

LEADER'S GUIDE



PLANT Lesson 1: Our Foundation

Q: Look at Luke 14:25-35. Do you think that Jesus really wants us to give up everything to follow Him? Why does He make such an extreme request of His disciples? The idea that God would ask us to deny our selfish desires and make Him our primary focus in life is a foreign concept in a culture that is driven by self gratification. Truly following after Jesus requires a paradigm shift that many are not willing to make. In this passage, Jesus is using hyperbole to communicate a message of genuine commitment to a lifestyle that will not be easy and comfortable. Who are some people that come to your mind that live this out in practice? What is it about these people that strikes you as noble and noteworthy?

Q: Are you willing to give up everything to follow Jesus? This is more than a rhetorical question, but you shouldn't force someone to answer unless they are willing. Be honest and transparent that this isn't an easy thing to do and our response should not be flippant or cavalier. We often assume that because we call ourselves Christians that we check off this box but really putting God in the center of our lives is a life-altering decision. The commitment of a Christ-follower will be seen in the fruit that they bear (Lk. 6:44).

Q: If not, what is holding you back? It's easy for us to understand what we can see, taste, touch, smell, and feel. We can relate to what we have personally experienced. We seek pleasure in the things of this world because we know that they can bring temporary satisfaction. In reality, living for God will bring us greater satisfaction and a reward that is eternal (Heb.11:6), but it may require us to give up some earthly pleasure and to delay our gratification for the life to come. We don't know what that reward will look like, but we do know that God is generous. Consider Matthew 10:37-42 if time permits.

Q: How might some people need to change their lifestyle when they commit to following Jesus? Consider Colossians 3:23. We don't need to all leave our occupations to enter the mission field. Rather, our mission field is wherever God has us planted. Wherever you find yourself is an opportunity to grow roots and to bear fruit in the lives of others. A few might be convicted to make some changes in their life or career (i.e. living together, a career that doesn't honor God, bad habits, etc.), but for the most part we as Christians need to be in the world, not separated from it.

Q: How have you or might you need to change your life to fully follow Jesus? This is likely a question that new groups may have a hard time discussing. It is a conversation that requires trust and perhaps some grace for those who recognize that their lives don't reflect the will of God. It's not a time for shame but a time for recommittal and possibly some repentance. Consider setting the stage for the conversation by being vulnerable and transparent about some things that God has needed to prune in your life.

Q: Look back at Matthew 13:1-9. What do you think makes a person's heart "good soil" for planting seeds of truth? The condition of our heart isn't so much based upon our performance as much as it pertains to our attitude. Specifically, we must be humble. Unfortunately, that goes against our human nature and it's really tough to conquer our pride! Are we willing to learn? Are we willing to accept responsibility for our actions? Do we acknowledge our need for God and others to help us grow in our faith? Or do we think we can do life on our own...

Q: Do you think that the Bible is accurate? What problems do people have with believing that the Bible is truly the Word of God? Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Every other book that has ever been written was written by fallible man, why should we think that the Bible would be any different? It certainly is an important question to answer. The Bible isn't like any other book. It is the revelation of God and it claims to be the exhaled Word of God - His revelation to us. If it is from God, we can trust it, believe it, and live by it. If it is merely a book written by men, then we would expect it to be full of hypocrisy and contradiction. As it is, the Bible has stood the criticism of people for millennia!

Q: How would you describe the Bible to someone who has never seen one before? It has been described as God's love letter to us. Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. It is a library of 66 books that describe the work of God through mankind culminating in the death and resurrection of His Son. However we describe it, the Bible cannot be described as just another religious book. God has reached into the created world to show us Himself. He wants to be known by us so He has given us His Word to show us the way to restore a relationship that has been broken due to sin.

Note to Leaders: If you find that you have extra time, feel free to ask more questions. For example, "What do you hope to get out of this study?" Or "How do you see God working in your heart at this time?" "How has God's Word brought you strength as you have gone through difficult challenges?"

Class Assignment: Write down your life purpose statement.

Over the next 6 weeks, be thinking about why God has specifically put you on this earth. What abilities has He given to you and how does He want you to use them to bless people? We are asking you to write a one-page description of God's plan for your life.

If anyone in your group has done this before, perhaps they could share some things that they've learned through their experience. The goal of this exercise is to recognize our gift, talents, and resources, and to set some goals to use them to bear fruit according to the way that God has uniquely designed us. Help one another to see their strengths and keep in mind that some people just won't have any idea why God has put them on this earth. Everyone has purpose. Everyone has something to contribute. What we offer is a gift to God and a blessing to those our lives touch! You might start this conversation with the question, "What are you most passionate about?" Have them start writing down ideas in their workbook. Encourage them to think about it more this week and we'll start to bring some structure to this next week.

Memory Verse (to memorize over 6 weeks): I challenge you to get EVERYONE in your group to memorize this verse! Be the first to memorize it as a leader and set the bar high enough that people will join you in the challenge. This verse describes the idea that when we take small steps to plant seeds of Truth in the kingdom of God, He is able to bring about a harvest greater than we could expect or imagine. The Church is the kingdom of heaven on earth. God's glory grows and spreads throughout His creation as His love is shared by those who abide in His Spirit.

Matthew 13:31-32 - *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Whenever someone shares a struggle or a victory, write it down and pray for them by name at the end of your group time together. Keep track of the work God is doing in your group and remember to give Him praise!