

JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

LIFE GROUPS GUIDE

An 18-Week Group Study

JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME
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Shepherd Church

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES



LETTER FROM PASTOR DUDLEY RUTHERFORD

Dear Friend,

Pack your bags and open your Bible, because we're about to embark on the *Journey of a Lifetime*!

Over the next 18 weeks, we will walk through the most incredible story ever told! From the very first page of the Bible to its last pages, we'll stop over at some of the most pivotal moments in Scripture filled with flawed heroes, dramatic twists, and life-changing truth. This is a 4-month spiritual journey to discover where we've come from, where we're going, how to live with purpose, and what God has called us to do.

When I planned *Journey of a Lifetime* a year ago, I knew that Life Groups would be the heartbeat of this series. We grow stronger and learn more with others. So, I want to encourage everyone to faithfully meet in your Life Group each week of this series. God will use your faithfulness to draw people closer to Him.

My prayer is that you will not only gain a deeper understanding of the Bible—but that you will also see your life woven into the pages of God's redemptive story. Whether you're reading about Abraham's faith, Moses' calling, David's heart, the life of Jesus, or the birth of the Church—each week is an invitation to a powerful encounter with God!

Let's expect God to meet us at every step with truth, grace, and transformation.

Thank you for making this journey with us!

In Christ's love,



Pastor Dudley Rutherford





***JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME* SERIES DESCRIPTION**

Pack your bags and get ready for an adventure through the most incredible story ever told! During *The Journey of a Lifetime*, we'll travel from the dawn of creation in Genesis to the powerful finale in Revelation, making stops at pivotal moments along the way. Along the way, we will find flawed heroes, encounter dramatic twists, and timeless truths that connect the pages of Scripture to our lives. Each week, we'll discover how God's story inspires us to a life of purpose and hope in Jesus Christ. This series isn't a history lesson—it's a journey to understand where we come from, where we're headed, and how to live fully for Jesus in the here and now.

YOU & THIS SERIES

WHY SHOULD I BE IN THIS GROUP?

In John 10:10, Jesus said that He came to give life and life to the full. In the New Testament, there are three primary Greek words for the word, *life*: *bios*, *psuché*, and *zoé*. The Greek word, *bios*, is used to describe biological life. *Psuché*, refers to life which encompasses the mind, emotions, desires, etc. However, *zoé* refers to the wholeness of life (e.g., biological, psychological, spiritual, etc.). In other words, *zoé* describes someone who is fully alive in every way possible. *Zoé* is also the Greek word used in John 10:10! We use the word *Life*, in “Life Groups” to represent the kind of life that God has for you.

We believe that God has an amazing life planned for you! However, this life does not come naturally—which is why we have Life Groups! Shepherd Church’s Life Groups are designed to help you live out the amazing life that God has for you by providing a place where you connect with others, grow to be more like Jesus, and impact your community with the Gospel.

HOW WILL THIS SERIES HELP ME?

This series will guide you through the grand narrative of the Bible in a powerful way that’s both engaging and transformative. As you walk through key moments—from creation to Jesus’ return—you’ll see how the entire story of Scripture weaves together to reveal God’s plan for humanity and His deep love for you. This series will not only help you understand the Bible’s big picture but will also show how its timeless truths speak directly into your everyday life. Whether you have never read the Bible or have followed Jesus for years, this journey will equip you to live with greater purpose, deeper hope, and a clearer vision of what it means to follow Jesus today.

WHAT’S MY ROLE IN THIS GROUP?

As you attend our worship services and participate in your Life Group, you will be equipped to live a life that’s fully devoted to God. However, the bottom line is that it comes down to *you*. Only you can make the decision to share in your Life Group, pray about what God is teaching you, add value to your fellow Life Group members’ lives, and join Jesus on His mission (Matthew 28:19-20). Enjoy the next few weeks! God is going to do incredible things!

MEETING IN PUBLIC SPACES

During this series, Pastor Dudley has asked all Life Groups to meet in public locations so others will notice your open Bibles, hear your discussions, and maybe even be compelled to ask about your faith! Because it can be intimidating to think of where to meet, we've compiled a list of potential public spaces to hold your Life Group meetings:

Coffee Shops, juice bars & smoothie shops, restaurants, cafes, donut shops, libraries, community centers, bookstores, parks, walking trails, bike trail rest stops, malls, outdoor shopping plazas, outdoor town centers, hotel lobbies (with hotel's permission), the beach, beach pier/boardwalks, public benches/docks in marinas & harbors, gyms & YMCA common areas, outside parking lots (tailgate-style), business courtyards (after hours), laundromats, outside areas of sports complexes, family activity centers, playground seating areas, retail store seating areas (e.g., Target, Costco, grocery stores, etc.), theater & performance venue courtyards, store cafeterias (e.g., IKEA), schools (CSUN, CSULA, UCLA, USC, College of the Canyons, Pierce College, Mission College, Moorpark College, etc.), dog park sitting areas, and the list could go on.

It's important for your Life Group to agree on a meeting location (you could even meet in a few locations). Your Life Group should also determine a backup location for issues such as inclement weather, busy nights at your location, temporary closures, and other unforeseen interruptions. Please check out **Advice About Meeting in Public Spaces** section in the back of this guide for more information and ideas.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

STUFF TO ENSURE YOU HAVE A GREAT LIFE GROUP EXPERIENCE!

1. Notice in the Table of Contents there are three sections: **Introduction to the Series**, **The Life Group Lessons**, and **Life Group Resources**. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.
2. Take to heart the insights included in the **Frequently Asked Questions** section.
3. Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If your Life Group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that! If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it!
4. Since we are asking all Life Groups to meet in public spaces, watch the lesson videos beforehand. Then, read the questions before your Life Group meets and if you have time, write down some of your initial thoughts under each question.
5. During this series, you'll have good days and bad days. Whatever the day might bring, as best you can, try to show up to your Life Group with an open heart! Coming to your Life Group with an open heart gives God plenty of room to work with. A good Life Group meeting can bring perspective and even turn a bad day into a better day!

UNDERSTANDING THE 4W'S LESSON OUTLINE

Every Life Group lesson is structured around four key rhythms that help Life Group members grow spiritually and build strong relationships. These rhythms—**Welcome, Worship, Word, and Witness**—are designed to create a balanced environment where people are known, God is praised, Scripture is central, and lives are lived on mission.

WELCOME

The Welcome time helps Life Group members feel seen, known, and valued. This section typically includes simple, relational questions or fun activities to break the ice and create a warm, inviting atmosphere. It's designed to help everyone connect personally and begin the session with openness and ease. **| You to me |**

WORSHIP

The Worship section shifts our hearts toward God. This could be through singing, prayer, Scripture reading, quiet reflection, etc. The goal is not performance but praise—focusing on God's character, presence, and faithfulness. Worship reminds us that God is at the center of our time together. **| Us to God |**

WORD

In the Word section, the Life Group digs into God's Word together. Scripture is read, discussed, and applied in practical, real-life ways. The questions are designed to help people engage personally and honestly with God's truth. Whether by flipping through the Bible's pages or gleaning wisdom from what other Life Group members share, this is where transformation happens as we allow God's Word to shape our lives. **| God in us |**

WITNESS

Witness is about living out what we've learned. This could mean serving others, praying for those far from God, or sharing faith through everyday conversations. It also includes planning ways the Life Group can impact the community or support each other in mission. We're not just hearers of the Word—we're witnesses and doers of the Word. **| God through us |**

BONUS...

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

Although not one of the 4 W's, this section is meant to help you stay connected to God and His Word throughout the week. Each question or prompt invites you to reflect more personally on the themes from your Life Group discussion and apply them to your everyday life. You can go through them all at once or spread them out over a few days—whatever works best for your rhythm. Use this time to slow down, listen for God's voice, and let His truth shape your heart, mind, and actions. Let this be a space where your faith grows deeper between group gatherings.

LIFE GROUP LESSONS



LESSON 1: CREATION & THE FALL

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- What is your favorite place in nature to go when you need to reflect or recharge and why?
- What was your favorite “first” as a kid? (e.g., first pet, first trip, first friend, etc.)

WORSHIP

Psalm 8 is a worshipful reflection on God’s majesty and human dignity. It reflects on the glory of creation, the smallness of humanity, and the honor God bestows on people as image-bearers. Written by David, Psalm 8 opens and closes with the declaration, “Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth,” framing the psalm as a worship song. As David reflects on the vastness of the heavens—the moon and stars—he marvels that the Creator of the universe would be mindful of human beings and entrust them with responsibility over creation.

Read Psalm 8 and take a moment to silently praise God for how vast creation is and how personal He still is with you. Then, discuss the specific things that come to mind after reading Psalm 8.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read Genesis 1-3 before your Life Group meets.

Genesis 1-3 serves as the theological foundation for the entire Bible. It introduces key themes such as creation, human identity, divine purpose, free will, temptation, sin, judgment, and grace. There is strong evidence that Moses was the author of Genesis, as well as the following four books of the Bible. Genesis 1 portrays God as the Creator who brings the universe into existence by His Word and forms humanity in His own image to reflect His character and steward His creation.

In Genesis 2, the narrative zooms in on the intimate relationship between God and the first humans, highlighting the beauty of life in Eden and the gift of choice. Genesis 3 then shifts dramatically, recounting humanity's fall into sin through disobedience, as well as the entrance of shame and death. Yet, despite the fallout, God offers a promise of redemption (Genesis 3:15) and a glimpse of grace (Genesis 3:21), establishing a pattern that will continue throughout our *Journey of a Lifetime* series: sin breaks, God pursues, people repent, and God restores.

1. What reasons would you give if someone asked you, "Why do Christians believe Genesis 1:1 is so important?"

LESSON 1: CREATION & THE FALL

2. Why do you think God uses *water*, *Word*, and *Spirit* in both creation and salvation? What makes all three so significant?

3. Read Genesis 1:14-17 and Psalm 19:1-7. In what ways do the skies and the rest of creation testify to God's glory?

4. How does the belief that people are created in God's image challenge assumptions in our modern culture?

5. In Genesis 2:15-17, what instructions, boundaries, and freedom does God give Adam?

LESSON 1: CREATION & THE FALL

6. In Genesis 3:1-7, what tactics does Satan use to tempt Eve? What does Jesus' example in Matthew 4:1-11 teach us about resisting temptation?

7. Right now, how would you answer if God asked you, "Where are you?"
Remember, God's question in Genesis 3:9 is relational, not geographical.

8. Genesis 3:12-13 records the first instance of blaming. How might remembering that you're forgiven and not forsaken change your posture toward God? How does it empower you to own your sin?

9. How is Genesis 3:17-19 reflected in Romans 8:19-22?

LESSON 1: CREATION & THE FALL

10. Where do you see Jesus in Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 3:21?

WITNESS

As you begin this 18-week *Journey of a Lifetime*, take a moment to think about the people in your life who aren't yet on this journey with God—or who may have wandered away along the way. Who do you know that's searching for meaning, hope, or direction? Who needs to see that God's story is not just ancient history but good news for today? Ask God to put specific names on your heart, and begin praying for boldness, compassion, and opportunities to invite them into the story. Whether it's a conversation, an invitation to your Life Group, or simply walking with them in love, consider how you can help someone else take their next step with Jesus.

Also, plan a prayer walk for the lost sometime over the next 18 weeks. During the prayer walk for the lost, you and your Life Group will walk in a neighborhood or college campus and pray over those who don't yet know Jesus, specifically asking for open doors and divine appointments.

LESSON 1: CREATION & THE FALL

- **Made in the Image of God**

Read Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Romans 5:12–21; Galatians 4:4–5; Hebrews 2:14–15; and Revelation 20:10. What is promised in Genesis 3:15, and who is it pointing to? How does Genesis 3:15 give hope even in the middle of sin's consequences? How do the other passages show Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise? Besides Jesus, how are the passages similar? What does it mean for you that Jesus crushed the serpent's head?

- **God's Example of Resting**

Read Genesis 2:1–3; Exodus 20:8–11; Mark 2:27; and Hebrews 4:9–11. What pattern of rest do you see in God's creation? Why do you think God rested—even though He didn't need to? What does it mean to enter into God's rest today?

- How can you grow in being more attentive to God's voice through both creation and Scripture this week?

LESSON 2: NOAH & THE FLOOD

WELCOME

If your life this week were a weather report (sunny, cloudy, thunderstorm, etc.), what would it be and why?

WORSHIP

In Psalm 29, the author, David, celebrates the majesty and authority of God's voice over all creation. Written by David, this psalm paints vivid imagery of a thunderstorm sweeping over the land, symbolizing God's unmatched strength and glory. Each verse highlights how God's voice thunders over the waters, breaks the cedars, shakes the wilderness, and brings forth life—all to remind us that He reigns over both the chaos and calm. The psalm closes with a promise: the same God who commands the storm also gives strength and peace to His people.

Read Psalm 29 together and as a Life Group, take a few moments to reflect and discuss:

- What stands out to you about God's power in Psalm 29?
- How does Psalm 29 encourage you to trust God when life feels uncertain or overwhelming?

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read Genesis 6:1–9:17 before your Life Group meets.

Genesis 6:1–9:17 tells the sobering yet hope-filled story of Noah and the flood. As humanity's wickedness reached a breaking point, God grieved over creation and decided to bring judgment through a global flood. Yet in the midst of this darkness, Noah stood out for his faith and obedience. God instructed him to build an ark to preserve life, and through Noah's trust and God's mercy, a remnant was saved. These chapters reveal both God's justice against sin and His desire to redeem and restore. From the first raindrop to the rainbow of promise, Genesis 6–9 reminds us that even in the flood, God is faithful.

1. According to Genesis 6:5–13 and Hebrews 11:7, how does Noah stand out against the backdrop of the world?

LESSON 2: NOAH & THE FLOOD

2. How does someone “find favor in the eyes of the Lord” today?

3. What is one of the biggest storms (literal or metaphorical) you’ve faced, and how did you endure it?

4. Pastor Dudley has been known to say, "Every step of obedience, every act of trust, and every moment spent in His presence draws us deeper into His blessing!" Has God ever called you to take a step of obedience before the outcome was clear? If so, what happened?

5. Take a moment and silently reflect on the last sentence of Genesis 7:16, "Then the Lord shut him in." What is the significance of God Himself shutting the door of the ark? What does this teach us about God?

LESSON 2: NOAH & THE FLOOD

6. In the video lesson, Shynna pointed out that Noah's first act after the flood was to worship (Genesis 8:20). What does this reveal about Noah's heart? What role does worship play in your life when you're coming out of a difficult season?

7. How does the flood story in Genesis 6–9 reveal God's judgment against sin and His mercy toward humanity at the same time? Where else in Scripture—or even in your own life—have you seen God hold justice and mercy in tension?

8. Genesis 6:9 says Noah “walked faithfully with God.” What does it look like for you to walk faithfully with God during this current season of your life?

