



Growth Group Leaders Guide
SENT - Week 1 - "Sent to Bring Life"
John 12:1-8

Welcome to the sermon based leaders guide. This is your first meeting so do not feel the need to get to every question. The emphasis for this weeks group should be reconnecting with group members who were in your group previously and (this is important) connecting with the people who are new to your group. Feel free to spend more time on snacks and fellowship than you ordinarily would. It may also be a good idea to do some ice-breaker questions or activities.

Quick Review

In the Leader Training we talked about how this section of the curriculum is meant to do several things. First, it is purposed to frame the rest of the discussion in relation to Sundays' sermon. It should also refresh peoples memories as to the salient points of the past Sundays message. For those who weren't there or even those who didn't understand it very well it will help them to get acquainted with the text and topic. These questions are also designed to be "softball" questions in order to get people to engage and participate.

1. Looking back at you notes from this past Sundays' message, is there anything that you are likely to remember 2 weeks from now?

There is really no wrong answer to this question. Answers could range from an important point in the sermon to how much they were irritated by the Pastors shirt.

2. Was there anything from the message that challenged or confused you?

This is an opportunity to clarify the teaching for those who may not have understood it. This can also be a jumping off point for great discussion. Sometimes groups don't get past this question and that's ok! Remember, you want to "scratch where it itches" so don't feel the need to rush past this.

My Story

This section is designed to be autobiographical for 2 reasons. 1. People are generally more open to talking if they are sharing biographical information so this section can get the conversation going. 2. By sharing these persona details it will engender a spirit of trust and transparency. As a leader you may have to step out first and model an

appropriate level of candor and transparency in order to encourage others to do the same.

1. On Sunday Pastor Jeff talked about how Jesus came to bring new life. Have you experienced the new life that is possible through Christ to some degree? If so, what is different about the "new life" as compared to the old life?
2. Pastor Jeff said that Mary's attitude and action were perceived by the onlookers as "disproportional" in that she defied several cultural expectations to display her love and devotion to Jesus. What might we do to display the same emotional connection to Jesus that might be seen in a similar light by people who do not know Him?

There were three aspects of Marys' actions that would have caught nearly everyone off guard:

1. The monetary sacrifice. The nard would have cost a years wages for most families. It is worth noting that she intentionally broke the alabaster jar it was contained in. She was not going to hold anything back.
2. She washes Jesus feet. To touch someone's feet in the ancient near east that the Rabbi's forbid it. Washing of feet was traditionally relegated to the lowliest of slaves.
3. She let her hair down. The would have been seen as scandalous. For a women to let her hair down in mixed company was very strange indeed. Most commentators believe that this is a sign of intimacy and highly inappropriate for mixed company. In Number 5:18 the priest loosened the hair of a women accused of adultery. A responsible women never went about with her head uncovered.

Digging Deeper

1. Read Luke 14:28-30. Why do you think it might be important to count the cost of following Jesus? What might the outcome be if you do not count the cost?

Luke 14:28-30(NIV)

28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

For some people the promises in the Scripture about the Christian life are enticing and so they make a half-hearted commitment without realizing there may be a cost associated with following Christ. In other cultures and in other times the cost may have been very high. In the second century Christians were fed to lions in the arena, in modern times Christians in the near east are persecuted and often killed for their faith.

You might try to get your group to come up with a list of possible outcomes if they decide to follow Jesus or ask the people in your group share examples of when following Jesus did cost them something.

2. John Piper once said *"Authentic discipleship may exact from you the highest price relationally and the highest price physically."* Look at the following verses and see if you can discern what following Jesus might cost us.

2 Timothy 3:12, Luke 14:26, Luke 14:33, John 15:18-25, Matthew 8:18- 22, Romans 8:36-37

2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV)

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

A follow up question could be; "what has persecution looked though the ages as opposed to what we are likely to face here and now?"

Luke 14:26 (NIV)

26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

This is troubling verse for some who are just encountering it for the first time. The Pulpit Commentary explains the passage like this:

"The Lord's teaching throughout, in parable and in direct saying, pressed home to his followers that no home love, no earthly affection, must ever come into competition with the love of God. If home and his cause came ever into collision, home and all belonging to it must gently be put aside, and everything must be sacrificed to the cause. Farrar quotes here from Lovelace -

*"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."*

Luke 14:33 (NIV)

33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

John 15:18-25 (NIV)

18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. 24 If I had not done among

them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. 25 But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

Matthew 8:18-22 (NIV)

18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Romans 8:36-37 (NIV)

36 As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

3. Jesus says that if we need to die to truly live. Read the following verses and see if you can figure out what they are promising those who truly give up their lives for Christ.

John 1:12, John 3:3, John 6:35, John 10:10, John 11:25-26, John 15:9-11, John 15:14-15

John 1:12 (NIV)

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

This is a key verse for understanding the doctrine of adoption. In his classic book *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer wrote:

"If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. . . . "Father" is the Christian name for God."

The doctrine of adoption is indeed integral to the gospel. But in recent years, theological discussion has perhaps been more focused on justification than adoption. And many lay Christians have never considered the rich implications of their adoption.

John 3:3 (NIV)

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

There may be an opportunity to talk about Baptism in light of this verse. If anyone in your group has questions about Baptism please let Pastor Jeff know ASAP.

John 6:35 (NIV)

35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

In context, Jesus is comparing Himself with Mana from Heaven (Exodus 16:4). Israel was on the brink of famine and certain death. God sent manna to stave off physical death, but that would only forestall death for months or years. Jesus is offering a bread which would stave off death forever.

John 10:10 (NIV)

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

A follow-up question might be; "What are the indicators of someone having "life to the full"?"

John 11:25-26 (NIV)

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 15:9-11 (NIV)

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:14-15 (NIV)

14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

4. Understanding and remembering God's sovereignty is an important part of dying to self. God's sovereignty means he is in control and nothing happens outside of his influence and authority. What can you learn about God's sovereignty from his words to the Israelites as quoted by Isaiah in Isaiah 46:3-11?

Isaiah 46:3-11 (NIV)

3

"Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob,

*all the remnant of the people of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since your birth,
and have carried since you were born.*

4

*Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

5

*"With whom will you compare me or count me equal?
To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?"*

6

*Some pour out gold from their bags
and weigh out silver on the scales;
they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god,
and they bow down and worship it.*

7

*They lift it to their shoulders and carry it;
they set it up in its place, and there it stands.
From that spot it cannot move.
Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer;
it cannot save them from their troubles.*

8

*"Remember this, keep it in mind,
take it to heart, you rebels.*

9

*Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.*

10

*I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say, 'My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.'*

11

*From the east I summon a bird of prey;
from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.
What I have said, that I will bring about;
what I have planned, that I will do.*

- Can you think of any examples of how knowing about God's sovereignty has helped you in the midst of a storm?

- Trials, challenges, and opposition give us opportunities to trust God's sovereignty and face things with confidence. Is there one of these areas that you are struggling to see God's sovereignty in?

Don't forget to close in prayer. Have someone jot down the prayer requests so you can email them to the group this week.