



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. The Journey Resources
- IV. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
 - If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.
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LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on May 5, 2024
by Pastors Bryan & Mark Wilkerson

WHY I STILL BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH – 1 Peter 2:19-22



I. Introduction

Questions: How can the local church continue to grow and thrive through challenges and changing times?

Bottom Line: I still believe in the genius of the local church, as long as it continues to repent and reform

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:

1Peter 2:4-5,9

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Bryan began with Davis and Graham's recent book, *The Great Dechurching*. For the first time in our nation's history, more adults don't attend church than do attend church. He then listed many reasons: a more hectic pace of life, disenchantment with organized religion, political polarization, abuses of power, repressive patriarchy, hostility toward the LGBTQ+ community, and deconstructing evangelicals, to name just a few.
 - How does this statement resonate with you or someone you know?
 - What have you observed about church attendance in recent history?
2. Pastor Mark mentioned the book, *Out of Fourth Place*, which posits that there are four types of spaces that we inhabit: (1) home of private life; (2) work or school; (3) where you relax or unwind; (4) church. Church is both the fourth space and in fourth place. He expressed that we have compartmentalized faith into places that we have deemed sacred. Although our digital ministry has enabled us to reach thousands more, we need to discover other ways to engage millennials in their own world instead of pulling them out of it.
 - Share one or two initial reactions/comments in response to the statement that church is "both the fourth space and in fourth place."
 - What are some good and/or poor examples where the church has empowered the current generations to engage with their spaces?
 - How has technology impacted the church, particularly in how church reaches out to the younger generations?
3. Read the following Scripture together: today's passage from 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9 and 1 Corinthians 3:16.
 - 1 Peter: What is Peter's message here? Notice the language he uses to describe Jesus in contrast to how he addresses his readers.
 - 1 Corinthians: What is Paul's message here? How is Paul describing believers?
 - After reading these two passages, how should this impact our identity? The way we view ourselves? The way we live? The way we interact with one another? The way we interact with the world?
4. Pastor Mark asked us to consider those who left the church, not as spiritual rebels, but as *spiritual refugees* desperately searching for a faith home that looks like the Jesus they want to follow.

- Have you experienced being a spiritual rebel/refugee?
 - How might this impact the way we judge those who leave the church? How we see them, talk about them, listen to them?
 - How could you make our faith community a home for the spiritual rebels/refugees?
5. At the last Christmas Eve message, Pastor Bryan talked about the idea in Celtic tradition of *“thin spaces” – places or moments in life when the line between heaven and earth seems nearly indistinguishable. Places where you sense God’s presence in a uniquely and tangible, and unforgettable way.* Pastor Mark shared a new paradigm of creating thin places for others who are desperately searching for it, rather than living out your faith in a building.
- Prayerfully brainstorm and consider with your small group of ways that you can, individually, or as a group, create thin spaces for people outside of the church walls.

Take Home Message:

Every 500 years for a time such as this. Inflection point Calling our church to repent and do the things you did at first. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to live out our faith everywhere and anywhere, with everyone and anyone. Admit we don’t have all the answers, to listen with care, compassion and humility. To have the courage and humility to embrace our modern times and to bless us with the wisdom and genius discover new ways to engage current and future generations that we would continue to share the love of Jesus to everyone and to spread the good news. Move out of our comfort zone.

Finding ways for the local church to engage millennials, Gen Z, Gen Alpha is going to take humility, creativity and new paradigms. It will involve taking risks with the way we do church now, and learning from our failures.

Let’s Pray

III. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

IV. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- Genius describes something that's exceptionally brilliant or clever or creative; something that no one saw coming, the value of which is immediately recognized
- The genius of the local church is that the Presence and Power of Christ can be experienced anywhere, anytime, by any group of people, who form any kind of community in Jesus' name.
We are the living stones – uniquely strong, beautiful, and growing people coming together to form something bigger than ourselves.
- The local church is beautiful, transcendent, and good for the world
- Peter is telling us that we are ALL priests. We are all acting on God's behalf. We are all bringing God's grace and goodness to the world He loves
- We need to go back to doing the most important thing Jesus taught: Loving God, loving one another, and loving our neighbors (whoever they are)
- Pastor Mark list 3 reasons that many people are leaving the church:
 1. It is not their rejection of Jesus, but their loyalty to him
 2. They want a faith community that helps them engage their world, not pulls them out of it
 3. We discovered that there wasn't a sacred/ secular line, but rather a secular religious line, and that sacred things and profane things seemed to be happening equally in both