9. What habits of obedience could you begin developing today that will prepare you for future storms?

LESSON 2: NOAH & THE FLOOD

10. In Genesis 9:12-17, what is the reminder of God's covenant? How do these verses give us hope for today?

WITNESS

Noah's faith wasn't just for his own benefit—it saved his family and shaped the future. Challenge your fellow Life Group members to invite someone sitting alone nearby to join the next Life Group meeting—reflecting Noah's faith to speak even when others didn't listen.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Hopefully, these prompts and questions will create space for you to listen to God, apply Scripture to your life, and take your next step in following Jesus. Whether you work through them all at once or over a longer period, our hope is that your time with God will draw you closer to Him and strengthen your walk with Jesus. Don't rush—go at your own pace, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group or questions/prompts that you want to take a deeper dive into.

- Memorize one or all of the following: Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:9; Genesis 8:20.

- Read Genesis 6:1–9:17 every day this week.

LESSON 2: NOAH & THE FLOOD

- **The Obedient Builder**

Read Genesis 6:14-22; Matthew 7:24-27; and James 1:22-25. What similarities do you see between Noah and Jesus' parable about the wise builder? How do these passages challenge you to act on what God has spoken? What "ark" might God be asking you to build in your life right now?

- **Sheltered by God**

Read Psalm 91; Genesis 7:16; and John 10:28-30. What do these passages teach about God's protection? How can you rest in the truth that God is your shelter in every season? What situations in your life do you need to entrust to God's covering?

- **From Flood to Future**

Read Genesis 9:8-17; 2 Peter 3:3-13; and Revelation 21:1-5. How do God's promises in Genesis 9:8-17 foreshadow His ultimate plan to renew creation? What does 2 Peter 3:3-13 teach us about waiting in obedience? How does the final renewal in Revelation strengthen your faith today?

- What storms are you facing right now? Write them out and then pray, surrendering your concerns and worries over to the Lord.

LESSON 3: THE TOWER OF BABEL

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- What's a funny autocorrect fail or text message mix-up you've sent or received?
- Share about a time when you tried to assemble something but it didn't go well.

WORSHIP

Read and pray exercise:

- Ask someone to read Philippians 2:1-4 and then ask another person to pray, thanking God for reminding us of the need for humility.
- Next, ask someone to read Philippians 2:5-8 and then ask another person to pray, thanking God for Jesus, who was humble and loving enough to step into our messy lives so we could be saved.
- Finally, ask someone to read Philippians 2:9-11 and then ask another person to pray, thanking God that He receives the glory through Jesus' humility.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read Genesis 11:1–9 before your Life Group meets.

Genesis 11:1–9 takes place after the flood, when humanity had a fresh start and a clear command from God to multiply and spread across the earth, but, as the story of Babel shows what happens when people ignore God's instructions and try to build their own version of success and security—*without Him*.

The setting for Genesis 11:1–9 is a city called *Babel*. The word, Babel, is the Hebrew word, *balal* (בָּלַל), which means "to confuse" or "to mix" and is the same Hebrew word used for "Babylon" throughout the Old Testament. The area where Babel was located would eventually become Babylon and later, modern day Iraq. At first glance, the Tower of Babel might seem like just another strange story tucked into the early chapters of Genesis—a tale about a tower, a confused crowd, and the sudden explosion of languages. However, this is a profound biblical narrative that reveals much about the human heart and God's character.

1. According to Genesis 11:1–4, what were the people trying to accomplish by building the tower? Why might it have seemed like a good idea on the surface and what was wrong with their motive?

LESSON 3: THE TOWER OF BABEL

2. How were the people disobeying what God said in Genesis 9:1? Why do you think they refused to obey God?

3. What does Genesis 11:6 teach about the power of human unity and the danger of uniformity without God?

4. In Genesis 11:5-8, what do we learn about the limits of human achievement compared to the greatness of God?

5. In your opinion, why did God confuse their language instead of just destroying the tower?

LESSON 3: THE TOWER OF BABEL

6. How does Genesis 11:7-9 align with and further God's commands in Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 9:1, 7?

7. In the space provided below, draw a picture of the Tower of Babel as you imagine it that is based on the description and motives found in Genesis 11:1-9. Then, discuss the questions below your drawing.

HOW YOU IMAGINE THE TOWER OF BABEL



7. (continued) How do we build “Towers of Babel” in our lives (e.g., skills or accomplishments that seem impressive but are rooted in pride, fear, rebellion, self-preservation, etc.)? What does it look like to surrender those towers to God?

8. In the video lesson, Derieck said, “When humans define good and evil, it results in a world of tragedy and death.” How does that statement connect with what happened at Babel and with what is happening in our world today?

LESSON 3: THE TOWER OF BABEL

9. How does this story about Noah illustrate both God's justice and mercy?

10. How are the events in Acts 2:1-7 the reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel? What does this tell us about how God redeems confusion and division?

WITNESS

In Genesis 11:1-9, the people built out of fear: fear of being scattered, fear of being forgotten. But we follow a God who remembers us and invites us to be part of His name—not just our own. Ask God to give you one person to pray for and one way to show them that God's story is better than self-made success.

Also, have each person in your Life Group write or say, "God loves you" in another language that is spoken in the Los Angeles area (e.g., Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, Farsi) and share it with someone nearby.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Hopefully, these prompts and questions will create space for you to listen to God, apply Scripture to your life, and take your next step in following Jesus. Whether you work through them all at once or over a longer period, our hope is that your time with God will draw you closer to Him and strengthen your walk with Jesus. Don't rush—go at your own pace, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group or questions/prompts that you want to take a deeper dive into.

- Memorize Genesis 11:9.

- Read Genesis 11:1-9 every day this week.

- What words or phrases are unique, repeated, or emphasized?

- What emotions are being displayed by the characters in the passage?

LESSON 3: THE TOWER OF BABEL

- **Step 2: Interpret**

The goal is to determine the purpose and meaning of Genesis 11:1-9.

- What themes are present in this passage (examples of themes include love, salvation, forgiveness, humility, unity, etc.)?

- What are some reasons the author might have included this passage in the book?

- Are there New Testament references to this passage?

- What makes the New Testament references relevant?

- How does this passage (it's themes, characters, places, etc.) align with the gospels, the New Testament, and the Bible as a whole?

- What does the passage teach about God's character and grace?

- Is there a challenge in the passage to accept?

- Is there an example in the passage to follow or not to follow?

LESSON 4: THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- What's the biggest step of faith you've ever taken in life so far?
- Share about one of the most fun trips that you've ever been on.

WORSHIP

In Genesis 22:14, after God spares Isaac, He provides a ram to take his place. This moment captures the heart of Abraham's worship: trusting and obeying even when the outcome is unknown. Read Genesis 22:1-14 and reflect silently on what God may be calling you to surrender or trust Him with right now. Then, discuss what "worship through trust" looks like in your own life.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read Genesis 12–25 before your Life Group meets.

Abraham is one of the most significant figures in the entire Bible—often called the father of our faith. His story begins in Genesis 12, when God calls him (then named Abram) to leave his homeland in Ur of the Chaldeans—modern-day Iraq—around 2000 B.C. God promises to bless Abraham, make his name great, give him descendants as numerous as the stars, and that he will be a blessing to all nations. Abraham obeys, stepping out in faith without knowing where he's going. His life is a journey of learning to trust God—through victories, failures, doubts, and delays.

Though Abraham and Sarah were old and childless, God kept His promise and gave them a son, Isaac, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. Isaac married Rebekah who gave birth to twins: Jacob and Esau. While Esau was born first, God chose Jacob—the younger, less likely son—to carry on the covenant promise. In Genesis 32:28, God changed Jacob's name to Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל), which means “struggles with God” or “God contends.” He had twelve sons, each of whom became the father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Abraham's legacy is massive! Not only is he the physical ancestor of the Jewish people, but he is also a spiritual forefather for Christians (Romans 4) and even respected in Islam. His life shows what it means to walk by faith, even when the path and destination are unclear. Through Abraham's family, God began to unfold His redemptive plan for the world—one that would ultimately lead to Jesus Christ, the Savior promised to bless every nation.

LESSON 4: THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

1. In Genesis 12:1–4, what stands out to you about God’s call and Abraham’s response?

2. According to Genesis 15:1–6 and Romans 4:13–16, why is it so important that faith (relationship) comes before the Law (rules). What are some dangerous outcomes when rules precede a relationship (e.g. resentment)?

3. In Genesis 16:1–6, what was the result of Abraham and Sarah trying to “help” God achieve an outcome instead of patiently waiting on Him? With your Life Group, create a list of what happens when you wait patiently on God vs. what happens when you are impatient with God.

<i>WAITING PATIENTLY ON GOD</i>	<i>BEING IMPATIENT WITH GOD</i>

LESSON 4: THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

4. God promised Abraham that everyone in the world would be blessed because of him (Genesis 12:3; 17:5-7). According to Romans 4:11-12; Galatians 3:26-29; and 1 John 2:1-2, how are the peoples of the world blessed through Abraham?

5. Read Genesis 18:10-15. Why do you think Sarah laughed? How do you typically respond when God's promises feel unbelievable?

6. In Genesis 22, while Isaac could have easily run away or overpowered Abraham, he chose to trust his father (Abraham was over 100 years old and Isaac was between 15–25 years old). What does this teach you about surrender both from Abraham's perspective and from Isaac's perspective?

7. What in Genesis 22 reminds you of Jesus? *HINT: There can be multiple words in and aspects of Genesis 22 that remind you of Jesus!

LESSON 4: THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

8. Read Hebrews 11:17-19. What does verse 19 say Abraham believed God could do? What does this tell you about Abraham's faith and view of God's power and character?

9. Genesis 22:14 says, "So Abraham called that place 'The LORD Will Provide,'" which in Hebrew literally means "The LORD will see to it." (יהוה ירא). How are *seeing* and *providing* connected when it comes to God? What does it mean to you that God sees your situation?

10. In the video lesson, Michael said, "Worship begins with a 'yes.'" Finish the sentence below, share it with your Life Group, share why you believe God wants you to say, "Yes," to that particular calling, task, etc.

I believe God is asking me to say, "Yes," to:

WITNESS

God didn't just bless Abraham for Abraham's sake—He said, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Abraham's life teaches us that faith isn't meant to be kept private; it's meant to bless others. As Abraham was a stranger in a new land, extend hospitality RIGHT NOW by asking the following question to someone near your group and pray for them on the spot: "How can we pray for you?"

LESSON 4: THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Hopefully, these prompts and questions will create space for you to listen to God, apply Scripture to your life, and take your next step in following Jesus. Whether you work through them all at once or over a longer period, our hope is that your time with God will draw you closer to Him and strengthen your walk with Jesus. Don't rush—go at your own pace, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group or questions/prompts that you want to take a deeper dive into.

- Memorize one or both of the following: Genesis 15:6 and Genesis 22:14.

- Read Genesis 12–25 and Romans 4 slowly throughout the week. Pay attention to the highs and lows in Abraham's journey.

• The Covenant Between God and Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18; Acts 7:2-5; Romans 4; Galatians 3:6-29; and Hebrews 6:13-20. What is the Abrahamic Covenant? What was sign of the covenant? Why does this covenant matter today? In what ways does the Abrahamic covenant show God's desire to bless all nations, not just one people group? How does Paul explain the promise to Abraham in light of Jesus? How does the Abrahamic Covenant lay the foundation for the rest of the Bible's story, including the coming of Jesus? How does this covenant encourage your walk with Jesus today?

LESSON 4: THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

- Galatians 3:6–9 describes Abraham as a model of faith. What connections do you notice between Abraham’s story and your life?

• Your Faith and Identity

Read Genesis 17:1-7; John 1:12-13; Acts 11:25-26; Romans 8:15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; 3:6-9, 26-29; and Philippians 3:20. What connections do you see between how God renames Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5) and how God transforms our identity when we become Christians? Next, list at least 15 ways your faith has shaped your personal identity.

LESSON 5: THE STORY OF JOSEPH

WELCOME

What's a movie, book, or story with an unexpected plot twist that has stuck with you?

WORSHIP

Take some time to pray for one another and any difficult seasons that group members might be enduring.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read Genesis 37–50 before your Life Group meets.

Joseph's story is one of the most compelling and detailed biographies in the Bible, spanning Genesis chapters 37–50. He was the favored son of Jacob and the firstborn of Rachel, which made his brothers jealous and resentful. That jealousy eventually turned into betrayal when they sold him into slavery at just 17 years old. Taken to Egypt, Joseph was falsely accused and imprisoned, yet through it all, he remained faithful to God. Eventually, he rose to power as second-in-command to Pharaoh—overseeing Egypt's response to a devastating famine. What others meant for evil, God used for good (Genesis 50:20).

Joseph's life shows how God works behind the scenes even when things seem unfair or hopeless. He went from the pit to the palace, and from prisoner to provider—not just for Egypt but for his own family. Through Joseph, God preserved the family line that would eventually become the nation of Israel. His story is one of forgiveness, faith, and God's providence, and it powerfully illustrates how God's purposes can unfold even through pain and betrayal.

1. Imagine you are telling Joseph's story to someone who has never heard it before. Where are the unexpected plot twists in Joseph's story? In other words, list the moments in Joseph's story where someone hearing it for the first time would say, "Whoa! I didn't see that coming!"

LESSON 5: THE STORY OF JOSEPH

2. According to Genesis 37:1–11, what were the reasons that Joseph's brothers dislike him so much? How have you seen those reasons cause division in relationships?

3. In the video lesson, Cole said, "Don't confuse 'delay' with 'denial.'" How might Joseph's story encourage you to "faithfully wait" and not confuse *delay* with *denial*?

4. More than once, Genesis 39:2–3 indicates the Lord was with Joseph. How is God’s presence visible in Joseph’s story? When have you experienced God’s presence in an unexpected place or moment?

5. How did Joseph respond when he was sold into slavery, falsely accused, and thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit (Genesis 39:1–6, 13–23)? What was Jesus’ response when He was treated unfairly? What are some Christlike ways we can respond when we are mistreated?

LESSON 5: THE STORY OF JOSEPH

6. Even while he was in prison, Joseph used his gifts to help others (Genesis 40:1–23). How have you used your gifts when circumstances weren't ideal?

7. After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph is elevated to power (Genesis 41). How did God leverage Joseph's previous experiences (both good and bad) to prepare him for leadership in Egypt? How has God utilized both good and bad experiences in your life?

8. What does Genesis 50:15–21 teach about forgiveness and reconciliation?

9. How can the hope found in Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:17; and James 1:2–4 comfort others without downplaying or dismissing their pain?

LESSON 5: THE STORY OF JOSEPH

10. Joseph chose character over comfort. When are you most tempted to compromise your integrity? How can you remain strong when no one's watching?

