

**ELMBROOK**  
— C H U R C H —



*Rooted + Released*

**Study Guide**



# *Rooted + Released*

STUDY GUIDE

## **Rooted + Released Study Guide**

Copyright 2015 © by Elmbrook Church. All rights reserved.

### Writing and Editorial Team

#### **Writers**

Albo Esilaba

Krista Heinen

Steve Sonderman

Jason Webb

#### **Editor**

Shelly Esser

#### **Design and Layout**

Lori Johnston

Access other Elmbrook resources at [www.elmbrook.org](http://www.elmbrook.org).

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation and New International Version copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

**ELMBROOK**  
— C H U R C H —

777 SOUTH BARKER ROAD  
BROOKFIELD, WI 53045

[elmbrook.org](http://elmbrook.org)

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Letter from Jason Webb .....                           | 7  |
| Introduction.....                                      | 8  |
| <b>1</b> <i>Rooted</i> in the Word .....               | 11 |
| <b>2</b> <i>Rooted</i> in Love .....                   | 17 |
| <b>3</b> <i>Rooted</i> in Community .....              | 23 |
| <b>4</b> <i>Rooted</i> in Obedience.....               | 29 |
| <b>5</b> <i>Released</i> to Live Purposefully .....    | 35 |
| <b>6</b> <i>Released</i> to Live Contagiously .....    | 43 |
| <b>7</b> <i>Released</i> to Live Compassionately ..... | 51 |
| <b>8</b> <i>Released</i> to Live Generously .....      | 57 |
| Life Group Covenant .....                              | 63 |
| How to Memorize Scripture .....                        | 64 |
| Personal Testimony Worksheet .....                     | 65 |
| Leader's Guide .....                                   | 67 |
| Leader's Notes .....                                   | 70 |

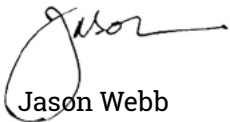


# Letter from Jason Webb

Welcome to **Rooted + Released**, a Life Group experience designed to help you on your journey of following Jesus. Our mission at Elmbrook Church is simply to help people become **Rooted in Jesus and Released to His Mission**. Here's the reality: we all have a tendency to drift away from the life God created us to live, so we need to be rooted in our Creator. But rooting is not enough; God roots us in order to use us in a big way. We are to be released to an adventure of following Him.

Over these next eight weeks you will discover the eight traits we believe are essential to living the **Rooted + Released** life. Whether you are a long-time follower of Jesus or this is your first time in a group like this, this journey is for you. Our prayer is that this journey is much more than a study guide, but an experience where you will become more like Jesus, step into a life that you never knew existed, and make great friends along the way!

Rooted + Released with you,



Jason Webb  
Senior Pastor  
Elmbrook Church

# Introduction

## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR LIFE GROUP EXPERIENCE

You are about to embark on a life-changing experience. This eight-week study has been designed to help you better understand what it means to be *Rooted in Christ* and *Released to His Mission*. We believe that the optimal place for you to grow spiritually is with other like-minded Christ-followers. For some of you this may be the first time you have joined a Life Group, so here's what you can expect.

There are four components of all Elmbrook Church Life Groups. Your time will be divided up accordingly:

- 1. STUDY OF GOD'S WORD.** The study of God's Word is central to all that we do, and a portion of your time will be spent watching a short video and then discussing various passages of Scripture that relate to our theme for the week.
- 2. SHARING AND PRAYER.** Each week you will have the opportunity to share with your group what God is doing in your life, where you would like to grow, and how they can be praying for you. You will only have to share and pray as much as you feel comfortable with.
- 3. CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER.** Jesus told the disciples in John 13:34-35 that they were to "Love one another" and that the world would know they were His disciples by their love. Oftentimes we are unsure of what that looks like but, in the context of a Life Group, you will be able to tangibly care and love one another. Our love for each other will be seen in accepting one another, forgiving one another, encouraging one another, praying for one another, and carrying each other's burdens.
- 4. OUTREACH.** Life Groups do not exist just for themselves, but for the world. Jesus calls us to be "light" in the midst of the darkness. Through the course of this study, you will be encouraged to do a service project together. Besides serving together, each of you will be seeking to be the hands and feet of Jesus wherever you go throughout the course of the week.



**LIFE GROUP COVENANT.** In preparation for the first week, you will want to review the group covenant found at the back of the book. The group covenant is to be accepted by all members of the group. It outlines the expectations made between the group members and the commitment everyone is making to God for the duration of the study.

### *The format for each session is:*

**CONNECT TOGETHER.** Each week you will begin with a time to catch up on the past week and to get to know the members of the group better. You will also be given an opportunity to check your progress from week to week.

**GROW TOGETHER.** This section will be divided up into two sections:

- A weekly video teaching by one of the Elmbrook Church pastors. You will be able to access these videos from both the Elmbrook Church website (at [elmbrook.org/rooted](http://elmbrook.org/rooted)) and from RightNow Media, under the Elmbrook Church library. See page 10 for more information about RightNow Media.
- Discussion questions designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Bible and to help you consider how the truths of Scripture impact your life.

**SHARE TOGETHER.** One of the greatest benefits of being in a Life Group is that it provides a place where you can share with other people what is happening in your life and where God is working. Each time you meet, there will be a time for you to share the joys, victories, struggles, and prayer requests with the group. We believe in “voluntary vulnerability”. That means that you will never have to share more than you want to. Our hope is that, as time goes on, you will feel more comfortable opening your life up to the other people in your group. The goal would be that your Life Group is a “safe place” where you can feel accepted for who you are, affirmed for who you are becoming, and can be authentic with what is going on in your life.

**PRAY TOGETHER.** In each session there will be a time when you will be able to pray for one another. In the beginning, the leader will handle that responsibility, but as time goes on we want to encourage each of you to be involved in the prayer time. We know that praying out loud can be very threatening to people, so we don’t expect anyone to pray out loud if they don’t feel comfortable. When you do have your prayer times, we encourage you to remember the A, B, C’s of prayer:

- **Audible**—so people can hear you.
- **Brief**—so that everyone has an opportunity to pray.
- **Christ-Centered**—so that the prayer times don’t get off on secondary issues, but rather focus on what God is doing in your life and those you are influencing.

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

**BEFORE YOU LEAVE.** Make sure to take time at the end of the study to talk about these. (These are found at the end of the book under *Leader's Notes*).

**DIGGING DEEPER.** This section is optional, and is for those who want to learn more about what the Bible has to say on that week's topic. It's up to your group to decide whether you want to cover these questions during your time together.

**FINAL REMINDER.** The videos, questions, and exercises provided will encourage you to take the things you know and are learning and incorporate them into your everyday life. Keep in mind you may not get through all the material, but that is okay. Each person should leave the group with one or two key principles they are going to apply to their life, or at least seek to apply in the coming week. Keep in mind the following guidelines for having a healthy discussion:

- **Be Involved.** Jump in and share your thoughts. You have a perspective that is unique and can benefit the other group members.
- **Be a Good Listener.** Value what others are sharing, try to understand their perspective, and don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions.
- **Be Courteous.** Always treat others with respect. When there is a disagreement, focus on the issue and never turn the discussion into a personal attack.
- **Be Focused.** Stay on topic and keep the side conversations to a minimum.
- **Be Careful Not to Dominate the Conversation.** Be aware of the amount of talking you are doing in proportion to the other group members.
- **Be a Learner.** Come with a teachable spirit each week and be sensitive to what God may want to teach you through the lesson.
- **Be an Encourager.** We all need it. When you encourage a person in your group, it can change their day, week, and month. Look for ways to encourage the people in your group.

---

(From Becoming a r12 Coach.)

### RightNow Media

The videos for the **Rooted + Released** study are available on RightNow Media. We highly recommend that you spend a few minutes before the study begins to get your RightNow Media account set up and explore the resources available. **To request an invitation to a free RightNow Media account, go to [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia) and click "request invitation".**

After you set up a free account, you can view the R+R videos on your computer or tablet via a browser. Log in to your RightNow Media account in your browser, click "Libraries" at top left of your screen, then choose "Elmbrook Church" from the menu that appears. The Rooted + Released channel should appear at the top of the Elmbrook Church library. Click the desired video to view it.

**NOTE:** The free RightNow Media app, available for smartphones and tablets, does not yet deliver our church's custom content. At this time R+R videos are only available through a browser.

# 1

## Rooted in the Word

---

*The Bible is ... as necessary to spiritual life as breath is to natural life.  
There is nothing more essential to our lives than the Word of God.*

~Jack Hayford

---

Welcome to the first lesson of the **Rooted + Released** Study Series. We are so glad that you have taken the step to get involved in a Life Group and know that you will not regret the decision. In this first lesson, we are going to be discussing what it means to be **Rooted** in God's Word.

Several years ago, Betsy Sanders, a woman who had worked her way up from the position of sales associate to executive vice president for Nordstrom's, told the following story at a sales event.

