



GRACE GROUP LEADER'S MESSAGE GUIDE

Leader note: This Message Guide is intended to help you facilitate discussion with your Grace Group. You can use the guide exactly as it is, ignore some of it, or add to it. We hope you view this guide as a flexible teaching tool, and not a rigid teaching task.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 14TH

Please review the Updates and Leader Information found on the Group Resources page found at gracefellowship.cc/groupresources.

ICEBREAKER

What was the most important date you ever forgot?

WATCH THE TEACHING VIDEO BY PASTOR JEREMIAH OLSON

LIFE - WEEK 1 (Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11a)

1. Read the scriptures. What does vs. 1 convey to you?
2. What is vs. 10 speaking about and what do you think it means for you? *(leader note: "understanding verse 10 is quite important to our well-being. Solomon assures us that God is deeply involved in these issues and events of life. In fact, he writes that they are God-given, implying that God has assigned them as disciplines for our development as His children. The dominant fact here is not whether God personally put us in them, since we may have gotten ourselves into them through our choices. The important factor is that we are indeed in them, and God is involved in them with us because at the very least He allowed us to fall into them." bibletools.org)*
3. Have you ever checked out, given up, disengaged or stop trying in a particularly hard season? If so, discuss why and how it turned out.
4. Use three words to describe the season you are in and tell why did you chose them.
5. It was said in the weekend message that most seasons are started by a milestone type of event. Perhaps a birth, death, graduation, passing a significant test, etc. Was there an event that began the season you are in?
6. Are you enjoying the season you are in, or are you dreading it?
7. What is God developing in you (or teaching you) during this season?
8. Describe what you have learned about God as you have gone through different seasons of life.
9. How can this development be beneficial in the next season you will be in? *(leader note: check out these scriptures related to seasons of life: Psalm 31:15, Romans 8:28, Galatians 6:9, Psalm 1:3, Psalm 139:16)*
10. In this current season you are in, have you remained on mission for Christ? Have you found a new mission or ministry to connect with? *(leader note: check out 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 related to the work or efforts we make for God)*

ACTION STEP

The action step out of the weekend message was to journal 15 minutes about the current season you are in including some thoughts about what should you prioritize or de-prioritize? Here's a short article that gives some good guidance on journaling: <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/journaling-for-spiritual-growth-and-gods-glory/>

SHEPHERDING / CARE / PRAYER

Five Ways to Care for Hurting People During the Holidays

While many people enjoy the holiday season more than any other time of the year, there are others who struggle to find any joy in it at all. In fact, for many people, this time of year is devastating and debilitating. A broken relationship, a haunting seasonal memory, the death of a friend or family member, or the inability to bless their family with the kind of gifts others are receiving plants a dark cloud over many, especially when they are seeing the masses celebrating passionately when they are hurting deeply.

So how does a small group leader show the love of Christ to those who are living in the midst of the dark night of the soul?

1. Be an active **listener** while disciplining yourself not to give advice. For many in this situation, all they need is a listening ear. They need the opportunity to share with someone what they're feeling and why they're hurting so deeply. Allow them to say anything they need to say without telling them what they need to do. You can't fix what's broken, but you can help them release some of their emotional intensity.
2. Exercise the ministry of "**presence.**" For many, aloneness is what causes their greatest pain. Invite the person to your home to spend the evening without any agenda in mind. In fact, it may be best just to invite them to come for dinner and spend the evening with you and your family.
3. **Worship** with the hurting individual. If the person you're aiding is single, or they're single when they attend worship at the church (their spouse doesn't attend church), simply invite them to sit with you. In the presence of God, emotions often flow freely allowing you to be there to comfort them and, in many instances, allowing you to be there and encourage them to trust God in the midst of their darkness.
4. **Text** words of encouragement often. Texting has opened the door to encourage in the moment when we don't have the time for elongated conversations. Use this approach wisely. Don't bombard the person with statements telling them that it will all work out (this is a promise you can't honestly make), or that they just need to claim God's promises. By the way, once a day would be best, twice a day would be optimal.
5. **Invite** the individual to celebrate the holiday with you—if it's appropriate in your situation. That is, if the person is going to spend the holiday alone. Be certain this is agreed to by your family, as many families prefer to spend the holiday with relatives only.

by Rick Howerton, lifeway.com, 2019