WITNESS

As a Life Group, go to shepherdchurch.com/go and choose an outreach project for your Life Group to participate in sometime during the next few weeks. Make sure everyone in your Life Group has the details.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Hopefully, these prompts and questions will create space for you to listen to God, apply Scripture to your life, and take your next step in following Jesus. Whether you work through them all at once or over a longer period, our hope is that your time with God will draw you closer to Him and strengthen your walk with Jesus. Don't rush—go at your own pace, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group or questions/prompts that you want to take a deeper dive into.

- Choose one or all of the following to memorize this week: Genesis 39:2; Genesis 50:20; Psalm 105:19

- Develop a schedule to read Genesis 37–50 throughout the week.

LESSON 5: THE STORY OF JOSEPH

• From a Pit to the Palace

Read Genesis 39-41; Psalm 105:16-22; and Romans 8:28-39. What patterns do you see in how God uses hardship to shape character and position people for impact? How do these passages offer hope when life feels unfair or slow?

• Choosing Forgiveness

Read Genesis 45:1-15; Matthew 6:14-15; Romans 12:9-18; Ephesians 4:32; and Colossians 3:12-17. What is forgiveness? What does it mean to forgive? What made Joseph's forgiveness possible? What step might God be calling you to take toward healing or reconciliation?

• **God's Sovereignty in the Shadows** Read Genesis 9:8-17; 2 Peter 3:3-Read Genesis 41:39-46; Isaiah 55:8-9; and Proverbs 19:21. How does Joseph's promotion affirm that God's timing is perfect? Where do you need to surrender control and trust His plan? What can you do to remember that God's plan is still in motion—even when your life feels stuck.

LESSON 6: EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- If you could be instantly freed from one adult responsibility (like laundry, taxes, grocery shopping, etc.), which one would it be and why?
- What's a trip or vacation you took that didn't go as planned, but still turned out great?

WORSHIP

In your Life Group, take turns reading 1 commandment out of the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. Then, share which commandment you struggle with the most and pray for one another.

AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read as much of Exodus 1–20 before your Life Group meets.

The Book of Exodus is the second book of the Bible and its authorship is traditionally attributed to Moses, who not only led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt but also recorded their journey with God's guidance. As both a central figure and inspired author, Moses played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of Israel as God's chosen people. His life—from his miraculous rescue as a baby from the Nile River to his calling through the burning bush—sets the stage for one of the most dramatic rescues in all of Scripture. Exodus reveals not only historical events but also spiritual truths about God's power, faithfulness, and desire to dwell with His people.

The story begins with the descendants of Jacob (Israel) flourishing in Egypt generations after Joseph had brought them there during a time of famine. Over time, their growing numbers became a threat to a new Pharaoh who had no knowledge of Joseph's contributions. Fearing a revolt, Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites and subjected them to harsh labor, forcing them to build cities and perform exhausting work under brutal conditions. The Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years (Exodus 12:40) and were slaves for much of that time.

Despite the oppression, the Israelite population continued to grow, and Pharaoh responded by ordering the death of every Hebrew baby boy—a cruel decree that would ironically lead to the rise of Israel's deliverer. Moses was born during this time of persecution and was rescued from Pharaoh's order. Then, he was actually raised in Pharaoh's palace!

Years later, God called Moses back to lead the Israelites to freedom. Through a series of plagues, God demonstrated His power over Egypt's gods and forced Pharaoh to let His people go. But freedom did not come easily. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites were trapped at the Red Sea, with Pharaoh's army in pursuit. God miraculously parted the waters, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry ground before the waters crashed down on the Egyptians, delivering God's people with power and purpose.

LESSON 6: EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND

After escaping Egypt, the Israelites began their journey through the wilderness, where God continued to provide and shape them into a covenant people. At Mount Sinai, Moses ascended the mountain to meet with God and received the Ten Commandments—God’s foundational laws for how His people were to live in relationship with Him and one another. The 10 Commandments were the beginning of a new way of life rooted in worship, justice, and holiness.

1. Read Exodus 6:6–7 and list the 4 promises God gave to His people. How are these promises still relevant for Christians? Which of those promises feels most personal to your life right now?

Promise 1:

Promise 2:

Promise 3:

Promise 4:

AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

2. In the video lesson, Kawika said, "God may have taken you out of your past, but now He wants to take the past out of you." Why did God need to "take Egypt out of the Israelites" even after they physically left Egypt? How can we best let God work on the "inside" even after our situation changes on the outside?

3. According to Exodus 12:1-13, what is Passover and why did God instruct the Israelites to celebrate it every year? What are some spiritual moments and/or milestones in your life that you remember regularly?

LESSON 6: EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND

4. According to Luke 22:14-20 and 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 11:23-26, how are Passover and communion connected?

5. Exodus 14:21-22 describes the parting of the Red Sea. Imagine walking through the Red Sea with massive walls of water on either side—how would you feel? What does this miracle reveal about God's power and presence during seemingly impossible situations?

AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

6. What's something God freed you from that you didn't realize was holding you back until after it was gone?

7. Read Exodus 16:1–5. Why do you think God gave the Israelites just enough manna for each day? What does that teach us about dependence on God?

LESSON 6: EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND

8. How does God refer to His people in Exodus 19:1–6 and 1 Peter 2:9? What does this teach us about our identity?

9. How might the 10 Commandments deepen your understanding of what it means to love God and love people (Luke 10:27)?

AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

10. The 10 Commandments are the first of 613 Old Testament commandments that comprise the Law of Moses—laws that God’s people had to keep to remain holy. The problem was that no one could keep all of the Law (James 2:10) because the Law’s purpose wasn’t to save us—it was designed to show us that we fall short and the Messiah can save us.

With that in mind, read Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 10:4; and Colossians 2:13-14. What does it mean that Christ is the end of the Law and how did He fulfill the Law?

WITNESS

If you haven’t already, go to shepherdchurch.com/go and sign your Life Group up for an outreach project. If you have already done so, be sure and spend some time working out the details of your local outreach project.

AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

- **Overview of the 10 Commandments**

Read Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21. What patterns or structure do you observe in the way the commandments are ordered? Which ones deal with our relationship with God, and which ones deal with people? Why do you think God begins with commandments about Himself before addressing interpersonal relationships? What does this order reveal about the foundation of a holy life?

- **The Commandments About God and Us**

Read the first four commandments (Exodus 20:1-11) and then read Isaiah 42:8; Matthew 22:36-38; John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1-2. What do these verses teach about worship and honoring God? What is idolatry in a modern context—not just statues, but in heart, habits, or priorities? How can you assess whether God is truly first in your life?

LESSON 6: EXODUS TO THE PROMISED LAND

• The Commandments About Us and Other People

Read the commandments on relationships with other people (Exodus 20:12–17) and then read Ephesians 4:25–32; Matthew 5:21–24; Romans 13:9–10; and James 2:8–12. How do the commandments reflect God’s desire for a just and loving community? Which of these commands challenge you the most in your daily interactions? How can obeying these commandments help you reflect Christ to those around you?

• Write down something from your *Past Egypt* that God has brought you out of (a sin, struggle, mindset, or habit). Then, write down something that you want to be free from (aka, your *Present Egypt*). Consider the questions below, write down your answers, and conclude by praying and inviting the Holy Spirit to continue transforming your heart and mind.

God freed me from _____ (Past Egypt)

I want God to free me from _____ (Present Egypt)

AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

- How did God free you from your “past Egypt”?
- Why am I still hanging on to this?
- How is this stabilizing me in an unhealthy way?
- What would it look like to let God remove it from me fully?
- How would I be more spiritually and emotionally healthy if it was removed from me?

LESSON 7: SAMSON AND THE JUDGES

WELCOME

In your opinion, what's the best and worst superpower and why?

WORSHIP

This week's worship moment is about finding our strength in God—even in weakness. Listen to a song like "Battle Belongs" by Phil Wickham on YouTube, Spotify, etc. As you listen, reflect on questions like "What battles are you trying to fight in your own strength?" or "What would it look like to hand them over to God today?" After the song, take a few minutes to pray as a group. Invite God to give you His strength in whatever battle you're facing this week.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and rread Judges 13–16 before your Life Group meets.

The period of the Judges was one of the most turbulent times in Israel's history. After the death of Joshua, the Israelites entered the Promised Land but failed to fully drive out the surrounding nations, as God had commanded. As a result, they were drawn into idolatry and disobedience. The book of Judges (covering roughly 1375–1050 B.C.) tells the story of this era. These judges were not courtroom figures, but regional leaders—military deliverers and spiritual guides—who helped bring the people back to God. Some well-known judges include Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and the most famous of all: Samson.

Samson's story is found in Judges 13–16. He was a Nazirite from birth—set apart to God with special vows that included not cutting his hair. Endowed with supernatural strength, Samson was called to deliver Israel from the Philistines. But his life was filled with contradictions. Though chosen by God, Samson often lived by impulse and pride, making poor choices—especially in his relationships. Yet even in his failure, God used him. In a dramatic final act, Samson gave his life to defeat Israel's enemies, showing that God can redeem even the most broken of lives.

The time of the Judges reminds us that when everyone does what is right in their own eyes, chaos follows—but even then, God is faithful to raise up deliverers and move His plan forward.

LESSON 7: SAMSON AND THE JUDGES

1. Which actors/actresses or people from your life would you cast if you were making a movie about Samson? Read the Scripture references about each character and then write your answer in the chart below.

BIBLICAL CHARACTER	STORY ROLE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	ACTOR/ACTRESS YOU'D CAST
SAMSON	A Nazarite judge (leader) with supernatural strength and deep flaws.	Judges 13–16	
SAMSON'S MOTHER	A God-fearing woman visited by an angel	Judges 13:2–7, 13–24	
SAMSON'S FATHER	Asks for guidance on how to raise Samson...he's faithful but unsure.	Judges 13:2–23	
THE ANGEL OF THE LORD	Announces Samson's birth and gives Nazarite instructions	Judges 13:3–21	
TIMNAH	Samson's first wife who was Philistine and pressured into betraying him	Judges 14:1–20	
SAMSON'S FATHER-IN-LAW	Gives Samson's wife to another man, unintentionally provoking conflict	Judges 14:20; 15:1–2	
DELILAH	Seduces Samson and betrays him for money	Judges 16:4–21	
PHILISTINE LEADERS	Political and religious leaders who conspire against Samson	Judges 16:5, 23–30	
THE YOUNG SERVANT	A young boy who leads blind Samson to the temple pillars	Judges 16:26	

2. What cycle is described in Judges 2:16-19 and how does that cycle show up in both modern society and in our personal lives?

3. According to Judges 13:1-5, what did it mean to be called as a Nazarite? What can we learn about God's calling in our lives—even before we are born (see Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-16)?

LESSON 7: SAMSON AND THE JUDGES

4. Based on what you have read in Judges 13–16, how did Samson demonstrate strong leadership?

5. Despite being chosen, Samson repeatedly gave in to temptation. Why is it so easy for us to squander our calling and spiritual gifts? What helps you stay focused on and committed to God's calling in your life?

6. Read Judges 14:1–3. Why do you think Samson ignored his parents' counsel and pursued unhealthy relationships? What can this teach us about boundaries?

7. Judges 16:20 says that Samson "did not know that the Lord had left him." What are some warning signs that we're depending on our strength instead of God's power?

LESSON 7: SAMSON AND THE JUDGES

8. Where do you see both God's discipline and His hope at work in Judges 16:18–22? What does this reveal about God's character?

9. Read Judges 16:26–30. What can we learn about God's willingness to hear us—even after we have failed?

10. In the video lesson, what do you think Alma meant when she said, “I’m enough, but only when I’m walking with Jesus”? What would your life look like if you consistently depended on Jesus’ strength more than your own?

WITNESS

This week, each Life Group member should post or share a short personal story on social media about how God showed up during a time of hardship. Spend this time talking about what people could say in their social media post.

- **Pride vs. Purpose**

Read James 4:6–10; Proverbs 16:18; and Philippians 2:1–11. What do these passages teach about pride and humility? How does Jesus model the opposite of what the people did at Babel? What does it look like for you to live humbly before God this week?

- **Samson's Strength vs. God's Power**

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–10. How does God show His strength in your weakness? How is that different from what the world values?

- **Return and Restore**

Think about an area of failure or regret. Write a short prayer, like Samson's, asking God to restore you and use you again.

LESSON 8: KINGS & KINGDOMS

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- If you could live like royalty for one day, what's the first thing you would do?
- What movie or show has your favorite fictional king or queen and why?

WORSHIP

This week's worship moment invites us to reflect on who truly sits on the throne of our lives. Listen together to a song like "King of Kings" by Hillsong Worship on YouTube, Spotify, etc. As the song plays, reflect on the humility, love, and power of Jesus as the true and forever King. After listening, take time to pray as a group. Thank Jesus for being a King who doesn't take from us—but gave His life for us. Invite Him to reign in every part of your life.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read as much of 1 Samuel 8–16 as you can before your Life Group meets.

The season of the Old Testament when God's people had kings is both a high point and a heartbreak in Israel's history. It began when the Israelites, wanting to be like other nations, demanded a human king to lead them instead of relying solely on God (1 Samuel 8). God allowed them to form a monarchy. A man named Saul became the first king around 1050 B.C. Though Saul began as a good king, he lacked a heart fully surrendered to God and was eventually rejected by Him.

David, "a man after God's own heart," followed Saul and reigned from about 1010–970 B.C. His reign united the tribes, expanded the kingdom, and established Jerusalem as the political and spiritual capital. David's son Solomon, known for his wisdom, wealth, and the building of the Temple, ruled from roughly 970–930 B.C. But Solomon's many foreign alliances and divided heart led to spiritual compromise and national instability.

After the death of King Solomon, his son, Rehoboam, became king, but his harsh policies—like high taxes—led to the northern 10 tribes revolting and forming their own kingdom, known as Israel. This left Rehoboam with the southern kingdom, which became known as Judah (comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). This division occurred around 930 B.C. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, ruled over Judah, while Jeroboam became king of Israel. The two kingdoms were vastly different in spiritual trajectory. Judah, though inconsistent, had several godly kings (like Hezekiah and Josiah) who led reforms and turned people back to God. Israel, on the other hand, never had a single righteous king, and its leaders often promoted idolatry and injustice, starting with Jeroboam's golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

Because of their unfaithfulness, both kingdoms eventually faced judgment. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and its people were exiled and scattered. The southern kingdom of Judah lasted longer but was ultimately conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem was destroyed and many of its people were taken into exile. From Saul's reign to the fall of Jerusalem, this era of kings spans nearly 500 years. It's a story filled with triumph and tragedy, showing what happens when leaders either follow or forsake God's ways.

LESSON 8: KINGS & KINGDOMS

Throughout this season, God remained faithful. He sent prophets to call the kings and people back to Himself, and He kept His promise to David—that one day a King would come from his line who would reign forever. That King is Jesus, the true and better King, who brings the divided back together and restores what sin has broken.

