WALKING with JESUS

LIFE GROUPS | LEADERS GUIDE

November 8-14, 2026 | Fall Week 7

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We're on the home stretch!

1. **YOUR SEVENTH MEETING:**
   - It's already the latter half of the season of Life Groups. And next week, as a heads up, we'll start talking about our feedback forms … it's crazy how time flies when you're having fun. ☺

2. **SERVE PROJECTS:**
   - If your group might be keen on this idea, you can SIGN UP HERE.
     - Here's what we've got booked – **just one more night to fill up:**

Week 9	Tuesday, November 10	Kiers/McNabb	
Week 10	Tuesday, November 17	Unrau/SC	Pasta Salad, Dessert
Week 11	**Tuesday, November 24**	**open**	

   - As well, we have our **SERVE SHIRTS** ready for your members, so send your newest members to the HUB to get theirs, or if any of your members need a new one – they can feel free to grab one. We've got youth sizes XS-L, and adult sizes S-XXXL.

3. **PICTURES:**
   - Thanks so much to the groups who have submitted some pictures!! Here's a few for all of us to enjoy:



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. Consider your parents, aunts and uncles, or grandparents, what do you admire about their relationships? What have you learned from their examples?

LEADER NOTE: This opening question gets us thinking about the context of the conversation in Matthew 19 that will have us look at Christ's call for us in our relationships. The saying that goes often along with studying history, is that if we don't study it, we're condemned to repeat it. However true that statement is, it's also true, that when we look back at the good things that happened, and how life was modelled positively, we can find ways to replicate those patterns and behaviors.

2. Who are the people in your life you are closest to in this season of life? Why them?

LEADER NOTE: This question as well, takes us into topic of study around how God has called us to live in community, and in close proximity, and in deep covenanted relationships. This question will have your groups talked about their closest of friends, their spouses, maybe even a really close child, or maybe a sibling. But more than that, we can find ourselves talking about close colleagues and neighbors.

One thing that we want to make clear this early in the conversation, is that not everyone in your group has committed relationships, and we want to do our best to make sure that as they are present, they're not ostracised or left out simply because of the topic that we're engaging with. That's why these questions are framed as they are, and why the coming ones, have the same approach.

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. One thing that we want to be clear as we approach this section, is that this isn't to be a time to evaluate the message or the one delivering it, but it's to be a time when we talk about what we have learned or how we've been challenged by God's Word.

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: Leaders, "*lead by example*" in your own use of these resources. Ahead of Sunday services, be sure to grab a guide in the lobby, fill it out during the message, scratch down extra thoughts and notes you might have, and bring it with you to your Life Group meetings.

2. Pastor Justin talked through the story of Hosea and Gomer, where we are reminded that God's faithfulness persists despite our unfaithfulness. How does Jesus' covenantal love for us reshape the way we respond when others have hurt or disappointed us?

LEADER NOTE: n/a

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: In addition to building relationships, reading scripture together is one of the most important practices in our Life Groups; so never shirk away from reading the following passage. Always make time to interact with the Word of God and its message for us.

READ Matthew 19:1-12

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 Genesis 2:22-25, Matthew 19:3-6. Marriage was instituted at the end of the creation story, and before sin came into the world. What does this tell you about the meaning of marriage?

LEADER NOTE: As the creation accounts in **Genesis 1** and **2** tell us, God made the earth and everything in it, and He said, "*it was very good*" (**Genesis 1:31**) once Adam was walking amongst it. However, something wasn't good, as in, not yet complete, God said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone*" (Genesis 2:18). Then God made a companion for him, in Eve, and said, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*." In saying this, God instituted the first marriage.

And this all happens *before the fall of humanity into sin*.

All which tells us that: **Marriage was God's idea**, and not a human institution. Marriage was a part of the creation story, and part of the good order and structure that God gave as a gift to those made in His image. We also get the picture that **marriage is a covenanted relationship**, which means that as two become one, there is an exclusive, and perpetual commitment, that is never to be undone or broken. **Marriage also establishes a new household** and isn't an extension of the household which the individuals were from. The man and woman both leave their homes of origin and establish a new family. Additionally, **marriage was and is intended to be good**. Remember, marriage was instituted before the fall, when everything that God had made was good, and in proper working order, and a part of His great design.

- **READ Matthew 18:22, 32-33.** Why might Matthew have compiled his gospel with 19:1-12 following Jesus' discourse on the posture of mercy, humility, and forgiveness?

LEADER NOTE: Matthew has been painting the picture of how the followers of Jesus are to orient themselves as first citizens of heaven, and then to respond with a special way of faithful living as citizens of heaven, living in this world. From chapter 18, we learn that God's people are to be dependent upon Him, like children are upon their parents, and how He is to be the source of strength for life. We are also to be a people who don't cause others to sin, or to fall in any kind of way, meaning that we're to be supportive and encouraging to others. We're to seek those who fall away, out of care and compassion. We're also to be humble and approach all hardships with a posture of mercy and a heart of forgiveness.

