As a group, commit to taking a step cross culturally in both the city and the world via ServErie, sponsoring a child, or praying for a missionary serving in another country.

Decide- What is next for the group? [Leader: Consider the suggestions for L.I.V.E. and rhythm in the LifeGroup Leader Handbook. Contact a member of your site's LifeGroup Team if you have any questions.]