The era of Kings and Kingdoms is one of the most dramatic sections of Israel's story. God's people rejected Him as their King, choosing a human king instead. This week we'll look at what happens when we place the wrong things—or people—on the throne of our lives.

1. Read 1 Samuel 8:4–7. Why did the Israelites want a human king so badly? What parallels do you see in how we seek leadership and security today?

2. God told 1 Samuel 1:8, "It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king." What does it look like for us to reject God's kingship while still claiming to follow Him?

3. Saul looked the part but lacked a surrendered heart (1 Samuel 13 & 15). What does this reveal about God's priorities for leaders?

4. In 1 Samuel 16:7, God says, "People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." How have you seen this truth play out in your life and/or the lives of others?

LESSON 8: KINGS & KINGDOMS

5. Using Psalm 51 below, **underline** words/sentences that show David's humility, **circle** any references to God, put a **square** around any of David's confessions, **write** down the verbs in the space next to Psalm 51, and **highlight** places where David repents or shows repentance. Then, with your Life Group, share what Psalm 51 looks like in your book and discuss the following question: What has this exercise taught you about David's heart and posture toward God?

PSALM 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so, you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. 5 Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

18 May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

6. While Solomon had a strong start to his career as king by asking God for wisdom (1 Kings 3:3–14), he eventually turned away from God (1 Kings 11:1–6). What lessons can we learn from Solomon about long-term faithfulness?

7. After Solomon died, the monarchy split into two kingdoms: Judah and Israel. How does division (whether in families, churches, or communities) often stem from turning away from God?

LESSON 8: KINGS & KINGDOMS

8. Most of Israel's kings "did evil in the eyes of the Lord." What happens when leaders forget they are under God's authority? How do we hold ourselves accountable to God in our own influence or leadership?

9. Isaiah 9:6–7 points to a coming King who will rule with justice and peace. How does Jesus fulfill this promise?

10. Several Old Testament verses refer to kings as shepherds (e.g., 2 Samuel 5:2; Psalm 78:70-72; Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:23-24, etc.). Read John 10:11 and consider how Jesus is the Good Shepherd King. In what ways is His leadership different than any earthly ruler? What area of your life do you need to more fully surrender to His care?

WITNESS

As followers of Jesus, we're called to reflect His rule with humility and grace. Who in your life might need to see a different kind of leadership—one rooted in compassion, truth, and surrender? Share that name with your Life Group and then, as a Life Group, pray for all of the names that were shared.

LESSON 8: KINGS & KINGDOMS

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize 1 Samuel 16:7 and/or John 10:11.

- Develop a schedule to read 1 Samuel 8–16; 1 Kings 3; 11; Isaiah 9:6–7; and John 10 throughout the week.

- **Lectio Divina: Listening to God Through Scripture**

This week, try meditating on Scripture using Lectio Divina. Try Lectio Divina 3 times this week on the following 3 passages: 1 Samuel 16:1–13; 1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 11

Lectio Divina means “divine reading.” It’s an ancient way of reading the Bible that helps us connect with God personally—not just gather facts about Him. First practiced in the 6th century by Benedict of Nursia and his followers, it’s less about information and more about transformation. Think of it like sitting with a friend who speaks into your heart through God’s Word. Instead of rushing through a long passage, you slow down, read deeply, and invite the Holy Spirit to speak directly to you. It’s about letting Scripture speak to your soul—like holding up a diamond and turning it to catch fresh light at every angle.

- **THE 5 STEPS OF LECTIO DIVINA**

*Try using these with a short passage of Scripture, like a Psalm or a teaching of Jesus.

- **Pause (*Silencio*)**

Before you open your Bible, be still. Quiet your mind and invite the Holy Spirit. Pray something like, “God, I’m here. Speak to me through Your Word.” Take a few deep breaths. Don’t rush. This is your moment to slow down and become aware of God’s presence.

- **Read (*Lectio*)**

Read the passage slowly—out loud if possible. Read it more than once. Let the words soak in. Don’t try to analyze everything. Just notice what stands out—what word, phrase, or idea grabs your attention.

LESSON 8: KINGS & KINGDOMS

- **Reflect (*Meditatio*)**

Think about what stood out to you. Ask, “Why this part?” or “What might God be saying through this?” Compare the Scripture to your life. Let it search you. Write down your thoughts, questions, or insights as they come.

- **Respond (*Oratio*)**

Talk to God about what you’re hearing. Use the passage as a starting point for your prayer. Be honest. Ask questions. Confess. Thank Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your next steps. This is where Scripture becomes personal.

- **Rest (*Contemplatio*)**

Now simply sit in God's presence. Let the truth settle in your heart. Ask, "Lord, how do You want me to live differently because of what I just read?" Take a moment to listen—and then write down anything you sense God is prompting you to believe, do, or remember.

Think about what stood out to you. Ask, "Why this part?" or "What might God be saying through this?" Compare the Scripture to your life. Let it search you. Write down your thoughts, questions, or insights as they come.

LESSON 9: BUILDING THE TEMPLE

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- If you could design your dream home, what fun and/or memorable features would it have?
- What's the most beautiful building you've ever been in and what made it so memorable?

WORSHIP

When it comes to your spiritual growth in a Life Group, honest transparency is foundational. Pretending like “you have it all together” is like building on a shaky framework—it may look fine on the outside, but eventually, it will collapse under pressure and hurt those closest to you. So, if the Lord leads you, share an area of your life that feels like it's under construction—or maybe even buried in rubble. While you don't have to lay out the details, remember that you weren't meant to rebuild alone. Afterward, spend time in prayer—lifting up both the struggles that were spoken and unspoken.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please read as much of 1 Kings 6; Ezra 3; Nehemiah 2; and John 2:13–22 as you can before your Life Group meets.

The building of the temple in the Old Testament was one of the most significant moments in Israel's history. Although King David desired to build a temple for the Lord, God told him that his son would be the one to do it (2 Samuel 7). That promise was fulfilled through King Solomon, who built the first temple in Jerusalem around 966 B.C. This magnificent structure was designed to be the permanent dwelling place for God's presence among His people—a central place for worship, sacrifices, and festivals. The temple symbolized God's covenant with Israel and became the heart of their spiritual life.

However, the people of Israel and Judah repeatedly turned away from God, worshiping idols and ignoring His commands. As a result, God allowed judgment to come. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed Solomon's temple, burned Jerusalem, and took many of the people into exile. This event devastated the Jewish people—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Without the temple, they no longer had a central place to worship, and it felt as though their connection with God had been severed.

Decades later, God began to restore His people. After the Persians conquered Babylon, King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem around 538 B.C. Under leaders like Zerubbabel and the encouragement of prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the second temple was completed around 516 B.C. Though it lacked the glory of Solomon's original temple, it marked the renewal of Israel's covenant identity and worship. Later, during the time of Ezra, spiritual reforms took place, and under Nehemiah's leadership (around 445 B.C.), the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, restoring the city's security and symbolizing a new beginning for God's people.

The rebuilding of the temple and the walls was more than a construction project—it was a spiritual revival. It reminded the Israelites of God's faithfulness and their calling to be a holy people. Despite exile, failure, and opposition, God was not finished with His people. The temple pointed forward to a greater fulfillment in Jesus, who would one day say, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:19)—referring to His own body. Jesus became the final and perfect dwelling place of God with humanity.

LESSON 9: BUILDING THE TEMPLE

1. 1 Kings 6:12 shows God's promise to dwell with Israel if they obeyed. How is your obedience connected to God's blessing in your life?

2. How do 2 Chronicles 5:11–14; 7:1–3 describe God's presence and what do they teach about God's presence? When was the last time you had to pause your agenda because you were in awe of God?

3. In Ezra 3:10–13, why do you think some people shouted for joy while others wept? Have you ever experienced joy and grief at the same time during a spiritual moment?

4. Read Nehemiah 2:17–18. Nehemiah wasn't a king, priest, or prophet. He was an ordinary person with an extraordinary burden whom God called to be a decisive leader. What can we learn from his example when it comes to stepping into spiritual leadership?

LESSON 9: BUILDING THE TEMPLE

5. In the video lesson, Tim said, "A building, in the Kingdom, is a physical reflection of a spiritual reality." How have you seen this truth reflected in your own life or in the church?

6. How does John 2:19-22 dramatically shift the Old Testament understanding of where God's presence dwells?

7. What do 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 and Ephesians 2:19–22 teach us about the dwelling of the Holy Spirit?

8. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–20. What does it mean to treat your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit? What are some ways to do this?

LESSON 9: BUILDING THE TEMPLE

9. What part of your life feels like *rubble* right now (rubble = an area needing rebuilding)? How might God be inviting you to let Him restore it?

10. In the video lesson, Tim said, “God doesn’t just build buildings—He builds people.” Then, he challenged us to join God in building others. Who has God used to build you up? How can you do that for someone else this week?

WITNESS

Rebuilding the Temple wasn't just for personal spiritual growth—it was a witness to the world that God was still present, powerful, and involved. Who in your life feels like they've been "ruined" or forgotten? This week, reach out to that person with encouragement. Invite them to church or simply remind them that God can rebuild what's been broken. As a group, take time to pray for the names shared—and ask God to give you opportunities to reflect His presence to them.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

LESSON 9: BUILDING THE TEMPLE

- Develop a schedule to read 1 Kings 6; Ezra 3; Nehemiah 2; John 2:13–22; and 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 throughout the week.

- Memorize Nehemiah 6:3, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down” (ESV) and/or 1 Corinthians 6:19.

- At the beginning of each day this week, pray the following short prayer. Then, in the evening, recall how God answered the prayer:

Father,

You are amazing and awesome.

I'm grateful for another day to glorify You.

Today, what part of me do You need to rebuild?

Today, who do You want me to share Jesus with?

Today, how can You leverage my time, words, or presence to help someone feel seen and strengthened?

Thank you for making me Your child and Messenger,

I love You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

• Building the Temple

1 Kings 6:11–13; 1 Chronicles 28:11–19; 2 Chronicles 5:11–14; Ezra 3:10–13; Nehemiah 2:17–20; Psalm 27:4; and Haggai 1:2–9. What do these passages have in common? Write down what these verses say about the purpose of the Temple and how God’s people are to respond to His presence. What role does community play in building or rebuilding the Temple? How does vision and courage lead to action?

LESSON 10: PSALMS & PROVERBS

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- What's one of the best pieces of advice that you've received? What made it memorable?
- Share a couple of your favorite movie or book quotes. What made these quotes so memorable?

WORSHIP

Psalm 3 is a powerful reminder that God is our shield in the midst of chaos. Written by David while fleeing from his son Absalom, it shows a man surrounded by enemies but anchored in the sustaining presence of God. David opens his heart to the Lord in raw honesty—but doesn't stop there. He worships through the pain. Read Psalm 3 aloud and take a moment to reflect on how worship and honesty can coexist.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson before your Life Group meets.

The Books of Psalms and Proverbs sit side by side in the middle of the Bible, but they serve very different purposes. Together, they reflect the full range of human experience in relationship with God. Both books were largely shaped by people with complicated lives but devoted hearts to God. Psalms is a book of songs and prayers that give voice to every emotion imaginable: joy, sorrow, anger, hope, despair, gratitude, and worship. Whether written in moments of celebration or seasons of deep pain, the Psalms remind us that God invites honest conversation. They teach us how to cry out to God, how to praise Him, and how to find our identity and refuge in His presence.

Proverbs, on the other hand, reads more like a field guide for wise living. It's a collection of short, memorable sayings that offer practical advice for everyday life—how to make decisions, handle relationships, manage money, avoid temptation, live with integrity, etc. At the heart of Proverbs is the idea that true wisdom begins with a humble posture toward God.

Think of it this way: Psalms helps us talk to God while Proverbs helps us walk with God.

1. Describe what your devotional time with God usually looks like.

LESSON 10: PSALMS & PROVERBS

2. How does Psalm 1 set the tone for the entire Book of Psalms?

3. What does Psalm 8:1-4 teach you about God's majesty & your identity?

4. Psalm 42:11 reflects a heart in conflict—discouraged, yet determined to praise. How can Christians navigate such tension in their faith journey?

5. Count how many times the following phrase repeated in Psalm 136: *His love endures forever*. Why do you think this phrase is repeated so many times? Share about a time when God was faithful to you even when you didn't deserve it.

LESSON 10: PSALMS & PROVERBS

6. How would you explain Proverbs 1:7 to someone who read it for the first time?

7. Read Proverbs 3:1–8. According to this passage, what does it look like to “lean not on your own understanding”?

8. What stood out to you from Susanne's reflection (from the video lesson) on Proverbs 18:21? How have you seen the power of words play out in your own relationships?

9. Where in your life are you most eager to gain godly wisdom? Have you asked God for this wisdom? Take a moment with your Life Group, share where godly wisdom is needed in your life, ask God for this wisdom, and pray for each other to receive godly wisdom.

LESSON 10: PSALMS & PROVERBS

10. David wrote many of the Psalms and his son, Solomon, wrote Proverbs. Even though both had broken pasts, God still used them. How have you seen God use imperfect people?

WITNESS

Give an update on your Life Group outreach project. Also, pray for some of the names that you've already mentioned—names that you have been praying for so they can find Jesus.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Hopefully, these prompts and questions will create space for you to listen to God, apply Scripture to your life, and take your next step in following Jesus. Whether you work through them all at once or over a longer period, our hope is that your time with God will draw you closer to Him and strengthen your walk with Jesus. Don't rush—go at your own pace, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time. Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group or questions/prompts that you want to take a deeper dive into.

This week, you'll be doing a deep spiritual dive into Psalm 119—the longest psalm in the Bible. It's actually a big collection of songs and prayers that shaped the worship life of ancient Israel. What makes this psalm unique is its structure because it follows the Hebrew alphabet, with each section starting with a different letter, and every verse in that section beginning with that same letter. Pretty creative, right?

Beyond the structure, what really stands out is the heart behind Psalm 119. It was written during a time when the Jewish people were trying to rebuild their identity and renew their worship. God's Word became the anchor for their spiritual and everyday lives. This psalm reflects that beautifully as it's full of honesty, struggle, and deep faith (showing just how much God's Word meant to them). It was their guide, comfort, and joy.

Read the assigned verses each day for the next 7 days. You'll also find a unifying theological principle for the verses that you read, as well as 3 questions to help you reflect on the verses. Mark the verses that stand out to you. Try memorizing one verse from your reading each day.

LESSON 10: PSALMS & PROVERBS

• Day 1: Read Psalm 119:1–24 (*Aleph & Beth*)

Principle: True blessing comes from walking closely with God and building your life on His Word.

- What does it look like to “walk blamelessly” in today’s world?
- Are there areas where I seek God only half-heartedly?
- What does verse 11 (“I have hidden your word in my heart...”) mean for my personal spiritual habits?

• Day 2: Read Psalm 119:25–48 (*Daleth, He, Vav*)

Principle: When you feel stuck or discouraged, God’s Word lifts, strengthens, and leads you forward.

