



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK:

⇒ PREPARATION FOR THIS WEEK:

- Do the homework and choose questions best suited to your group.
- Listen to the [Audio Guide/Podcast](#) for more discussion suggestions.

⇒ COVID UPDATE:

- As Dr. Henry has updated this week, we are now in the 'second wave' of the COVID-19 virus. While she is mostly concerned with intimate events like weddings and funerals, she is still encouraging British Columbians to **"Be kind. Be calm. Be safe."**
- As a coordinating team, we said from the beginning, that *we trust you as leaders to make the best decisions for your groups. We stand by that!* So, listen to the pulse of your members, and act accordingly. We simply ask that you continue to report attendance, cancelling events as you need to.

LEADER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

⇒ PICTURES!

- Last week I saw a whole variety of pictures be shared on Facebook and Instagram, as well as emailed into to me - thanks so much for doing all that! **Keep up sharing and posting!** We love the potential that sharing your excitement for you group can increase momentum for **#GatewayLifeGroups!**
- Be sure to follow both GATEWAY COMMUNITY CRC on both platforms!

⇒ SOCIALS:

- Have you planned out a SOCIAL event where your group can simply just enjoy each other's presence? Get everyone's minds together and plan something fun!

⇒ LIFE GROUP SERVE PROJECT:

- Be sure to follow through with the instructions that Pastor Marcel gives you to finalize the details of your SERVE project!

LEADER INFORMATION:

⇒ WEEKLY LEADER TRAINING:

- Find the article **"FOSTERING GOOD DISCUSSION"** at the end of this guide.

⇒ ATTENDANCE:

- Submit your group's attendance online or in the Church Center App, or at: <https://gatewaycrc.churchcenter.com/groups/life-groups>. Be sure to **submit your attendance right away after your meeting.**
- If you have missed filling in your attendance for past events – please go back and fill them in! If those events were cancelled, please indicate that by clicking on the "cancel event" button.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

LEADER NOTE: As we continue to develop our relationships with each other, we will continue to provide simple ice breaker questions, one that is simple and fun, and one that relates more towards the topic and theme.

1) What is the strangest gift you have ever received?

LEADER NOTE: This is a question you can invite every voice in the room to contribute towards. Go around the room: either lead by example, or invite a confident member to start!

2) Where did you see the activity of the Holy Spirit this past week as you looked to the LEFT, RIGHT, and STRAIGHT FORWARD?

LEADER NOTE: This question looks back to a challenge that we received on Sunday morning. Be careful to not jump ahead into the Quick Review portion of this guide in this discussion, but be more reflective of your personal experiences.

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?

LEADER NOTE: Be sure that you're leading by example, refer to your own notes and thoughts that you have collected. Help your members see the value in taking notes!

2) When Pastor Adam said that *"the Spirit uses your words and actions to impact the lives of others?"* How did that strike you? How have you seen that in your life or in the lives of others?

LEADER NOTE: This was referring to my two personal stories "Conversation with Joe" & "My Daughter." Allow your members a few moments to reflect on their own lives, recognizing that the activity of the Spirit may look simpler than we expect.

GOD'S STORY - TRIADS

LEADER NOTE: This are three question that we ask each week, and have us look at each passage we study through the same lens.

[READ Ephesians 3:14-22](#)

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 Ephesians 3:1, 14](#). In 3:1, Paul begins this prayer, but gets distracted by expanding upon the mystery of the mission to the Gentiles, then in 3:14, he picks up where he left off, and begins his prayer. What does your prayer life look like?

LEADERS NOTE: We start off our questions with a more reflective question. Invite your members to be honest with themselves, and your group. Lead by example – open the conversation about where you are at, or invite your co-leaders to start off the discussion.

DISCUSSION TIP: As simple as this question sounds, it may still be tough for some of your members to answer it. Prayer life in our denominational culture has tended to be a very private matter. So as your members share, be sure to affirm their struggles and limitations. For those who may answer, “It’s not good enough,” or “I certainly don’t pray enough,” do all you can to help not feel guilty or shamed. Also, leave the ‘fixing’ conversation for the next question!

ADDITIONAL QUESTION:

- How was a prayer life modeled for you growing up?
- [READ Psalm 19:14, Mark 1:35, Philippians 4:13](#). While Paul’s distraction was a spiritual diversion, we usually get distracted by random thoughts, to-do lists, our social media feeds, and more! What are some of the ways that you can remove distractions you regularly face as you pray??

