



How to Use This Guide

This Groups Discussion Guide consists of small group discussion guides from three series from our “The Ways of Jesus” collection of talks. (Real Love, Closing the Loop, and FOR.) Feel free to tailor to your church context.

Note that this guide is simply that - a resource/guide to facilitate discussion with your group. You may find that once participants get acquainted with the passage by taking the time to read it individually, and sharing their observations and questions, conversations will naturally gravitate towards what they are interested in finding out. Don't feel as though you have to ask every single question. Be mindful, however, of staying on topic. The materials will take between 60- 90 minutes to go through, depending on participation.

Each weekly guide includes the sections described below:

- **Connect** - Take time every session to connect with each other before beginning the discussion. You may use two or three of the following fun, “**get-to-know**” questions, and then, if time permits, jump to the questions in the “Connect” section for each week.
 - Share your name, how long you’ve been coming to EastLake Church.
 - What brought you to EastLake Church the first time and what keeps you coming back?
 - What's your current favorite restaurant?
 - What is the best movie you recently watched?
 - What show are you currently bingeing?
 - Pick any season of your childhood and tell us: What was your favorite show growing up?
 - When you were a kid, what was your dream job?
 - If you could do anything for a day, what would you choose to do?
 - If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?
 - Are you a morning person or night person? Are you an introvert or an extrovert?
- **Opening/Closing Prayer** - As the facilitator of the group, please open and close your sessions with a short prayer. Sample prayers are provided. Also, as you feel comfortable, invite others to open/close in prayer.
- **Big Idea / Anchor Passage / Command** - We recommend that you read these sections to your group to frame the discussion. Or you may simply just keep these in mind to keep the discussion on track.
 - Big Idea - Describes what the overarching idea/theme is for the week.
 - Anchor Passage - The scripture passage that the weekend message is based on. In some instances, the anchor passage consists of short verses; therefore, additional scripture is added for supplemental reading.
 - Command - The command of Jesus that the weekend message is based on.
- **Read Passage / Re-Read Passage** - Ask volunteer(s) to read the passage. Then ask the group to read the passage again silently to themselves. Invite them to write down their observations, questions, things that might be confusing, surprising, or challenging. You might want to let them know to bring something to write on/with to each session, or perhaps use a Notes APP. These two sections can take anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes depending on the length of the passage.



○ Let's Talk

- **General questions** relevant to the passage.
- **Reflection and application questions** that invite people to apply to their lives what they gleaned from the passage.

General Leader Tips

- Our year-long journey through the Ways of Jesus is a great opportunity to accompany new believers and not-so-new believers in their walk with Jesus. As you facilitate your group, may you lead with an extra dose of grace, as always. At EastLake Church, we desire to help people grow in friendship and faith through their participation in community. In light of this goal, may you make space for participants to ask questions and share insights, and encourage those who are new to faith or just checking out community to engage in ways that are comfortable for them.
- Prepare weekly for your group session by:
 - Praying for your group members;
 - Reviewing the Leader Tip, Big Idea, Anchor Scripture, Command, and selected passage(s) to discuss; and
 - Familiarizing yourself with the study content.
- Be mindful that this guide is designed for communal investigation of Jesus' ways in a loving and grace-filled environment. As the facilitator, and as much as you may be gifted in breaking down passages, supplying historical context, etc., resist the temptation to teach. Also, remind participants that this is an opportunity to hear their reflections, and how the passage might connect to how God has shown up in their lives.
- For questions or concerns, feel free to contact your Groups pastor.
- Finally, consider providing additional support to your participants by pointing them to EastLake Church resources on mental health. You can find that here: <https://eastlake.church/mental-health-resources>.



Week 1 | The Way of Love

Connect (5-10 mins)

As a group, take time to connect. If your group has new members, take time to go around the circle sharing names. Have new people share how long they have been coming to this church, why they chose to sign up for a group, and a little bit about their family and/or professional life. As noted in the general leader tips, consider using some of the “Get to Know” questions.

If you have time and your group is already familiar with one another, share:

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Have you committed to going on The Ways of Jesus Journey this year? thewaysofjesus.com

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on such things as we might be invited to reflect on, or to do. May we be continually reformed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

Love is incredibly important to God. In fact, scripture tells us that one of the best ways we can define who God is or seek to understand his ways is by looking at the word “love.” Everything he does is motivated by love and seeks the outcome of love. For disciples of Jesus and followers of his ways, the foundation of all our relationships is found in our relationship with Jesus. As we look at his instructions and commands, it’s clear that Jesus defines and manifests love in a very different way than the world does. Jesus, God’s selfie, is our model for how to love; we are to love like him, not as the world does. This series, Real Love, is all about understanding God’s definition of love and following Jesus’ instructions on how to live it out in our lives and our world.