- What “dust” (v.25) or heaviness in life do I need God to revive me from?
- How can I better meditate on God’s Word throughout my day?
- How do I respond to pressure or opposition for holding onto God’s truth?

• Day 3: Read Psalm 119:49–72 (*Zayin, Heth, Teth*)

Principle: God’s Word comforts our pain and teaches us more through trials than anything or anyone else ever will.

- When have I experienced God’s Word as a source of comfort?
- What have I learned about God or myself through hardship?
- How am I allowing God’s Word to train and shape me (even when it’s uncomfortable)?

• Day 4: Read Psalm 119:73–96 (*Yodh, Kaph, Lamedh*)

Principle: God created you, sustains you, and His Word anchors you with truth that never fails

- What does it mean to ask God to give me “understanding” (v.73)?
- During challenging seasons, do I rely more on my feelings or on God’s promises?
- How does verse 89 (“Your word, Lord, is eternal...”) change my view of today’s challenges?

LESSON 10: PSALMS & PROVERBS

• Day 5: Read Psalm 119:97–120 (*Mem, Nun, Samekh, Ayin*)

Principle: Loving God's Word gives you wisdom to walk strong and stand in awe of Him.

- Do I truly love God's Word like verse 97 describes?
- In what ways does Scripture light my path (v.105) for real-life decisions?
- Does my view of God inspire healthy reverence and awe or have I become too casual?

• Day 6: Read Psalm 119:121–144 (*Pe, Tsadhe, Qoph*)

Principle: God's Word lights the way and gives strength when everything feels heavy.

- How can I trust God to act justly when I face unfair treatment?
- Are there "gray areas" in my life where I need God's guidance?
- What truths in this passage breathe new life into tired or anxious parts of my soul?

• Day 7: Read Psalm 119:145–176 (*Resh, Shin, Tav*)

Principle: During your darkest moments, God hears your cries, stays close, and carries you home by His Word.

- Am I honest with God like the psalmist is when I feel desperate?
- What verses give me hope that God hears and sees me?
- How can I make it my goal—like the psalmist in verse 176—to keep returning to God, no matter how far I wander?

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- If you could be the voice of a character in any animated movie, who would it be and why?
- If your life was a news headline this week, what would it say??

WORSHIP

This week's worship moment is all about hearing God's voice in a noisy world. Listen together to a song like "Speak to Me" by Koryn Hawthorne or "Available" by Elevation Worship on YouTube, Spotify, or another platform. As you listen, ask God to soften your heart to hear what He wants to say to you. After the song, pray as a group, inviting the Holy Spirit to speak through His Word and through each person in the group tonight.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and try to read as much of Isaiah 6:1–8; 53:1–12; Ezekiel 2:4–7; Amos 5:21–24; and Zechariah 7:11–12; 9:9–12 before your Life Group meets.

The Major and Minor Prophets make up the final 17 books of the Old Testament, stretching from Isaiah to Malachi. Though labeled “major” and “minor,” these terms refer to the length of the writings, not their importance.

- The Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah (including Lamentations), Ezekiel, and Daniel, contain longer and more comprehensive messages.
- The Minor Prophets—Hosea to Malachi, are shorter but equally powerful, often addressing specific moments in Israel's history with sharp clarity and deep theological truth.

These prophetic books were written across a span of approximately 400 years, during some of Israel and Judah's most turbulent times—times of idolatry, injustice, exile, and restoration. The earliest prophet with a written book is likely Obadiah or Joel, both possibly around 850–800 B.C., while Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, likely wrote around 430 B.C.

The prophets ministered before, during, and after the exile of God's people, warning of judgment, calling for repentance, upholding God's justice, and pointing forward to the coming Messiah. Collectively, their writings show us that God is not silent—He speaks, warns, comforts, and promises redemption. Through the prophets, we see God's heart for holiness, hatred of injustice, and unwavering desire to restore His people to Himself. Even today, God still speaks to us through the prophets in the pages of Scripture.

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

1. What words come to mind when you hear the word, prophet? How has the video lesson and/or your reading changed or deepened your understanding of that word?

2. How is God's holiness described in Isaiah 6:1–8? In the box below, draw a quick sketch of the scene in Isaiah 6:1–8 and share it with your Life Group (it doesn't matter how good or bad your drawing is).

SCENE IN ISAIAH 6:1–8



3. Micah 6:8 outlines some qualities that God wants reflected in our lives. Which quality stands out the most to you? What does do these 3 qualities look like in your daily life?

4. Why does God reject certain acts of worship in Amos 5:21–24? How can we guard against God's rejection of our worship?

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

5. How did people react to the prophets' teaching in Ezekiel 2:4–7 and Zechariah 7:11–12? What are some reactions that our modern society has toward those who preach truth?

6. Where do you see Jesus in Isaiah 53? *HINT: He can be found more than once in Isaiah 53.

7. What do Psalm 118:25-27; Zechariah 9:9-12; and John 12:12-16 teach us about how Jesus fulfilled prophecy and the reliability of Old Testament prophecies?

8. The prophets often spoke out against injustice. Where do you see injustice today? How can Christians respond in ways that reflect God's heart?

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

9. In the video lesson, Abe talked about how prophecy in the New Testament encourages, strengthens, and builds up the Church. When have you received a word of encouragement that felt Spirit-led? How did it make a difference in your life?

10. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22. How can we be open to the Spirit speaking through others, while still discerning what is true and biblical?

WITNESS

The prophets weren't just messengers—they were witnesses to God's character. This week, ask God to use your voice to encourage, challenge, or uplift someone around you. Practice being a "prophetic voice" by sending a personal, Spirit-led message of encouragement to someone outside your Life Group whom God places on your heart.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus. Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

This week, we want you to become more familiar with the prophets! Over the next 7 days, read the following assigned passages from the prophets and then ask yourself the following 5 questions after you finish reading.

Also, choose a verse from your reading this week to memorize.

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

- **Day 1: Isaiah 53**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?

- **Day 2: Jeremiah 1**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

- **Day 3: Ezekiel 37**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?

- **Day 4: Hosea 1, 3**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

- **Day 5: Amos 5 & Micah 6**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?

- **Day 6: Jonah 1-4**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?

LESSON 11: MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

- **Day 7: Joel 2 & Zechariah 9**

- Is there sin to avoid?

- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an attitude to adjust?

- Is there a challenge to accept?

- Is there an example to follow (or not to follow)?



LESSON 12: THE FOUR GOSPELS EXPLAINED

WELCOME

Using 7 words or less, write a sentence that tells people about God's love.

WORSHIP

This week, let's center our hearts around the person and work of Jesus through the worship song "King of Kings" by Hillsong Worship. You can find it on YouTube, Spotify, or any music platform. As you listen, reflect on how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus changed your life—and the whole world. After the song, spend a few minutes in group prayer thanking Jesus for who He is and asking Him to help you see Him more clearly through the Gospels.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson before your Life Group meets.

The word, *gospel*, means “Good News” (the good news about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus). The four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are ancient, Spirit-inspired biographies that tell the story of Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Each Gospel is written by a different author, offering a unique perspective for a specific audience.

Matthew, a Jewish tax collector turned disciple, wrote to a Jewish audience to show that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who fulfills Old Testament prophecy (likely written in the 50’s-60’s A.D.). Mark, believed to be a companion of Peter, wrote his Gospel Roman readers in mind, emphasizing Jesus as the suffering servant who came to act and to save (many scholars believe Mark could be recording Peter’s exact words). Luke, a Gentile physician and student of Paul, wrote for a Gentile audience, portraying Jesus as the perfect Son of Man and Savior for all people. Later, he wrote the Book of Acts. Finally, John, the beloved disciple, wrote much later (likely in the early 90s AD before he wrote Revelation), focusing on Jesus’ divine identity and inviting readers to believe in Him for eternal life.

The first three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are called the Synoptic Gospels (from the Greek synopsis, meaning “seen together”) because they share a similar structure, content, and sequence of events. They include many of the same stories and sayings of Jesus, though often with slightly different details or emphases (e.g., all 3 contain The Parable of the Sower). John’s Gospel, however, is quite distinct. It contains more theological reflection, longer discourses, and unique material not found in the Synoptics—such as the “I Am” statements and extended conversations like Jesus with Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman. Together, all four Gospels offer a full and beautifully multifaceted portrait of Jesus—fully God, fully man, the promised Savior and risen Lord.

LESSON 12: THE FOUR GOSPELS EXPLAINED

1. In the video lesson, Shawn Walden mentioned how each Gospel paints a different “portrait” of Jesus. Which portrait of Jesus most resonates with you right now and why?

2. Take a moment to examine how each of the four Gospels begins. What stands out about their differences, and what might each introduction tell us about the author’s purpose or audience?

3. In Mark 4:35–41, Jesus calms the storm, but first asks, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” How do fear and faith compete in your life?

4. What do Luke 5:31–32 and 19:10 reveal about Jesus’ heart for the lost?

LESSON 12: THE FOUR GOSPELS EXPLAINED

5. After reading John 1:1–5 and John 20:30–31, what stands out to you about how John opens and closes his Gospel?

6. John 1:14, 17 say that Jesus came full of grace and truth. How did Jesus model living in the tension between grace (being compassionate and loving) and truth (telling people what God says)? What would it look like for us to do the same in today's culture?

7. According to Matthew 13:10–17, 34–35, why did Jesus speak in parables and what is their purpose? Which parable is your favorite?

8. Read Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34. Jesus predicted His death multiple times. What does this teach us about the intentionality of the cross? Why is it important to believe that Jesus' death was not an accident?

LESSON 12: THE FOUR GOSPELS EXPLAINED

9. What does Jesus say about the Church in Matthew 16:13–20? How is Peter’s confession in these verses a foundation for the Church?

10. How do you share the Good News with people as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19–20? Share your answer with your Life Group and then write down how your fellow Life Group members share the Good News to see if you can learn anything from their methods.

WITNESS

Using the YouVersion Bible app or biblegateway.com, ask some group members to read Matthew 28:18–20 from 5–7 different Bible versions (e.g., NIV, NLT, NCV, NKJV, *The Message*, etc.)... regardless of the version, notice the mission still remains the same. Pray as a group for people you know who need to encounter Jesus in a fresh way. Ask God for opportunities to share your story and the hope found in the Gospels.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

LESSON 12: THE FOUR GOSPELS EXPLAINED

- Memorize one or more of the following: Matthew 16:15; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; and John 20:31.

- Read Mark over the next week.

***You'll read it in less than a week if you read 3 chapters a day.

- **Jesus and Baptism**

Read Matthew 28:18–20. What does verse 18 have to do with baptism? Who gave Jesus this authority? Why does he have this authority? According to verse 19, who should be baptized? Who does the baptizing? What commands and promises are made by Jesus? What responsibilities do believers have because of Jesus's commands? How do these commands and promises encourage and empower believers?

• Portraits of Jesus

Dig into the following passages to explore how each Gospel shows us a different aspect of Jesus:

- How is Jesus described as the Messiah and King in Matthew 1:1–7; 5:17; 28:18–20?

- How is Jesus described as the suffering Servant in Mark 1:1–15; 10:45; 15:33–39?

- o How is Jesus described as the Jesus the Savior for All in Luke 1:1–4; 2:8–14; 15:1–7; 19:10?

- How is Jesus described as the Son of God in John 1:1–18; 3:16–17; 10:10; 20:30–31?

LESSON 12: THE FOUR GOSPELS EXPLAINED

- **Rhythm of Work and Rest**

Read Matthew 12:1–13; Mark 1:35–41; 6:30–32; Luke 10:38–42; 14:1–6; 15:15–16; and John 4:6. What did Jesus do and not do in of these passages? What do you learn from Jesus' rhythm of work and rest from these passages? What boundaries did Jesus set? How can you model this in our own lives?



LESSON 13: THE FIRST DAY OF CHURCH

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- If you could instantly become an expert in one thing, what would it be and why?
- What's the most fun you've had at a beach, lake, or pool?

WORSHIP

Read and pray exercise:

- Ask someone to read Psalm 16:1–4 and then ask another person to pray, thanking God for being our Provider.
- Next, ask someone to read Psalm 16:5–8 and then ask another person to pray, thanking God for being our ultimate Guide and Teacher.
- Finally, ask someone to read Psalm 16:9–11 and then ask another person to pray, thanking God for abandoning you.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson & read Acts 2 before your Life Group meets.

The Book of Acts, also known as The Acts of the Apostles, was written by Luke—the same Gentile physician who was Paul's student and wrote the Gospel of Luke. Together, these two volumes make up a 2-part work that traces the life of Jesus and the spread of His message. Acts was likely written between A.D. 62 and 64, and it picks up where Luke's Gospel left off: with Jesus' resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and His promise to send the Holy Spirit. The book is addressed to Theophilus, just like the Gospel of Luke, and serves to provide a historical and theological account of the early Church's explosive growth.

The "thesis statement" for the Book of Acts is found in Acts 1:8 and the book is divided up into the following outline:

- Jerusalem (Acts 1-7)
- Judea & Samaria (Acts 8-12)
- The ends of the earth (Acts 13-28)

Whereas everything in the Gospel of Luke is heading toward Jerusalem, everything in the Book of Acts is heading away from Jerusalem and toward the ends of the earth.

The purpose of Acts is to show how the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth through the power of the Holy Spirit and the bold witness of Jesus' followers. It highlights key figures such as Peter, Stephen, Philip, and especially Paul, whose missionary journeys take up a significant portion of the book. Acts emphasizes the unity and diversity of the Church, the central role of the Holy Spirit, and God's unstoppable plan to redeem people from every nation. Far from being a story of perfect people, Acts shows how God uses flawed, ordinary men and women to carry out His extraordinary mission.

LESSON 13: THE FIRST DAY OF CHURCH

The events in Acts 2 occur on the Day of Pentecost, which was celebrated 50 days after Passover. Originally a Jewish harvest festival, in Acts 2 it was the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on Jesus' followers, enabling them to speak in different languages and proclaim the Gospel. This marked the birth of the Church and the launch of its global mission.

From the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the powerful preaching of Peter, and from the diverse crowd to the deep sense of fellowship—Acts 2 is a powerful reminder that God works through ordinary people to do extraordinary things. The Church was never meant to stay behind walls. It was born to go out and transform the world.

1. In the video lesson, Paula said that Pentecost reminds us that God doesn't need us to accomplish His purposes—but *He invites us*. Why do you think God chooses to work through us?

2. Read Acts 1:8; 2:1–13. For what purpose was the Holy Spirit poured out on Jesus' disciples? Why do you think the Holy Spirit miraculously caused the disciples speaking in languages they didn't know?

3. The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 probably looked messy and chaotic to outsiders, but it was the beginning of a global movement. Have you ever seen God move in an unexpected way or even disruptive way?

