

## GROUP LEADER GUIDE (Week: 10/31-11/6) – Vision: Whole Hearts

Sermon Text: Matthew 16:13-20; Matthew 18:15-20; Hebrews 13:17 / Sermon Title: “Citizens of the Kingdom”  
BIG Idea: *The church has the sole authority to affirm someone’s citizenship in the kingdom of God. Church membership is the one of the primary ways in which God cares for and preserves the citizens of the kingdom.*

**Focus this week:** Continue to focus on growing in prayer, depth, and vulnerability as a group.

**Semester updates:** The Fall semester of groups will be concluding at the end of the month with **Worship and Prayer on November 28**. Please invite all group members to attend worship and prayer then. Next week we will be starting a new sermon series on the book of Colossians.

### FELLOWSHIP TIME (15 minutes)

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Be sure to plan out some way to implement casual fellowship time as people come to your group. After the fellowship time at the beginning of your meeting, have everyone find their seats and start off with an icebreaker. You can use one of the icebreakers from the leader resource page found here:

<https://lifewayresearch.com/2020/02/19/75-icebreaker-questions-for-church-small-groups/>

**Pow’s and Wow’s (a.k.a. “High’s” and “Low’s”):** After you do the icebreaker, one thing you can do to start your group off each week is called “Pow’s and Wow’s”. Have each person go around and share a “pow” (a low moment from the past week) and a “wow” (a high point moment from the last week). This can also be a great way to learn how you can pray for one another.

### DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

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Start discussion by saying, “This past Sunday we talked about the necessity of meaningful church membership. We learned in Matthew 16 and 18 that Jesus has given local churches the authority to affirm someone’s citizenship in the kingdom of God through repentance and faith. Church membership is also one of the most important things for our spiritual accountability and for the holiness and purity of the church.”

1. What were some things from the sermon that were particularly helpful or challenging for you?

Once again this question is simply to get people comfortable speaking out loud and chatting about the sermon.

2. Have someone read Matthew 16:13-20 and 18:15-20. Then you can say something like, “These two passages provided us with the foundation of how Jesus will build his church essentially through church membership. That is, people professing faith in Christ and local churches affirming your professions of faith. *How did these passages of Scripture affect the way you view the local church?*”

Jesus told Peter that he would give him the “keys of the kingdom” to “bind and loose” in the kingdom of God. Then in Matthew 18 he extends this authority to the church to “bind and loose” through affirming or not affirming the professions of faith of people into the church.

3. What do you think are some of the things that hinder us from wanting to commit to one single local church over a long period of time?

Church membership is not always well received by Christians. There can be a number of reasons for this. This questions helps your group identify things that may hinder us from seeing the good in church membership.

4. The two reasons given for why church membership matters are 1) assurance of your spiritual growth and perseverance as a Christian, and 2) the holiness and purity of the local church. Which of these two reasons stood out to you the most? Why?

The first reason is because the commitment of fellow of church members to see to it that your are walking faithfully with Christ. The second is because of church discipline and having to engage members when they walk out of step with the gospel.

5. What do each of the two reasons above mean for you practically? In other words, if those reasons are true, then how do they affect you today?

This question is for the purpose of getting people to think about where Jesus is pushing them to obedience.

6. Sometimes church membership requires everyone taking responsibility for one another in the church. This may even require us to have difficult and awkward conversations. How do we overcome these fears and move toward fellow brothers and sisters to have these conversations?

These kinds of conversations with people need to be had. This questions helps people to be aware of the things that prevent us from engaging a brother or sister in the church whom we love.

7. How does this gospel of Jesus Christ relate to our commitment to one another in a local church?

We always want to see how the gospel connects to everything. Jesus not only purchases our forgiveness, but also binds us together by his blood as a church.

## **PRAYER (30 minutes)**

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Take some time to specifically pray for one another and for Church at Bergen to grow in our understanding of church membership and to fulfill our covenant commitments to one another.