



LIFE GROUPS | LEADERS GUIDE

October 12-18, 2025 | Fall Week 3

ANNOUNCEMENTS

You're now all finding your rhythm in your groups! It's time to now enjoy the week-to-week engagements with your groups.

1. YOUR THIRD MEETING:

- As these rhythms settle into place, are you keeping in touch with some of your members who said they'd come, but haven't yet? That's an important step to building relationships and making sure that all members are accounted for.
- Also, have you been keeping up with logging your attendance? The email reminder for that comes out just as your group gets meeting, so be sure that once everyone leaves to find the email and check off those boxes!
- If your group cancels an event, be sure to reflect that as well, as there's an option to do so in the same email as the attendance reminder. In that email still click the blue button, "[Take Attendance](#)." You'll then see your list of members, then on the left side, click "[Events](#)", and then click on the date you need to cancel, and under the drop-down box of "[Options](#)" – click "[Cancel](#)." That'll make our logs fully accurate!

2. SERVE PROJECTS:

- We have curated a list of serve sites and opportunities across our city – have a look [HERE](#), for that last, and sign up for an event that grabs everyone's interest. Some dates are flexible; others are pre-booked – connect with pastor Adam to start planning your Serve event. There's been a bunch of activity this week with groups planning their SERVE projects.
 - Oct 27, Gorter/Luymes are working at the Life Recovery Store
 - Oct 17, Baars/Dejong are working at the Food Bank
 - Nov 14, Hilderman are working at the Food Bank.
 - Nov 3, Mulder/Carruthers are working the rental event here at the church.
 - Unrau is sorting out details with Life Recovery.
 - Vaandrager/Van Dop are considering a Tree Planting event with the city (Want info on that? Reach back out to pastor Adam).
 - Wardrope are planning to work at the Gleaners.
- There's still time book your group in for one the options!

3. PICTURES:

- We love seeing what you're all up to! Take pictures of your meeting spaces, your group gathered around the kitchen counter with their snacks and drinks, and your group out having fun, and serving together – then share them with Pastor Adam – via email or text.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

LEADER NOTE: These are the lowest risk questions and are great ways to get everyone in your group talking – from those who love sharing stories, to those who feel a little uncomfortable in this new space. Low risk questions have their way of breaking the ice and getting everyone a little more comfortable sharing. It also gives a chance for everyone to share in an easy, approachable way.

1. What's something small that instantly makes your day better?

LEADER NOTE: Sometimes these questions are best lead when you say, “*let's go around the room and hear everyone!*” That way everyone can contribute and can be heard – and ultimately felt welcome in the group. But this one, as your people will likely have to think about their answers, give them time, by inviting everyone to share when they're ready.

2. When you were young, what was the most exciting or unrealistic job you imagined having when you grew up?

LEADER NOTE: In this question, you'll learn about some of those early hobbies and joys that your members had as children. Take this opportunity to enter into those moments of joy, hope, and wonder, as you get to know the heart behind your members.

QUICK REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: These following two questions aim to have your group reflect upon Sunday's message. The first question will always be the same, and the second one is provided from our teaching pastor from the service.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

LEADER NOTE: Use this question first as a teaching moment, observe your room, and see if there are anyone who doesn't have the sermon guide, and be sure that they know where to find it. We say each season, “*Lead by example.*” In the services, be sure to grab a guide, fill it out, scratch down extra thoughts and notes, and have that with you at your Life Group meetings.

Also, with these questions, we want to be sure that we don't make them about evaluating the message, but that we're listening together, for what God is teaching us through them. Leaders, we leave this to you to help guide conversations towards productive, good, and wholesome conversation – that's uplifting and encouraging for all in the room.

2. This weekend, Pastor Justin challenged us to “*live from grace, not for grace.*” How does that perspective change your daily walk with Jesus?