Then as we turn the corner into chapter 19, where Matthew organizes the text around specific examples of how God's people are to live, we enter this text about marriage. Where too, we are to enter these relationships with the same posture – leaning on each other, being supportive, encouraging, humble, and compassionate, and most importantly, with a forgiving spirit.

This gives us the groundwork that for those entering the marriage partnership, they are to elevate the needs of their partner, all ahead of their own. As Paul writes to the **Philippians 2:3**, "*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves*." This means that in marriage relationships it is never going to be 50/50, it's never an even divide of responsibilities, or covering or caring for one another. It's never a score that is kept. It's always and forever, being present to support and encourage the other through thick and thin.

This is not to say, however, that all marriages that face hardships can be sustained by forgiveness alone. And there are instances, in which marriage covenants are broken. And that's what Jesus identifies here – when one partner isn't faithful, the other is free to go.

2. READ Matthew 19:6. Jesus knows our tendency to be self-centered, divisive, and unsatisfied. How do we hear Jesus challenge us (here and elsewhere) to uphold our relationships, and also encourage and strengthen the relationships between others?

LEADER NOTE: Now, on this side of the fall, ahead of Christ's return, there is no relationship, commitment, or marriage that is unaffected by sin. This is what the curses in Genesis 3 all allude to, that there will be tension and unrest in all things, relationships will not be perfect, the ground will cause all kinds of trouble, things of life and health will always get in the way. All which causes humanity to lean towards attitudes of self-preservation and self-protection. While we know that this wasn't God's design, it's our reality.

So, we're driven from God's words, in Christ Jesus to recognize our fallen nature, and strive to do better, and live for Christ in all we do. As Jesus recalls the words of God in **Genesis 2** in **Matthew 19:6**, He takes note of a few different things that are important for us to study.

He says, "*they are no longer two, but one flesh*." While the picture here painted in words is clear, that two individuals come together as one couple, it's fascinating to understand that in Greek, the word "one" is somewhat an odd word, it's understood as "*the plural of the singular*." While it is one, it is always two. This picture of marriage is that it is perpetuity inseparable, undividable, permanently together.

Jesus goes on to say, "*what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*." And this union, is not something that humanity does on its own. God authors it. God joins it. God holds it together. But as humanity lives and exists in the realm of our fallen nature, it's in our default state to undo what God has done. Mankind will cause these unions to separate.

Therefore, we need to pursue these lives of dependency and humility that God is calling us to live through Matthew's words here.

Relationships require intentional commitment and work. Our tendency is to pull away when things get hard, Jesus challenges us to lean in, and sort through the challenges.

Personal pursuits and interests undermine relationships. As we seek our own autonomy, we leave our partners in the dust. While it's important for individuals to retain their own passions, it must happen and be encouraged in the realm of the undividable relationship. Jesus commands us to put aside our own interests, and build up the other.

We also see in here the need to uphold and encourage the relationships of others, understanding that humanity can be both the cause of, and solution to life's challenges. We need to be the latter there. The solutions. Taking the time to support and encourage others in their challenges, not encouraging division or separation, but always supporting the commitments made.

While Jesus doesn't specifically talk about Marriage all too often, He talks about relationships in the main. **Matthew 18:21-35**, which we've just looked at the other week, has us consider being the extensions of mercy and forgiveness as we have received it. **Matthew 20:25-28** paints the picture of perpetual servitude towards all. **John 13:34-35** leaves us with the command to love one another, as Christ has loved us.

- **READ Matthew 15:18-19, & Ephesians 4:1-3, 25-32.** Paul encourages his readers to pursue unity within the church. How do his words shape how we uphold and encourage one another in our relationships? What bad habits get in the way of those relationships?

LEADER NOTE: As we are talking about relationships, and particularly marriage relationships throughout this study, it's beneficial for us to recognize that underlying this whole conversation, we're talking about being better and more faithful followers of Jesus. In these texts in Matthew 15 and Ephesians 4, we're given the command as Jesus' followers to build up and encourage all those around us, seeking unity, harmony, and togetherness.

However, as we've noted already through this conversation, it falls within our sinful proclivities to demean, tear-down, make fun of, make light of, and stir the pots of disgust in just about any situation we come across. We gossip, criticize, resent, and assume the worst. We unwilling to help, we're full of personal pride, and we avoid reconciliation. These are the bad habits we need to leave in the past.

This whole conversation around broken covenants is shedding light on just how much we do not uphold the values of committed relationships. Therefore, Paul's words should hit home for each of us, in how we act and respond to the situations that play out in our lives. *Leaders*, be careful that your group isn't just observing the bad habits of others with our binoculars, but that we pick up our mirrors, and see where we're playing a part in this all.

