

LIFE GROUPS | LEADERS GUIDE

November 15-21, 2026 | Fall Week 8

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We're on the home stretch!

1. **YOUR EIGHTH MEETING:**
   - After this week, there's just one more week to go with our regular pattern of meetings. Have you thought about how you'd like to close out this season yet? We often encourage a few things:
     - **Leading your group to fill out feedback forms**, which will be sent out in the following week. These forms help us plan for the coming season that will start later in January, with a few weeks of sign-ups ahead of then.
     - **Finishing strong with another study!** Be sure to on your final night, to embrace the journey of study you've been on, and while reflecting back upon the journey, dive once more into God's word as group!
     - **Plan an additional night**, what we might call, Week #10, where you get together socially, and simply have fun together. Maybe, as the Christmas season is right around the corner, make it a Christmas party! Play games over appetizers, do a small gift exchange!
     - **Make plans to celebrate advent together with your church family!** While we'll have each Sunday morning, through the advent season flavoured with all things that celebrate the coming birth of Christ, we'll have a few other events for us to be a part of:
       - Sunday, December 13th, 6.00pm – A night of Christmas Music and Songs.
       - Friday, December 25th, 10.00am – Christmas Morning Service
       - Thursday, December 31st, 10.30am-Noon – Gateway Skates! (ARC).

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.

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 is a small thing someone did recently that made you feel included? Why might that have been special?

LEADER NOTE: As we near the end of our Life Group season, keep up the fun conversations that open everyone up to chatter, but do watch the amount of time you spend here, and work towards getting into God's word together. This question has your members looking back at how others have treated them in group scenarios, which starts to put us in the shoes of the workers in the field, which Matthew 20 will have us explore.

2. Have you ever been in a situation where someone received the same recognition or reward as you, yet the contributions were very different? How did that make you feel?

LEADER NOTE: This question has your member directly dive into being in the shoes of the workers in the field who felt that they were unfairly treated. As your conversation develops through this session, perhaps draw back on these conversations, and make note that humans will always tend to unfairness when dealing with matters like episode in the field and the with the master paying everyone the same. This however, only helps us see what God is doing more so, that He is an exceptional God who does not think or act like we do – while we limit who we offer grace to, God doesn't; where we keep score, God doesn't.

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 shared that Jesus reminds us that we receive God's grace not because we deserve it, *but because of His mercy*. How might remembering this change the way you respond when life doesn't unfold the way you hoped?

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 20:1-16

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 Matthew 19:16-22. The rich man says he has kept all the commandments that guide him through his earthly relationships, yet the implication of Jesus' words is that something is missing. More than simply selling his possessions, what is Jesus calling him to do? What does this reveal about what has a hold on his heart?

LEADER NOTE: There's a lot of interesting elements to this moment in Matthew 19. It starts off with the rich man asking about "*what good deed*" he must do. Here we see that this man sees that a place in God's kingdom is something that he can earn as a result of his own actions. Then in reply to Jesus, this man says that he has kept those commands that Jesus asks him about. It is interesting that Jesus asks only about the commandments from the second table of the 10 Commandments, which all have to do about keeping human relationships, whereas the first table, is all about serving and following God. This man confidently replies that he is morally upright, living a "good" life.

But then, Jesus takes a corner, and tells the man that he is missing something in his life, that he is missing a wholehearted devotion to God, he's a worshipping of the things he has, he sees his value in his community by what he has in his wallet and in his driveway.

Jesus tells him that he's got to find a way to separate from the grip that his possessions have upon him, and to "*follow*" Jesus, essentially, Jesus tells him to live into the first table of the 10 Commandments, as well as the second. It's key to take note here that Jesus isn't condemning wealth and having possessions, He's identifying the man's heart, and how he has placed his own security in what he has.

Following Jesus requires more than adding Him to an otherwise comfortable life. It means surrendering whatever competes with Him for our ultimate allegiance. It means that as we follow Him, that He is the foundation where all our lives are built upon, and where all our decisions are made from.

- **READ Matthew 19:23-30.** In v.27, Peter asks again about his place in God's kingdom. What do you understand to be going on in his heart and mind?

LEADER NOTE: As the disciples are listening in on this interaction between Jesus and the rich man, they're nodding in agreement with Jesus, as they've given up most things in their lives to follow Jesus. Think of Matthew, who was the tax-collector for the Romans. He had wealth, he had everything that he could want on this earth. And he turned from it all, to follow Jesus. Peter left his family fishing business. They all left something in order to spend their days as Christ's disciples. That's evident in Peter's statement, "*see, we have left everything and followed you*."