LEADER NOTE: n/a.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: Reading scripture together is one of the most important practices in our Life Groups, so never shirk away from reading the following passage, always making time to interact with the Word of

God and its message for us. As leaders, you can read the passage yourselves, invite others to read the whole text, or go around the room from paragraph to paragraph. Over time, as you lead, you'll see what works best. Always say "*thank-you*" to those who read out loud – it's not everyone's favourite thing to do.

These questions that follow, will be the same throughout the semester. And if you're familiar with the "*Triad Questions*" from over the years, these are changed up a bit – simplified, and with slightly different emphases.

READ Isaiah 54:1-8

1. How does this passage highlight God's presence in our world?
2. What does this passage say about our broken human condition?
3. How does this passage call me to make change in my life?

Another option with these questions, is to even more simply ask, once you've read the passage together, as in a general way, "*What strikes us about this passage?*"

DIGGING DEEPER

LEADERS NOTE: These discussion questions generally start simple and gradually become deeper and more complex. This progression follows natural discussion patterns, but as leaders, you know your group best. Use this guide flexibly; it is not necessary to cover every question. Focus on ensuring everyone is heard and has the opportunity to contribute and ask their questions.

1. READ Isaiah 54:1-3. The image of a barren woman implies that the nation of Israel has been negligent in following God. Yet, we're told that there will be more children and that a bigger tent is necessary. What is Isaiah trying to communicate?

LEADER NOTE: The barren woman here is a symbol of Israel's lack of fruitfulness in how they followed the Lord and extended His love and care to the nations around them. In the first week of Life Groups this season, while using Romans 15 to explore our calling, we looked at the call of Abram in Genesis 12 in the our Life Group leadership notes, where it was noted that up until his call, Abram's life was about him and his own household, but then as the Lord directed his path going forward, he heard that this direction had little to do with his own household, but everything to do with how his household was to be a blessing for "*all peoples on earth*" (**Genesis 12:3**). Then in the following note, a number of passages were cited to highlight just how the Israelites failed in their missional task (**Exodus 32, Numbers 11, 14, & 20, Judges 2, & Jonah**).

Remember that the nation split a while ago – Judah, the two tribes to the South, and Israel, the ten tribes to the north. Now Isaiah writes this passage during the time that the Northern Tribes of Israel are going a different direction that they did not anticipate. They were being carried off into Assyria, leading to these tribes ultimately being fully lost, all as a result of their persistent idolatry and rejection of God and His covenantal promises (see **2 Kings 17:6–18**). In the end, Isaiah was writing about their "*tent*," and how it was going uncared for. He wrote about how they were barren in their faith and fervor for the Lord.

But yet, Isaiah knows this to be true, as he was communicating the Lord's words – that the Lord, in spite of His people's barren faith and lack of fervor, the Lord would still "*enlarge the place of your tent*." More

of His children would find rescue in His hands, and they would need a stronger, and larger tent to house them all.

The Lord will grow His nation, the Lord will draw His people to Himself – with, or without, the help of His children.

- **READ Jeremiah 4:19-22 & 10:19-21.** In Isaiah, the tent expands, but in Jeremiah, it's destroyed. What caused the collapse? How does God promise to rebuild it? (*hint: Jeremiah 30:18-22*)

LEADER NOTE: Isaiah was recorded in the time frame when the northern tribes of Israel were taken into Assyrian captivity (722BC), Jeremiah was written when the southern tribes of Judah were taken into Babylonian captivity (605BC). While the time frames, locations, and people groups are different between the writings, the emphasis remains the same. Both authors capture the Lord's disgust with the lack of faith and fervor in His people.

In Isaiah, God pronounced that Israel's tent would have to be made larger, but that time has not yet come, as things needed to get a little worse, before getting better. In Judah, king after king (aside from a few good ones), "*Did what was evil in the sight of the Lord*" (**2 Kings 24:19**). Showcasing the reality, that in the end, Judah lived no differently than Israel – they lacked faith and fervor.

