



## ON GOD, LIFE AND LOVE: The Disciplines of Life-Change

Pastor Derek Sanford

January 3, 2021

### Life Group Discussion

#### Encouragement:

Share an example of the impact of church/small group community on your faith journey. Maybe they supported you during a difficult a season, celebrated a victory with you or helped hold you accountable as you committed to spirit-led changes. Or perhaps they stretched you in perspectives, understanding and outreach...

#### Scripture:

[Matthew 4: 18-22](#)

Why do you think it is important that Jesus invited others alongside Him as He shared the word of God? How would you describe this model biblical community?

[John 17: 20-23](#)

How did Jesus' relationships with His disciples reflect His relationships with the Father and the Holy Spirit? What would it look like for this small group community to become 'perfectly one'?

[John 13: 34-35](#)

What role does living in community with other believers play in spreading the gospel of Jesus to unbelievers?

#### Prayer:

Read [1 Corinthians 13: 1-7](#). Share which aspects of love are most challenging for you and pray together for God's help in loving others these ways.

#### Next Steps:

Group: Talk together about the strength of your group as a Biblical community. Encourage one another with examples of love and unity among you. Identify one or two ways that you could better love and serve one another and commit to working on those areas.

Individual: What spiritual discipline do you want to incorporate more regularly in your daily life this year? How can this group help you?



## ON GOD, LIFE, and LOVE: Finding & Living Your Mission

Pastor Derek Sanford

January 10, 2021

### Life Group Discussion

#### Encouragement:

Spend some time encouraging each other. How do you see others in your group being used by God? What are the gifts and talents and experiences that you see?

#### Scripture:

Read [Esther 2:4-11](#), [4:1-17](#)

- Pastor Derek identified Mordecai as Esther's Truth-Teller. From this passage and what you gained from Pastor Derek's message, what are the qualities of a truth-teller? Who are the truth-tellers in your life?
- As we read this story, it is so clear that Esther really was given her position for "such a time as this" and yet at first she didn't see it. What keeps a person from seeing God's mission for them?
- In verse 16 Esther calls for everyone to fast and pray. Pastor Derek called this "preparing spiritually." Have you ever spent time "preparing spiritually" for a mission (either as an individual or with other people)? What was the experience like? What was the outcome? Have you continued in this practice or was it a one-time experience?

#### Next Steps:

What next steps is God putting on your heart? What do you need to do this week as part of finding or fulfilling your mission?

#### Prayer:

Based on the Next Steps questions, spend time praying for each other's mission.



## ON GOD, LIFE, and LOVE: Bridging the Racial Divide

Pastor Derek Sanford

January 17, 2021

### Life Group Discussion

**Encouragement:** Tell us about a time when you were on the receiving end of compassion from someone. What did that look like? Feel like?

### Scripture:

Read [Matthew 14:14](#), [Mark 6:34](#), [Luke 7:13-14](#), [Luke 10:33-34](#).

- What happens as a result of compassion in these verses? Can compassion exist without resulting in action?
- Compassion is concern for the suffering of others. The opposite of compassion is not cruelty, it's indifference. [Leader, give a moment for the group to reflect on that statement.]
- When have you been indifferent to suffering? What sins block your heart from feeling compassion toward others? Was Jesus ever indifferent to suffering?

Read [Philippians 2:1-8](#)

- How does Christ's example point us to compassion? Why is it not possible to increase in Christ-likeness without increasing our capacity for compassion?
- How can we show compassion to people of color? What sins cause our hearts to feel indifferent to their suffering?

### Prayer:

*Use this liturgy of confession from [Be the Bridge](#) by Latasha Morrison as your prayer today. You can text/email the prayer to your group members so that you can all read it aloud together, or the leader can read it while everyone listens.*

Lord, we confess that we dwell in a nation built on the backs of the oppressed. Violence, bloodshed, and oppression are the means by which our nation has acquired wealth and dominance. We confess that a structure of racial oppression was formed at the beginning of our nation's history, a system that, instead of being eradicated, has been adjusted to be palatable with the changing times. Gracious Lord, we confess that most often the church has played a role in establishing, cultivating, and protecting the foundations of the structural oppression that exists in our nation. We confess that the church has taken part in injustice and has often failed to protect your image bearers in its pursuit of political power and security. The body of Christ is meant to display your grace, compassion, and righteousness to the world, but our self-interest and comfort have taken priority over loving our neighbors. We have been willing to ignore the example and words of our Savior Jesus Christ in the pursuit of our own agendas.

Spirit, empower us in our confession.

**Next Steps:** How will you show compassion to people of another race this month?



## ON GOD, LIFE, and LOVE: Don't Give Up!

Pastor Derek Sanford

January 24, 2021

### Life Group Discussion

#### Encouragement:

Have you ever had an audience for a performance of some kind? What happens when you know you're being watched? Take a moment and share an encouraging word- how did you see someone in the group serve or love or live well (even if they didn't know you were watching)?

#### Scripture:

Read [Hebrews 12:1-11](#)

- What is your response to knowing there is a "cloud of witnesses" encouraging you in life?
- This chapter is pointing back to the example of the "Faith Heroes" in chapter 11 while also pointing us to the Better example of Jesus. What do you learn from both?
  - o Consider reading [Philippians 2:5-8](#), [Philippians 3:14](#), [Hebrews 4:15](#)
- Look again at Hebrews 12:5-11. What type of discipline are these verses talking about? How can this type of discipline help us to seek after the spiritual disciplines Derek talked about in week one? [[January 3, 2020](#)]
- What does Verse 11 tell us about what we are striving for? What is the prize?

Read [Psalm 121](#) before you pray.

**Prayer:** Using the **ACTS** model- **A**doring God for who he is, Creator and Redeemer, **C**onfess the times of doubt and frustration, **T**hank God for getting us through 2020, and **A**sk (**S**upplication) God for his spirit to help us to keep our eyes fixed on Him and to discipline ourselves to better follow Christ in 2021.

**Next Steps:** Identify your "living witnesses." Are they at work, in Life group, in your family? How can you encourage someone else in their faith?



## ON GOD, LIFE, and LOVE: God's Irrational Love

Pastor Derek Sanford

January 31, 2021

### Life Group Discussion

#### Encouragement:

Share something you have been challenged with through this sermon series.

Consider opening (or closing) in worship: [How Deep the Father's Love For Us](#) by Stuart Townsend; [Reckless Love](#) by Cory Asbury.

#### Scripture:

\*Leader, if necessary, give a brief overview of the minor prophet Hosea. Use "[How to Read Hosea](#)" from the Bible Project on RightNow Media as a reference. [Need a *free* RNM account? Sign up [here](#).]

Read [Hosea 11:1-12](#)

- What is the tone, the emotion, behind the Words of God in this chapter?
- What do you learn about God and His love in this chapter?
- While we may not worship baals, what kinds of idolatry do we engage in?

Read [John 3:16](#); [Romans 5:8](#); [1 Corinthians 7:23](#)

- What did Hosea's love for Gomer cost him? What did God's love for you cost Him?
- Do you deserve God's love? Why do you think He freely gives it?

**Prayer:** Use [Ephesians 3:14-21](#) to pray over the group.

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

#### Next Steps:

Read Mark 12:30-31

- How will His love call forth love in your life this week?