

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the Week of February 11, 2024

This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion

LEADER NOTES

MEETING NOTES

⇒ COVENANTS

Go over the Covenant with anyone who missed the first week. Remind anyone who hasn't signed the Covenant to do so. Email it to Linda Cole (linda@springfieldfaithcenter.org), turn it in by mail, or drop it off at the office or at the Life Group Kiosk on church campus by Sunday, April 23.

⇒ SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT WEEK #2

Remember we're on week #2 with your group. People are still acclimating, especially any new people. Lead your group through the questions according to how well everyone knows each other. There are plenty of questions in this guide to take you deeper. **REMEMBER, as a leader your goal each night is to lead your group in such a way that you hear from everyone and use the Bible as your guide.** Know that if you do this each week the people in your group will grow! **Remember you don't need to cover all questions. Great conversation is far more important than covering all the questions.**

⇒ PRAYER NOTE

Check out the **Tips on Group Prayer at the end of this Leader's Guide.** If you have new people in your group, please make sure you go over this. **And NEVER make someone pray. Group prayer is similar to public speaking, which is the #1 fear people have.** More than once we've had people tell us they quit Life Groups because a well-intentioned person required everyone to pray.

⇒ ATTENDANCE

Submit your group's attendance online through the [Planning Center Groups](#). If you are still having trouble with taking attendance online, please read this article: <https://pcogroups.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360016180273-take-attendance>.

Find all of our leader resources online: <https://www.springfieldfaithcenter.org/leader-resources>

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

⇒ SUNDAY EXPERIENCE TEAM MEETING

Sunday, February 18th at 12:30 p.m. Calling all ushers, greeters, coffee, security, and pastoral partners! Thank you for being flexible in rescheduling our second quarterly meeting. We're doing things old school with a potluck-style gathering, so please bring a dish to share. We can't wait to see you there! Register online or in the Connect Hub.

⇒ VISION NIGHT

Sunday, February 25th at 6:30 p.m. in SFC's Sanctuary. Join us for Vision Night 2024! We will gather to CELEBRATE what God has done this last year and dream about how we can ADVANCE forward in our vision of Encounter, Grow, and Love. Enjoy tasty desserts afterward! Register now online.

⇒ DISCOVER SFC

Sunday, March 10 at 12:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. Are you new to SFC? Or are you simply interested in getting to know us better? Then come join our Discover SFC class to delve into the heart of our church! We'll even provide lunch and childcare for your convenience. Register online or in the Connect Hub.

DISCUSSION REMINDER: Remember, every night you want to hear from everyone in your group. Think through **how** you're going to ask questions so this happens. Ask various individuals what they think, go around the circle, set time limits on answers so you have time to hear from everyone.

LIFE GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

For the week of February 11, 2024

QUICK REVIEW

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

BE FRIENDLY

Where are you in the birth order of your family—oldest, youngest, somewhere in the middle? What are the best and worst parts of your order in the family?

Low Risk: *Good question to have everyone answer.*

If you're an only child, would you prefer an older or younger sibling? Why?

Low Risk: *Good question to have everyone answer.*

Who are some of your favorite celebrity/sports siblings?

Low Risk: *Good question to have everyone answer.*

More Questions: *At least one of the following are also fun questions to ask:*

- We all have different preferences. How would you answer the following:

What's the best way to start the day?

What's the best day of the week?

What's worth spending more on to get the best?

- Would you rather ...
 - ... for your birthday, receive cash or gifts?
 - ... go to a movie alone or to dinner alone?
 - ... hear the good news or the bad news first?
 - ... be given a lifetime supply of delicious food or books?
 - ... watch the big game at home or live at the stadium?

BE OPEN

#1 Genesis 4 is another sad story of human failure. This story is about the fractured relationship between Cain and God, but it also shows the scandal of harboring enough anger that would lead someone to murder his or her sibling. Jesus talks at length about the dangers of harboring anger toward a brother or sister. We could take his words both literally and spiritually. Either way, his teaching echoes much of what is going on in Genesis 4 and has profound implications for making sense of our stories today. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Matthew 5:21–26, NIV

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. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Why do you think Jesus draws a comparison between anger and murder? Asked differently, why do you think Jesus increases the intensity of the OT law “you shall not murder” to include storing up anger?

Medium Risk – *Some may not be comfortable to share in a larger setting.*

Leader Tip: *This excerpt of Scripture is from the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5-7. Jesus appears to be addressing the Old Testament Law—“You shall not murder”—but does something different with it. He goes behind the letter of the Law to address the spirit of the law. For Jesus, anger toward a brother or sister also comes with a harsh judgment—it is like bad murder—because the heart is already bent on destruction. The section also sounds a lot like Genesis 4, and I am sure his audience would have recognized the connection.*

What is easier—to continue harboring anger against a brother or sister, or to go to the person to be reconciled with them? Why is that the case?