As we've been paying attention to Peter, and the disciples through these moments, we've seen them rise and fall, a few times through that cycle. Here again, we see them fall. They're still looking at what they have and what they don't have, and are still trying to sort out their great standing in the kingdom. They ask, "*What then will we have?*" Essentially, they asked, "*what place are we in?*"

They're still thinking in terms of human hierarchy.

They're still vying for the greatest spots in the kingdom.

They still think they're deserving of something more.

But then Jesus, closes off this moment of teaching by telling them that for those who think they're going to be *first*, that they will be *last*. Just like this rich man who thought that because of his wealth and by his prestige – which he saw as the Lord's hand of blessing in his life – that he was already great in the kingdom, and he was assuming that Jesus would answer him in such a way. But, while the man left a long time ago, we get the impression, that he would be in this example, *last* in the kingdom.

It might be important here too, to recognize that Jesus doesn't rebuke Peter, or that Jesus doesn't recognize the sacrifices that they have in fact made. Jesus challenges their assumptions that by what they have done, they will be granted places in the kingdom. God's generosity is not granted on human merit, but it flows out of His love and care for those whom He has created.

- **READ Ephesians 2:6-10.** Knowing that your place in God's kingdom is God's gift to you, how does that affect the way you respond to the Lord in your service and work for Him?

LEADER NOTE: It may be better for your group to go back a little further in this Ephesians reference, to read **2:4-10**, where it starts with "*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the love with which he loved us … made us alive together with Christ."* This is where we get the picture of where we just were, that God initiated the relationship we have with Him, and that it is He who grants love and mercy for us, simply because He chooses to do so.

This is the picture of grace freely given.

Grace alone.

Looking back at Peter's question, it is still important that he sacrificed all that he had to follow Jesus, but we need to see that his sacrifice comes as a response to Christ's call. It's not Christ's call coming as a reward for his sacrifice. Grace was given, Peter responds.

It must be the same in our lives, that as we have received such a gift, that we are then to live in response of not just following Jesus and His command for our way of life, but to also, extend that same grace – to be freely given to anyone and everyone that we come into contact with. It means that we assume the best of everyone we meet. It means that we love unconditionally. It means that we love without promise of reciprocity.

We don't work for a place in God's kingdom.

We work because God has graciously given us a place in His kingdom.

We are saved by grace and shaped for a life of good works.

2. READ Matthew 20:8-12. All the workers are paid the same, regardless of the hours they worked in the field. What were they told they would all be paid? Why are all those who put in more hours so upset? If you were in their shoes, what might you have felt?

LEADER NOTE: This parable, while it's separated by a chapter heading, moving from chapter **19**, to **20**, it's a direct flow of thought and teaching from Jesus. This is happening in quick succession from **19:30**, where Jesus says, "*so the last will be first, and the first last*." This is going to be another case-in-point moment for the disciples. While they just heard that *sacrifice doesn't equal entitlement*, they're now hearing that *God's generosity, cannot be humanly measured*.

Take note that in the parable, only the first group of workers were promised a wage – a denarius. A wage worthy of their day's labour. Then the following hired workers, were only promised, "*whatever is right*." Those workers would have known what a day's wage was, and that being paid fairly, they would get what they deserve, compensation for hours given.

Then at the end of the day, as we're told in **20:9-10**, all workers were paid the same. Starting with the last hires, given a full days wage, to those hired first, given the same.

Humanly speaking, as the first hires saw the last hires get paid, they would have easily been anticipating a larger sum, and they would have been quite excited at the prospect. They would have been thinking about the moment they got home and how they would share the excitement with their families, and what more they would be able to do with this gift.

But it quickly dawns on them, that will not be the case, and they get upset.

And with their agreed upon wages in their hands, they respond with disgust, as they look at those who were hired last, with the same coins in their hands. But they don't complain about the money, as much as they complain about being made equal with those who did less.

- **READ Matthew 20:13-16.** The workers are not necessarily upset about being paid all the same, they're upset about being *made equal*. Why is that?

LEADER NOTE: They felt that they deserved more, when they see how much those who did little, received. They believe now, that because they've contributed more, they now deserve more. They could have been paid first, went on their merry way, none the wiser.