*One day a group of executives from Nordstrom's invited a number of top executives from JCPenney to a luncheon. They were all seated around a large table enjoying their meal when one of the executives from JCPenney asked, "To what do you attribute your tremendous success? Nordstrom's has become a model that people all over the world are studying." (In other words, "What is your secret?")*

*At that point, one of the executives from Nordstrom's left the room to retrieve a large book from an adjacent room. He brought the book over to the JCPenney executive, opened it, and laid it in front of him. The JCPenney executive asked, "what does this old book have to do with your success?"*

*The Nordstrom's executive said, "This book is over 100 years old and is the original operating manual for JCPenney. We do everything that it says in that book, and that is why we are so successful."*

What an odd moment that must have been! You see, what he was really saying was: You lost your first love; you have drifted away from the foundation of your company.

That, my friends, is what happens in so many of our lives as well. We tend to forget that God's Word reveals His purposes, plans, and promises for our lives. It says in Joshua 1:8, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." In this study, we are going to discover why studying, knowing, and applying God's Word is so important to our lives.

## GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To begin building community through a time of sharing and going over the group guidelines.
- To understand the importance of God's Word in our lives.
- To understand that each of our stories has a place in God's story.
- To recognize the importance of spending time in God's Word.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

Pick two or three of the questions below and briefly share with the group.

1. Where did you grow up?
2. What small group experience have you had?
3. What is your favorite hobby?
4. Tell us something interesting about your family.
5. What is your favorite movie genre? Why?
6. What is one interesting fact about you that we should know?
7. Where is your favorite place to vacation? Why?

Part of journeying in a small group together is building trust with one another. For this reason, we have some basic group guidelines we want to go over together before we begin. (Refer to the *Leader's Guide* at the back of the book.)

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

1. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Rooted in God's Word*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

### *Discussion Questions*

Each week as part of our study, we will look at several passages of Scripture related to the theme of the week. It will be very helpful to bring a Bible with you each week so you can look up the passages being discussed.

1. Look up the following passages of Scripture and have someone read them out loud:  
Psalm 19:7-14, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, James 1:22-25, and Psalm 119:9-11

- What picture do these passages paint about God's Word?
  
- Why it is important for God's people to understand and apply Scripture to their lives?
  
- From the passages above, which description of God's Word most resonates with you?

2. There are many people in our society that know a great deal about the Bible, but their lives don't show it. How do you move from information about the Bible to transformation of your lives?

3. Discuss as a group what it looks like to be in the Word on a regular basis and how you can start to make that a regular part of your day. Share resources for reading through the Bible in a year.

4. Besides reading the Word on a regular basis, what are other ways you can be influenced by the Word?

5. Look up Matthew 4:1-11 and have someone in the group read the passage.

- How is this an example of being *Rooted in God's Word*?

- Read Psalm 119:9 and 11. How are these passages related to the story you just read?
- Discuss as a group how you can start to memorize God's Word on a regular basis and what the benefit of it would be. See the article in the back of this study guide for suggestions on how to memorize Scripture.

**CASE STUDY (OPTIONAL)**

You have a believing friend whose life includes many church-related activities. He serves in various ways, attends church functions, and has good relationships in and out of the church. He tells you he doesn't really have time for the kind of intense Bible stuff that you do, and doesn't really have the interest either. He says he loves to hear sermons at church and on the radio, where he gets all of his Bible information. "I am growing just fine as a believer," he tells you.

What are your thoughts about this scenario?

***Application Ideas for this Week:***

1. Commit to spend time reading the Bible each day this week. Read one Psalm each day, or read one chapter of the Gospel of Mark each day.
2. Memorize one of the verses you studied this week. (See article in back of this study guide.)
3. Do the Digging Deeper section found at the end of lesson two in preparation for your study next week.

## SHARE TOGETHER

One way we grow in our relationship with God is by spending time in His Word. Another way we grow is through prayer. When we are willing to share our joys and struggles with our faith community and lift each other up in prayer, we will grow in our relationship with each other and God.

1. When, where, and with whom have you felt comfortable sharing your joys and struggles?
2. What makes it difficult to do so?
3. When you think of prayer, what comes to mind?

We recognize that many of you may have never prayed out loud before. That's okay. We are hoping that this will be an area of growth for everyone in the course of the eight-week study. As we all become more comfortable with each other, the idea of praying out loud will become more desirable. One of our guidelines for the group is "voluntary vulnerability." That means that you share only what you are comfortable sharing both in the discussion and prayer times.

There is no wrong or right way to pray. You can talk to God just as you would with anyone sitting in the group. Prayer is talking to God like you would talk to a friend. Again, we don't want you to ever feel pressured to pray out loud, but only as you are comfortable.

When we do pray together over the course of this study, we ask that those who want to participate pray short, simple one-sentence prayers.

**What is one highlight from your week or something you would like us to pray about?**

## PRAY TOGETHER

Group leader closes in prayer.

---

## RESOURCES

- Go to RightNow Media and watch a video series on growing in God's Word.
- *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *God Has Spoken* by J.I. Packer
- *The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People* by Max Lucado and Randy Frazee
- *How to Understand the Bible: A Simple Guide* by Mel Lawrenz
- *Topical Memory System* by The Navigators



# 2

## Rooted in Love

---

*We love because he first loved us.*

1 John 4:19

*What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. This is what love looks like.*

~Augustine

---

In 1990, Robertson McQuilkin, the president of Columbia Bible College, knew he needed to make a decision about his career. The school needed him 100 percent, and his wife, Muriel, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease almost ten years earlier, now needed him 100 percent. In the end, Robertson said, "The choice to step down from my position was an easy one for me to make." Perhaps the best explanation can be found in the letter he wrote to the Columbia Bible College constituency to explain his decision:

*...recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just "discontent." She is filled with fear—even terror—that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. So it is clear to me that she needs me now, full-time...*

*The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health...till death do us part." So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of her debt.*

*Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more: I love Muriel. She is a delight to me—her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of what wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don't have to care for her. I get to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person.*

So Robertson became a homemaker and caregiver. Robertson was able to give this kind of sacrificial love, because He was rooted in the One who gave it to him in the first place—God. 1 John 4:16 says, "God is love" and 1 John 3:11 says, "We should love one another." The most important thing we can do as Christians is to love God and others well, like was modeled so well in this story. This week, we're going to look at what it means to be *Rooted in Love*.

## GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To understand and grasp how much God loves us.
- To develop and practice love as a lifestyle.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. How was Robertson's love sacrificial? How does his love mirror Christ's love for you?
2. Describe a time in your life or circumstances when you felt loved even though you didn't deserve it.
3. How does understanding and accepting God's love for you help you love others?

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

1. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Rooted in Love*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

### *Discussion Questions*

For our Bible discussion time today we are going to look at two amazing passages. The first is one of Jesus' most famous teachings, the story of the prodigal son. The second passage is found in the book of I John. It is a wonderful description of God's love for us and how once we have experienced His love we are to be a conduit of His love to the world.

**Read Luke 15:11-32 about the Prodigal Son.** (Divide up the passage asking several people to read 3 to 4 verses at a time out loud.)

1. What person do you most identify with in the story (the father, the prodigal son, or the older brother)? Why?
2. Loving those who deserve to be loved is easy, like a spouse when things are going well, a son or daughter when they are cute and cuddly, or the person who is always there for you. The challenge comes when God puts people in our lives who don't deserve to be loved. What then?
3. How did the father show unconditional love for his prodigal son, especially when he didn't deserve it?
4. How is God's love for us like the father's love for his son?

### **Read 1 John 3:1**

1. When you read "what great love the Father has lavished on us" how does that make you feel?
2. What do you learn about God's love for you from this verse?
3. What do you need to do to respond to God's love in your life?

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

4. How does knowing how much you're loved by God affect you personally? How does it affect how you love others?
5. As you think about the passages of Scripture we looked at, what have you learned about being *Rooted in Love*?

As a response to this lesson, consider the following 5-Day Love Challenge. These are five daily activities that will help you grow in your understanding and application of God's love.

### 5-DAY LOVE CHALLENGE

**DAY 1:** Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. Linger particularly on verses 4-8 on the different descriptions of what love is. Rewrite this passage with your name instead of the word "love" and on every statement give yourself a score of 1-5 on how you perceive yourself. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you grow in the areas of love you lack most.

**DAY 2:** Read through the prodigal son story again (Luke 15:11-32). Ask the Lord to show you all the ways you have behaved like the second son, and how you have had the attitude of the first son.

**DAY 3:** Spend time reading through Romans 8:37-39. Journal all the things that have threatened to shake your understanding of God's love for you. Spend some time in solitude telling God what you appreciate about His love for you. Also feel free to tell Him if there are aspects of His love you struggle with.

**DAY 4:** Read John 15:9-17. Write down what it means for you to show your love to God by obeying Him.

**DAY 5:** Read 1 John 3:16-18. How can you respond to God's love for you today by loving others in a more complete way?

### SHARE TOGETHER

1. At times, we all feel unworthy of God's love. Share a time when you felt that way. How did you rediscover God's deep love for you?

2. At times we haven't loved the people in our lives like Christ has loved us. When and who has it been difficult to love and how can the group pray for you to be rooted in Christ's love for that person?
3. We show love by our actions. Spend a few minutes and fill out the *Love Commitment* below in response to your sharing time and begin praying for God to help you honor this commitment of love through regular prayer for this person.