Medium Risk – *Some may not be comfortable to share in a larger setting.*

Leader Tip: *There are numerous books written that address having “difficult” or “crucial” conversations. Clearly, the harder thing to do is to go to the person for reconciliation. Reconciliation means we have to be vulnerable, and maybe, we have to admit some fault of our own.*

Here are some possible answers:

- *Going to the person causes fear and anxiety*
- *We don’t have to face someone who wronged us*
- *We don’t have to address our own sin*
- *We would rather be angry because it makes us feel better*
- *We fear that the issue will never be resolved*

#2 God’s grace is on full display in Genesis 4: God still offers his protection to Cain even though “Cain went out from the presence of God” (Genesis 4:16). God has not lost interest in the murderer, nor has he given up on him. The same is true for us. God doesn’t give up on us in our failure; he pursues us

with his grace. Read the following passages and note God's amazing grace for unworthy sinners.

Romans 5:6-8, NIV

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:1-5, NIV

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

How do these verses give you a better understanding of how God's grace is given, exemplified, or shown to you?

Medium Risk – Some may not be comfortable to share in a larger setting.

Leader Tip: Even though Cain did not answer the invitation to do well or do the right thing, God still

approached him, asked him what happened, and then put a protective mark on his body so that he would not be avenged by those who may want to kill him.

These verses demonstrate that God works for us to bring us salvation while we were powerless, ungodly, sinners, even dead in our sin. We are saved by grace and grace alone. The grace of God that didn't give up on Cain doesn't give up on Abel.

BE VULNERABLE

How would you summarize Pastor Brandon's message in one or two sentences?

High Risk – *A few people may want to answer this question.*

Leader Tip: *Answers will vary. This type of question allows each person to reflect on what stood out the most, and usually refers to the most applicable parts of the sermon. It is always interesting to see how the sermon spoke differently to the group.*

In what ways has God's grace exposed the Cain inside of you? (i.e., unrighteousness, bitterness, enviousness, anger, disobedience, hatred, etc.)

High Risk – *A few people may want to answer this question.*

Leader Tip: *Answers will vary. If we can be honest with ourselves, we all have a Cain-like bent within us. We all can operate with impure motives, with heart attitudes that are wicked, we can all come to God without faith. How many of us have ever been unrighteous, bitter, envious, disobedient, angry to the point of rage, and harbored hatred in our hearts?*

If your group knows each other well, then this question will not be too high of risk, but if your group is fairly new and you are still building trust, this question might be answered by only a few, and it could give you the leader a chance to share part of your testimony.

PRAYER REQUESTS

You could write down some of the prayer requests from your Life Group here.

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Transition Statement to Covenant: “One of the great benefits of being in a Life Group is the opportunity to have help from others as we seek to be strategic and intentional about our spiritual growth. The Life Group Covenant is designed to serve as intentional guidelines to help us make the most of our time together.” Pass out Covenants and go over them with your group. You can download the [Leaders Guide to the Life Group Covenant](#), by going to Resources tab on Planning Center Groups.

Close in prayer: Next week the Study Questions will include an introduction to praying (Topical Prayer) in a group so if you have a new group or a lot of new members, it's suggested that you wait until week two to do any group prayer.

Additional Question (an important one for new groups): Prayer is an amazing avenue God has given us to communicate with him and he with us. But we also come to it with a lot of different thoughts and feelings.

Which of the following statements are most true for you?

- Prefer to pray silently instead of out loud
- Find my mind wandering when praying
- Like to write out prayers
- Look forward to time in prayer
- Don't really know how to pray
- Other

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in Life Group. Group prayer goes better when we follow three simple guidelines.

WE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME - Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request either before prayer begins or during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next topic.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE - Because the group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one is required to pray.

WE KEEP OUR PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE - Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one is required to pray out loud.

Eat dessert: *Mingle with everyone.*

CREATION TO CHAOS

A SERIES ON GENESIS 1-11

SCANDAL EAST OF EDEN

Genesis 4

The Story of Cain and God:

Genesis 4:3-16, Leviticus 2, 1 Samuel 2:17, Proverbs 21:27, Hebrews 11:4, 1 John 3:11-15

- The rejected offering has more to do with the attitude of the heart than the gift offered.
- Sin is a destructive beast that desires to ambush.
- The “mark” is a symbol of guilt and grace.

Making Sense of our Story:

Matthew 5:21-26, Romans 7:15-25, Ephesians 2:1-5

1. Life is perpetually tainted when we are unwilling to deal rightly with the Cain-like bent within us.
2. We cannot carry the weight of our sin; it will kill us.

God does not give up on sinners.