Anchor Passage

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. [John 13:34-35 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Love one another.

Read Passage (3-5 mins)

¹ It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come



from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." ⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" ¹⁰ Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean. ¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. ¹⁸ "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.' ¹⁹ "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." ²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." ²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." ²⁸ But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. ³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. ³³ "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." ³⁶ Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." ³⁷ Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times! [John 13 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - Look for repeated words/phrases; key characters; what's happening?
 - What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, surprising, challenging, or hard to understand.
 - If reading from a different translation, note any words or phrases that are different from the translation read aloud.



Let's Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

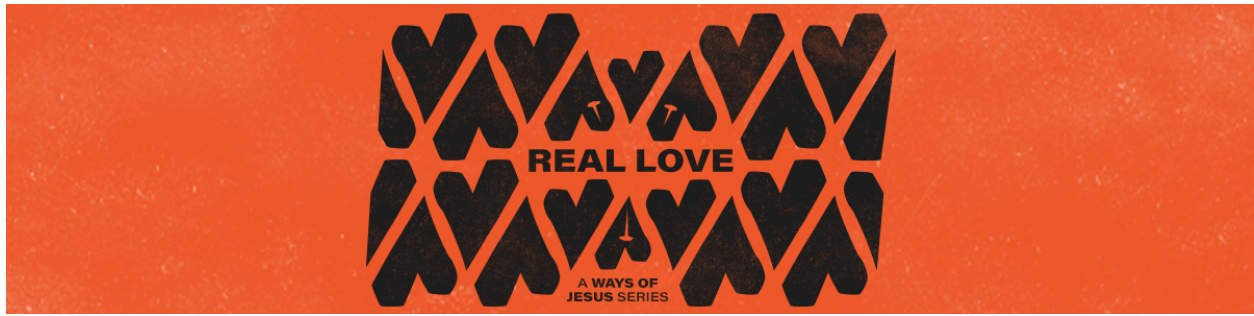
- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ How did Jesus model love to his disciples?
- ☐ When you think about your closest relationships, whom would you say exhibits the kind of love Jesus modeled?
- ☐ In what types of situations/relationships do you find it *easy* to love others? What makes it *easy*?
- ☐ In what types of situations/relationships do you find it *difficult* to love others? What makes it *difficult*?
- ☐ When it comes to your closest relationships, how can you grow in your capacity to love?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be reformed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”



Week 2 | The Way of Marriage

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on such things as we might be invited to reflect on, or to do. May we be continually reformed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

This week, we are looking at Jesus’ command to honor marriage. The command to honor marriage is taught throughout scripture. Jesus [as well as Paul] teaches that marriage is a sacred union between man and wife, a gift from God for humanity to enjoy. While God never intended divorce to be a part of human experience, and that it grieves him when we break a covenant that he created, we also know that God’s grace abounds. Divorce is a difficult part of the human experience in our imperfect world. How do we live out this command to honor marriage in a society that thinks life-long marriage is impossible?

Anchor Passage

¹ When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” ⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” ⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” ⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” ¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.” [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Honor marriage.



Read Anchor Passage (3-5 mins)

¹ When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” ⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” ⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” ⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” ¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.” [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, surprising, challenging, or hard to understand.
 - ☐ If reading from a different translation, note any words or phrases that are different from the translation read aloud.

Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ Recalling last week’s scripture ([John 13](#)), how might Jesus followers apply the principles we learned to today’s reading?
- ☐ What do you think of when you hear the word honor? How would you define it at its best? How would you define it at its worst?
- ☐ Every relationship poses its own challenges. What does scripture teach us about keeping our vows and honoring marriage, especially if you’re not feeling satisfied in the relationship?



- ☐ If you are single, how does today's passage impact the way you think about singleness, dating and/or marriage?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be reformed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”



Week 3 | The Way of Purity

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on such things as we might be invited to reflect on, or to do. May we be continually reformed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

In a society where satisfying physical desires is facilitated by easily accessible experiences to meet those desires, Jesus’ call to sexual purity seems insanely countercultural. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus called his followers to a way of living that completely cuts against the grain of how the world tells us to live. The Apostle Paul also points us in the same direction, reminding Christ followers that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to honor God with our bodies. We’ve seen over the past few weeks that obeying Jesus in all his ways is impossible without his Holy Spirit. We are also reminded that Jesus’ redemptive love and grace heals all brokenness, including those caused by disordered desires. Our bodies are not separate from our God-breathed souls. Thus, the Holy Spirit continues to invite us to a transformative way of living, empowered by Jesus’ spirit present in us.

Anchor Passage

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Do not commit adultery; do not lust.



Read Passages (3-5 mins)

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

¹ As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. ³ It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit. [1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passages Individually (7-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, surprising, challenging, or hard to understand.
 - ☐ If reading from a different translation, note any words or phrases that are different from the translation read aloud.

Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this text?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ “Sex is a gift from God to be enjoyed and explored within the context of a marriage.” How does that statement strike you?
- ☐ Sexuality goes beyond the mechanics of intercourse to connection with others. Read Deb Hirsch’s statement below. What do you think or feel about what she says?



Sexuality can be described as the deep desire and longing that drives us beyond our souls in an attempt to connect with, to understand, that which is other than ourselves. Essentially, it is a longing to know and be known by other people on physical, emotional and spiritual levels.” – Deb Hirsch, Redeeming Sex

- ☐ In a world where physical attraction and sexual desires can be easily satisfied, what guardrails have you, or might Jesus be inviting you to, put up in order to maintain sexual purity?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be reformed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”



Week 4 | The Way of Reconciliation

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on such things as we might be invited to reflect on, or to do. May we be continually reformed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

All families/relationships go through conflict. Nevertheless, Jesus commands his followers to be reconciled with those whom they have sinned against. While Jesus commands us to forgive those who've harmed us, and also ask for forgiveness, forgiveness and reconciliation are nuanced processes. Forgiveness may be given, but reconciliation may not happen this side of eternity. This is the tension that exists between forgiveness and reconciliation.

Anchor Passage

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. [Matthew 5:21-25 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Be reconciled.

Read Passage (3-5 mins)

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” ²² Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to



him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸ But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. ²⁹ His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ ³⁰ But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ³⁴ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” [Matthew 18:21-34 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, surprising, challenging, or hard to understand.
 - If reading from a different translation, note any words or phrases that are different from the translation read aloud.

Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ How have you personally experienced God’s forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation in your life?
- ☐ While forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation matter, boundaries are also an important part of healthy human relationships — especially if and when someone has proven to be unsafe. How have you seen forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation work alongside boundaries?
- ☐ Is there a relationship in your life that could use some forgiveness, grace, or reconciliation? What is the next step can you take this week to move things forward?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be reformed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”



Bonus Week | The Way of Love Wrap Up

Connect (20-25 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Now that you are more familiar with one another, spend some time playing Two Truths and a Lie. Here is how this game works:

Everyone needs to think of three things to share about themselves. Two of those things need to be true and one of those things need to be a lie. When it's a person's turn they will share all three things (the two truths and the one lie). They will not indicate which of the three things is a lie and they can say the lie first, second, or third. Everyone else in the group will then have to guess which of the three things shared is a lie.

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on such things as we might be invited to reflect on, or to do. May we be continually reformed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Reflection and Discussion Questions (30 mins)

- ☐ While we have connected in our group each week over specific content, in what ways would you say you are seeing God move in your life this season?
- ☐ What is something you learned about yourself, your relationships, or God during this group season that feels significant? Explain why.

To help everyone reflect and remember, take some time to read through the anchor passages we looked at each week:

Week 1: Love One Another

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” [John 13:34-35 \(NIV\)](#)

Week 2: Honor Marriage

¹ When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” ⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’ ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” ⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” ⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives



because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” ¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.” [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Week 3: Do Not Commit Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

Week 4: Be Reconciled

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.” [Matthew 5:21-25 \(NIV\)](#)

- ❑ In light of your relationships and the ways in which you relate, connect, and treat others, in what ways are you hoping to experience continued growth and transformation? Your answer can be reflective of something you have shared previously or above, or it can be something new that is coming to mind or that you have not shared with the group yet.
- ❑ Go around your group and take time to encourage one another. In light of the good you see in one another and the growth you see unfolding in one another’s life, speak an affirmation or word of encouragement over each other.


Closing Prayer (10-15 mins)

Take extra time this week to pray for one another. Have each person in the group specifically pray for another person in the group. If you are not comfortable praying out loud, confirm who you are praying for and take a second to write a prayer down on your phone and then read that out loud during your prayer time. Your prayers for another can be short and simple.

Looking Ahead

As we end this group season, consider planning something fun to do as a group. This could be a potluck or doing something fun together.

CLOSING THE LOOP



Week 1 | The Way of Life

Connect (5 - 10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the General Leader Tips. If time permits, you may also ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Have you committed to going on The Ways of Jesus Journey this year? It's not too late!

If your group has new members, take time to go around the circle sharing names. Have new people share how long they have been coming to EastLake Church, why they chose to sign up for a group, and a little bit about their family and/or professional life.

Opening Prayer (1-2 minutes)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

The Way of Jesus is a life of daily choosing between the narrow way that leads to abundant life in Jesus, or the broad way that leads to death. Choosing the narrow way puts us on a different trajectory than those around us, sometimes even our family and friends. Nevertheless, Jesus promises that his path leads to a life of deep joy and flourishing. This week we explore what it looks like to choose the narrow way.

Anchor Passage

¹³ Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. [Matthew 7:13-14 ESV](#)

Command

Choose the narrow way.