## Love Commitment

In response to my love for God, I would like to love \_\_\_\_\_ more intentionally (fill in a specific person's name).

In response to my desire to love others like God loves me, I would like to \_\_\_\_\_ more intentionally (fill in a specific action).

## PRAY TOGETHER

One of the most significant ways we can show acts of love for our group is to pray for each other. Partner with another group member to exchange prayer requests and pray for each other throughout the week. In what way would you like the rest of the group to pray for you this week?

Group leader closes in prayer.

## DIGGING DEEPER

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.

1. Make a list of all the things that this passage says love is. (Note: Love is described both positively and negatively.)
2. Which descriptions of loving others do you find easier to do? Which ones are the most difficult?

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

3. Look at verse 1 carefully. "The Greek word for love indicates a selfless concern for the welfare of others that is not called forth by any quality of loveableness in the person loved, but is the product of a will to love in obedience to Gods command" (The *NIV Study Bible*). How, then, is love a choice and not a feeling?
4. How does realizing that love is a command affect your love for others?
5. How can you love others better after reading this passage?

**Read and meditate on 1 John 3:16-18.**

---

### Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch the *Crazy Love* and *Perfect Love* video series.
- *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* by Henri J. Nouwen
- *Love Beyond Reason* by John Ortberg
- *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by Relentless Love* by Francis Chan
- *Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God* by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge

# 3

## Rooted in Community

---

*What if our loneliness is the result not simply of needing a partner but of needing people? We are made in the image of a relational God; it makes sense that we possess the desire to be together.*

~Debra Fileta

---

The year was 1976 and the Special Olympics were being held in Seattle. There were nine contestants, all physically or mentally challenged, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win.

All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. They all turned around and went back. ***Every one of them.***

One girl with Down syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." All nine linked arms and walked across the finish line together.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What truly matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course. Friends together are better than being alone!

We are all going to fall down, fumble the ball, and scrape our knees in life—that is a given! What is not a given is whether or not you will give your life to a community of people, who will stop what they are doing to go back on the track and help pick you up. Will you be one of those people?

As we continue our series on what it means to be *Rooted in Christ* and *Released to His Mission*, we will now look at what it means to be *Rooted in Community*.

## GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To understand that we were created by God to live in community.
- To understand and engage in what it means to become the community God designed for us.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. In what ways is your community (family, church, friendships, etc.) like or unlike the following? Explain your answer.

- a drive-through
- a theater performance
- watching a football game
- a hospital
- a shopping mall

2. When you think of the word “community” what comes to mind?

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*



1. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Rooted in Community*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

### ***Discussion Questions***

Among the most quoted passages at a wedding is Genesis 2:18 where God says of His creation of man, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." The truth of this statement goes beyond the context of marriage. God's plan for man is community. Our need for community is a part of how God created us. We are designed to live, thrive, and exist in community.

#### **Read Acts 2:42-47.**

1. What are the traits of a healthy community as described in this passage?
2. What would it take for your Life Group to become this type of community?
  - How might we develop an atmosphere that allows for vulnerability and truth-telling?
  - How might we focus on becoming more Christ-like?
  - How might we meet not just for ourselves, but for the world?
  - How might we be sacrificing for one another?
3. How can we live out this type of community described in Acts 2 in today's world?
4. Look at verses 44-45. What was the cost involved to the community in Acts?

**EXERCISE: OVERCOMING OUR FEARS ABOUT COMMUNITY**

We haven't all had positive community experiences. Whenever a group of people gather together, there is bound to be some bumps along the way. We are all so different, after all. As you engage in community with your Life Group, here are some things you need to watch out for so that you can experience the kind of community found in Acts 2.

- Shallow-ness: "Sometimes depth is too risky."
- Inward focus: "The new guy made it harder for us to deepen our conversation."
- Gossip: "Gathering essential information."
- Unhealthy cliques: "But I prefer to hang out with those I like."
- Comparison: "Ours is better."
- Mistrust of leadership: "They are imperfect, you know!"

Have you experienced any of these? How can you guard against them in your community?

**SHARE TOGETHER**

1. What is your biggest fear about living in community?
2. When and where have you experienced real community in your life?
3. Discuss some ways you can "give to anyone who has need" both inside and outside of your Life Group. What would that look like for your group?

**PRAY TOGETHER**

We have an incredible opportunity to support each other in community by praying together. As an extension of our community, partner with another group member and get together during the week to get to know each other better. Talk about what you've been learning through the study this far and plan to pray together. The goal is to deepen the relationships within the group.

Spend some time in closing, praying one-sentence prayers out loud, for those who desire to participate, thanking God for the gift of community.

## DIGGING DEEPER

Read Mark 2:1-12.

This is a story about community. It shows what commitment to one another looks like and how community can be life-transforming. Read the passage and answer the questions.

1. How is commitment to one another a central theme of this story?
2. What did friendship cost this group and what are the costs you will have if you are going to deepen community in your group?
3. What are the underlying convictions of the friends that cause them to never give up?
4. What does it look like today to get people into the presence of Jesus so He can bring healing and transformation to their lives? Who in your life needs that today?
5. Where have you put your “to-do list” ahead of people?
6. What other lessons have you learned from this passage as it relates to being in a Life Group and in relationship to other people?

---

### Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch the video series *Living Life Together* by Shauna Niequist
- Go to RightNow Media and watch the video series *Love at Last Sight* by Kerry Shook
- *Everybody is Normal Until You Get to Meet Them* by John Ortberg
- *Community 101* by Gilbert Bilezikian and John Ortberg
- *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide**

# 4

## Rooted in Obedience

---

*Just as a servant knows that he must first obey his master in all things, so the surrender to an implicit and unquestionable obedience must become the essential characteristic of our lives.*

~Andrew Murray

*Many think that the price of discipleship is too costly and too burdensome. For some, it involves giving up too much. But the cross is not as heavy as it appears to be. Through obedience, we acquire much greater strength to carry it.*

~James E. Faust

---

Every day we are confronted with choices to do the right or wrong thing. The Bible reminds us, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..." (Hebrews 3:15). The problem for so many of us is, even though we hear God's voice and we know what He is asking of us—we harden our hearts and fail to obey.

### 11B

I will never forget the moment I made a simple choice that deeply hurt a stranger. I was getting on an airplane and went to find my seat only to find a man was in my seat! "I want to sit here next to my wife, so you can sit in my seat—11B," the man said pointing across the aisle and up a row. My eyes followed to where he pointed. I saw the empty seat next to a really large man, who was mumbling and talking to himself. Frustrated that I had been put in this position, I took an empty seat across the aisle instead. I was not about to sit next to that man.

Soon afterwards, a girl came down the aisle. Looking confused, she told me that I was in her seat. Instead of doing the right thing and letting her take my seat, it was my turn to point! I motioned across the aisle as I explained that my seat was taken and that she needed to sit in 11B. I felt horrible the moment she sat down. I knew God was asking me to

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

put aside my preferences, but I was stubborn and disobedient. I watched as this girl, clearly younger than me, scooted in her seat closer and closer to the aisle. As the flight continued, she was barely perched on the edge of the seat. She flipped her hair over the side of her face, just trying to create a physical barrier between herself and the man. After beverages had been served, the man accidentally knocked his entire cup of coffee over her lap. She leaped in pain and frustration, motioning for a flight attendant. I started to cry. I should have sat in 11B. I would have better loved on that man and spared that girl so much. I could have been an example of self-sacrificing love, but instead I put myself first. My selfishness got the best of me and I hurt another person by not obeying God. I am grateful for God's forgiveness, but I will never forget the look of pain and discomfort I caused that girl.

We all have an 11B moment, when God clearly speaks and asks us to do the right thing—and we have a choice to make. The choice is always ours, but disobedience can have deep and lasting consequences. This week we are going to look at what it means to be *Rooted in Obedience*.

## GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To recognize our love for God is lived out through obedience to Him.
- To view obedience as an outward action of an inward transformation.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. What is one way you have applied material from the first three weeks of the study?
2. Divide up in partners. Come up with a definition for the word "obedience". Have each set of partners share with the group. Discuss the similarities and differences you had within your definitions.

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

1. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Rooted in Obedience*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

### *Discussion Questions*

**Read Matthew 7:16-27.**

These verses fall into a section of Scripture known as the *Sermon on the Mount*. This sermon was named this because the people sat on a hillside near Capernaum as they listened to Jesus teach. In these teachings, Jesus lays a foundation for how He desires His followers to live. From the start, He asks us for a life of obedience.

1. What is Matthew describing in verse 17? What must be taking place inwardly for good fruit to be produced?

## **ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide**

2. Jesus boldly states that those who are able to enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do “the will of my Father who is in heaven.” What is Jesus saying about obedience here?
3. What are some ways we can know what God is asking us to do?
4. How is obeying God like building a house on the rock? How is disobeying like building a house on sand?

