



## NEWS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

## THIS WEEK:

## ⇒ DISCUSSION TIPS:

- Remember you don't have to answer every question (or even go in order!)
- Choose questions best suited to your group.
- Listen to the [Audio Guide/Podcast](#) for more discussion suggestions.

## LEADER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

## ⇒ FEEDBACK FORMS:

- Next week we will be handing out feedback forms for your group! [Look for those on SUNDAY, MARCH 8<sup>th</sup>](#), in your HOST's mailbox at the church. Here is the process:
  1. Hand out Feedback forms DURING your week 8 meeting and give them time to fill it out.
  2. Once filled out, let group members place their feedback forms in the envelope. Once all parties have filled it out, seal it.
  3. Hand in the envelopes by Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup> (or 22<sup>nd</sup> if certain members are missing on week 8) through Pastor Adam's staff mailbox.
 

*[Note: Please do not hand them out and ask people to submit them on their own time. Give them 10 minutes at the meeting and take them back]*

## ⇒ PICTURES:

- We are looking for more pictures – from your meetings, serve projects, or socials! We want to put together a highlight video to be shown to our church after this Life Group semester wraps up. Please email them directly to pastor Adam – [adam@gatewaycrc.org](mailto:adam@gatewaycrc.org). Invite your group members to follow through with this as well!

## LEADER INFORMATION:

## ⇒ WEEKLY TRAINING TIP (OPTIONAL READING):

- Looking for more guidance for your seventh meeting? You can find the weekly training tip "[Training Week 7 – Having Difficult Conversations](#)" in your planning center portal under "resources" or at the end of this document.
- *Is there anything specific that you would like to learn about? Let us know!*

## ⇒ ATTENDANCE:

- Submit your group's attendance online at: <https://gatewaycrc.churchcenter.com/groups/life-groups>. Be sure to submit your attendance right away after your meeting.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

**LEADER NOTE:** Choose one of the two questions you feel would work best as an ice breaker for your group. They can be a good tool to hear from all voices in the room early on.

1) *[Skip for homework — Answer at the group meeting]* Take 30 seconds and write down as many things as you can that you do well. Come up with at least 5, then share with the group.

2) What fun or helpful thing do you wish you knew 10+ years ago?

## QUICK REVIEW

**LEADER NOTE:** These are two questions that have your group reflecting back upon last Sunday's message.

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

2) This past week Justin had us consider what comes to mind when we use the word "evangelism." What typically comes to mind for you?

**DISCUSSION TIP:** This may be a good question to invite your group to go around the room and answer.

## GOD'S STORY - TRIADS

**LEADER NOTE:** Continue to watch how your answers are changing, or deepening. You might find yourselves getting ahead into the "Digging Deeper" questions through these – that's okay, enjoy the conversation!

**READ Colossians 4:2-4**

1) **GOD** - What does this passage say about the character of God?

2) **THE WORLD** - What does this passage say about fallen humanity?

3) **ME** - Where does this passage specifically expose sin or unbelief in my own life? How does it specifically call me to change my thinking, redirect my affections, replace my behaviors, and trust my Savior?

## DIGGING DEEPER

1) [READ Colossians 3:2, 17, 23-24](#). It's been said that *"Prayer doesn't change God, it changes us."* How have you approached prayer? Are you willing to share some of your personal prayer habits?

**DISCUSSION TIP:** As this question goes pretty personal, perhaps model answering the question as leaders to open the discussion, as not all of your members may not have answers. Prayer is a very personal practice for many Christians.

**Additional Question: How was prayer modelled for you growing up?**

• [READ Luke 18:9-14](#). Describe the posture towards prayer that Jesus is looking for in this parable. How then should we approach prayer for those on our Pi<sup>2</sup> list?

**LEADER NOTE:** Take a moment to remember Jesus' comparison of the Pharisees being like the Elder Brother in our last series on "Running from God." Now here again, we see a negative view of them and how they act.

**DISCUSSION TIP:** For those who have been silent, perhaps this is a lower-risk question that you can use to invite them to share, *"Charlie, I wonder what you wrote there?"*

2) Paul was not asking his audience to pray for his *release* from prison, but that his ministry would be effective while *in* prison. [READ John 10:7-9](#). We pray through Paul's words in Colossians for the open door of opportunity, and Jesus says, *"I am the door..."* Does this give us more or less confidence when it comes to living missionally?

**LEADER NOTE:** A short poem: *"I am here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time."* Paul recognized that God had him right where He needed him. You can invite your group to consider this question:

**Additional Question: Given your present situation, where do you see Jesus opening up the door in your life right now?**

• [READ John 17:20-23](#). How might Christ's prayer give you more confidence?

**COMMENTARY THOUGHT:** One thing you can highlight about John 17 is that while Jesus was on His way to the cross, He pauses, and prays for *us*, His future followers. At the same time, He prays for those who will hear the same message through us! In case your group hasn't brought it up yet, these two passages should bring us to the point of greater assurance that we will find success in the work that we set out to do in God's kingdom – that there will be some who will in fact say yes to Him as a result of our efforts.