LESSON 13: THE FIRST DAY OF CHURCH

4. According to Acts 2:5–11, the early church was made up of multiethnic and multiracial individuals from diverse backgrounds. How does Acts 2 model the kind of diverse and unified community that churches should strive for today?

5. In Acts 2:14–41, Peter preaches a bold and powerful sermon. What do you notice about his tone, content, and courage? How does this challenge or encourage the way you speak about Jesus?

6. In Acts 2:14–22, how does Peter’s quote from Joel 2:28–32 help explain what was happening at Pentecost, and why do you think he started his sermon with that passage?

7. In Acts 2:23–32, why might Peter have quoted Psalm 16:8–11, and how does it help him point to Jesus as the Messiah?

LESSON 13: THE FIRST DAY OF CHURCH

8. In Acts 2:38, Peter called the people to *repent*. The Greek word for repent (*metanoēō*) means “to change one’s mind, to turn around (aka, 180-degree turn).” What are some obstacles that keep people from truly repenting? How can we help one another live a lifestyle of *metanoēō*?

9. Read Acts 2:38–39; Romans 6:1–8; 1 Corinthians 12:13; and Ephesians 4:4–6. How are baptism and the promise of salvation connected—not just for the original audience, but for future generations of Christians, including us?

10. What stands out to you in Acts 2:42–47? What made these rhythms so powerful and how could your Life Group reflect more of them?

WITNESS

If members of your Life Group have not been baptized, please talk to them about what it would look like for them to get baptized. If you haven't taken that step, consider taking that step. Ask yourself what is standing in the way of you getting baptized.

Also, as a Life Group, choose one or both of the following:

- Just as the early church was fueled by prayer and encouragement. Take some time to write notes of encouragement to some Shepherd Church staff members.
- See if your Life Group can find another group meeting nearby (study group, AA, young parents at the park), and offer to buy them coffee or give a small treat with a card that says, "We see you. God loves you. And we are praying for you."

LESSON 13: THE FIRST DAY OF CHURCH

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize Acts 2:38

- **Babel vs. Pentecost**

Read Genesis 11:1–9 and Acts 2:1–12. What contrasts do you see between the two stories? How is Acts 2 the reversal of the events at the Tower of Babel? How does God use language to scatter in Genesis, but unify in Acts? What does this tell you about God's heart for the nations?

- **Jesus and the Holy Spirit in John**

Read John 14:15-17; 15:26-27; 16:7-15. What titles, names, and imagery does Jesus use to talk about the Holy Spirit? How do you feel about the names that Jesus has for the Spirit? Is it comforting, confusing, etc.? if so, why? Why does Jesus say the Spirit was sent to believers? How does Jesus say the Spirit helps believers? How does Jesus say the Spirit engages the world?

- In the video lesson, Paula said, “Pentecost didn’t end that day—it was just the beginning.” Why? Because people acted on their faith. How can that perspective shape your week ahead, especially in how you speak, serve, and share Jesus?

LESSON 14: GROWTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- If you could teleport to any city in the world right now for dinner, where would you go and what would you eat?
- What's the most spontaneous thing you've ever done?

WORSHIP

Have someone in the group read Psalm 67 out loud and have a moment for everyone to silently reflect on what they heard. Afterward, ask someone in the group to close out this time with a prayer.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson before your Life Group meets.

The growth of the early church in the Book of Acts is nothing short of extraordinary. Beginning with a small group of disciples in Jerusalem, the movement quickly expanded into a global mission that turned the world upside down. As we learned in the previous lesson, Christians were empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and Peter began to boldly preach about Jesus' death and resurrection. Thousands responded in faith, were baptized, and joined a new kind of community—one marked by deep fellowship, radical generosity, constant prayer, and devotion to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42–47). This Spirit-filled life attracted outsiders and led to daily conversions as “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

As the church grew, so did the challenges—but persecution didn't slow the movement; it accelerated it. When believers were scattered due to opposition (Acts 8), they carried the Gospel with them into Judea, Samaria, and beyond. The church broke cultural and ethnic barriers through moments like Peter's interaction with Cornelius (Acts 10) and Paul's missionary journeys into the Gentile world. Ordinary men and women, led by an extraordinary God, planted churches, trained leaders, and lived with bold faith.

Throughout Acts, we see that church growth wasn't driven by strategy, buildings, or programs—it was the result of obedience to Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit transforming hearts and lives across the known world.

LESSON 14: GROWTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

1. Read Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 16:5. What patterns or themes do you notice in how the early church grew? What were some of the key ingredients that led to this daily growth?

2. What is the church's role and what is your role in making disciples, not just converts (Matthew 28:19-20)?

3. In the video lesson, Dale Penn said, “The church grows when ordinary people trust an extraordinary God.” What does that look like in practical terms? Share a moment in your life when your trust in God resulted in spiritual growth.

4. What can Acts 6:1–7 teach us about Spirit-led problem-solving? How did the disciples balance practical leadership with spiritual discernment?

LESSON 14: GROWTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

5. What barriers did the early Christians need to overcome to obey God's call in Acts 8:1–8; 10:34–48?

6. How have you seen God grow churches today? Think about examples at Shepherd Church, in your Life Group, or in global missions. What do these examples teach you about God's heart for the world?

7. Instead of closing with resolution, Acts ends with Paul in prison and preaching Jesus “without hindrance” (Acts 28:31). How might this unfinished ending invite us to step into this story and continue it today?

8. Throughout the New Testament, we are encouraged to live like Jesus (caring for others, praying, forgiving, welcoming outsiders, etc.). Which of these areas do you feel strongest in and which might God be inviting you to grow in this week?

LESSON 14: GROWTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

9. Instead of the latest trends or catchy slogans, the early church's growth was rooted in Spirit-filled obedience. What are some practical ways we can become more Spirit-led in our daily lives?

10. Answer one or both of the following questions:

- Who someone in your life right now whom you're intentionally investing in spiritually? How are you helping that person grow?
- Who is someone God has placed in your life for you to invest in spiritually? How can you lean into that opportunity?

WITNESS

Growth isn't just about us—it's about others encountering Jesus. As a group, take a few moments to silently pray for your neighbors, classmates, co-workers, or family members who don't yet know Jesus. Then, discuss one bold, Spirit-led action you could take this week to share Jesus. Maybe it's starting a conversation, sending a text, or extending an invitation.

Also, find out if anyone in your Life Group needs help this Thanksgiving or knows someone who needs help this Thanksgiving. Then, as a Life Group, try to do your best to provide a good Thanksgiving meal for that person or invite them over to one of your houses for Thanksgiving.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize one or both of the following: Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 9:31

LESSON 14: GROWTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

• **The Holy Spirit and the Growth of the Church**

Read Acts 13:1–3 and Acts 16:6–10. How did prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit influence the church's growth strategy? What do these moments teach us about listening to God's leading before making decisions? When was the last time you changed direction because of a clear nudge from the Holy Spirit?

• **Obedience vs. Control**

Read Genesis 9:1; Matthew 6:33; Acts 4:19–20; 5:29; 16:6–10; and Psalm 127:1. Why is it hard to obey God's commands when we don't see the full picture? Where might God be calling you to release control and trust Him more? How can you pursue God's Kingdom first instead of building your own

- How does Acts 9:31 describe the early church? What do you think it means to live in both “the fear of the Lord” and be “encouraged by the Holy Spirit”? How do these two seemingly opposite ideas actually work together?

LESSON 15: ADDRESSING THE ROMANS

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- Does pineapple belong on pizza? Why or why not?
- If you had to live in a different country for a year, where would you go and why?

WORSHIP

As a Life Group, choose a worship song to play on YouTube, Spotify, etc. After the song, pray as a group. Ask God to dwell in each of you more fully, and to use your group as His people to reflect His presence in the world

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read as much of Romans as you can before your Life Group meets.

The Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul around A.D. 57, likely while he was staying in Corinth during his third missionary journey. Unlike many of his other letters, Romans was not written to a church Paul had planted or even visited. Instead, he wrote to a growing community of believers in Rome—a mix of Jewish and Gentile Christians—who were living in the heart of the powerful Roman Empire. No one is sure who planted the church in Rome, but Acts 2:10 lists people from Rome as being present on the Day of Pentecost. There's a good chance that one or more of those people returned to Rome from the events of Acts 2 and the church in Rome launched just because of their community.

In any case, Paul had wanted to visit them for a while and hoped to use Rome as a launching point for future missionary work in Spain (Romans 15:23–24). Before doing so, he wanted to make sure the Roman church had a strong theological foundation, especially in light of the cultural pressures and persecution they were facing under Roman rule.

At its core, Romans is a thorough explanation of the gospel. Paul addresses humanity's universal need for salvation, the sufficiency of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. A key pain point Paul tackles is the tension between Jewish and Gentile believers—who had different religious backgrounds, practices, and assumptions about righteousness. Paul confronts spiritual pride and division by making it clear: all have sinned and all can be justified by grace through faith (Romans 3:23–24). The letter unpacks deep theological truths while offering practical instruction for how to live a Spirit-empowered life of love, unity, and faithfulness in a hostile culture. Romans isn't just a theological treatise—it's a heartfelt plea to live fully for God in response to His incredible mercy.

LESSON 15: ADDRESSING THE ROMANS

1. What is Paul's main point in Romans 1:16 and why does he emphasize this point in the beginning of the letter?

2. Read Romans 2:1-5 and count how many times Paul uses the words *you*, *your*, and *yourself*. What point is Paul making? How might this apply to us?

3. What do Romans 3:23–24 and Ephesians 2:8–9 teach about grace and faith? How do these verses change or confirm how you see yourself and others?

4. In the video lesson, Kira talked about how moving across the country was a step of faith for her family. What was your last step of faith and how did it go?

LESSON 15: ADDRESSING THE ROMANS

5. In Romans 7:15–23, how does Paul describe the frustration of knowing what’s right while battling sin? Think about a time when you felt torn between following God and giving into temptation... How did that tension impact your faith?

6. Share about a time when you experienced/felt the freedom that Paul describes in Romans 7:24–25; 8:1–4.

7. Read Romans 8:31–39. Below is a two-column chart. The left side of the chart lists the things that threaten or oppose us, along with the verse references from Romans 8. Fill in the right side—“What God Does”—based on the corresponding verses. Write down the promises God makes or how God responds to each threat.

WHAT THREATENS US	WHAT GOD DOES
Opposition (v. 31)	
Accusation (v. 33)	
Condemnation (v. 34)	
Trouble, hardship, persecution (v. 35)	
Famine, nakedness, danger, sword (v. 35)	
Death or life, angels or demons (v. 38)	
Present or future, powers (v. 38)	
Height or depth or anything in creation (v. 39)	

What stands out to you as you compare the two columns? How does this deepen your confidence in God's love during hardship?

LESSON 15: ADDRESSING THE ROMANS

8. Paul writes in Romans 12:1 that we are to “offer our bodies as living sacrifices.” What does that look like in practical terms (work, relationships, decisions)?

9. In Romans 12:9–18, Paul gives a list of ways to live for God. Which one is the most natural for you and which one is the most difficult for you?

10. How would you explain Romans 13:8-10 to someone who had never read that passage before?

WITNESS

Paul wrote to a church he had never met but whose faith was “being reported all around the world” (Romans 1:8). Their example was a witness to others. Take a few moments as a group to reflect on the following questions:

- Who’s watching your life of faith right now—at work, school, or in your family?
- How could your story of trusting God encourage someone else to take their next step with Him?

Ask God to give you courage, clarity, and compassion to share your story with someone this week.

LESSON 15: ADDRESSING THE ROMANS

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize one or both of the following: Romans 1:17; Romans 6:4; Romans 12:1

- Read Romans over the next week

• From Death to Life

Read Romans 5:1–9; 6:1–14; Colossians 2:12–14; and Galatians 2:20. What do these verses say about both death and life? What do these verses teach about your identity in Christ? How can you remind yourself daily that you've been raised to live a new life?

• Living Sacrifice

Read Romans 12; Matthew 16:24–26; and Philippians 3:7–14. How are these passages similar? How are they different? What is God asking you to lay down? What would it look like to offer your whole life as worship this week?

LESSON 15: ADDRESSING THE ROMANS

• Write a Letter to Your Future Self

Follow the prompts:

DEAR _____,

• Start by recalling the mission or calling you believe that God has placed on your life:

• Reflect on the kind of person you hope to be spiritually, emotionally, and relationally:

• Close with a challenge or encouragement to keep pursuing Jesus:



LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

WELCOME

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- What's one of the best thank-you note you've ever received and why did it mean so much??
- How did you begin attending Shepherd Church and how did you begin attending this Life Group?

WORSHIP

Have someone read 2 Corinthians 5:17. You are a new creation and you have a new identity in Christ. As a Life Group, watch or listen to and sing with "Who You Say I Am" by Hillsong Worship on YouTube, Spotify, etc. As you worship through this song, focus on the truth of your identity in Jesus. Take some time for prayer and thank God for freeing you from sin and making you into a new person.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson before your Life Group meets.

The Apostle Paul wrote letters to many churches during his missionary journeys, but some of the most theologically rich and pastorally passionate were addressed to the 5 churches in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae. These letters—1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—were written between A.D. 49 and A.D. 62, during Paul's travels and imprisonments. Together, they offer a sweeping view of early Christian theology, church life, and what it means to live out the gospel in a complex world.

The Corinthian letters (written around 55–56 A.D.) were sent to a divided church in a morally chaotic city. Paul addresses issues like factionalism, sexual immorality, spiritual gifts, and confusion about the resurrection. He urges them to pursue love and unity under the lordship of Christ. In contrast, Galatians (likely written around 49–50 A.D.) was Paul's first letter and is his urgent response to believers who were being influenced by legalism. He reminds them that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, apart from the works of the law.

Written during Paul's Roman imprisonment (around 60–62 A.D.), the letters to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae form part of what are often called the "Prison Epistles." Ephesians casts a grand vision of God's eternal plan in Christ—highlighting themes of identity, unity, spiritual maturity, and the armor of God. In Philippians, Paul writes with warmth and joy, encouraging the church to live humbly, press on toward Christ, and rejoice even in hardship. Finally, Colossians focuses on the supremacy of Christ over all creation and false teachings that threatened to diminish His sufficiency.

What ties the letters to all 5 churches together is Paul's deep commitment to discipleship, not just conversion. He doesn't merely plant churches and move on—he follows up, writes back, corrects, encourages, and intercedes. These letters reflect a leader who was both theologian and shepherd, passionate about helping believers grow in maturity and stand firm in their faith. Even today, these letters continue to disciple us, showing what it looks like to walk with Christ and be His Church in every generation.

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

1. Each of Paul's letters to the 5 churches reveals a different challenge or theme. Which of the letters (1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians) stood out to you most in the video lesson, and why?

2. In the video lesson, Daniel said Paul didn't just start churches—he stayed involved in their lives. Why is follow-up and ongoing care such a crucial part of discipleship?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:10–13 and 6:18–20. What issues was the church in Corinth facing, and how do these issues compare to challenges that churches face today?