**Read 1 Samuel 15:22 and John 14:15, 21, 23-24.**

1. What do these verses say about obedience?
2. When is it easy for you to obey God? When is it difficult?
3. Where do you need to do a better job of living in obedience to God?
4. What is the difference between joyful obedience and rote legalism (following out of a desire to be perfect or fear of consequences)? How do you know when you have fallen out of joyful obedience?

## **SHARE TOGETHER**

One of our guidelines for the group is “voluntary vulnerability.” Again, to review, that means you share only what you are comfortable sharing.

1. Have you had an 11B moment recently that you can share?
2. Why is obedience so difficult even when you know that the consequences of not obeying can be so bad not only for you, but for others.
3. What can we do when we’ve been disobedient? (Read 1 John 1:9—“the Christian’s bar of soap”—and discuss.)



## **PRAY TOGETHER**

One of the areas we want to grow together is prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God like you talk to a friend. We know that some of you have never prayed out loud before. That's okay. You don't have to do anything you're not comfortable with. So this week, we will spend a few moments in silent prayer. I would encourage you to write down a few areas where God is asking you to do the right thing, and in these moments ask God to help you do it this week.

If anyone in the group would like to pray a one-sentence prayer for something they are thankful for this past week, we will spend a few minutes to do that. I will close us in prayer.

## **DIGGING DEEPER**

Find time during the week to read the book of Jonah.

1. What does Jonah do to disobey God?
2. What did repentance and confession look like for Jonah?
3. What happened when Jonah chose to obey?
4. When have you needed to repent and confess to God? Are there areas that you need to do that right now?

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

5. Ask God to speak to you through His Word. Reflect on each of the following passages and then spend some time asking God how He wants you to demonstrate obedience in your daily life.

1 Samuel 15:22

Proverbs 19:16

Acts 5:29

Galatians 5:1

Hebrews 4:16

James 4:17

---

### Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch a video series on living an obedient life.
- *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* by Eugene Peterson
- *Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World* by Craig Groeschel
- *Louder than Words: The Power of Uncompromised Living* by Andy Stanley

# 5

## *Released to Live Purposefully*

---

*For we are God's workmanship; created in Christ Jesus to do good works; which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

~Ephesians 2:10

*The real test of a man is not when he plays the role he wants for himself, but when he plays the role destiny has for him.*

~Vaclav Havel

---

The Academy Award-winning movie *Braveheart* told the story of the Scottish Freedom Fighter William Wallace. Toward the end of the film, Wallace is in chains awaiting his execution. On the strength of his passion and determination, he had led all of Scotland to revolt against their English oppressors. Time and again, his will and determination had bonded the spirits of the people into a force for national identity, pride, and freedom. But now he had been betrayed, handed over to his enemies, and sentenced to death. In the scene, a young woman urges the imprisoned Wallace to do whatever he can—regardless of its impact on his life, mission, or personal convictions—to stay the hand of his enemies, in order that his life might be spared. His response communicates one of the deepest truths of human existence: “Every man dies,” he said. “Not every man really lives.”

Friends, you were made for a purpose. You were made to really live. When you begin to understand God's purpose for your life, you will understand that you are part of something greater and grander than yourself—that you have a role to play in the unfolding of God's redemptive plans for the world.

As we continue our series on what it means to be *Rooted in Christ* and *Released to His Mission*, we will look at what it actually means to be *Released to Live Purposefully*.

## GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To understand that God has uniquely made you for a purpose.
- To discover what God's purpose for your life is.
- To be empowered to live with a sense of purpose.

## CONNECTING TOGETHER

1. We are now halfway through the study. Share what has been most helpful from the first four lessons.
2. Share a time in your life when you felt that you were doing exactly what God made you to be and do. How did that make you feel?

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

1. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Released to Live Purposefully*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

### *Discussion Questions*

Before a building can be built, an architect has to first draw up the plans. He will meet with the owner to discuss what the intended purpose of the building is. The intended function always determines how it is made. The same is true of God. Before God created you, He decided what role He wanted you to play on earth, and then designed and created you to fulfill that purpose.

1. As a group, make a list of the benefits of knowing that God has made you for a purpose.
2. A number of years ago, Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church wrote the popular book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. In it he divides God's purposes for our life into five categories. Read through each of the passages of Scripture and answer the questions.

**MAGNIFY.** *We were made by God and for God and all of life is worship to Him. Every activity can be transformed into an act of worship when done to the praise, pleasure, and glory of God.*

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).

What does it look like for our work to be an act of worship?

How can you turn your normal activities of life into acts of worship?

**MATURITY.** *God's desire is that we continue to grow from babies in Christ to spiritual adults. This life-long process will involve becoming more and more like Jesus every day.*

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

What are some things you have done to continue growing in your faith?

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

**MINISTRY.** *Every follower of Christ has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve the Body of Christ and the community in which they live. Our responsibility is to use the talents, gifts, and abilities God has entrusted to us for His glory and the extension of His Kingdom.*

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”  
(1 Corinthians 12:7)

Why is it important for every person to find a place to serve in the church?

What are some steps you can take to find a place to serve at Elmbrook Church?

**MEMBERSHIP.** *God created us for community and we will only reach our spiritual potential when we are connected to others in a Life Group. A Life Group is a place where you can be encouraged, comforted, loved, prayed for, supported, and is a place to grow.*

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

What benefits have you experienced from being together the last four weeks?

**MISSION.** *God is a global God and we are involved in something much bigger and grander than ourselves, and involved in a cause with global dimensions and eternal consequences. This means I will be able to tell the story of what God has done in my life and to be able share God’s story with others.*

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24)

It has been said that every single Christ follower is a missionary and our mission field is between our own two feet. What does that look like for you?

These five purposes for your life provide direction, inspiration, and a sense of significance. Discuss as a group how you will practically go about incorporating each of these into your life.

3. Read the following definition of *Kingdom Purpose* and discuss.

*Your specific contribution to the Body of Christ within your generation that causes you to be totally dependent on God and authentically display His love towards others through your unique shape.*

- What is most helpful?
  
- What is confusing?
  
- What does this look like for you?

## **SHARE TOGETHER**

1. Go around the group and share one thing you are thankful for and one thing you are struggling with this week.
2. Based on the discussion about living purposefully, how can the group pray for you as you seek to discover and live out your kingdom purpose?
3. Share what you are going to do this week to begin to live with a greater sense of purpose.

## **PRAY TOGETHER**

Over the course of the last four weeks, we have introduced the concept of group prayer. Take time now to pray for one another. Remember to keep your prayers brief and Christ-centered. If you don't feel comfortable praying out loud, you don't have to participate.

## **DIGGING DEEPER**

Each of these passages speaks to God's purpose for our lives. Look them up and make notes about the main points of the passage.

Ephesians 2:10

Philippians 3:7-14

Acts 20:22-24

Philippians 1:21

Jeremiah 29:11-13

Romans 8:29

1 Corinthians 12:4-27

Psalms 139:13-16

1. What are some of the major themes you saw in these passages?
2. How would you describe your purpose for living? And how does this alter your life? How is your sense of security and significance influenced by knowing God has a purpose for your life?
3. Which of these verses motivates and clarifies God's call on your life the most?



4. How do you go about discovering God's purpose for your life? What role does passion, giftedness, past experiences, and relationships play?

There are four questions every person needs to answer in life. Read through the following and answer them the best that you can.

1. *What is going to be at the center of your life?* (What am I going to live for? Money, family, career, hobby, sports, or Christ?)
2. *What is going to be the character of your life?* (What am I going to demonstrate to the world I live in? Am I making visible the invisible Christ or am I going to reflect modern culture?)
3. *What will be the contribution of your life?* (Each of us has been uniquely made and gifted to make a contribution in the world. Am I using my time, talents, and treasures to further God's kingdom or have I hidden them?)
4. *What will be your communication?* (What will I say to the world with my words and life? What will I say to those who are hurting, broken, and in pain? What will I say to those without Christ?)

## KEY PRINCIPLES

- God has created everyone for a purpose.
- Knowing God's purpose for your life will give you a sense of direction, keep you focused, and prepare you for God's final audit of your life.
- We must seek God with all our heart to discover His purpose for our lives.
- Every person has a role to play in the unfolding of God's redemptive plans for the world.

---

### Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch a video series on living a purposeful life.
- *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* by Rick Warren
- *A Purposeful Life* by James Emery White
- *Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire That Ignites Personal Vision* by Bill Hybels
- *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* by Os Guinness
- **SHAPE CLASS.** This one-day, video-led course will help you discover how God has shaped your Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences—and how that impacts the role God wants you to play in His kingdom. Visit [elmbrook.org/shape](http://elmbrook.org/shape) for more information.

