Growth Group Leader Guide

This “growth group leader guide” is meant to be just that, a guide. Please feel free as the leader of your group to add questions or comments, as you feel necessary, to fit your group’s dynamics.

Also, don’t feel pressured to cover every question.

The Friend of Sinners – Nov. 15, 2026

- What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend’s message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.

3 Points

- **The Call of a Sinner**
- **The Friend of a Sinner**
- **The Hope of a Sinner**

I. The Call of a Sinner

- What is one common misconception people in our culture have about who Jesus is or why He came to earth?

- The sermon pointed out that our culture often filters the Gospels through a victimhood lens. How does that cultural lens sometimes distort why Jesus actually came (see Luke 19:10 and 1 Timothy 1:15)?

- Our culture often encourages us to view ourselves primarily as victims of outside hurts rather than sinners in need of grace. How can you practically guard your heart so that you remain more concerned with the sin within you than the sins committed against you?

II. The Friend of a Sinner

- Share a time when someone unexpectedly invited you to a meal or welcomed you into their home when you felt like an outsider. What impact did that hospitality have on you?

- When you hear the phrase “friend of sinners,” what image or feeling first comes to mind? Has that phrase ever felt comforting, convicting, or even uncomfortable to you?

- Why do you think Matthew’s first instinct after following Jesus was to throw a feast for other tax collectors and sinners?

- Matthew didn't wait until he had theological training to share Jesus; he immediately threw a feast and invited his friends. Do you ever feel like you aren't "impressive" or "well-spoken" enough to share the gospel? How does God's choice of Matthew encourage you to simply be faithful?

- The Pharisees were scandalized that Jesus would recline at table with people like this. In what ways can we (even unintentionally) act more like the Pharisees than like Jesus when it comes to people we consider “undesirable”?

- Jesus was not pragmatic about who He chose. He turned away a respected scribe (Matt. 8:19–20) and called a hated tax collector. How does this challenge our own assumptions about who would be most useful or impressive in advancing the gospel?

III. The Hope of a Sinner

- Read Jesus' response in verse 12. How were the Pharisees acting like a doctor who diagnoses a terminal illness without ever offering a cure?

- Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 ("I desire mercy and not sacrifice") to rebuke the religious experts. According to the sermon, what happens to religious rituals, church attendance, or outward morality when our hearts are cold toward others?

    - **Read** Amos 5:21-24

- Luke’s parallel account adds the crucial phrase “to repentance” (Luke 5:32). How does this protect us from two common ditches:

    - Legalism (condemning sinners without offering mercy)

    - Antinomianism (offering grace without calling for repentance)?

- Jesus was a friend of sinners and He called them to leave their sin and follow Him. What does it look like, practically, for us to hold both of those truths together in our relationships with non-believers?

- Who are the modern “tax collectors and sinners” God might be calling you to pursue with the gospel—people who know they are sinners and need mercy? What is one concrete step you could take this week to move toward them the way Matthew did (inviting them into relationship and pointing them to Jesus)?

Announcements

Christmas Decorating!

11/30 | 6pm | Worship Center

Please join us on Monday the 30th to decorate the Worship Center for Christmas! You don't need to be creative, just available. There's plenty for everyone to do. We would love for everyone to participate, even if you're only able to come for a little while!

Pre-Annual Business Meeting

11/29 | 6pm | Worship Center

During our Sunday night service, we will have our "Pre-Annual Business Meeting." Join us to hear from our leadership team about where our church is headed in the coming year!