LEADER NOTE: This is perhaps the time to find ways that your group can encourage each other in their prayer life. Take time to hear those who have found ways to focus their hearts, and affirm their efforts!

2) [READ Ephesians 3:17-18, Psalm 103:7-12](#). Paul and David both speak of the immense size of God’s love for His people. As you read these two texts, how do we come to a point of comprehending all of this love?

LEADER NOTE: What is super interesting about the Psalm text, is that David picks up on the notion that you can travel north on the globe, and eventually, starting heading south, and vise-versa, you can travel south, and eventually start heading north. However, as you travel east, you will never head west; as you travel west, you will never head east. It’s the picture of God’s limitless, unending, and forever love – we’ll never find the end of it!

- [READ Hebrews 12:1-3](#). What does the author here mean as they use the phrase “*great cloud of witnesses*”? How does this help us understand how we are rooted and grounded in the Love of God?

LEADER NOTE: Look back into Hebrews 11, and find there the affirmations of faith of many Old Testament individuals – these are some of the biblical men and women who have gone ahead of us, carving out the way for us to continue living into God’s goodness. As the author here picks up on biblical history, invite your group to consider their own history, asking:

ADDITIONAL QUESTION:

- Who in your life do you suspect was a part of your “cloud of witnesses”? Are there specific people? Specific groups of people?

3) [READ Ephesians 3:20-21, Isaiah 55:8-9](#). Sometimes we limit God in our actions, words, and thoughts; we essentially place Him in a small box, and expect Him to operate within it. How do Paul’s words challenge our actions, words, and thoughts?

LEADER NOTE: As much as we know that God is absolutely immense, our actions suggest otherwise. We limit His ability to our own abilities, willingness, & efforts. Allow your members to sit with that thought, and wrestle through looking at their own actions.

- [READ Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#). This text is the Hebrew “*shema*,” a very important Jewish prayer. Jesus even quotes it in Matthew 22:37. How do these words help us recover from our limited view of God??

LEADER NOTE: The neat part about all of this mystery of God, is that we are never required to know it all. We are simply to understand that God is God, and we are us – not God.

TAKING IT HOME

How might your actions today, your prayers and petitions, your obedience to God's call, affect future generations?

LEADER NOTE: This is your opportunity to look forward as a group, into the coming week, the coming year, 10 years from now, or 10 generations from now. If the Lord could have used as many people as He did in the biblical times, just think about how many more people He is using to bless His kingdom going forward?

CLOSE YOUR MEETING: Invite your members into a time of prayer, chatting through your on-going prayer needs, updating each other on where things are at! Be sure to in the midst of this, to offer prayers of gratitude & thanksgiving!

ADDITIONAL SELF STUDY *(Optional Personal Reflection Questions)*

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

1) **READ 1 Corinthians 13.** This is a very famous part of Paul's writings. Essentially, he is saying that if he was the most religious of all religious people—that without love, his religion is meaningless. Re-read this text with the vantage point of praying for the future of the church. How does that now challenge you to live?

2) **READ 1 John 4:7-21.** John spends considerable time expanding upon the origin of our ability to love. To summarize, John makes the point that our ability to love comes from the presence of God's Spirit within us, combined with the fact that God loved us first. Reflect upon John's words, and also how God "*is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think.*" How might God be challenging you this week to live? What are some practical changes you can make?

GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

PICTURES: We are looking for pictures – from your meetings, upcoming 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.

HASHTAG CHALLENGE: Be sure to encourage your group to use the #GatewayLifeGroups hashtag on Facebook and Instagram. Remember that there is going to be a \$300 gift card draw at the end of the semester. [One COVID tip – try to inspire the public sharing of photos that follow covid-19 protocols. Optics & perception play a role]

"FUTURE PRAYER'S"

PAUL'S FIRST REQUEST:

1. THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE INNER STRENGTH, FROM AND THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ephesians 3:16, Matthew 6:31-32, Philippians 4:19, John 14:15-17, Ephesians 1:13-14

- The Spirit uses our **WORDS TO IMPACT** the lives of others.
- The Spirit uses the **ACTIONS OF OTHERS TO IMPACT** our lives.