# 6

## Released to Live Contagiously

---

*We need to let our stories be windows. Then people will see through us and through our stories to Christ.*

~ J. Mack Stiles

---

In his book *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, Bill Hybels shares a letter written by a relatively new Christian to the person whose life had influenced hers so greatly. In the letter she mentions a number of qualities she found to be contagious. Read what she wrote:

*You know when we met; I began to discover a new vulnerability, a warmth, and a lack of pretense that impressed me. I saw in you a thriving spirit—no signs of internal stagnation anywhere. I could tell you were a growing person and I liked that. I saw you had strong self-esteem, not based on the fluff of self-help books, but on something a whole lot deeper. I saw that you lived by convictions and priorities and not just by convenience, selfish pleasure, and financial gain. And I had never met anyone like that before. I felt a depth of love and concern as you listened to me and didn't judge me. You tried to understand me, you sympathized and you celebrated with me, you demonstrated kindness and generosity—and not just to me, but to other people, as well. And you stood for something. You were willing to go against the grain of society and follow what you believed to be true, no matter what people said, and no matter how much it cost you. And for those reasons and a whole host of others, I found myself really wanting what you had. Now that I've become a Christian, I wanted to write to tell you I'm grateful beyond words for how you lived out your Christian life in front of me.*

Who wouldn't want to receive a letter like that? In this lesson we are going to examine what it looks like for each of us to be *Released to Live Contagiously*. As we see in this letter, it was how the life was lived that made the difference. It was a life that pointed to Jesus. Just think what would happen if every week 5,000 people walked out of Elmbrook Church living a contagious life—a life that is consistent with the gospel they embrace and a life that is prepared to share what God has done and desires to do in others' lives? Milwaukee would never be the same!

### GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To see that God has put you here for the sake of others.
- To understand what it means to live contagiously.
- To develop some basic skills for telling others about Jesus.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. As you have looked back at God's work in your life, what is one thing you're thankful for?
2. Share with the group who was most influential in your coming to Christ. Why were they so influential?
3. What are some barriers to sharing your story and God's story with others?

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

4. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Released to Live Contagiously*?
5. What was most helpful to you?
6. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

## *Discussion Questions*

Look up Matthew 5:13-16 and have someone in the group read the passage.

1. Why would Jesus use the terms “salt and light” to describe a Christian’s influence in the world?
2. What are the “good deeds” that He is referring to in verse 16? What are some practical ways you can demonstrate the love of Christ to your neighbors?
3. What are the dangers He refers to in this passage as it relates to being a contagious Christian?

**STYLES OF ENGAGEMENT.** When it comes to engaging the world with the gospel, it is so important to remember that God wants us to be the unique individuals He made us to be. When we compare ourselves to others, we can fall into the thinking that we have to be someone “super spiritual” in order to be effective in communicating our faith. In Scripture, we find examples of at least six different styles of sharing your faith. As we look at these different styles of engaging with people, we should not compare them or rank them over another. Neither should we label ourselves or limit ourselves to a lifetime of just one style.

Take turns as a group to read through each of these styles and then answer the questions at the end to discuss. Be thinking about which approach best describes you.

### *The Confrontational Approach (Acts 2)*

Peter is an example of someone who is comfortable and willing to present the gospel in a bold and direct manner. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, he stood confidently before the people and presented them with the facts of who Christ was and what He had done for them. Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, and Bill Hybels would be three men that have this style.

### *The Intellectual Approach (Acts 17)*

The essence of this approach is one’s ability to present the gospel in a logical and articulate manner. In this passage Paul presents an ingenious argument, starting from the Athenian idol to an unknown god and moving all the way to the only true God and His resurrected Messiah. This approach will be used by someone that is analytical, logical, and inquisitive.

### *Testimonial Approach (John 9)*

This man had been blind from birth and then Jesus came along and gave him sight. As soon as he was able to see, he was thrust in front of a group of people and asked to explain what happened. His response was wonderfully simple: “Once I was blind, but now I see.” It is hard to argue with personal testimony. People need

to hear a similar testimony of God's working in your life. While this is a dramatic story, it is authentic. And that is what characterizes the testimonial approach: authentic communicating about what Jesus has done in your life.

***Interpersonal Approach (Luke 5)***

In this account, Matthew relies on the relationships he had built over the years and sought to further develop these friendships. He invited them over for a meal and ate with them, because he genuinely cared about them and wanted to influence them toward considering Jesus. The people who use this approach tend to be warm, people-centered individuals who enjoy deep communication and trust with those to whom they are reaching out. They enjoy long talks with people over a cup of coffee. They are the ones opening their homes as places of gathering for meals and discussion.

***Invitational Approach (John 4)***

After Jesus had spent time talking with this Samaritan woman she quickly realized that He was no ordinary Jewish teacher. His prophetic insights and authoritative answers convinced her of His claim to be the Messiah. She immediately went into her town and invited whomever she could find to come to the well to hear Jesus for themselves. This simple invitation led to Jesus staying two more days in their town. Many of them came to faith as a result. There are many in our society today who would make great strides in their faith journey if someone would invite them to a service or Christian event. George Barna, in one of his most recent surveys, discovered that over 50 percent of Americans say they would come to church if they were invited.

***Service Approach (Acts 9:36)***

Dorcas was a woman who was "always doing good and helping the poor." She was well known for her loving acts of service performed in the name of Jesus. Through acts of service people got a glimpse of the love of God that filled her. This approach to engaging people comes naturally to those who notice the needs of others and enjoy finding ways to meet needs. These people usually enjoy expressing compassion through tangible forms of action. (Exercise taken from *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg.)

1. Which one of the above styles best describes you?
2. How can you minister to people in your sphere of influence in tangible ways that fit with how you naturally engage with people?
3. What are some cautions you need to exercise when it comes to your style of engaging with others?

**THE POWER OF YOUR STORY.** Every one of you has a story to tell about what God has done in your life.

1. What are the benefits of being prepared to share your story?
2. What kinds of conversations lead to sharing your personal, spiritual experience?
3. How has your view of being *Released to Live Contagiously* been challenged or changed this week?

***Application ideas for this week:***

- Pick up a book on sharing your faith and read through it. There are a number listed at the end of this lesson.
- Begin the process of writing out your story. (See “Personal Testimony Worksheet” at the back of the book.)
- Take a walk and pray for the families in your neighborhood this week. Use Colossians 4:2-4 as a guide for your prayer time.
- Intentionally ask a friend, co-worker, or neighbor to go out for coffee, a meal, or over to your home to get to know them.
- Listen and look for a need that someone has and then fill it.

**SHARE TOGETHER**

1. What is your biggest fear about sharing your faith?
2. What would give you more confidence?
3. Think of a friend who is not currently connected to a church. Why not invite that person to come to church with you this weekend? What is the worst thing that could happen if you invite them? What is the best thing that could happen if you invite them? Is the potential benefit worth the risk? Remember over 90 percent of Christians first went to church because a friend or family member invited them.

Tell your group the name of the person you will invite to church so they can pray.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## PRAY TOGETHER

Would anyone like to share an answer to a prayer from last week? What one thing can the group pray for you this week?

Get into groups of three or four and pray for one another. Especially pray for the people that you want to invite to church this weekend. Read Colossians 4:2-4 before you pray.

Pray that each person in your group develops lives that are contagious to the world and are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading to the needs around them.

## DIGGING DEEPER

This week we are going to examine John 4:1-42, which is the story of Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman. We are going to study this passage using *The Discovery Bible Study Method*. Studies show that 90 percent of what people remember and apply to their lives comes through self-discovery. *The Discovery Bible Study* is based on the passage found in James 1:22-25, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does." It is the process of working through a Bible passage first individually and then together as a group, with the goal of better understanding who God is, that will help you make application to your life.

To get started, read through John 4:1-42 several times slowly to allow the text to really sink in. Once you have done that, answer the following questions.

1. If this story is from God, what does it teach us about His character? Who is God according to this story from His Word? What do you see God doing in this story?
2. If this story is from God, what does it teach us about humanity? Who are we as humans? What is our character or nature?
3. If this story is from God, what might He want you to do as an application? Your answer will be, "I will..."
4. Who could you share this story with? (What is their name?)



## Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch a video series on becoming more contagious with your faith.
- *Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps Pointing People to Faith* by Bill Hybels
- *The Insider: Bringing the Kingdom of God into Your Everyday World* by Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy
- *Going Public with Your Faith: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work* by William Peel and Walt Larimore, MD
- *The Coffeehouse Gospel: Sharing Your Faith Through Everyday Conversation* by Matthew Paul Turner
- *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels with Mark Mittelberg
- *The Unexpected Adventure* by Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg



# 7

## Released to Live Compassionately

---

*Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you, too.*

~Frederick Buechner

---

Several years ago a story appeared in the *Boston Globe*. A woman and her fiancé were planning their wedding reception at the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston. They poured over the menu, selected the best food, the best silverware, and the best flowers. The bill came to around \$13,000. As was required, they paid 50 percent of it for the down payment.

The only problem was that on the day the wedding invitations hit people's mailboxes, the groom got cold feet and backed out. Sadly, the bride went to the Hyatt to cancel the reception. The event manager was very understanding. She told her the story of her own broken engagement: "The same thing happened to me, honey." But then she shared the bad news: "The contract is binding. You can't get your money back, so you have two options: forfeit the rest of the down payment or go ahead with the banquet. I'm sorry, I really am."

The more the bride thought about it, the more she realized what she wanted to do. She wanted to go ahead with the party—but not a wedding banquet, a big blowout instead. Ten years earlier this same woman had been living in a homeless shelter. She was back on her feet, had a good job, and had built a good nest egg. Now she had the crazy idea of using her savings to treat the down-and-outs of Boston to a night on the town.