4. Paul writes that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7–10). Where in your life do you currently feel weak and how might God use that for His glory?

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

5. How would you define *legalism*? In Galatians 3:1–3, how did Paul confront legalism? How can we help each other avoid legalism’s trap?

6. How does Ephesians 1:3–14 affirm your identity in Christ? What part of this passage do you need to hold onto this week?

7. Even though Paul was imprisoned while writing to the Philippians, his letter is full of joy. In Philippians 4:4–9, what advice does Paul give for experiencing joy?

8. How does Paul's description of Jesus in Colossians 1:15–20 challenge or expand your view of Jesus? What does it mean that Jesus is *supreme*?

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

9. Come up with a slogan/tagline for each of the 5 churches (e.g., Gifted but Divided). You can write more than one slogan for each church.

THE CHURCH IN CORINTH:

THE CHURCH IN GALATIA:

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS:

THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI:

THE CHURCH IN COLOSSAE:

10. In the video lesson, Daniel said that discipleship is more than a moment—it's a journey. How have you grown in Christ so far this year?

WITNESS

This week, think of someone in your life who has recently taken a spiritual step—maybe they've started coming to church, asked questions about God, or expressed a desire to grow. As a group, pray for them. Then commit to reaching out this week to encourage them, invite them to Life Group, or simply check in. Your follow-up could be a turning point in their journey.

Also, pay for someone's drink or meal behind you in line, then ask the cashier to give them a small card or note from your Life Group with a verse from Acts.

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize one or both of the following: Ephesians 2:8–9; Philippians 4:6–7; Colossians 1:17.

- **Understanding the Letter to the 5 Churches**

Read through the letters to the 5 churches this week—1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians in their entirety. After you read each letter, take some time to reflect and write down the answers to the following questions:

1 CORINTHIANS

- What did this church struggle with?
- How did Paul encourage and/or correct the church?
- What can I learn for my own life and faith?
- What themes are repeated or emphasized in this letter?
- What emotions or tone do you sense from Paul in this letter?
- What does this letter teach about unity and division within the church?
- How does Paul call believers to live differently because of their identity in Christ?

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

2 CORINTHIANS

- What did this church struggle with?
- How did Paul encourage and/or correct the church?
- What can I learn for my own life and faith?
- What themes are repeated or emphasized in this letter?
- What emotions or tone do you sense from Paul in this letter?
- What does this letter teach about unity and division within the church?
- How does Paul call believers to live differently because of their identity in Christ?

GALATIANS

- What did this church struggle with?
- How did Paul encourage and/or correct the church?
- What can I learn for my own life and faith?
- What themes are repeated or emphasized in this letter?
- What emotions or tone do you sense from Paul in this letter?
- What does this letter teach about unity and division within the church?
- How does Paul call believers to live differently because of their identity in Christ?

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

EPHESIANS

- What did this church struggle with?
- How did Paul encourage and/or correct the church?
- What can I learn for my own life and faith?
- What themes are repeated or emphasized in this letter?
- What emotions or tone do you sense from Paul in this letter?
- What does this letter teach about unity and division within the church?
- How does Paul call believers to live differently because of their identity in Christ?

PHILIPPIANS

- What did this church struggle with?
- How did Paul encourage and/or correct the church?
- What can I learn for my own life and faith?
- What themes are repeated or emphasized in this letter?
- What emotions or tone do you sense from Paul in this letter?
- What does this letter teach about unity and division within the church?
- How does Paul call believers to live differently because of their identity in Christ?

LESSON 16: FOLLOWING UP ON 5 CHURCHES

COLOSSIANS

- What did this church struggle with?
- How did Paul encourage and/or correct the church?
- What can I learn for my own life and faith?
- What themes are repeated or emphasized in this letter?
- What emotions or tone do you sense from Paul in this letter?
- What does this letter teach about unity and division within the church?
- How does Paul call believers to live differently because of their identity in Christ?



LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

WELCOME

If you could learn from any historical leader from the past or present (outside of the Bible) who would you choose and why?

WORSHIP

Let's spend time praying through Psalm 78:1–8, which highlights the importance of passing faith to the next generation. Have someone read the passage aloud slowly. Then pause and reflect silently for a few moments. As a group, pray in response to each of the following prompts:

- Thank God for the people who have poured into your life.
- Ask God to help you pass along your faith with integrity, humility, and courage.
- Ask God to bless the next generation of believers at Shepherd, in your home, and/or in your workplace.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read as much of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus before your Life Group meets.

The books or letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are often referred to as the Pastoral Epistles—letters written by the Apostle Paul to two younger leaders he had personally mentored and entrusted with church leadership: Timothy and Titus. These letters are not general epistles to churches but deeply personal messages filled with encouragement, instruction, and urgency. Paul wrote 1 Timothy around 62–64 A.D., after his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28). 1 Timothy to help Timothy navigate complex issues in the Ephesian church, offer guidance on how to appoint leaders, correct false teaching, and lead with integrity.

Around 66–67 A.D., Paul wrote another letter to Timothy which is now known as 2 Timothy. This was Paul's final letter before his execution in Rome (2 Timothy 4:6–8). It's a heartfelt farewell that urges Timothy to remain faithful to the gospel no matter the cost. Filled with urgency and affection, the letter calls Timothy to courage, endurance, and Jesus-centered living.

Titus, another trusted co-worker of Paul, was stationed on the island of Crete—a difficult cultural environment known for dishonesty and immorality. Paul wrote a letter to him sometime between 63–65 A.D. (around the same time as 1 Timothy). Paul's letter to Titus emphasizes the importance of strong character, sound doctrine, and healthy leadership within the church.

Throughout these three letters, Paul paints a compelling picture of what faithful ministry looks like: leaders who live with humility, teach with clarity, and serve with conviction. These epistles remind us that Christian leadership is not about status, but about stewardship—and that God uses ordinary people to build extraordinary churches when they live out the gospel with courage and consistency.

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2. Paul tells Timothy to entrust what he's learned to "reliable people" who will pass it on. What does this passage teach us about discipleship and leadership development?

2. In the video lesson, Jeremy said, "Sometimes we are the 'discipler,' sometimes we are the disciplined... many times, both at the same time." How do you recognize when it's time to lead vs. when it's time to learn?

3. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul challenges Timothy not to let others look down on him because of his youth. Why do age, experience, and/or personality become barriers to spiritual leadership and how can such barriers be overcome?

4. The disciples spent 3 years or so with Jesus (Matthew 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–51) before the church began. Paul spent 3 years with Jesus in Arabia before beginning his ministry (Galatians 1:11–18). Paul poured into Timothy before sending him out to lead. Why is spiritual mentorship so crucial before someone leads?

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

5. What criteria did Paul give for leadership in Titus 1:5–9? What stands out to you most in this list? Why would Paul prioritize character over charisma?

6. One of Titus' assignments was to "correct what was lacking" in a culture full of confusion. What might "correct what is lacking" look like in our modern-day churches, homes, and/or schools?

7. In the video lesson, Jeremy said, “We will disagree with people, but I want it clear that we love them.” Think about someone you disagree with... Would that person describe you as loving? Why or why not?

8. Both Timothy and Titus were assigned to lead in messy places—Ephesus and Crete. What encouragement can we draw from their willingness to serve in difficult environments?

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

9. Read 2 Timothy 1:6–8. Paul tells Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God and to not be ashamed. What “gift” might God be stirring in your life right now? How can you fan that gift into flame?

10. How would your life look different if you saw yourself as a “next leader” (aka, someone called to pass on faith, wisdom, and love to the next generation)?

WITNESS

Find out if anyone in your Life Group needs help this Christmas or knows a family who needs help this Thanksgiving. Then, as a Life Group, try to do your best to provide a good Christmas for that family (find out what presents they want, ask if they have a place to go to on Christmas Day, etc.) and/or invite them over to one of your houses for Christmas.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize one or both of the following: 2 Timothy 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:2; and/or Titus 2:7-8.

- Read 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus over the course of this week.

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

• **Passing on the Faith**

Read Acts 18:24–28; 20:17–38; and 2 Timothy 2:1–2. The growth of the early church was deeply relational and rooted in discipleship. What do these passages reveal about mentoring and passing on the faith? Who played a role in the growth of your faith? Similar to question 10 in the WORD section, who are you intentionally helping grow in their faith right now? If no one, who might God be prompting you to disciple?

• **Journaling Your Responses This Week**

At the start of every day this week, write down your answers to the following questions:

DAY 1

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

DAY 2

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

DAY 3

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

DAY 4

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

DAY 5

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

LESSON 17: NEXT LEADERS

DAY 6

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

DAY 7

As I begin the day...

- What's one thing that I can surrender to Jesus?

- What's one step I can take to follow Jesus more closely?

As I end the day...

- Was I successful in surrendering that one thing to Jesus? If so, what helped me to be successful? If not, what can I do differently?

- Did I take that one step to follow Jesus more closely? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?

LESSON 18: BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE

WELCOME

Choose one of the following fun, non-biblical questions to answer:

- What's a movie or book you rewatch or reread—even though you already know the ending? Why does it still move you?
- If you could receive any gift for your birthday or a holiday, what would it be and why?

WORSHIP

Psalm 96 is a joyful celebration of the Lord's coming reign. As we reflect on Jesus' return in Revelation 19, this psalm helps us anchor our hearts in worship. Have one person read Psalm 96 aloud. Then invite three people to each pray the following:

- Thank God for His greatness and the beauty of creation.
- Thank Jesus for being our Savior and victorious King.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live with joy and urgency as we await Christ's return.

NOTE: There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

WORD

Please watch the video lesson and read as much of Revelation 16–22 as you can before your Life Group meets.

The Book of Revelation is the final book of the Bible and serves as the dramatic conclusion to God's redemptive story. Written by the Apostle John while exiled on the prison island of Patmos, Revelation is a prophetic vision filled with powerful imagery, symbols, and messages from Jesus to His Church. Likely written around 95 A.D. during a time of intense persecution under the Roman Empire, the book was meant to encourage suffering Christians to remain faithful, reminding them that despite present trials, Christ ultimately reigns victorious.

Far from being a random collection of strange visions, Revelation is a carefully structured message about hope, judgment, and renewal. It pulls together themes from the entire Bible—echoing the Garden of Eden, the promises of the prophets, the mission of Jesus, and the final restoration of creation. The heart of Revelation is not fear, but confidence in Jesus as the Lamb who was slain and the King who will return. It calls believers to endure faithfully, live expectantly, and worship wholeheartedly, knowing that the end of the story has already been written: Jesus wins.

LESSON 18: BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE

1. In the video lesson, Naomi opens by asking if you've ever watched a movie when you already knew how it would end. How does knowing the end of earth's story (Revelation 22) impact your perspective during difficult times?

2. Revelation 19:11 calls Jesus "Faithful and True." Why is the title "Faithful and True" especially meaningful in today's world? What does it mean to trust Jesus' faithfulness and truthfulness when life feels uncertain?

3. What imagery in Revelation 19:11–16 stands out to you the most, & why?

4. Jesus is described as wearing many crowns. What does that reveal about His authority and reign? How is such power different from earthly power?

LESSON 18: BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE

5. Revelation 19:13 says that Jesus' robe is dipped in blood. Why is it significant that Jesus returns as both the Lamb who was slain and the King who reigns?

6. In the video lesson, Naomi shared three takeaways: *Stay ready. Let hope lead you. Share the Good News.* In the space below, write down what it might look like to put each into action this week:

Stay ready:

Let hope lead you:

Share the Good News:

7. How can we avoid fear when we think about Jesus' return? How does His return inspire us to live with confidence and urgency?

8. In what ways does Revelation 19 fulfill the promises of Genesis 3:15? How is the cross connected to Jesus' return?

LESSON 18: BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE

9. What are some different ways that people in your Life Group can encourage one another to stay faithful until the end?

10. Take a few moments to reflect on the past 18 weeks by writing down your answers to the following questions and sharing them with your Life Group:

- What story or character from the Bible stood out to you the most, and why?

- How has this series helped you understand God's plan for the world—and for your life?

- What's one way you've grown in your faith during this *Journey of a Lifetime*?

LESSON 18: BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE

WITNESS

Revelation 19 is a reminder that the story ends in victory—but not everyone knows that yet. Who in your life still needs to hear the good news? How can you share the story of Jesus' love, victory, and return with urgency and compassion this week?

Also, pray about choosing a Christmas service at Shepherd Church to attend and sit together as a Life Group.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue growing in your faith throughout the week by reflecting more deeply on what you explored in your Life Group. Whether you work through them all at once or over several days, our hope is that your time with God will strengthen your walk with Jesus.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that were not covered during your Life Group.

- Memorize Revelation 19:16

- Make a schedule to read the Book of Revelation this week.

• Jesus, Our Returning King

Isaiah 63:1–6; Daniel 7:13–14; Philippians 2:9–11; Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:1–4; Revelation 1:12–18; 19:11–16. What images or descriptions of Jesus in these passages stir your heart the most? How does the image of Jesus as a conquering King complement (or challenge) how you usually think of Him? According to Daniel 7:13–14 and Philippians 2:9–11, what will happen when Jesus returns? How do these passages expand your understanding of what it means to worship Jesus today?

• The Already & Not Yet Kingdom

Matthew 24:42–44; Luke 12:35–40; Romans 13:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Titus 2:11–14; James 5:7–9; 2 Peter 3:8–14; Revelation 22:12–17. How do these passages describe the mindset and lifestyle of someone who is living in expectation of Christ's return? According to Romans 13:11–14 and Titus 2:11–14, what role does grace play in helping us live godly lives as we wait? Why do you think the New Testament emphasizes both comfort and warning when it talks about Jesus' return? What personal or practical changes would you consider making to live more fully in anticipation of Jesus' second coming?

Let this be your anthem as you close the series:

GOD IS CREATOR.

HE IS FAITHFUL.

HE IS SAVIOR.

HE IS KING.

AND ONE DAY, I WILL SEE HIM—RIDING IN ON A WHITE HORSE.

Thank you for participating in *Journey of a Lifetime*.





LIFE GROUP RESOURCES

LIFE GROUP CALENDAR

<i>DATE</i>	<i>LESSON</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>LEADER</i>

LIFE GROUP AGREEMENT

It's a good idea for every Life Group to put words to their shared values and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines in order to lay the foundation for a healthy Life Group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your Life Group. If the idea of a written agreement is unfamiliar to your Life Group, we encourage you to give it a try.

WE AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

- To encourage and challenge each other to live for God (Matthew 28:18-20; John 10:10).
- To prioritize Life Group attendance (call or text if I am absent or late).
- To foster a place where people feel heard and loved (e.g., no quick answers, snap judgments, simple fixes, etc.).
- To keep anything that is shared strictly within the Life Group.
- To give Life Group members permission to help me live a healthy, balanced, and consistent spiritual life that is pleasing to God.
- To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers.
- To get to know the members of our Life Group and pray for them regularly.