2 Kings 24-25, tell of Judah's defeat by King Nebuchadnezzar, and how they were carted off to Babylon where we eventually hear the stories of the prophets Daniel & Ezekiel, the destruction of the temple, and how eventually Ezra and Nehemiah led the nation back to their home in Jerusalem. Then after 400 years of silence, the moment of Christ's birth, Restoration personified, the Prince that Jeremiah alludes to – arrived. And the spiritual tent that is the Christ and the Church, will be built.

ADDITIONAL QUESTION:

- **READ Acts 1:6-8.** How do you see God's promises of the expanding tent being fulfilled in the mission of Gateway? Of the worldwide church?

LEADER NOTE: This question is a good opportunity to take what your group has been discussing, and to bring the lessons and patterns into the 21st century, to explore how this is all playing out in our community at Gateway Community Church, and how the Lord is using us to expand "*the place of our tent*" here in Abbotsford, and throughout the whole world.

2. READ Isaiah 54:4-5. God tells His people that they will no longer face "*shame*" or "*disgrace*," even though they haven't been faithful followers. What will make that a reality? Why is this significant?

LEADER NOTE: Verse 4 here in Isaiah is an astounding verse, as it communicates so much hope for helpless humanity. Surely, Israel as a nation reaped their rewards for being so unfaithful – they were exiled to Assyria after all, but that didn't mean it was their end as a nation, and that the lineage of hope would completely cease. As a result of all these consequences – *because God isn't giving handouts*, and as a result of this punishment – *because God is still holding His people to their mission and tasks* – the pathway to salvation has not changed!

There will come a season where there is no more shame, no more disgrace, no more confusion, no more being forgotten – not because of what they as a nation are able to do, but only because of who their Creator is!

This is the whole story of the Bible, that it's always been about God and what He is up to, and what He is able to do – in spite of sin filled, selfish, and unteachable humans. It's what Paul proclaimed in **Romans 5:8**, “*but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,*” and to the Ephesians in **Ephesians 2:4-5**, “*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.*” It is by grace that many Israelites were able to eventually return home, it is by grace that they were able to rebuild the temple, it is by grace that the Lord came in the flesh, and it is by grace that we today can still live into His provision and His promises.

- **READ Isaiah 40:28-31, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.** Have you ever experienced a season of “*shame*” or being “*disgraced*,” maybe even forgotten, and then felt God’s care & embrace? What was that like? What helped you?

LEADER NOTE: Take a moment with your group to consider how the Israelites must have felt when they were taken away from their homes and properties, marched to a foreign land, and to serve kings not their own. They must have felt this deep sense of shame as they were whipped, beaten, and bruised. They must have felt this disgrace when they lost their sense of value as a nation and felt that they lost their place in this world. While they were never alone – as they always had each other, they must have felt completely abandoned and forgotten by the Lord.

Surely, in our lives now in the 21st century, we aren’t being carted off by outside nations (*now pause here for a moment – as there might be members of your group who might remember some of the harsh reality of the wartimes in the 1940’s in Europe, and how opposing nations did in fact pull people from their homes to serve in foreign lands and to serve kings not their own. Consider how they might have experienced shame, disgrace, and being forgotten...*). Now in the 21st century, these patterns of shame and disgrace come in different ways – family strife, arguments with friends, political division, opinions of left, right, and center – matters of disagreement have a way of polarizing ourselves and distancing ourselves from each other.

And this isn’t right.

It’s not the way that the Lord’s people are called to live.

We’re to point each other back to the Lord’s embrace, rather than away from it. We’re to remind each other of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness. We’re to represent God’s care and compassion to each other, so to lift up and encourage each other.

3. READ Isaiah 54:5. Throughout scriptures, Israel is depicted as God’s bride (OT) and the church as Christ’s bride (NT). Why is this marriage metaphor helpful (or not helpful) in understanding our relationship with God?