As you go about your week:

- Look to the **LEFT**, and look for ... **GOD'S HAND IN THAT MOMENT**
- Look to the **RIGHT**, and look for ... **GOD'S ACTIVITY THERE**
- Look **STRAIGHT FORWARD**, and ask the Lord ... **TO REVEAL TO YOU IN THAT MOMENT JUST HOW HE IS PRESENT**

PAUL'S SECOND REQUEST:

2. THAT WE WOULD EXPERIENCE CHRIST'S FOUNDATIONAL LOVE.

Ephesians 3:17-18, Philippians 2:5-8

- May that **HOPE**, that **JOY**, that **INDWELLING PRESENCE** of God, be what roots and grounds you to the love of the Father.
- With the **COMMUNION** of the **SAINTS**.

PAUL'S THIRD REQUEST:

3. THAT WE WOULD GROW INTO THE FATHER'S INFINITE FULLNESS.

Ephesians 3:19

- God invites us to **PARTICIPATE** in His **FULLNESS**.
- Genesis 6:13-14, Exodus 14:21, Joshua 3:15-16, Luke 1:35-38, Matthew 4:18-20

Think of the **COUNTLESS PEOPLE** that **INVESTED** into your life so that you might be just where you are now!





FOSTERING GOOD DISCUSSIONS

Fall 2020 Semester | WEEK #5

In any small group, it can often be difficult to foster a good discussion. We may feel compelled to speak up more often than we would like in order to keep the discussion going. We may have some people who dominate the conversation, while others never speak up at all.

If that happens, 'What do we do?'

Today's lesson focuses on some ways we can be intentional about dealing with these issues and fostering productive discussion in our groups. Let's jump in!

Silence

First, silence...Here's the secret. Embrace it!

Yes, it seems counterintuitive to a good discussion, but silence isn't necessarily a bad thing.

It often can take people 30 to 45 seconds to formulate an answer to a complicated question. Which is a long time.

Do not jump in too soon. If the silence is following a question that's been posed, give people adequate time to think. If the question was posed by you, you have likely had time to think about it and compose your answer, so you may feel antsy. Fight the urge to break the silence too soon.

Of course, you also need to be a student of body language. If people are indicating cluelessness, rather than deep thought, you may want to rephrase the question or steer the discussion in a different direction. But make sure you are not misreading the situation.

Talkers and Non-Talkers

There are the talkers. And there are non-talkers.

Here again, discernment is called for. How are they wired?

Yes, some talkers may just like the sound of their own voice, but it is more likely they are verbal processors and that is how they learn. Are they interfering with discussion or are you just personally annoyed?

And the non-talkers—are they just naturally less talkative than the others? There is nothing necessarily wrong with that.

However, if you feel there are problems that need to be addressed, you can take some steps to do so.

When you have Life Group members who talk too much, here are a few helpful step-by-step guidelines:

1. Set Expectations: You may want to mention to the group before discussion that you are looking for brief answers and want as many people as possible to share.
2. Gently Interject: If that doesn't work, it may be necessary to interrupt or cut off a talker mid-sharing, thanking them for what they said and asking another member for their thoughts or posing a new question.
3. One-on-One Conversation: And if that fails, it may be necessary to speak to them one-on-one about it, possibly even leveraging the situation by asking them to help you get others in the group to share.

For non-talkers, embracing silence may give them the opportunity to process the way that they need. However, it may also be necessary to create openings for them to share, at times specifically asking them if they have anything they would like to add and validating them when they share. Of course, you should always accept a “no” or “I don’t know” answer when asking if they want to share.

Also, with both talkers and non-talkers, make use of eye contact. By giving more to the non-talkers –perhaps by sitting directly across from them –and less to the talkers –perhaps by sitting next to them –you can subtly encourage the non-talkers to talk more and the talkers to talk less.

Good discussions do not just happen. By being intentional about fostering a good discussion, you can help everyone in your group have a more productive and rewarding experience.

Some Things to Consider:

1. What is your level of comfort with silence in a small group setting?
2. Are you naturally more of a talker or a non-talker? If a talker, how can someone let you know you are sharing too much? If a non-talker, how can others encourage you to share more?
3. How can you tell when people are thinking about an answer versus simply not knowing how to respond?
4. Have you had to address a situation with a talker or non-talker before? How did it go? Is there anything you would do differently?
5. What tricks do you use to help foster discussion in your small group?

Want to Keep Learning?

For more practical tips on leading a Life Group (or any small group for that matter), check out the book “Field Guide for Small Group Leaders” by Sam O’Neal.

Pastor Justin
& Pastor Adam