So on what was supposed to be her wedding night, the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston held a party, the likes of which has never seen before. The bride decided on the menu: *boneless chicken in honor of the groom!*

She sent invitations to local rescue missions and homeless shelters. That night, people who were used to diving into trash cans looking for old pieces of pie, dined on Chicken Cordon Bleu. The Hyatt waiters, in tuxedos, served appetizers and hors d'oeuvres to vagrants, addicts, and prostitutes—they all danced late into the night.

## ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide

In Isaiah 58:6-7 God says, "Is not this the kind of fasting (*or worship*) I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice...to set the oppressed free...to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter..."

So often when we talk about what it means to worship God, we think about a church service, a good sermon, or a time of prayer together. While all these are vital to our worship of God, what happened in Boston that night was the type of worship God intended us to show: feeding the hungry, giving hope to the hopeless, and helping those who nobody else will help. That's radical compassion in action!

So how do we live this out? How can we be *Released to Live Compassionately*? This week we're going to explore that in greater depth.

## GOALS FOR THE LESSON

- To discover God's heart of compassion for the marginalized.
- For your group to take practical steps in showing acts of compassion.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. Describe a time in your life when you showed compassion to someone or some group in need. How did this act of compassion change you?
2. What do you think are the greatest barriers to people showing compassion to those in need?
3. How do you develop a heart of compassion, especially towards those people who are so different from yourself?

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

1. What is one thing that impacted you from the video *Released to Live Compassionately*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

### *Discussion Questions*

1. Have someone in the group look up each of these verses and read to the group. What do the following passages tell us about God's heart for the marginalized? Be specific.

Luke 4:14-18

Psalm 34:18

Psalm 68:4-6

Proverbs 14:21

## **ROOTED + RELEASED Study Guide**

### **Read Matthew 25:34-46.**

1. What does this passage tell you about the eternal importance that God puts on compassion?
2. How does knowing that Jesus is in the “least of these” change your view of compassion?
3. Who would you list as the “least of these” in society today? In your life?

### **Read James 2:14-17.**

1. Why do you think James says that a lack of compassion will kill our faith?
2. What steps can you take to do something about someone’s physical needs?

### **DISCUSS NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR GROUP**

Take time to discuss what you will be studying next as a group. For some groups this will be determined by the ministry, but otherwise you can decide together what you want to study next.

## **SHARE TOGETHER**

1. Based on the study, what practical ways can your group begin living compassionately together? Brainstorm ways you can serve in the community together and make a plan to serve together in the next few weeks. (For detailed information about how to serve with one of Elmbrook Church’s local partners, visit [elmbrook.org/serve](http://elmbrook.org/serve).)
2. To whom in your life has God been asking you to show radical compassion? What specific step do you need to take this week?

## PRAY TOGETHER

Spend time praying that God would use your group to serve the practical needs of others.

Pray specifically for the needs of those ignored in the greater Milwaukee area. This list may include:

- Homeless and poor
- People of different races
- Refugees and immigrants
- Teenage moms
- Those with disabilities
- Children at risk
- Girls caught in sex trafficking
- People addicted to drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Prisoners

At the end of your prayer time, recite together this prayer from Mother Teresa:

*Lord, open our eyes  
that we may see you in our brothers and sisters.*

*Lord, open our ears  
that we may hear the cries of the hungry,  
the cold, the frightened, the oppressed.*

*Lord, open our hearts  
that we may love each other as you love us.*

*Renew in us your spirit.*

*Lord, free us and make us one.*

## DIGGING DEEPER

Read and study **Luke 10:25-37** (The Parable of the Good Samaritan).

1. As you read Jesus' opening dialogue with the expert in the law and the story he shared, how do you think the story of compassion corresponds with Jesus' view of eternal life?
2. Look closely at verses 31-32. What was the response of the first two men that came along to the man left beaten and left to die on the road?
3. What was the response of the third man, the Good Samaritan, in verse 33?
4. What does it mean "to have pity" on people (verse 33)?
5. It's significant that the Good Samaritan—not the religious leader or the Levite—was commended by Jesus. Why do you think Jesus did that? (Note: The Good Samaritan was a foreigner.)
6. What can we learn from the Good Samaritan's compassion? What can we learn from the priest's and Levite's lack of compassion?
7. To whom do you need to show compassion?

---

### Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch a video series on becoming more compassionate.
- *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* by Timothy Keller
- Set up a time to visit one of Elmbrook Church's James Place ministries. (For more information, visit [elmbrook.org/jamesplace](http://elmbrook.org/jamesplace).)



# 8

## *Released to Live Generously*

---

*The world asks, "What does a man own?"*

*Christ asks, "How does he use it?"*

~Andrew Murray

---

You may remember the story of Matt Emmons at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. Matt is a sharp shooter and was competing in the 50 meter three-position rifle event. He had won the world championship in this event four years in a row and he had never trained more or harder than he did for this Olympic moment. He was, not surprisingly, dominating his competition. He had one final shot that he had to complete. He didn't need to hit a bull's-eye, but really needed to hit the target. He shot it. It was a bull's-eye. His shot would have normally earned him a score of 8.1, enough to take home the gold. But there was just one problem: he fired at the wrong target. Standing in lane two, Matt fired at lane three. It was deemed by those who know the sport as an "extremely rare mistake in elite competition." Matt said he had only made that mistake a couple of times in his entire life. When asked why he thought he made that mistake he replied, "I just forgot to look where I was firing."

As we conclude our **Rooted + Released** study, our hope is that you will aim at the right target. There is nothing worse than realizing at the end of the day that you spent all your time, talent, and treasure aimed at the wrong target. But there is nothing better than aiming your time, talent, and treasure at the bull's-eye God has for you.

This is what it means to be *Released to Live Generously*. It means taking all of our time, talent, and treasure and asking God, "Where do you want me to aim them?"

### **GOALS FOR THIS LESSON**

- You will see your time, talent, and treasure as resources God has given you to be a part of His bigger mission.
- You will identify the barriers you have in living generously and take steps towards releasing all of these areas to God and His work.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. When people hear the phrase “live generously” in terms of time, talent, and treasure (resources), what objections do they have?
2. Which of these three is the easiest for you to be generous with: time, talent, or treasure? Why? Which is the hardest? Why?

## GROW TOGETHER

*Watch the video together as a group. Notes:*

1. What impacted you from the video *Released to Live Generously*?
2. What was most helpful to you?
3. Do you have any questions about what the speaker said?

## *Discussion Questions*

### **Read Matthew 25:14-30.**

The key figure in this story was the master. One view of him led two servants to be generous and leverage their talents; another view of him led one servant to bury his.

1. How does our view of God affect our generosity?
2. Based on this passage, how do you think Jesus looks at how we spend our time, in light of the task He has given us on earth? (Be specific from the passage; see Psalm 90:12.)
3. In what ways do we “bury our time” without even realizing it? How does our culture encourage us to bury our time?
4. One of the reasons that the man buried his talent was that he was “afraid” (verse 25). What specific fears keep us from being generous with our time? Our talents? Our resources?
5. It’s interesting that the person who had the least amount of talents in the story was the one who buried his. Why do you think this is? How do Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 refute this?
6. What does this passage say about how God blesses us when we are generous with our resources? (See 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Malachi 3:9-10; Proverbs 3:9-10.)

## SHARE TOGETHER

Take a minute to fill out the chart and share with each other.

|                        | How am I generous? | What keeps me from being generous? | One step I will take to be more generous... |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b><i>Time</i></b>     |                    |                                    |   |
| <b><i>Talent</i></b>   |                    |                                    |   |
| <b><i>Treasure</i></b> |                    |                                    |   |

1. How can we hold each other accountable in these areas?
2. Share what has been the most significant life-changing thing that you have learned from this study the last eight weeks.
3. What excites you about being **Rooted + Released**?

## PRAY TOGETHER

In today's prayer time we want to practice generosity with each other. Break into groups of 3 to 4 and tell each other how you have seen their talents and gifts used in the Life Group. Pray that God continues to use them as He already has used them in your group.

Praise God for the things He has taught you individually and as a group through the **Rooted + Released** study these last eight weeks.

## DIGGING DEEPER

Study Romans 12 and consider how Paul's words instruct us to live generously with our time, talent, and treasure.

1. In verse 1, we are urged to "offer your bodies as living sacrifices...this is your spiritual act of worship." How is being generous a sacrifice and act of worship?
2. In verse 2, Paul talks about "not conforming to the patterns of this world." How does the world view generosity and the giving of our time, talents, and treasures? How are we to view generosity from a Christian worldview?
3. How does living generously draw people to Christ?
4. Study verses 4-7. In what ways does living a life of generosity bring glory to God and benefit others in accomplishing God's greater mission?
5. How can we be "devoted to one another in brotherly love... and honor one another above ourselves" with our time, talent, and treasures?
6. What did you learn from this passage of Scripture about being *Released to Live Generously*?