3) Paul asks his readers to pray for him, that he might be clear when sharing the Gospel message ([Colossians 4:4](#)). Have you seen a good example of the gospel being shared?

**DISCUSSION TIP:** Perhaps you will hear of past Billy Graham crusades, youth Mexico Trips, or maybe even great experiences in other churches. Perhaps ask also:

**Additional Question: What made those good examples good?**

• What do think our non-believing friends think or feel about prayer? How would/have your neighbors responded to you asking if you can pray for them?

**DISCUSSION TIP:** You could even invite your group members here to consider how those on their Pi<sup>2</sup> prayer card would respond, or how they have responded if they've already been reached out to. You may want to re-phrase the question in this way:

**Additional Question: What might your non-believing friends think about the fact that you pray for them every day?**

## TAKING IT HOME

1) Talk about what it's been like to pray for your Pi<sup>2</sup> list. Have there been any "providential moments" with those you've been praying for?

**DISCUSSION TIP:** This is a fairly high-risk question, as your members may feel uncomfortable sharing these personal experiences. For anyone who does share, be sure to affirm the responses you get, saying: *"thanks for sharing that,"* and add, *"is there anyone else who has an experience that they'd be willing to share?"*

**COMMENTARY THOUGHT:** Providential moments are those times that you have an encounter with someone else that you just could not make happen yourself, it's like those moments that Philip and the Eunuch shared, but it is also like those times you ran into someone in the grocery or hardware store, or had the inkling to phone or text someone, and either situation panned out to be what both parties needed.

Take some time to pray as a team for your Pi<sup>2</sup> list.

*(Note: Sharing names is "optional." There is no pressure to do so. But be praying for one another all the same as you seek to pray for the lost in your life.)*

**CLOSING YOUR MEETING:** As you go into closing your meeting, continue like last week in praying for those on your Pi<sup>2</sup> prayer cards. This week be more intentional in praying that we all might see more clearly where Jesus is holding open the door. Then end your group time in prayer for each other's needs as you see fit.

## ADDITIONAL SELF STUDY *(Optional Personal Reflection Questions)*

**LEADER NOTE:** As you know, these questions are completely optional for participants' personal reflection.

1) [READ Psalm 31](#). Listen for the challenge that God is laying before you as you approach praying for those on your Pi<sup>2</sup> list. How might have you 'been in the way' of God's plan? What self-assurance are you left with after reading this Psalm?

2) [Colossians 4:1](#) in the NIV says "Devote yourselves to prayer", in the ESV it says "Continue steadfastly in prayer." Is it really possible to be praying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? What does that look like? Is it always hands folded and eyes closed? How do we then devote ourselves, or continue steadfastly?

## GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PICTURES:** We are looking for more pictures – from your meetings, serve projects, or socials! We want to put together a highlight video to be shown to our church after this Life Group semester wraps up. Please email them directly to pastor Adam – [adam@gatewaycrc.org](mailto:adam@gatewaycrc.org).

**GATEWAY HASHTAG CHALLENGE:** Our Life Group coordinating team checks in on the hashtag postings weekly, and we are very grateful for the posts that have been made! Thanks everyone! We have just a few more weeks to post pictures from our events! Post your shots to FACEBOOK / TWITTER / INSTAGRAM, using **#GatewayLifeGroups**. Know that for INSTAGRAM, we can only see the pictures if the post is PUBLIC or if you're a FOLLOWER of one of us on the team. In the comments, write what you love about your group. At the end of the semester we will have a random draw. The winning Life Group will receive a \$250 gift card for their entire group to enjoy together! One entry per member. *[P.S. Leaders can also get 9 additional entries! All submitted attendance records on time also equals an entry!]*

Breakdown of entry possibilities:

- 1 entry per person, per group (max of 10 entries for the sake of fairness to smaller groups) = 10 total possible entries.
- 1 entry per submitted homework = 9 total possible entries.  
= 19 POSSIBLE ENTRIES PER GROUP

## "INTENTIONAL PRAYING"

### EVANGELISM IS . . .

1. HELPING OTHERS FIND CHRIST IN WAYS THAT ARE NATURAL TO YOU.
2. SHORT AND ACCESSIBLE ACTIONS & WORDS, NOT LONG, COMPLICATED, KNOWLEDGE-BASED SPEECHES.

Luke 19:1

### Pi²—THE GOSPEL-SHAPED LIFE

1. PRAY DAILY FOR FOUR PEOPLE.
2. INVEST
3. INVITE

### PRAYING FOR GOSPEL IMPACT:

Colossians 4:2-4

1. WHEN WE MODEL PAUL'S EXAMPLE TO PRAY, WE GIVE OURSELVES PERMISSION TO STOP ACTING LIKE SOMEONE'S SAVIOR.
2. YOU CAN'T CRAM CHRIST THROUGH CLOSED DOORS.