CLOSING THE LOOP



Read Passage (7 - 10 mins)

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. [Matthew 7:13-29 NIV](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (10 - 15 mins)


- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

Let’s Talk (40 - 60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

CLOSING THE LOOP




Reflection and Application

- ☐ How does Jesus explain the differences between the narrow and the broad way?
- ☐ What commands/instructions can you spot (implicit or explicit) in the passage?
- ☐ What promises and warnings can you glean from the passage? Which ones resonate with you and why?
- ☐ Think of some examples of the narrow and broad way in your life? Relationships? Workplace? Where do you find yourself at that crossroads of choosing which way to follow?
- ☐ Reflect upon the foundation upon which you have built your life. Are there any areas in your life that appear to be on sandy ground? What invitation, if any, do you hear from Jesus?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

CLOSING THE LOOP



Week 2 | The Way of Mercy

Connect (5 - 10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the General Leader Tips. If time permits, you may also ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?

If your group has new members, take time to go around the circle sharing names. Have new people share how long they have been coming to EastLake Church, why they chose to sign up for a group, and a little bit about their family and/or professional life.

Opening Prayer (1-2 minutes)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

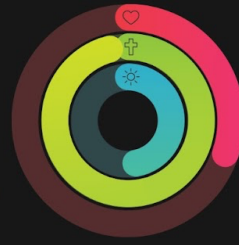
Big Idea

Mercy is simply defined as not getting what we deserve. Mercy chooses to extend compassion, grace, and forgiveness. God not only demonstrates mercy, he is the God of mercy. We see God’s mercy play out in the ways God pursues justice. In God’s economy, justice is fundamentally about restoring, renewing, and reconciling all people to himself, and to one another. For God, justice is not about punishing evil. Rather, justice looks at evil through the lens of mercy and desires to transform that which is evil into good. Jesus teaches that we are to practice mercy by pursuing a form of justice that aims for the restoration of people and relationships. Such is an example of the narrow way into which Jesus invites us to live. How then does mercy play out in our everyday lives?

Anchor Passage

³⁸ You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. [Matthew 5:38-42 NIV](#)

CLOSING THE LOOP



Command

Do not resist an evil person... turn the other cheek also.

Read Passage (3 - 5 mins)

⁹ Love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, persist in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints, pursue hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil; consider what is good before all people. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people. ¹⁹ Do not avenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God's wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ Rather, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will be heaping burning coals on his head. ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. [Romans 12:9-12 NET](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7 - 15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what's happening?
 - What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

Let's Talk (40 - 60 mins)


General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ In this season of your life, how do you find yourself approaching scripture? A list of do's and don'ts? A pathway to knowing Jesus more? Something else?
- ☐ There are a lot of do's and don'ts in today's passage. What do you find most difficult to do or not do? Why?
- ☐ What parallels, if any, do you see between Jesus' teaching on mercy in Matthew 5:38-42 and Paul's letter to the Romans in today's reading? Do you think these parallels are coincidental or purposeful? Explain.

CLOSING THE LOOP



- ☐ Where can we pursue justice for others in our day-to-day lives?
- ☐ Paul writes: *“Love must be without hypocrisy.”* First, what does this mean? Secondly, in what ways can you practice that this week?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

CLOSING THE LOOP



Week 3 | The Way of Grace

Connect (5 - 10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the General Leader Tips. If time permits, you may also ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?

Opening Prayer (1-2 minutes)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

Grace is simply defined as getting what we *don't* deserve. It is God's undeserved kindness towards us - a gift he freely gives without expectation of anything in return. Scripture tells us that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus ([Ephesians 2:8](#)). We can't earn our way to salvation; it is a free gift from God. In light of this, following the ways of Jesus is an invitation to extend grace to others, even towards our “enemies,” without any expectation of receiving the same. One way to show grace is to pray even for one's enemies.

Anchor Passage

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [Matthew 5:43-48 NIV](#)

Command

Pray for those who persecute you.

CLOSING THE LOOP



Read Passage (3 - 5 mins)

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. [Colossians 3:12-17 NIV](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7 - 15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what's happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

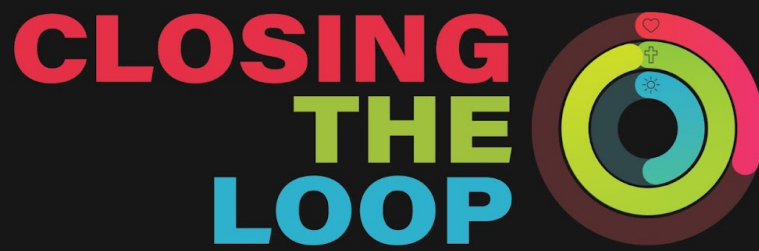
Let's Talk (40 - 60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application


- ☐ Praying for your enemies is but one way of extending grace. What characteristics do you see in this passage that align with grace? Explain.
- ☐ How would you describe "bearing with one another"? Share a personal experience.
- ☐ Why do you suppose Paul says that love is the best bond of unity?
- ☐ How does this passage describe your relationship with God and with others?
- ☐ Which characteristic(s) is God inviting you to take a look at? Which ones are difficult to "put on" and why? Which of these can you ask the Holy Spirit to help you with?
- ☐ Where in your life can you be an agent of peace? In what areas can you bring the temperature in the room down by bringing peace, or forgiveness, or gentleness?



Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

CLOSING THE LOOP



Week 4 | The Way of Hope

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the Leader Tips or you may ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?

Opening Prayer (1 -2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

Scripture tells us that Jesus will return at some future date that only the Father knows. What do we do in the meantime while we wait? Do we just bide our time until he returns, or for most, until we pass on from this life? Awaiting Jesus’ return is not a passive posture. There are actually things Jesus expects his disciples to do as we wait. This study unpacks a few of those.

Anchor Passage

⁴² “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. [Matthew 24:42-44 NIV](#)

Command

Keep watch.

Read Passage (7-10 mins)

¹ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.” ³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many

CLOSING THE LOOP



will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²² “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.


²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days
“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. ³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. [Matthew 24:1-35 NIV](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (10 - 15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

CLOSING THE LOOP



Let's Talk (40 - 60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?


Reflection and Application

- ☐ What have you been taught about the “end times” or the second coming of Jesus? How does this passage line up with your ideas about the end times?
- ☐ What does this passage say about Jesus’ return? What promises do you see in this passage?
- ☐ What does Jesus warn against in this passage? Why do you suppose he gives these warnings?
- ☐ What emotions stirred in you as you read this entire passage? Why do you think that is so? What can you bring to Jesus in prayer?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

CLOSING THE LOOP



Week 5 | The Way of Hope

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your small group, take time to connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the Leader Tips or you may ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?
- ☐ How has your journey in The Ways of Jesus been for you thus far?
- ☐ Did you get a chance to read any of the devotionals last week? What resonated with you?]

Opening Prayer (1 -2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

Scripture tells us that Jesus will return at some future date that only the Father knows. What do we do in the meantime while we wait? Do we just bide our time until he returns, or for most until we pass on from this life? Awaiting Jesus’ return is not a passive posture. There are actually things Jesus expects his disciples to do as we wait. This study builds on last week’s discussion and unpacks more about this conversation.

Anchor Passage

⁴² “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. [Matthew 24:42-44 NIV](#)

Command

Keep watch.

Read Passage (7-10 mins)

³⁶ “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them

CLOSING THE LOOP



all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. ⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” [Matthew 24:36-51](#)
NIV

Re-Read Passage Individually (7 - 15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for - repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

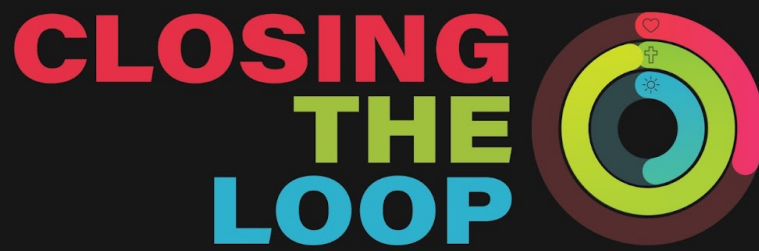
Let’s Talk (40 - 60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ In what ways is this era like or unlike the days of Noah?
- ☐ How are we to prepare ourselves for Jesus’ return?
- ☐ What are you hopeful for?
- ☐ What emotions stirred in you as you read this entire passage? Why do you think that is so? What can you bring to Jesus in prayer?




Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

Looking Ahead

As we end this group season next week, Week 6, we encourage you to simply celebrate - breaking bread together and maybe planning something fun for the off season. You’ll find some suggestions in the next section.

CLOSING THE LOOP



Bonus Week | It's a Wrap! Let's Celebrate!

This discussion guide is shorter than most weeks. We are making time for you to hang out and connect. Also, as you may have noted, there is no video. We are going to maximize our time in discussion today.

Connect (20 -25 mins)

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Now that you are more familiar with one another, spend some time playing Two Truths and a Lie. Here is how this game works:

Everyone needs to think of three things to share about themselves. Two of those things need to be true and one of those things need to be a lie. When it's a person's turn they will share all three things (the two truths and the one lie). They will not indicate which of the three things is a lie and they can say the lie first, second, or third. Everyone else in the group will then have to guess which of the three things shared is a lie.

