

Life Group Leader's Guide

For the week of November 20, 2016

Quick Review:

Mark mentioned four gifts from God that enable us to live an abundant life. What are they? Which one stands out the most to you?

My Story:

1. Name an influential person in your life. What made this person so impactful?
2. Describe a situation when you felt responsible for someone else. What did this feel like? How did you respond?

Digging Deeper:

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 hones in on those individuals who were leaders in the church. Read these verses and answer the following questions.
 - a. What are some specific ways Paul commands us to treat our spiritual leaders? Why do you think he addresses this?

Things that should come up:

- Appreciate your leaders
- Esteem them highly in love
- Live in peace

- b. Take a look at Hebrews 13:17. What reason is given for obeying church leaders? How might it be “unprofitable” for you to cause your leaders to lead with grief? What are some tangible examples of obeying and submitting to our leaders?

Reasoning:

- Leaders keep watch over our souls and will give an account.

Biblical Example you may decide to use:

- Daniel 1:8-9 – here Daniel shows respect for the leaders God has placed in his life by asking permission not to eat the king's food. God granted him “favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials”, and as a result of this submission, the entire situation ended with more joy than conflict (for both sides).

2. 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18 calls each reader to spiritual leadership. Read those verses and take time to answer the following questions.

In each of the following questions, really drive home the responsibility each of us as Christians has to be a spiritual leader within the circles of influence God has placed us – whether that be family, job, school, etc.).

- a. Find all of the verbs in these verses (some of them are two-word phrases). In what ways do they relate to being or becoming a spiritual leader?

Verb List:

- Admonish (... the unruly)
- Encourage (... the fainthearted)
- Help (... the weak)
- Be Patient (... with everyone)
- Seek (... after what is good)
- Rejoice (... always)
- Pray (... without ceasing)
- Give Thanks (... in everything)

- b. At the end of verse 18, Paul gives a reason for all of the commands – what is it? Why might Paul be directing these commands to everyday citizens? How do they apply to us today?

Reason: “for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”.

Paul is directing these commands to the everyday citizens in Thessaloniki to show them how important it is for them to not only appreciate their spiritual leaders, but to become spiritual leaders in their own circles of influence.

- a. Have a group member read Acts 16:16-26. Discuss Paul and Silas’s reaction to being imprisoned. How are their reactions an example of the commands Paul gives in his letter to the people of Thessalonica? What were the ultimate results of their reaction? Do you think the event in verse 26 is God’s response to their reaction? Why or why not?

For some examples of the commands Paul gives in 1 Thessalonians, consider that Paul and Silas are 1) Praying and 2) Rejoicing in the midst of an awful situation. On top of that, the prisoners are listening to them, which may have been an opportunity in itself for them to 3) Encourage the fainthearted. Each of these are commands we see in 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18.

Ultimate results: God orchestrates an earthquake; their chains are unfastened, and they are ultimately let out of prison (Acts 16:26-40).

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24 and answer the following questions.

- a. What might Paul mean by “quench the Spirit” and “treat prophecies with contempt”? Why do you think he deems it necessary to include these in his letter?

“Quenching the Spirit” refers to trying to put out the fire of the Holy Spirit. Paul is using verse 20 and his command not to “despise prophetic utterances” to show the people of Thessaloniki – who were looking down upon fellow believers’ spiritual gifts of prophecy – that they are not only putting out the fire of the Holy Spirit, but they are also eliminating a form of encouragement among them.

- b. In verses 23 and 24, he reveals both the purpose behind obedience of the aforementioned commands, and our hope throughout this process. What is the purpose? Who is our hope? What is the end result?

Purpose: sanctification.

Hope & End Result: The God of peace will bring our sanctification to pass because He is faithful.

Taking it Home:

1. How do you respond to the call to be a spiritual leader?
2. In what ways do you feel you are succeeding as a spiritual leader? What is one thing you need to work on? As you close in prayer, take time to mention each other’s spiritual leadership within the unique circles God has placed you.
 - a. If you have extra time and/or your group would like to discuss leadership in the context of the church, consider the following alternative questions.
 - i. What are the challenges associated with hearing the phrase: “submit to your leaders”? Does this submission mean we are to follow blindly?
 - ii. In what cases might blind followership be detrimental to the church?
 - iii. How can we strike an effective balance between respectful followership and making sure church leadership is always biblically sound?