LEADER NOTE: The marriage metaphor throughout scripture is a rich image depicting the covenantal relationship that God has initiated with His people. Here are three vantage points. (1) The foundational element of this metaphor is that marriage is not a contract – it’s a covenant – it’s a deeply personal and binding promise that is rooted firmly in being faithful. God is completely and forever committed to His people. (2) This metaphor also displays that God desires to not just a distant and overseeing God, but also to be intimate with His people, growing the sense of belonging with them. In this image, we learn that God doesn’t want His people just to *obey* Him, but to in a deeper and more connected way, to *know* Him. (3) Another way to see the richness of this image is to see that this relationship points also towards

God's grace for His people, and His desire to redeem and restore His people. So often, people – the nation of Israel or us in the Church today – fail. But in God's commitment to His people, He does not waiver and always pursues restoration and steadfast love.

While no metaphor is perfect, and this image can be quickly misunderstood. Marriages here on earth have not helped this metaphor, as we see them as temporary, or more simply seasonal contracts that can come and go. While some separations are merited, we can certainly have a skewed view of God's love for us, by what we have experienced from others here on earth.

- **READ Romans 8:31-39.** What makes it difficult for us to fully trust in God's firm commitment and unshakeable love? Why might it be the same for our neighbors?

LEADER NOTE: As we just noted, we project on God what we understand to be love, by what we have received from others around us. We might not see God as a loving father, because we didn't have a good relationship with our father. We might have a hard time depicting God as a loving husband, because our marriage relationships have not been strong. We might have a hard time understanding and accepting His corrective ways for us, because we've been hurt deeply by others correcting us.

The reality is that we tend to interpret our understanding of God's care for us, through our own earthly experiences. But that is us putting things of this life in the wrong order. We're first to understand God's great love for us and then experience how that plays out in the world, including how we're to love our neighbor, so that they can experience God's unlimited love for them – through us.

This is also the thrust of this passage in Isaiah that reiterates what God called Abram to do – he was to be a blessing to all other nations around him – to all the peoples of the earth. Not just his own Israelite family and nation that was yet to be, but every other person that God would lead him towards. The same is true for us, that we're to be representations of God's love and compassion in this world, so that our families, neighbors, friends, colleagues, classmates – are blessed by the Lord, through us.

TAKING IT HOME

READ Isaiah 54:9-10, 15-17, Hebrews 13:8. As we look at the world around us, and within us, we see quickly that life can be quite difficult. What do these promises of God mean to you? What could they mean to your neighbors? How might you help them see and understand them?

LEADER NOTE: It doesn't take long to scroll through a newsfeed or page through a newspaper to get the impression that our world is in tough times, and too, we face hardships in life every single day. Health scares, financial worries, dissention and disagreements among friends, colleagues, and families too, uncertain and unpredictable political climates. But God has promised us, that these hardships and calamities are not of Him, that the flood wouldn't happen again on His terms, and that whatever weapon that might be raised against us, is not going to be on His accord. And the author of Hebrews reflects that God doesn't change – the promises He made long ago, are still true to this day.

This all means, that whatever is happening in this world now – God did not cause to happen. It's been said before that God does not cause bad things to happen to His people. What we need to understand, and grow in knowledge of, is that when these calamities of any kind do strike, that the Lord will strengthen us for the journey, He'll be present with us through it all, and will guide us to Himself in the process.

While this is true for us, it is also true for our neighbors, but it is also true that they'll learn about all that and experience it all – *in and through us*.

And that's how the church will grow, and that is what it is going to take to fill the expanding tent, that is God's kingdom.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

LEADER NOTE: This following question is completely optional and is intended for the participants' personal reflection. But do feel free to explore using the question within your groups meeting.

READ Isaiah 53. Read the prior chapter in Isaiah, a familiar text that we often look at during the season of Lent and Easter. How does this chapter affect your reading of Isaiah 54? Does anything change in what you understand God to be speaking to the nation of Israel? To our church today? To yourself?