Notice the first word out of masters mouth as he responds, "*Friend*." He doesn't meet them in their frustration and anger, He doesn't take back the pay and send them away empty handed, he approaches them with the grace, and logic. He has treated them fairly, paying what was agreed.

These workers, still looking at the coins in their hands, are comparing themselves to others, and the gift that they had received. And rather, taking the place that the master would have like them to take, where they would have been joyful of the gift the others received, they just looked at what they got, and were left jealous. They wanted more. They wanted life to be fair.

There's a picture in the crucifixion scene that draws upon this same image, In **Luke 23:39-43**, there was an exchange of words between the two men on either side of Jesus, one was making fun of Jesus, and the other, saw Christ's glory, and asked to be remembered by Jesus, and Jesus replies, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise*." This man, as we can tell, by the fact that he's on the cross, lived a questionable life, and his crimes, in the eyes of the Romans, saw fit for execution. Clearly, a sinful life. Yet, upon asking for Christ, he was granted Him. You might say that this criminal, was like those last hired in the field. He contributed very little in comparison to others.

But God, doesn't compare.

God doesn't keep score.

God doesn't repay upon merit or good works, only on the posture of the heart. And this criminal, moments before his death, humbled himself, and saw who it was who was dying beside him. The *last* in this moment, really did become the *first*.

- **READ Jonah 3-4.** Jonah is upset because God has chosen to extend grace to those he didn't think were deserving. Can you think of a time when someone else's good news or blessing brought up a sense that you were owed something too? What did that reaction help you see about what desires were on your heart?

LEADER NOTE: Leaders, if your groups are familiar with Jonah's journey, then don't feel the need to read these two chapters, but focus in on **3:10-4:4**, which capture the moment of God's mercy upon the city of Nineveh, and Jonah's response.

But remember, Jonah chooses to hide on a ship, rather than go to this city, as he felt from the beginning that this city wasn't deserving of God's grace, or even of God at all. He risked his life on the chaotic waters, in order to withhold the same grace that he was given, from the Ninevites. The storm came up, he was tossed into the sea, the great fish swallowed him, where he lived for those three days, was spit up on the shore, and he had a change of heart, and went to Ninevah, where we're told in **Jonah 3:5**, "*the people of Nineveh believed God*."

Rather than responding with joy and celebration, at God's promise to not destroy the city, Jonah was greatly displeased. He was upset.

Much like these first workers in the field. By comparison, the Ninevites didn't deserve this gift, and neither did those last workers. But in God's economy, He doesn't compare, nor does He keep score. He looks at the posture of heart, and He saw the change in the Ninevites, and he saw the hearts of the last workers.

In our lives, we do much of the same thing. We compare, we contrast, we measure others by our own efforts and contributions. But we must remember the words of Billy Graham who consistently reminded his audiences, "*the ground at the foot of the cross is level*," which highlights the emphasis of Paul's words in **Romans 3:23**, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*."

This question isn't intended to make people feel guilty for experiencing an emotional reaction to someone else's good news. Rather, it invites us to examine what that reaction reveals. Are we more concerned with what we think we deserve, than with celebrating God's goodness in someone else's life?

TAKING IT HOME

READ Matthew 19:29-30, & 20:14-16. God's kingdom is built upon the gift of His grace, not human merit. Yet, we live as though we deserve God's grace, and we can be reluctant to extend that same grace to others. Where do these two attitudes show up in your own life? What changes might you need to embrace to live out your place in God's kingdom?

LEADER NOTE: Now this study takes a deep turn inward to the lives of your members, being invited to see where they are in these two stories, asking themselves, "*am I like this rich man who cannot give up what I have?*" or asking if they might be like these first workers, "*am I like these first workers who cannot take joy in others receiving this gift?*"

While we might all to easily see ourselves as deserving, and like Peter, with the assumption that we have already a great place in the Kingdom, we need to take a moment to recognize how easily we fall into the patterns of these self-entitled and selfish characters.

Jesus isn't saying that our actions don't matter or that faithful service goes unnoticed. Remember, it's always the Lord who initiates our relationships with Him, and then we live out our lives as response of gratitude for all that He has done for us.

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 55:1-7, Luke 23:39-43, & John 6:35-44. Where in your life do you feel like you need to prove yourself before coming to Jesus? Where in these verses do you hear God's reassurance speaking directly to you? In your community, who might still be waiting for an invitation to experience the bread of life in Christ Jesus?