John 6:44

### SPECIFICALLY, WHAT TO PRAY FOR:

1. PRAY FOR OPPORTUNITY.  
Colossians 4:2-4
2. PRAY FOR BOLDNESS.  
Acts 4:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 2
3. PRAY FOR CLARITY.  
1 Corinthians 9:20-23





## Having Difficult Conversations

By: Justin Carruthers

I'm not sure that having difficult conversations is something anyone wakes up in the morning excited about. We tend to avoid conflict like the plague. You know the adage: "Let sleeping dogs lie..."

So as a Life Group Leader perhaps the most daunting of tasks is the prospect of having a "difficult conversation." And yet more healing and transformation can result in that than a 10-week bible study. Difficult conversations are about healing and correction. Take, for example, someone who breaks their arm. You know that the doctor first needs to *correct* the arm by putting it back in its rightful place. Unless you have some powerful pain medication, the process will hurt. And yet that step is the first and essential step for ultimate healing and restoration. Difficult conversations are like that.

Here are a few tips in how to have Difficult Conversations:

### Who Should Have This Conversation?

When you realize that an issue needs to be addressed, one of the first things to ask is,

"Who should have this conversation?" Remember your Life Group training – "I GO" "YOU GO" "WE GO." Consider all of the circumstances of the situation and determine what type of instance this is. In most circumstances, YOU are the best person to have the conversation. Why? Because you are their Life Group Leader and likely have more relational equity with the person than anyone else on staff.

But remember if you ever feel over your head, please feel free to contact me immediately.

### Create a Natural Time to Talk

Scheduling a meeting to have a difficult conversation can be as difficult as the conversation itself. It's a tricky balance between not wanting to blindside the person ("I thought we were just catching up, and you're telling me we're meeting to discuss my sexual purity?"), but also wanting to be able to have the conversation face to face. It's a bad idea to have these conversations on the phone or worse, the internet or text.

One way to mitigate this is to build these conversations into your system. One way is to start and end with social time and to allow for folks to stick around once group time is over. As people leave you can bring so-and-so aside and ask them to stay for a bit.

### Effective Facilitation

When the meeting arrives, there are a few things that can help it go smoothly:

*Relax.*

If you're stressed, nervous, or angry, that's probably going to come through. If you're relaxed, the other person will feel at ease, and you'll have a much more productive conversation. That's also why prayer is so important. You're praying for the other person, but you're also praying that you will handle the situation well and have a holy confidence.

*Start by listening.*

Say as little as possible at the beginning of the meeting. Spend a lot of time asking for the other person's thoughts, opinions, perspectives, and feelings. Begin with, "I've heard some concerns that ..." or "I noticed this happening, and I wasn't sure what to make of it. Can you tell me more?"

*Avoid 'why' questions. Rather, use 'what' or 'how.'*

Nothing puts someone more on edge than a 'why?' question. Be sure to take a look at "The Art of Active Listening" in your Leader Resources to more ideas on how to ask good questions.

The object of a difficult conversation is never punishment; it's growth. When I'm meeting with leaders to discuss a problem, I want them to grow through it and come out better and stronger and more Christ like on the other side. I'm not trying to make them pay for what they've done. One way to help ensure leaders know you want good for them and that you value them is simply listening to what they have to say. They might be dead wrong, but let them express their perspective before you tell them that. It's important to hear their side of the situation.

The second reason why what they have to say is important is that you could be dead wrong. In the past, I had a situation where I thought some leaders were being stubborn. They were leading what we call a "black market" group, an under the radar group that isn't officially registered with the church and often isn't open to new people joining.

We discourage official groups from becoming black market groups unless there is a good reason. We want to combat "us four and no more" syndrome, and very practically speaking, we need groups to remain official, open groups, because we need places for people to connect. (By the way, I fully realize that while open groups are important in our context, closed groups have their place in other contexts.)

One way we encourage leaders to keep their groups open and linked in to the larger church body is that we support and resource our official groups. We don't do that for black market groups, so when we got a reimbursement request for \$300 to help pay for childcare for a group that I didn't even know existed, I was less than excited.

Instead of calling up the leader and letting him know he couldn't have the money, I decided to listen first. To my surprise, I learned that they had tried to register the group. In fact, they thought they had registered the group, but apparently it didn't go through for some reason.

I have been known to have the occasional bout of foot-in-mouth disease, and one of the best treatments I've found is simply listening first and speaking second because sometimes I'm wrong. Don't let your preparation and fact finding get in the way of listening to the perspective of the person you're meeting with.

While I want to have a game plan, don't let your preparation, fact finding, and game plan get in the way of what you might have gotten wrong or what God might be doing in and through the situation.

Which leads me to my final point.

### **Sensitivity to the Spirit**

Let's go back to that leader who I was having issues with and talking to on the phone. It turns out that someone else on our team had some concerns about him a couple of times, and I kept advocating for him.

It's good to be an advocate for your people, but you also need to listen when there's a check in your gut. When your team members or other staff members keep bringing up issues, the Spirit may be speaking through them. As you pray for your meeting, ask the Spirit to give you guidance and wisdom. You may find the Spirit giving you a check in your gut. I've ignored that more than once, and, unfortunately, I've paid the price.

Fact finding is important. The conversation is important. But neither is as important as the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Shepherd of his church, and he will work through his Spirit to guide us in helping him shepherd it.