WE ALSO AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Childcare _____
- Starting Time _____
- Ending Time _____
- Public Meeting Location _____



ADVICE ABOUT MEETING IN PUBLIC SPACES

Meeting in public is a unique opportunity to live out your faith in visible, everyday ways—and to be a light to those around you (Matthew 5:14-16). While it might feel unfamiliar at first, many Life Groups have discovered that public spaces can lead to surprising conversations, deeper relationships, and even new people joining the Life Group. Here are some tips to help you make the most of meeting in public spaces:

CHOOSE WISELY

Pick a location that's accessible, has enough seating, offers some level of privacy, and allows for conversation (not too loud, not too quiet). Scout the location ahead of time and consider factors like lighting, parking, restrooms, and hours of operation. Be mindful of noise levels and distractions, especially if you plan to pray or discuss sensitive topics.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Make sure all Life Group members know where and when you're meeting each week. If your location changes, notify the Life Group early. Group text threads, calendar invites, or messaging apps can help keep everyone informed.

BE FLEXIBLE

Public spaces can be unpredictable. Have a backup plan in case your regular spot is full, closed, or too noisy that day. You might consider rotating between a couple of "go-to" locations or meeting outdoors when the weather allows.

RESPECT THE SPACE

Be courteous guests. If you're in a business like a coffee shop or restaurant, encourage each group member to make a small purchase to support the venue. Clean up after yourselves, avoid blocking walkways, and thank the staff when possible. As stated earlier, if needed, be sure to secure permission from the owner or organization before starting your Life Group's regular meetings.

STAY SAFE AND AWARE

Choose locations that feel safe and are in well-lit, public areas. Keep an eye on your surroundings, especially in outdoor spaces at night. If any Life Group members have safety concerns, be sure to address them together and adjust as needed.

BE BOLD BUT GRACIOUS

Don't be afraid to open your Bibles, pray together, or talk about Jesus—just do so in a way that's respectful and natural. Public settings are a great way to plant seeds of faith through your visible witness, gentle tone, and joyful presence.

ANSWER THOUGHTFULLY

In public spaces, others may overhear parts of your conversation—even unintentionally. While it's important to be authentic and open in your Life Group, be mindful of how you respond to sensitive questions or personal stories. Speak with grace, compassion, and discretion, especially when discussing topics like past trauma, controversial issues, or deeply personal faith struggles. Avoid sounding overly critical or argumentative, and instead, model Christ-like humility and love in every response. And if you're asked a question that you don't know the answer to, don't be ashamed to answer, "I don't know, but let me think about it a bit more and I'll get back to you!" Remember, your words might not only encourage someone in your Life Group—but also impact someone listening nearby who is curious about God.

INVITE WITH INTENTION

Public spaces can make it easier to invite friends, coworkers, or neighbors who might feel hesitant about attending a Life Group in someone's home. Let them know your Life Group is open and friendly, and that anyone is welcome to sit in and listen without pressure to speak.

Meeting in public doesn't have to feel awkward—it can actually amplify your impact. With a little planning, flexibility, and prayer, your Life Group can turn any ordinary location into holy ground where God shows up in powerful ways.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

• **WHAT DO WE DO ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF OUR LIFE GROUP?**

Like all fun things in life—have a party! A “get to know you” coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new study. You may want to review the **Life Group Agreement** and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

• **WHAT IF I’VE NEVER BEEN IN ANY KIND OF SMALL GROUP BEFORE?**

That’s okay! Everyone has a first time, and you’re not alone. Life Groups are designed to be welcoming, low-pressure environments where people can explore God’s Word and build friendships at their own pace. There’s no need to have all the answers, and there’s no “perfect” way to participate. Just come as you are, be open to the experience, and trust that God can use this time to encourage and grow you.

• **DO I HAVE TO TALK, SING, OR PRAY OUT LOUD?**

No, you never have to speak or pray out loud unless you feel comfortable doing so. Some people are more verbal, while others prefer to listen and reflect quietly—and both are equally valuable in the Life Group. Over time, many people find that their confidence grows, but there’s never any pressure to perform. You’re free to engage in the way that best fits you.

• **WHAT IF I DON’T HAVE A BIBLE?**

Tell your leader or contact Shepherd Church—we have Bibles we give to people who don’t have a Bible! You can also download the Bible app for free on your mobile device (youversion.com/the-bible-app/) and read or listen to the Bible in multiple versions.

• **SHOULD WE CANCEL LIFE GROUP MEETINGS ON WEEKS WITH LOW ATTENDANCE?**

The simple answer is, **NO**. You should meet even if it’s just you and your leader or a couple of other members. One of the keys to having a successful Life Group experience is **consistency**. It sets a tremendous example if you (and your leader) commit to showing up regardless of how many other members show up. If your Life Group gets in the habit of canceling whenever attendance is low, then other members will eventually not prioritize attendance. Again, consistency breeds consistency. Please contact a Life Groups Team member if your Life Group is getting in the habit of canceling due to low attendance.

• WHAT IF I MISS A LIFE GROUP MEETING?

Life happens, and it's okay if you can't make it every week. If you know in advance that you'll miss a meeting, just let your leader know—it helps with planning. You're always welcome to jump back in the following week. Even if you miss some of the discussion, showing up when you can will allow you to stay connected and grow with the Life Group.

• WHERE DO WE FIND NEW MEMBERS FOR OUR LIFE GROUP?

This can be troubling, especially for new Life Groups that have only a few people or for existing Life Groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to pray with your Life Group and then brainstorm a list of people from work, church, your neighborhood, your children's school, family, the gym and so forth. Then have each Life Group member invite several of the people on his or her list.

Before every series, the Life Groups Team will conduct Life Group sign-ups, which allow people to sign-up for "Open" Life Groups. However, studies show it is exponentially more effective when Life Group members personally invite others to their Life Group.

No matter how you find members, it's vital that you stay on the lookout for new people to join your Life Group. All Life Groups tend to go through healthy attrition—the result of moves, releasing new leaders, ministry opportunities and so forth. If you and your Life Group stay open, you'll be amazed at the people God sends your way. The next person just might become a friend for life. You never know!

HOW LONG WILL THIS LIFE GROUP MEET?

It's totally up to the Life Group once you come to this study. We strongly recommend the Life Group meet for the first six months on a weekly basis if at all possible. This allows for continuity, and if people miss a meeting they aren't gone for a whole month.

At the end of this study, each Life Group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on for another study. Some Life Groups launch relationships for years to come, and others are stepping stones into another Life Group experience. Either way, enjoy the journey!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IF THIS LIFE GROUP IS NOT WORKING FOR ME?

You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of this 18-week study, decide whether to continue with this Life Group or find another. You don't buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a Life Group. Try not to bail out before the 18 weeks are up—God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict before you have given them a chance. God is still working in them too! However, if things are getting too challenging, please contact a Life Groups Team member who can assist you in finding another Life Group.

WHO IS THE LEADER?

Most Life Groups have an official leader. But ideally, the Life Group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy Life Groups rotate leaders on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution and develop their gifts. This Life Groups Guide and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be in your midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way.

HOW DO WE HANDLE THE CHILD CARE NEEDS IN OUR LIFE GROUP?

We suggest that you empower the Life Group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room, and to share the cost of a baby sitter (or two) who can be with the kids in a different part of the house. In this way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. Another idea is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. You could also rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or care for the children either in the same home or in another home nearby. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. The most common solution is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple, and to make your own arrangements for child care.

(CONTINUED)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE DOMINATES THE CONVERSATION OR THINGS GET OFF-TOPIC?

It's normal for conversations to drift or for someone to unintentionally take up a lot of time. If this happens, the Life Group leader will usually guide things back on track with grace. As a Life Group member, you can help by gently redirecting the conversation with a question or by contributing in a way that includes others. The goal is to create space where everyone feels heard and the focus stays on growing in Christ.

WHAT IF SOMEONE SHARES SOMETHING SERIOUS OR CONCERNING DURING THE LIFE GROUP?

If someone opens up about something heavy—like abuse, addiction, or thoughts of self-harm—it's important to listen with compassion but also recognize the limits of what the Life Group can handle. Encourage the person to speak with a pastor or a professional counselor. If you're unsure, talk to your Life Group leader privately after the meeting so they can help take the next right step.

HOW CAN I MAKE OTHERS FEEL WELCOME (EVEN IF I'M NOT THE LEADER)?

You don't have to be the leader to help create a warm and inviting Life Group environment. A smile, remembering someone's name, asking thoughtful questions, or simply making room for others in the conversation can go a long way. Think about how you'd want to be treated as a newcomer and do the same for others. Everyone contributes to the Life Group's culture—and your presence matters more than you know.



HOW TO BECOME A LIFE GROUP LEADER

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN BECOMING A LIFE GROUP LEADER, YOU SHOULD HAVE:

- Love for God
- A heart for people
- An excitement to study God's Word
- The willingness to host or find a place to host the Life Group
- A longing to share Jesus with others

We're looking for people with a desire to apply the Bible to your life and tell others about Jesus. You don't need a Bible college or seminary degree to lead a Life Group. You simply must have some basic people skills and a willingness to grow in the Lord.

You also need to be a graduate of *Next Steps*, a 4-week experience designed to help you find your "next steps" here at Shepherd Church. Each of the 4 steps is a 1-hour interactive session where you will learn all about Shepherd Church and how to connect with God, the church, and others. Go to shepherdchurch.com/nextsteps for more information including a list of upcoming sessions at various campuses.

Finally, you need to register for the *Life Group New Leaders Essentials*—a 2-hour training and orientation on Life Groups for new leaders. You will learn the philosophy of Life Groups and how to effectively begin leading a Life Group. Completing this course does not obligate you to lead a Life Group, but it does allow you to become a new leader. Go to shepherdchurch.com/lifegroups for more information and future training dates.

LIFE GROUPS TEAM CONTACTS

Below is a list of Life Groups Team members and areas they oversee. Feel free to contact them with any questions or needs:

ABE ANAYA, LIFE GROUPS PASTOR
(aanaya@shepherdchurch.com)

- Granada Hills, North Hills, Arleta, Lake Balboa, Van Nuys, Panorama City, Sherman Oaks, Hansen Dam, Shadow Hills, Valley Glen, Valley Village, Studio City, Toluca Lake, Burbank, West Covina, Encino, Sun Valley, Mission Hills, Sylmar, Pacoima, San Fernando, Sunland, Tujunga, Corona, and Lake View Terrace.

VICTOR PEÑA, GROUP ZONE LEAD
(vpena@shepherdchurch.com)

- Porter Ranch, Northridge, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Hollywood, and Culver City

NEIMAD DURHAM, GROUP ZONE LEAD & CARE TEAM
(ndurham@shepherdchurch.com)

-or-

LORI LEWIS, ASSISTANT
(ndurham@shepherdchurch.com)

- Calabasas, Camarillo, Canoga Park, Chatsworth, Moorpark, Reseda, Thousand Oaks, West Hills, Winnetka, Westlake Village, and Tarzana

BRIAN MARSTON, AGUA DULCE CAMPUS PASTOR & GROUP ZONE LEAD
(bmarston@shepherdchurch.com)

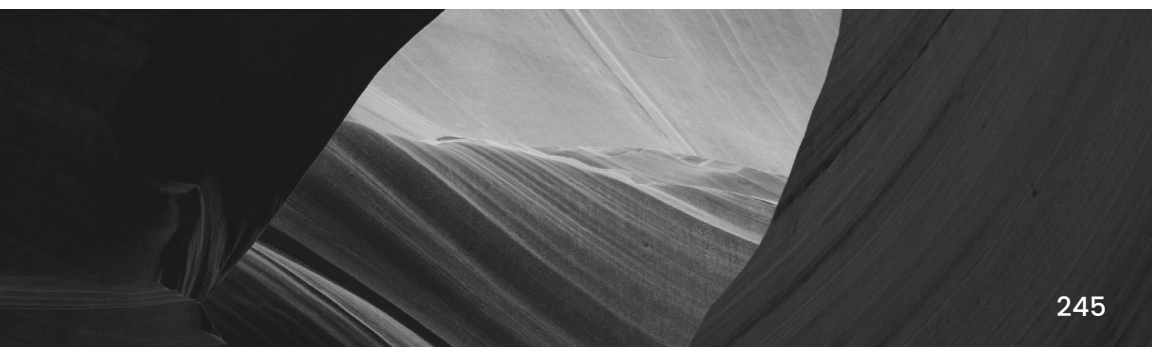
- Acton, Agua Dulce, Canyon Country, Newhall, Santa Clarita, Palmdale, Valencia, Saugus, and Stevenson Ranch

STACY THOMPSON, SIMI VALLEY CAMPUS LIFE GROUPS COORDINATOR
(sthompson@shepherdchurch.com)

- Simi Valley

CHESTER NISPEROS, WOODLAND HILLS CAMPUS PASTOR
(cnisperos@shepherdchurch.com)

- Woodland Hills



BIBLE RESOURCES

Here are some opportunities to continue your study of the Bible:

- Engage previous Shepherd Church sermons and sermon series:
 - Porter Ranch campus weekend services (youtube.com/c/ShepherdChurch)
 - Porter Ranch campus Thursday night services ([@ThursdaysatShepherd](https://youtube.com/@ThursdaysatShepherd))
 - East Valley Campus (podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/shepherd-church-east-valley-podcast/id1800254431)
 - Simi Valley campus ([@ShepherdChurchSimi](https://youtube.com/@ShepherdChurchSimi))
- Pastor Dudley's podcast, Godly Goosebumps (godlygoosebumps.com), and his ministry, Lift Up Jesus (liftupjesus.com) where you can find his books, previous sermon series, Bible journals, previous Life Groups series, and more.
- You can download the Bible app to read or to listen to the Bible in multiple translations, find devotionals, and more (youversion.com/the-bible-app).
- Download Shepherd Church's Bible reading plan (shepherdchurch.com/content/ShepherdChurch/Guide_Bible-Reading-Guide.pdf).



- Bible Gateway is a good website to look up verses, do word searches, find commentary, read devotionals, and more (biblegateway.com).
- Dr. Mark Moore has complete Bible College courses on Jesus' life, Acts, and more (markmoore.org/lectures). He has also written books that will help you study crucial Bible passages and themes, such as *Core 52*, *Quest 52*, *The Chronological Life of Christ*, and more (markmoore.org/books).
- Ozark Christian College offers free online Bible classes and seminars (occ.edu/resources/nextlevel).
- Dallas Theological Seminary offers free online Bible & theology courses (courses.dts.edu).
- The Silo Project at Eternity Bible College offers free online courses (eternity.edu/silo).
- If you want to learn more about how to study the Bible, consider the following book: *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* by Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks (amazon.com/dp/0802408230).



PRAYER NOTES

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