

NewSpring Church Groups Guide

I ♥ the 80s – Week 5 – Growing People Change

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.

Group Leader Guide for Use Sept. 5 - Sept. 11, 2010

FOR THE LEADER:

The Main Point - People who have a relationship with Jesus cannot stay the same. God changes them to become like Christ. He works in them using tools such as the Bible and service as they take and retake steps of faith.

Sermon Recap - When people put their faith in Jesus they begin a journey. Throughout scripture we see that Christ-followers should always be growing. Their first act of obedience is baptism. They are also called to be generous, read the Bible, share their faith, confess and repent, and be a member of a church. This obedience has nothing to do with God's love for them, but it proves their love for Him. As we grow God will reveal ways for us to do these things that will bring us joy and draw us closer to Him.

Biblical Background - (Philippians 3:10-14) While writing to the church in Philippi from prison, Paul encourages these Christians to continue growing in their faith. He talks about the importance of "pressing on toward the goal to win the prize." That prize is knowing Jesus and becoming like Him (a mature Christian). As a mature follower imprisoned for his faith, Paul understands that it takes effort daily and commitment to become all that Christ saved us to be.

OPENER:

Controversial Icebreaker - A restaurant chain in California named In-n-Out Burger claims to have opened the first drive-thru in 1948 in Baldwin Park, CA. Other sources cite Jack-in-the-Box as the first major restaurant to open a drive-thru in 1951 in San Diego. To meet Americans' desire for convenience, comfort and fast delivery, we now have drive-through banks, dry cleaners, pharmacies, wedding chapels, even funeral homes where people can view the remains of their loved ones through windows. Do you see this drive-thru mentality anywhere in the church? If so, where? What about in the area of spiritual growth: do Christians today expect to become mature quickly, conveniently and comfortably? Is this possible? Is this Biblical? Why or why not?

Activity Option - Think about your favorite childhood toy, doll or stuffed animal. Share about it with the group. (Describe it, explain why it was so important to you, memories you have of it.) Where is that toy

now? Do you sleep with it? Do you carry it with you to work, the grocery store or class? Would you say you've outgrown it...or changed since you needed it? What's your attitude now toward it?

QUESTIONS:

Q: Why is it important to grow in your relationship with Christ?

A: Eph. 4: 4-16; 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-14; I Cor. 3:1-3 God expects us to grow and mature spiritually in order to serve others and witness for His glory. A new Christian needs the pure, simple basics of the Word (milk) to grow. In time, he must be able to digest the meatier commands and demands of God's Word (solid food), apply them to his living and teach them to others. God's plan is that we progress from a carnal or worldly infant who depends on others to feed us to an unselfish and mature Christian who feeds ourselves and others.

Q: What are some childish attitudes, actions or ways you've abandoned or left behind in the past month? The past six months? The past few years? How would those childish things have affected you had they remained in your life?

A: (I Corinthians 13:11; Eph. 4: 11-16) Answers may vary depending on personal situations, but childish, immature actions and attitudes do hinder your walk with Christ and stunt your spiritual growth. The church equips us to let go of childish ways and replace them with service in the body of Christ.

Q: What are some things that make spiritual change so difficult for some people?

A: Pride (Jeremiah 18:1-6; Isaiah 45:9, 64:8) One of the main things is pride. Too often, we want to do what we want. We want to be in charge of our own life rather than yield to God's direction and discipline. To change as God intends, we must understand that God is our maker and we are His clay. Clay yields to its Maker in order to become a beautiful vessel that is perfect for His purpose and that pleases Him in all our ways.

Q: What tool does God use most to change you? (The sermon spoke of baptism, the Bible, regular church attendance, confession and repentance, giving, sharing Christ and service as some tools.)

A: Philippians 2:12-13; Gal. 5:1, 25-26; Matt. 11:28-30) All of these tools are important, but God deals individually and specifically with each believer to help us know His will and priorities. Obedience is vital, but it is to be done out of simple love and devotion for Jesus. We must never be enslaved to any Christian activity. Being in right relationship with Jesus should never burden us (His yoke is light); rather, it should give us perfect peace and joy.

Q: In what way is God stretching and growing you right now?

A: Philippians 1:4-6; 3:10-14 God promises that He will complete the good work of salvation that He began in each Christian. He works in the circumstances of our life to grow our faith. We must keep our eye on the prize, which is knowing Jesus and conforming to Him.

CLOSER:

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.)*

Since you were born, you have changed immensely in how you look, act, think, etc. If you are a Christ-follower, you have been "born again" spiritually. You crossed over from death to life when you asked the LORD to take complete control. Just as a baby grows and changes, Christians are to grow in our walk with Jesus. His Word first penetrates our hearts and takes root (John 15:7). The more time we spend with Him the more like Him we become. We will better serve others, both in the church and outside. Giving beyond our tithe will come naturally. And we will want to share our love for Christ with everyone, always "prepared to give an answer... for the hope" that we have (1 Peter 3:15). Just like a baby grows into a healthy man or woman, in time our spiritual roots grow deeper into Jesus. We develop a strong, grounded relationship with Him and want to share His name wherever we go.

Prayer Time Idea - We all resist God at one time or another. He prods us to change, and we push back. If we confess this area of resistance to Him and others, He will give us the power to repent and the accountability to stand firm in temptation. Ask people to be transparent as they share an area in their life in which they are currently resisting change. Give them a minute to speak. Then ask several people to pray for one another to repent and be pliable in God's hand.