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: *"God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your spirit has to say as we study your word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen."*

Reflection and Discussion Questions (30 mins)

- ☐ While we have connected in our group each week over specific content, in what ways would you say you are seeing God move in your life this season?
- ☐ What is something you learned about yourself, your relationships, or God during this group season that feels significant? Explain why.

To help everyone reflect and remember, take some time to read through the anchor passages we looked at each week:

Week 1: Choose the narrow way.

¹³ Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. [Matthew 7:13-14 ESV](#)

Week 2: Do not resist an evil person...turn the other cheek also.

³⁸ You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants

CLOSING THE LOOP



to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. [Matthew 5:38-42 NIV](#)

Week 3: Pray for those who persecute you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [Matthew 5:43-48 NIV](#)

Weeks 4 & 5: Keep watch.

⁴² “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. [Matthew 24:42-44 NIV](#)

- ☐ In light of your relationships and the ways in which you relate, connect, and treat others, in what ways are you hoping to experience continued growth and transformation? Your answer can be reflective of something you have shared previously or above, or it can be something new that is coming to mind or that you have not shared with the group yet.
- ☐ Go around your group and take time to encourage one another. In light of the good you see in one another and the growth you see unfolding in one another's life, speak an affirmation or word of encouragement over each other.

Closing Prayer (10 - 15 mins)

Take extra time this week to pray for one another. Have each person in the group specifically pray for another person in the group. If you are not comfortable praying out loud, confirm who you are praying for and take a second to write a prayer down on your phone and then read that out loud during your prayer time. Your prayers for another can be short and simple.

Reminders

- ☐ During this break, don't hesitate to schedule some sort of fun, casual activity for your group and our families. Ideas include: plan a potluck, have a barbeque, a game night, go to dinner, etc. The Group Leader does not lead or host this event, anyone can step up to own things.
- ☐ Groups are scheduled to start back up after summer.



Week 1 | The Way of Compassion

Connect (5-10 mins)

As a group, take time to connect. If your group has new members, take time to go around the circle sharing names. Have new people share how long they have been coming to this church, why they chose to sign up for a group, and a little bit about their family and/or professional life. As noted in the general leader tips, consider using some of the “Get to Know” questions.

If you have time and your group is already familiar with one another, share:

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what you have to say as we study the Bible. Help us be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

Human compassion is an attitude of care and concern, grounded in empathy towards others. Jesus was the perfect example of divine compassion - a compassion that desires for all of God’s people to flourish. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be concerned for and meet the needs of others when and where we are able. This week kicks off a new series where we will be looking at what it means to be “FOR” our Church, “FOR” our Community, and “FOR” California/Baja California.

Anchor Passage

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’” ³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the



hands of robbers?” ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” [Luke 10:25-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Go and do likewise.

Read Anchor Passage (7-10 mins)

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’” ³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” [Luke 10:25-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (10-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?



Reflection and Application

- ☐ Consider each character in the parable. Who do you relate most with in this passage? Why?
- ☐ In a modern day retelling of this story, who might play what characters today? Consider who we might see as superior, “other”, less than, or deserving of help.
- ☐ When is it hardest for you to stop and help someone else?
- ☐ In your own life, how can you grow to express more compassion and care for others?
- ☐ How does ‘loving your neighbor as yourself’ help you better understand how Jesus loved? If it doesn’t, explain why.
- ☐ How does God see each of us? How can we work to see each other the way God sees us?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for creating space where we can process our faith and life, and for the way your Bible speaks truth to each of us. Help us to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

Weekly Reminders

Throughout this series everyone is encouraged to:

- ☐ **Be at service:** We believe that God has much for us to learn together. That’s why it’s so valuable to have you join us each week during the series.
- ☐ **Join a growth group:** Life is better together. Be a part of a group and get to know people that will help you take the next right steps in your faith.
- ☐ **Sign up for a service project:** One of the best ways we can reach our community is by serving our community, so join any of the service projects.
- ☐ **Make a financial commitment and stay the course:** We are asking everyone who is part of our church to listen to the Holy Spirit, have courageous faith, and make a financial commitment to FOR.
- ☐ **Pray regularly for our church and the FOR initiative:** In everything we do, we’re reliant on God’s wisdom and provision. Join us in praying for our churches as we continue to be people helping people find and follow Jesus.
- ☐ **Do the Daily Devotional:** Grow and be encouraged in your faith by following our daily devotionals throughout this series. They’re written specifically for our Movement and for this season in our lives and you can find those at The Ways of Jesus website.



Week 2 | The Way of Illumination

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your growth group, take time to Connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the “Get to Know” questions or you may ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what you have to say as we study the Bible. Help us be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

Scripture tells us that Jesus is the light of the world. Yet Scripture also often uses light as a symbol of the people of God, and especially the manner in which believers are able and required to reflect the glory of God in a broken world. A huge part of being a light in the world is to do “good works,” as our anchor passage for this week encourages.