Jesus has pointed out for us in **Matthew 15** our propensity for sinful chatter, and He tells us those actions are dangerous for us, as they "*defile a person*." Paul picks up on this language in **Ephesians 4** as he calls us to also walk in humility, looking to respect and affirm the value of all others, and more firmly, he writes to "*put away all falsehood … speak the truth*." And the truth, is that God has ordained these relationships, and therefore they need to be affirmed, encouraged, and supported.

3. READ Deuteronomy 24:1-4, & Matthew 19:8-9. Jesus explains that Moses permitted divorce because of people's hard hearts, while pointing to God's intention for marriage. In what ways do our attitudes and cultural patterns diminish the value of marriage? How might we better honour marital commitments and those involved?

LEADER NOTE: It's brilliant the way that Jesus answers this question. Go back to where this episode began, **Matthew 19:**3 says, "*And Pharisees came up to Him and* tested *Him*…" This was a loaded question meant to trip Jesus up in His answer. It was not a deeply pastoral question where they were seeking guidance to care for their flocks. They were seeking division, they were seeking His wrong response, that would leave them more secure in their evil hearts.

As well, the Jewish tradition amongst the Pharisees approached this topic with two angles that is rooted in some of their perceived understanding of Moses' words in **Deuteronomy 24:1**, where he wrote, "*some indecency*" (ESV), or "*something indecent*" (NIV), or "*something wrong with her*" (NLT) regarding the man's perception of the need to divorce. They interpreted this to say that the man could divorce his wife "*for any cause.*" Meaning, that if the man didn't like that she burned the toast, or didn't sweep the floor, or please him as he desired, he could walk away. Alternatively, they held too the few that divorce was only allowed, when there was infidelity and unfaithfulness.

The Pharisees were trying to get Jesus to answer in either direction, which they would have argued in the opposite. However, Jesus answers by going back to the creation story, and His Father's institution of marriage, and He highlights within Has answered, the very reason that Moses saw too, because of their "*hardness of hearts*," a term that the Old Testament used to convey humanities rebellion against God's ways. Moses was actually seeking to elevate and preserve the commitments made in marriage, and making it so that those who were divorced, were done so with respect and decency, so that they wouldn't be fully ostracized by their community, but would still have a place within it, all the while, holding in the highest esteem, the value of commitment, and urging his people to live within that esteem.

- **READ Ephesians 5:25-32.** How does Paul connect the relationship between husband and wife with the relationship between Christ and the Church? How does the image of being "*one body*" help us?

LEADER NOTE: Paul now lays the groundwork we've been waiting for – the gospel centrality within the message of marriage. Marital unions are to be reflections of how Christ loves and gave Himself up for the church. The picture that we're left with here is that **Christ gave Himself up for the church**. Paul calls both man and woman to do that for each other, always elevating the needs of the other. In the picture of "*one body*" we are to understand that as we seek to take care of ourselves, we are to care for our spouses as we care for ourselves, because we are one body. We do exist in that state of plural oneness.

While Paul's instructions specifically address husbands and wives, be reminded that this passage is points to Christ. Married couples won't perfectly reflect His love, but also, those who are single are equally a part of the Bride of Christ. Our understanding of marriage should ultimately deepen our appreciation for the faithful love Jesus has shown His people.

TAKING IT HOME

READ Ezekiel 16:8-14. Ezekiel gives us a picture of God's covenant faithfulness towards His people, and how He has adorned them with His gifts and splendour. Knowing that God has treated you with the same

mercy and grace, how are you left challenged to extend that same posture to those whom you have relationships with?

LEADER NOTE: As we've taken a journey through **Matthew 19:1-12**, we've seen the challenges that relationships face, and we've seen how we can all be a part of the solution to advancing good and wholesome togetherness. Here, we are seeing once again the value that God, in Christ, has bestowed upon those whom He loves. Here, God is speaking specifically to the nation of Israel, reminded them through the prophet Ezekiel that He has created them for a greater purpose, to be more than just a nation of people, but a collective unit that will unveil His goodness and love for the world, Ezekiel writes, "*and your renown went forth among the nations*."

They're to be God's hands and feet to everyone they come into contact with.

For us today, we can read ourselves into the text, that just as God speaks this love and splendour upon the nation of Israel – His children, we understand too, that through the message of the whole New Testament, that by extension, we too, are His children, and we too, are adorned with the same beauty, and washed with the same love, anointed with the same Spirit.

And like Abraham, in **Genesis 12:1-3**, we're blessed in order to be a blessing. We're adorned with splendour of God's image, in order to adorn others with the same.

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 56:4-5, Matthew 19:10-12, & 1 Corinthians 7:1-7. How do your closest relationships help you recognize and live out God's calling for you today? How are you encouraging those people to do the same? What habits could you change to better support one another in following Christ?