---

### Resources

- Go to RightNow Media and watch a video series on becoming more generous.
- *When the Game is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box* by John Ortberg
- Watch the following messages online from Elmbrook Church:
  - TIME:** *When You Are Too Busy to Think*, [elmbrook.org/media/sermons/series/get-rich](http://elmbrook.org/media/sermons/series/get-rich)
  - TALENT:** *The Barriers to Greatness*, [elmbrook.org/sermon/the-barriers-to-greatness](http://elmbrook.org/sermon/the-barriers-to-greatness)
  - TREASURE:** *Get Rich* series, [elmbrook.org/media/sermons/series/get-rich](http://elmbrook.org/media/sermons/series/get-rich)



# LIFE GROUP COVENANT

In order to grow in my discipleship with Christ and to build authentic Christian community, I agree to the following standards:

**1. TOTAL AND COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY.**

What I hear here, see here, and say here stays here. I will say nothing that may be traced back or that could be injurious or embarrassing to my group members. My group leader will refer me to a pastor if I am contemplating harming myself or doing harm to others.

**2. SHARE MY LIFE.**

I will be as open about my life as I can. I will be vulnerable with you, letting you know who I am as a person.

**3. UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.**

I will love you and affirm you no matter what you have said or done in the past. I will love you as you are and for what Christ desires you to be.

**4. VOLUNTARY ACCOUNTABILITY.**

I will ask the group to hold me accountable for specific areas of my life. With my permission, you can ask me about the goals I set with God, my family, personal life, and world. I expect you to lovingly not "let me off the hook."

**5. PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER.**

I promise to pray for those in my group regularly and lift their needs to the Lord.

**6. SENSITIVITY TO WHERE PEOPLE ARE.**

I understand each person in this group is at a different point in their walk with the Lord. I will accept you the way you are, but encourage you to grow in the Lord. I will seek to create a safe environment where people can be heard and loved.

**7. SPIRITUAL GROWTH.**

I will come prepared each week to participate and I will make every effort to be at class; it will have a high priority in my schedule. If I cannot attend, I will call my leader to let them know. I view my participation in this group as a means to grow in my relationship with Jesus and service to Jesus.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

(From *The Navigators*, [www.navigators.org](http://www.navigators.org).)

From its beginnings, *The Navigators* have encouraged Bible memorization as an important tool for spiritual growth. The ministry has developed packets of memory verse cards to enable people to learn verses that will help them share their faith and become more like Christ. These cards are grouped by subject or “topic” and comprise what we call the Topical Memory System. The following article references these topics in its suggestions for effective memorization. You can find out more by going to *The Navigators’* website.

## **AS YOU START TO MEMORIZE A VERSE:**

- Read in your Bible the context of each verse you memorize.
- Try to gain a clear understanding of what each verse actually means. You may want to read the verse in other Bible translations or paraphrases or perhaps consult a commentary, after you’ve done your personal study.
- Read the verse through several times thoughtfully, out loud or in a whisper. This will help you grasp the verse as a whole. Each time you read it, say the topic, reference, verse, and then the reference again.
- Discuss the verse with God in prayer, and continue to seek His help for success in Scripture memory.

## **WHILE YOU ARE MEMORIZING THE VERSE:**

- Work on saying the verse out loud as much as possible.
- Learn the topic and reference first.
- After learning the topic and reference, learn the first phrase of the verse. Once you have learned the topic, reference, and the first phrase and have repeated them several times, continue adding more phrases after you can quote correctly what you have already learned.
- Think about how the verse applies to you and your daily circumstances.
- Always include the topic and reference as part of the verse as you learn and review it.

## **AFTER YOU CAN QUOTE CORRECTLY THE TOPIC, REFERENCE, VERSE, AND REFERENCE AGAIN:**

- Writing the verse out can be helpful. This deepens the impression in your mind.
- Find a friend to check you on the verse. Better yet, memorize together!
- Review the verse immediately after learning it, and repeat it frequently in the next few days. This is crucial for fixing the verse firmly in your mind because of the tendency to forget something recently learned.
- Review! Review! Review! Repetition is the best way to engrave the verses on your memory.



# PERSONAL TESTIMONY WORKSHEET

Read the following guidelines and then begin working on a rough draft of your personal testimony. Keep in mind that no two testimonies are the same. It is this very uniqueness about how God has worked in your life and how you have responded that validates for others that their unique story is important and impactful as well.

## GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

### I. The Outline

- A. **Before.** A short sketch about what your life was like before you became a Christian.
- B. **How.** A brief outline of the steps you took to become a Christian.
- C. **After.** Describe the changes that Christ has made in your life compared with your life before Christ.
- D. **Unifying Theme.** The central issue(s) in your life that shows the contrast in your spiritual outlook before and after knowing Christ. (e.g., looking for peace, looking for a place to belong, looking for purpose, etc.)

For example: in Bill Hybel's book, *Just Walk Across the Room*, he gives these examples:

- "I was striving . . . but now I'm grateful."
- "I was self-destructive . . . but now I'm healthy."
- "Guilty . . . but now liberated."
- "Fear-stricken . . . but now confident."
- "Despairing . . . but now hopeful."
- "Seeking popularity . . . but now I live to serve others."
- "Plagued by loneliness . . . feel cared for, wanted, and loved."

It's worth searching your heart to pinpoint the foundation of your story: the key word or concept that describes your life before you met Christ, the fact that you then came into a relationship with Christ, and the keyword or concept that describes who you are after walking with Christ for a time.

## II. Questions to Consider

### A. In the "*Before*" Section

1. What was your life like before receiving Christ?
2. Make a list of five to seven adjectives that describe your life before Christ.
3. Circle the word that best describes your "before" state.

### B. In the "*How*" Section

1. How did you hear or learn about the gospel message that changed your life?
2. What was it about the message that affected you?
3. What were the life circumstances or events that caused you to submit your life to Jesus Christ? Were there any key people, events, or circumstances that were important?

### C. In the "*After*" Section

1. How did your attitude/behavior change after you received Christ?
2. What problems do you still struggle with, and how is God helping to make a difference? (People don't expect, nor will they believe, that you are perfect now.)
3. Finish this statement: Since becoming a Christian I have become. . .

## III. Reminders

- A. Make it sound conversational. Prepare it to be spoken.
- B. Speak in the first person.
- C. Avoid religious jargon.
- D. Generalize so that more people can identify with your story. It isn't necessary to name specific churches, denominations, or groups.
- E. Include some humor and human interest, if appropriate. This is a story.
- F. Word pictures also increase interest. Think about the details of your life that add color to help someone visualize what you're talking about.
- G. Keep it simple. Mention only a limited number of people, moves, meetings, jobs, etc., to maintain an interesting flow to your story.

Now, write your story in **300 words or less**. This limitation will allow you to tell your story in a couple of minutes or less. You can expand from here as your real-life conversations dictate.

## LEADER'S GUIDE

# Tips for Leading a Life Group

### PREPARING FOR THE FIRST STUDY

It is often the little things that set the tone for the first study. Planning, and being organized and prepared gives group members a sense of confidence. Most of these items are for the first study, but some are for all the studies. Several practical tips include:

- Call everyone the day before the first study to welcome and remind them.
- Pray for each person.
- Make sure you are able to access and view the videos as a group. You'll need to set up a RightNow Media account if you haven't yet done so. See page 10 for details.
- Have a comfortable physical setup; everyone should be able to see each other. The place should be well-lit.
- Have name tags available, at least for the first several weeks.
- Start and finish on time; very important!
- Go over the Life Group Covenant (found on page 63), if you are going to use it.
- During the first session, explain the format of the group: the purpose, length, how the study will be divided up, etc.

### BEING DILIGENT IN YOUR PREPARATION

An unprepared leader is a liability to any Life Group. The group will soon pick up on this. If you are not prepared, why should they be?

***Do not wait until the last minute.*** Bible study takes time and work for it to be fruitful. Start ahead of time and don't procrastinate.

***Keep the end in mind.*** As you are preparing for the lesson, think and pray about what the main objective of the study is, and what you want the group to leave with.

***Be diligent in your study.*** Again, do not rely on your study notes from your previous reading of the book, but re-read it looking up all the verses as you go.

***Pray for your group members and the discussion time.*** Spend time individually and with your co-leader praying for the upcoming lesson. Pray that God will have His way and visit the study through the work of the Holy Spirit.

# FACILITATING YOUR SMALL GROUP

## A FIVE-STEP PROCESS FOR GOOD FACILITATION

1. The Holy Spirit is everyone's teacher (John 14:26).
2. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God and/or Christian material to teach us.
3. Everyone studies the material and brings what the Holy Spirit has taught them to the meeting, including the leader.
4. The leader asks good questions to facilitate stimulating discussions and, as a result, talks less than 20 percent of the time.
5. Everyone leaves the meeting experiencing God speaking through different members and leaving challenged to apply what they have heard, including the leader.

## THE TEST OF A GOOD QUESTION

- Is it easily understood?
- Is it short and to the point?
- Can it be answered briefly?
- Does it require thought? (Do not be afraid of silence.)
- Can it have several responses and never be a "yes" or "no"?

