



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
For the sermon preached on
2/7/2021:
***“The Promises, Practices, and People of
God”***
from the Sermon Passage
Luke 19:1-9

How to use the Study Guide During Virtual Online Group Meetings

Group life is even more critical during this incredible season. Over and over, group leaders are reporting that suddenly there is a new hunger to connect, share, pray, and meditate on Scripture together, and so we are making these guides available weekly and suggesting a new format during this season.

As you know, our Group Life’s vision is to “practice the way of Jesus.” And while Jesus never had to lead a Torah study over Zoom, he was strategic in his teaching ministry, and we want to be as well.

There are a number of differences between meeting in person and meeting online, ranging from the obvious to the subtle. One is, given our attention spans for online meetings, we want to encourage you to limit the length of your call between 45-60 minutes and we are calling this “Check-In Plus One.” Meaning, spend a few minutes checking in with your group and see if there are any new needs with them (or even amongst their neighbors). The “One” is to spend time in study. As our virtual season continues, our desire for meaningful content and interaction will grow. Given our new format, the study guides based on Sunday’s sermon will be designed to be more application based (as opposed to unpacking the text with the Inductive Bible Study method). You might consider sharing the passage beforehand with your group in hopes that they might spend more time with the Scripture before the gathering.

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do in practicing the way of Jesus in community.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim Ghali and Pastor Rachel Keeler on behalf of the Group Life Team

For the Leader: “Check-In Plus One”

Welcome everyone to the Zoom call and outline the goal of this call being 45 minutes. Spend 15-20 minutes checking in with one another, then move into a time of prayer, and then spend some time discussing the application of the Scripture passage. A “check-in” question might be, “How are you doing, and is there anything new that has arisen in your life or in your neighborhood that we can pray about?”

Introduction:

The message focused on the disappointment experienced in loneliness. Loneliness is a feeling everyone has experienced in different forms, for various reasons, throughout many seasons of life and it often brings up a number of memories, thoughts and even pains. Today, we want to try to focus on the loneliness that we have experienced since the pandemic started and the loneliness we have observed around us as well.

To warm up to the conversation, let's consider that some forms of loneliness are connected to the missing out on relationships, events, and gatherings -for example like grandparents not seeing their grandchildren, or high school seniors not being able to celebrate graduations and ceremonies with their families and friends. What have been some of the important family, community, or relational moments that you have missed out on over this last year?

Q – Adam mentioned a Barna Research statistic that asked, *“Think back on your last seven days. How often would you say you felt lonely?”*

- **41% of Boomers** would say that they feel lonely at least once a week
- **50% of Gen X** would say the same thing
- And a whopping **65% of Millennials** are feeling lonely...
 - **44%** of them would say they feel that way **every day!**

How would you answer if the question were posed to you – how have you felt lonely in the past seven days? There are often numerous generational comparisons, but the research demonstrates that everyone experiences loneliness, in fact, it is expressed more so in young generations. How does this shape your understanding of those younger or older than you?

Q – The text was on Zacchaeus climbing the tree to see Jesus – a familiar story for many and an intriguing one if you are new to the account. Let's read the passage in Luke 19:1-9 and try our best to look at this story with fresh eyes – what do you see?

Q – Most have fortunately not had the experience of exploiting their community and having their neighbors despise them like Zacchaeus did. But most of us have felt some form of experience of having friends, or family or co-workers withdraw somehow and have some sense of relational loneliness as a result. We learn that one does not have to be corrupt like Zacchaeus to experience loneliness. Have you ever felt like Zacchaeus? And how can we intentionally identify and minister to those experiencing loneliness around us?

Q – The message featured a wonderful set of panelists that highlighted a few principles and practices each person has incorporated in the pandemic. Natalia expressed that “we do life best in community.” And Sam spoke about his practice of praying and Scripture-reading. Adam stressed the importance of finding hope in the promises of God and summarized the message by saying, **“We begin to break the cycle of loneliness and disengagement by relying on the promises, practices, and people of God.”** What hope can you find in this and how can you share this hope with those around you this week?