Anchor Passage

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. [Matthew 5:14-16 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Let your light shine.

Read Passage (3-5 mins)

[Before you start, while we generally use our Anchor Passage as the Scripture reading for the group, today’s Anchor Passage was a bit shorter so we will be reading another section of Scripture that points in the same direction.]

¹ Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are



improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." ¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. [Ephesians 5:1-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for repeated words/phrases; key characters; what's happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

Let's Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ Tell us about a time you were recently influenced for better or worse by someone or something.
- ☐ Considering where you live, work and play, in what ways do you have influence in other lives?
- ☐ How might we explain in more common language what it means to live with the light of God?
- ☐ In what ways are you living this passage out? In what ways could you live differently to better reflect its truth?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: "Jesus, thank you for creating space where we can process our faith and life, and for the way your Bible speaks truth to each of us. Help us to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen."



Weekly Reminders

- ❑ **Be at service:** We believe that God has much for us to learn together. That's why it's so valuable to have you join us each week during the series.
- ❑ **Join a growth group:** Life is better together. Be a part of a group and get to know people that will help you take the next right steps in your faith.
- ❑ **Sign up for a service project:** One of the best ways we can reach our community is by serving our community, so join any of the service projects.
- ❑ **Make a financial commitment and stay the course:** We are asking everyone who is part of our church to listen to the Holy Spirit, have courageous faith, and make a financial commitment to FOR.
- ❑ **Pray regularly for our church and the FOR initiative:** In everything we do, we're reliant on God's wisdom and provision. Join us in praying for our churches as we continue to be people helping people find and follow Jesus.
- ❑ **Do the Daily Devotional:** Grow and be encouraged in your faith by following our daily devotionals throughout this series. They're written specifically for our Movement and for this season in our lives and you can find those at The Ways of Jesus website.

Also, as a group, take time now to talk through your ideas and commitment for your upcoming Serve projects. Remember — you can either come up with a way to serve as a group or sign up for a project together. All the information you need can be found on the church app or website.



Week 3 | The Way of Inclusion

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your growth group, take time to Connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the “Get to Know” questions or you may ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what you have to say as we study the Bible. Help us be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides and to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

The cultural climate of today tends towards exclusion more than inclusion. Thanks in part to the social media platforms that capture every piece of data about each individual, creating algorithms that isolate/insulate people from others of varying opinions, we have become a society that tends to exclude people who do not think, behave, and vote like us. Jesus invites us to a completely different way of living. At every turn of the Gospels, we see Jesus including those in the margins of first century Palestine, offering them life in the kingdom of God. As Jesus followers, we want to be a church that emulates Jesus’ example of inclusion. We want to be a church that doesn’t set up barriers for lost people. We want to be a church that extends God’s grace, removing obstacles to faith and instead, inviting others into a relationship with Jesus.

Anchor Passage

¹ One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ² There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” ⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. ⁵ Then he asked them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?” ⁶ And they had nothing to say. ⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” ¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you



back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” [Luke 14:1-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Invite the poor, the crippled, and the blind.

Read Anchor Passage (3-5 mins)

¹ One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ² There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” ⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. ⁵ Then he asked them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?” ⁶ And they had nothing to say. ⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” ¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” [Luke 14:1-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (7-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
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 - Look for repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?



- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ What factors impact our seating choices in social gatherings, such as meals, lectures, or church gatherings?
- ☐ Who do you relate to in this story and why?
- ☐ Consider your circle of friends. Are their life stories and experiences more or less similar to yours? What attracts you to them and why?
- ☐ How important is it for you to cultivate relationships with individuals who are more unlike you? Why is it difficult/easy for you?
- ☐ What are some challenges you've faced in diverse groups of people you belong to?
- ☐ How might God be inviting you to be more inclusive?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for creating space where we can process our faith and life, and for the way your Bible speaks truth to each of us. Help us to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

Weekly Reminders

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- ☐ **Make a financial commitment and stay the course:** We are asking everyone who is part of our church to listen to the Holy Spirit, have courageous faith, and make a financial commitment to FOR.
- ☐ **Pray regularly for our church and the FOR initiative:** In everything we do, we're reliant on God's wisdom and provision. Join us in praying for our churches as we continue to be people helping people find and follow Jesus.
- ☐ **Do the Daily Devotional:** Grow and be encouraged in your faith by following our daily devotionals throughout this series. They're written specifically for our Movement and for this season in our lives and you can find those at The Ways of Jesus website.



Week 4 | The Way of Invitation

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your growth group, take time to Connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the “Get to Know” questions or you may ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what you have to say as we study the Bible. Help us be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides and to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

The anchor passage this week is a continuation of Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees over dinner. In this week’s passage, we see God’s divine hospitality and benevolent kindness, inviting everyone to his son’s wedding feast. He desires no one to perish so he extends the invitation to all; he wants the wedding feast to be full of all sorts of people. And so he commands us to share the good news so that all may come to the feast.