## USING GUIDING QUESTIONS

These basic principles and questions are very helpful in leading and facilitating group discussions. It takes the pressure off of the co-leaders and puts more responsibility on the participants.

**EXTENDING QUESTIONS.** "What can you add to this?" "Are there any examples of this that you can find in the Old Testament?" "Where else in the Bible can you find that principle?" "Is there another Scripture verse that is related to it?" These are all examples of extending type questions.

**CLARIFYING QUESTIONS.** Two examples are, "What do you mean by that?" "Can you explain that more fully?"

**JUSTIFYING QUESTIONS.** "Why do you say that?" "What is the thinking behind that statement?" "Can you justify that for us?" "Where else is that found?"

**REDIRECTING QUESTIONS.** “Jim, what do you think?” “How would you answer that?” “What are your thoughts on that?” If there is a person who has been answering all the questions, you can redirect the questions to other people in the group.

**SUMMARY QUESTIONS.** “John, how would you summarize the last 10 minutes of our discussion?” “What is the main principle that you have come away with from today’s discussion?”

## HANDLING PRAYER TIME

People who are new to Life Groups may have backgrounds where they have not been accustomed to praying, especially praying out loud in a group. Your group may have people who are not Christians or who have recently accepted Jesus as their Savior and may not know how to pray.

Consider the following suggestions for encouraging prayer in your group.

- Teach by example by demonstrating how to pray.
- Ask for prayer requests and lead by sharing what you would like them to pray for you. The leader’s vulnerability in sharing his personal life can lead the group into great freedom to pray for what is really on their minds.
- Emphasize that there is no right or wrong way to pray. “Talk to God just as you would to anyone sitting in the group. We don’t want you to pray because you feel pressured, but only as you are comfortable and have a desire to do so.”
- Encourage the group to pray short, simple prayers, not long flowery ones. Someone who has never prayed out loud will appreciate that prayer can be as simple as a sentence of praise, confession, or petition.
- Encourage the group to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit in prayer and to pray as they sense His leading. Show them how to let Scripture guide their thoughts toward God’s thoughts as they “pray through” Scripture.
- Promote the “popcorn” method of prayer, which is where group members pray as they feel led, rather than in any particular order or sequence.
- Encourage the ABC’s of group prayer. *A* is for *Audible*, *B* is for *Brief*, and *C* is for *Christ-centered*.

# LEADER'S NOTES

## LESSON ONE

- **Connect Together Time.** If you have a new group, you will want to take more time in the first few weeks to get to know each other. Your main job is to build relationships within the group. Studies have shown that people will stick with a group if they feel connected to the group.
- **Watching the Video.** You will want to plan ahead regarding how you will watch the video each week. You can watch on a computer via the Elmbrook Church library on RightNow Media (see page 10 for setup tips); or on a DVD player with a DVD checked out from the Elmbrook Library (as available).
- **Prayer Time.** Take it slow! If you are leading a new group, we suggest that you close the time with prayer and not ask anyone to pray. As you get to know people in your group, you could ask someone ahead of time to open or close in prayer. As the group moves forward, you will slowly want to introduce group prayer, but make sure people don't feel pressured to pray.
- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of the next week's lesson under "Digging Deeper".
- **Group Social.** Begin to plan your group's social in the first month of your time together. By getting off-site, you will provide a more relaxed setting for people to get to know each other.
- **Life Group Covenant.** You will want to go through the *Life Group Covenant* at the end of the book so everyone in the group knows what to expect.
- **Tips for Leading.** In the Tips for *Leading a Life Group* section, there are a number of ideas for preparing for the first study. Make sure you look those over.
- **Name Tags.** Make sure to have name tags for the first week so people can get to know each other by name.
- **Introduce RightNow Media.** In addition to being a place to find each week's video teaching, RightNow Media has a number of great resources available as a followup to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free by requesting a link at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia). More information on page 10.
- **Leadership Tip:** An important component of leading is eye contact and learning people's names.

## LESSON TWO

- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of next week's lesson under "Digging Deeper".
- **Share Responsibility.** To get others involved, share some of the responsibilities for leading the group. For example, you can ask someone to plan the social, someone to plan the service project, someone to bring treats, and/or someone to call those who weren't able to attend this week's study.
- **Group Social.** Begin to plan your group's social in the first month of your time together. By getting off-site, you will provide a more relaxed setting for people to get to know each other.
- **Remind Them About RightNow Media.** There are a number of great resources available as a followup to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia).
- **Welcome New People.** If you have anyone new this week, make sure to make them feel welcome and bring them up to speed.
- **Thank-You Notes.** It's always a good idea after the first meeting to send a note, email, or text to those that came, thanking them for coming. If there is anyone that signed up, but didn't make it, make sure to follow up with them and, if need be, meet with them during the week to bring them up to speed.
- **Leadership Tip:** Don't be afraid of silence.

## LESSON THREE

- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of the next week's lesson under "Digging Deeper".
- **Sharing and Prayer Time.** If you are a mixed group and have not split up for the sharing and prayer time, you might want to introduce this to the group. By having gender specific groups, people will be able to share more openly about what is going on in their lives.
- **Life Group Coach.** Be reminded that you are not in this alone, but each Life Group leader has a coach to talk and pray with. Make sure you avail yourself to them.
- **Remind Them About RightNow Media.** There are a number of great resources available as a followup to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia).
- **Leadership Tip:** Affirm group members whenever possible.

## LESSON FOUR

- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of next week's lesson under "Digging Deeper".
- **Remind Them About RightNow Media.** There are a number of great resources available as a follow up to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia).
- **Group Social.** Your group should have had your social gathering by now; if not, make sure it happens.
- **Group Evaluation.** Conduct an evaluation of your group. Assess how it is doing with the DNA of a Life Group:
  - Is Scripture a part of the group time?
  - Is prayer part of the group?
  - Is the group re-visiting prayer requests of group members?
  - Are group members sharing on a deeper level?
  - Are people caring for each other, not fixing each other?
  - Have you gotten together for a social? Serve?
  - Is life-changing growth happening and being shared? Being prayed for?
  - Are you, as a leader, praying during your preparation/study, and praying for your group members?
- **Leadership Tip:** Be an example of vulnerability to the group. They will only be as vulnerable as you are.

## LESSON FIVE

- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of next week's lesson under "Digging Deeper".
- **Service Project.** As a group you will want to start talking about doing a service project together. There are a number of opportunities listed on Elmbrook Church's website at [elmbrook.org/serve](http://elmbrook.org/serve).
- **Remind Them About RightNow Media.** There are a number of great resources available as a followup to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia).



- **Apprentice Leaders.** Be on the lookout for an apprentice leader. Our movement of Life Groups will only grow as new leaders are identified, asked, trained, and released.
- **SHAPE Class.** Make plans to attend the *SHAPE* class offered by Elmbrook Church on a regular basis. This one-day, video-led course will help you discover how God has shaped your Spiritual gifts, *Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences* and how that impacts the role God wants you to play in His kingdom.
- **Leadership Tip:** The life you lead prepares the way for the words you speak.

## LESSON SIX

- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of next week's lesson under, "Digging Deeper".
- **Personal Testimony.** If your group or individuals want to start writing their story, there is a worksheet at the end of the book called *Personal Testimony Worksheet*. This would be a great opportunity to give them help.
- **Remind Them About RightNow Media.** There are a number of great resources available as a followup to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia).
- **Service Project.** Plans for your service project should be in the works now, with a date and project.
- **One-on-One Time.** If you have not had a chance to connect one-on-one with individuals in the group, you should set up a time to do so and get to know them better.
- **The Next Study.** You will want to start talking about what to study next when this study is over. For those meeting on Tuesday evenings, there will be a study on the book of *James*. You will also want to talk to the group coach to see what other options there are.
- **Leadership Tip:** Your role is that of facilitator, not teacher. You should be talking less than 20 percent of the time.

## LESSON SEVEN

- **Digging Deeper.** If your group is doing the homework, it can be found at the end of next week's lesson under "Digging Deeper".
- **Remind Them About RightNow Media.** There are a number of great resources available as a followup to the topic covered in each lesson. If members don't have an account, they can open one for free at [elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia](http://elmbrook.org/rightnowmedia).

- **The Next Study.** Continue talking about what to study next when this study is complete. For those meeting on Tuesday evenings, there will be a study on the book of *James*. You will also want to talk to the group coach to see what other options there are.
- **Leadership Tip:** Be conscious of “rabbit trails” as they can sidetrack your group. Keep pulling the group back to the DNA and what your focus is.

## LESSON EIGHT

- **Sharing Time.** Take time for the group to share the stories of what God did in their lives during the last eight weeks. Also evaluate how your group did. Did they fully embrace the DNA of a Life Group?
- **The Next Study.** Make sure that everyone knows what you are going to be doing next week. Is there a book or study guide that needs to be purchased? Where are you going to meet? Who will be leading the group?
- **Financial Resources.** If there are any people struggling with their finances, Elmbrook Church has several resources available to them: budget counselors and a class called *Financial Peace University*. Information can be found on the Elmbrook Church website.
- **Leadership Tip:** The closer you get to a person, the greater the impact you will have in their life.