

# NewSpring Church Groups Guide

I ♥ the 80s – Week 3 – I Can't Do Life Alone

Group Leader Guide for Use Aug. 22-28, 2010

**Directions** - This guide provides a menu of teaching and discussion materials to help in leading your group. Please select and use the materials that best suit your group.

**The Main Point** - Living in community is essential for every Christian. Our church community spurs us toward love and good deeds, helps us avoid sin, provides a place to live out God's commands, and offers opportunities to become servants and givers like Christ.

**Sermon Recap (Matthew 26:69-75)** - The majority of people see Christianity as a solo sport. We need to realize that the Christian life was intended to be lived in community. While isolated from his friends and other disciples, Peter denies Jesus on three different occasions. We want to believe that just being saved will ensure that we follow Jesus, or that we can gain enough knowledge on our own to avoid sin. Judas and the Pharisees prove that it is impossible to avoid sin simply by being knowledgeable about Jesus or scripture. We all need people in our lives that will encourage us and hold us accountable.

**Biblical Background (Matthew 26:69-75)** - Jesus has been arrested, and the chief priests and Jewish council are attempting to find just cause to put Him to death. All of His disciples have left Him except for one, Peter. Peter was in the courtyard just out from where Jesus was being questioned. He denied to a servant girl that he had been with Jesus. Later at the gateway, he is recognized by other people as being one of Jesus's friends; two more times, Peter denies even knowing Jesus. When the rooster crows, Peter remembers Jesus's words to him that he will deny Him three times. He goes outside and weeps bitterly.

**Controversial Icebreaker** - In July, a Dutch court ruled that 14-year-old Laura Dekker could attempt to become the youngest person to sail around the world alone; the judge ruled that she had prepared sufficiently and her parents could decide. Six weeks earlier, 16-year-old Californian Abby Sunderland was rescued in the Indian Ocean after a storm wrecked her boat, and her dreams, of setting this record. Her family was criticized for the cost of the rescue effort and allowing her to sail the high seas alone. Do you agree with the court's ruling to allow a 14-year-old to sail around the world alone? Why or why not? Is this a parent's decision? (Segue) Life in general, and in the church, isn't meant to be done alone. Christians need to live in fellowship and community.

**Activity Option** - Have everyone draw a horizontal timeline of his/her life in 5-year increments. Using a +5 to -5 scale vertically (with the beginning of timeline at 0), chart or graph low dips for low points, and high peaks for good times. Then have them draw a star on the graph where significant friendships or relationships were strong during that time and a dot where significant relationships were lost or broken. Discuss among yourselves what types of patterns and correlations you see on your graph....how relationships do indeed affect you, and how the lack of friends can also have a great impact.

**Prayer Time Idea** - Tell the group that we all need help in our Christian lives. We want to pray specifically about these things tonight. Have people write on an index card one thing that they need help with. (Leader, be prepared to share your own need first.) Have people include their name (if they want to be prayed for by name), or leave it anonymous if they don't want to be identified. Pass the cards in, and have someone pray (out loud) for these needs. Begin praying, however, by praising God for His love, power, and promise in Philippians to meet all our needs, in and through, Jesus.

**L.E.A.D.S. Applications (Learn the word together. Embrace serving together. Assist one another, Devote ourselves to generosity. Send people out to start new groups.)** - Peter was one of Jesus's dearest friends. He witnessed Jesus's teachings first-hand and talked one-on-one with his Lord. They were so close that he even promised Jesus he would rather die than disown Him (Matthew 26:35). But there came a time when "Peter followed at a distance" (Luke 22:54) and ended up denying that he even knew Jesus. Peter may have felt that he could do life alone. In our own lives, we often enter into a relationship with Jesus, spend time with Him, read His Word, but neglect to apply what we have learned or to remain in close fellowship at church - which leads to our straying away and doing our own thing. It is a daily choice for each Christ-follower to seek Jesus by reading our Bibles and praying, but also by serving others through church, spurring on fellow believers, and giving generously within the church. Even though Peter did deny Jesus, his denial was not the end of their friendship. We serve a forgiving God. Peter remembered what he learned from Jesus and eventually became a key factor in building the early church. He gave himself completely by serving others, raising up fellow believers, and financially giving everything he had...all within the bride of Christ...the Church. As Peter's life demonstrates, we were not designed to do life alone.

**Pool of Discussion Questions** -

***Q: What's the most common reason that people isolate themselves from church: (1) fear of being judged; (2) pain or loss that hasn't been dealt with; (3) spiritual laziness; (4) other?***

**A:** (Matt. 7:1-5) Jesus says we shouldn't judge the speck in another's eye, but should take the plank out of our own eye first. (2 Cor. 1:3-5) We should open up with others about our own pain so that we can comfort them with the comfort we've received from God. (Heb. 10:23-24) We should consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds, and not give up meeting together. Every believer fights apathy at some time, so we must spur each other on to fulfill our ministries.

***Q: How are you doing your part to create a NewSpring community where needs are met physically, spiritually, and financially? If you are not involved, what can you begin to do?***

A: (Acts 4:32-37) In the early church, "All the believers were one in heart and mind...they shared everything they had...there were no needy persons among them." Ask God to reveal to you, first, what you are holding on to that could benefit your community and, secondly, the needs that you can meet (personally or through your small group). Then, trust Him enough to let go and obey.

***Q: NewSpring is presenting the Gospel in an amazing way on August 29. Who can you reach out to - and where - by inviting them to the service so they don't have to do life alone anymore?***

A: (Matt. 28:19-20) When Jesus says in this passage (known as "The Great Commission") to "Go and make disciples," He literally is saying that "as you go," you are to make disciples, baptize and teach people. This week, wherever you go, ask God to impress upon you those people that He is drawing to Himself that you can talk to about Jesus and invite to church Aug. 29.

***Q: What will happen if we are too proud to show others our true selves (or be transparent) in a godly friendship?***

A: (Proverbs 16:18; James 5:16) Our pride can destroy a friendship, but confessing our sins to one another can heal us, our friends and even our relationships.

***Q. Do you think that it's okay to pray and ask God for friends? Why do you think some people may not consider that a worthy request, or may view it as something that God "doesn't have time to answer?"***

A: (John 15:15, Philippians 4:6) Jesus values friendship; astoundingly, He calls those of us who obey Him "My friends," and He makes known to them the truths that God has told Him. We can pray about anything; no request is too small, particularly one as important as having Christian friends to share life with, encourage us, and hold us accountable. Ultimately, Jesus must be the most important person in our lives; family and friends take a lesser, but God-given, role.