Anchor Passage

¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁶ Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ ¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ ²⁰ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ ²¹ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ ²² “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ ²³ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’” [Luke 14:15-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Command

Compel them to come.



Read Anchor Passage (7-10 mins)

¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁶ Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ ¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ ²⁰ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ ²¹ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ ²² “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ ²³ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.’ ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.” [Luke 14:15-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Re-Read Passage Individually (10-15 mins)

- ☐ Read the passage again silently to yourselves. Optional: You may use another translation.
- ☐ Write down your questions and observations.
 - ☐ Look for repeated words/phrases; key characters; what’s happening?
 - ☐ What questions or insights do you have about this passage?
 - ☐ Take note of anything in the text that is confusing, interesting, challenging, or hard to understand.

Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

- ☐ What was encouraging about this passage? What, if any, was challenging?
- ☐ What text stood out to you? Why?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ When did you come to know Jesus? What was that process and journey like? Consider who were people that helped you understand about God’s love.
- ☐ Have you ever seen someone accept Jesus? What was that process and journey like for them?
- ☐ Consider is there someone in your life that you hope encounters Jesus? Without over sharing their story, where are they at now in their journey? And how is God inviting you to participate in their story?



Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for creating space where we can process our faith and life, and for the way your Bible speaks truth to each of us. Help us to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

Weekly Reminders

- ☐ **Be at service:** We believe that God has much for us to learn together. That’s why it’s so valuable to have you join us each week during the series.
- ☐ **Join a growth group:** Life is better together. Be a part of a group and get to know people that will help you take the next right steps in your faith.
- ☐ **Sign up for a service project:** One of the best ways we can reach our community is by serving our community, so join any of the service projects.
- ☐ **Make a financial commitment and stay the course:** We are asking everyone who is part of our church to listen to the Holy Spirit, have courageous faith, and make a financial commitment to FOR.
- ☐ **Pray regularly for our church and the FOR initiative:** In everything we do, we’re reliant on God’s wisdom and provision. Join us in praying for our churches as we continue to be people helping people find and follow Jesus.
- ☐ **Do the Daily Devotional:** Grow and be encouraged in your faith by following our daily devotionals throughout this series. They’re written specifically for our Movement and for this season in our lives and you can find those at The Ways of Jesus website.



Week 5 | The Way of Commitment

Connect (5-10 mins)

In your growth group, take time to Connect. You may start with two to three icebreaker questions from the “Get to Know” questions or you may ask the following questions.

- ☐ What are you thankful for this week?
- ☐ Where did you see goodness in your life this week?

Opening Prayer (1-2 mins)

Sample prayer: “God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what you have to say as we study the Bible. Help us be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides and to follow through on whatever it is you are asking us to reflect on or do. May we be continually formed, transformed and conformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen.”

Big Idea

This is Commitment Sunday closing out this series. As we have seen throughout these past four weeks of this series, Jesus followers are invited/called to bless people in the various communities we are a part of. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th century German theologian once, wrote that there is a cost to discipleship. Many have paid dearly to spread the gospel. While not all are called to the kind of martyrdom Christ followers have been subject to over the centuries, Jesus nevertheless invites us to a life of compassion and open-handed/generous living. This shows up in the ways we commit to sacrificially serve people in our communities with our time, talent, and treasure. It shows up in the commitment to sharing the good news and including/inviting into our lives people who wouldn’t otherwise feel like they belong.

Anchor Passage

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. ³⁴ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” [Luke 14:25-35 \(NIV\)](#)



Command

Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

Read Anchor Passage (7-10 mins)

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. ³⁴ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” [Luke 14:25-35 \(NIV\)](#)

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Let’s Talk (40-60 mins)

General Questions

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- ☐ What does the passage tell us about humanity?
- ☐ What biblical principles did you pick up from this passage?

Reflection and Application

- ☐ What does Jesus say it takes to be his disciple?
- ☐ When you first started following Jesus what expectations did you have about what following him would cost you? How have those expectations shifted over time? If you are not a follower of Jesus or a newer Jesus follower, do you have any preconceived expectations of what it means to walk with Jesus?



- ☐ What does it practically look like to give up some things we value for Jesus?
- ☐ Looking at your life today, does your love for Jesus impact your daily choices, behaviors, and actions?
- ☐ In what ways have you struggled or are you struggling to give something up in order to follow Jesus?

Closing Prayer (3-5 mins)

Sample prayer: “Jesus, thank you for creating space where we can process our faith and life, and for the way your Bible speaks truth to each of us. Help us to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be formed, transformed and conformed into your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen.”

Looking Ahead

As we end this group season, consider planning something fun to do as a group. This could be a potluck or doing something fun together.