



Grow Group Guide | Week 1

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

This week, we will follow up Pastor Ted's message on friendship with a conversation about our own friendships, and how they line up with the Bible's take on these relationships.

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Proverbs 17:17

- Have you had a friendship that has made a lasting impact on your life? What made that friendship so impactful?
- What are the defining characteristics of a good friend?
- Why does this verse say "a friend loves at all times"? Why do difficult times provide opportunities to grow friendships?

Read: Proverbs 18:24

- Ask several people with different translations read this aloud. What does this verse mean?
- Why would God warn us against having too many friends?
 - Have you ever felt like you were trying to have "too many friends"?
 - How do you navigate between making new friends and making a stronger commitment to your current friendships?

Read: Proverbs 27:6

- What is the author warning us about in this Proverb?
- How do we discern when it's time to move on from a particular friendship?

Read: Proverbs 27:10

- There's a lot going on in this particular Proverb. What did this verse make you think of *first*?

Read: Proverbs 27:17

- In this context, what does it mean to "sharpen"?
- By now, you've likely identified several individuals that you regard as true friends. How does this verse apply to these friendships?
- When Jesus "sharpens" us, how do we tend to react? What we can learn from this to help us "sharpen" our friends?
 - Do any of your current friendships cause you to become more "dull" (less sharp)?
 - Do your current friendships help you grow closer to God?

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Other Scriptures from this Sunday: Isaiah 53:4; Hebrews 13:5; Romans 5:8; Matthew 26:49; Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34

Optional Group Activity:

Materials Needed: One large piece of paper and a marker

Say: *"As we kick off a new Grow Group season, what are some words that we want to represent what the friendships in this Grow Group should look like?"*

- Write the words out LARGE for the group to see

Hold up the paper when you're done with the activity and ask: *"How can we make these words a reality in our grow group?"* Allow time for group to answer.

Some may already be happening, but let's break up into prayer groups (men and women) and pray for these words to become a reality for this Grow Group this season.

- (Fun tip: if you have a place to display these words where your grow group meets each week, find a place to hang it up as a reminder each week of the close relationships we want to be building with one another.)

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.

- As Pastor Ted reminded us, Jesus is a selfless, steadfast, and sacrificial friend who seeks to sharpen us because He loves us. Pray that we will strive to follow His example in our friendships.



Grow Group Guide | Week 2

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

Are we on fire for our faith, or deterred by what is convenient and comfortable? This week, we will follow up Pastor Simmon's message that challenges us to consider what we're doing that is of eternal significance, and how God can work mightily through us when we let Him.

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Acts 1:6-8

- What is the task that Jesus gave His apostles? What is the mission to which each of us (as believers) is called?
- Why does Jesus dismiss the apostles' concern about the timing of His return?
- Applying verse 8 to ourselves, what is our Jerusalem? What is our Judea and Samaria?

Read: Acts 2:1-13

- Why do the events at Pentecost matter to us?
- If we are to apply these scriptures to ourselves, what does the Holy Spirit empower us to do? (How does Pentecost relate to us?)
- How can we know if we are filled with the Holy Spirit? What are some signs, symptoms, or "side-effects" of being full of the Holy Spirit?

Living the Mission

- What is spiritual obesity? Are we exercising our faith and sharing the Gospel, or are we becoming "spiritually obese?" (Can be asked rhetorically)
- What factors or fears prevent us from sharing the Gospel? What does the Bible say about these fears? Like in 2 Timothy 1:7; Acts 4:13, 31; 2 Cor. 3:12; Eph. 6:19
- We know God wants to use us to spread the Gospel. How can we prepare ourselves better to be used by God?
- **How are you being called to share the Gospel in your Jerusalem this week? What are some ways we can be creative, intentional, and even innovative in pursuing Christ's mission for us?** *Leaders: it is important to spend a good amount of time on this question, so make sure you leave yourself time to do so.*
 - Encourage each group member to come up with ideas or plans that are specific to their own life and the people in them.
 - Encourage each group member to listen to the convictions God has placed on them recently.
 - Don't settle for vague "feel-good" or "cop-out" answers! Remember that this is our mission! Get some real fruit-producing answers!

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- Last week we discussed the qualities of strong friendships, and how the Bible calls us to “sharpen” one another. How can we be sharpening each other on this mission?

If you feel it important to review and discuss the message we as believers in Christ are called to share, Acts 2:21; 2:36-39 may be helpful for this.

Other Scriptures from this Sunday: Matthew 3:11; Matthew 6:33; Acts 1:9-14; Acts 2:14-41; Acts 4:4

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.

- Pastor Simmons made the observation that many/most Christians are intellectually obese believers who need to start exercising their faith more. Pray for each other, that we would be emboldened to be intentional about having Gospel conversations with people we come into contact with. Pray that we would be prayerful and patient in listening to hear what God is calling us to do.



Grow Group Guide | Week 3

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

This past Sunday kicked off a new sermon series on the Gospel of Mark. Mark packs a lot of content into just a few verses, but this week we will focus our discussion on the events that happened immediately following Jesus's baptism: the forty days He was in the wilderness.

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 1:9-13

- Mark doesn't say much about Jesus' time in the wilderness. What are some of the details he did include in this short portrayal, and what might be the reasons he felt it important to include them?
- Why would Jesus have been compelled to go into the wilderness right after His baptism?

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

- What are the differences between Mark's account and Matthew's account? Why is there such a difference? (See notes on next page)
- What was the purpose of Jesus' time in the wilderness?
- Does the wilderness represent anything in our own lives? How does Jesus' interactions with the devil relate to what we've experienced?
- Matthew records that Jesus fasted 40 days and nights and THEN Satan came and tempted Him. Why did Satan wait so late? Did he procrastinate or was he being strategic? How strategically does Satan tempt us?
- Is there any significance in the angels caring for Jesus after Satan left? Why didn't they come to Jesus earlier?
- Describe the role of citing scripture in Jesus' time in the wilderness (note that both Jesus and Satan quoted scripture). What should we learn from this to apply to our own daily lives? How important is scripture in our defense against temptation?

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Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.

- Pray that God would continue to reveal to us the importance and relevance of Jesus' time in the wilderness and how to deal with temptation in our own lives the way that He did.

Notes from Pastor Ted:

Matthew, like any good author, writes with a specific purpose and a specific audience in mind. He's not just putting words onto paper to hit a deadline or record his fond memories. No, he intended this to be much more than that.

Matthew's Gospel was written to the Jewish people of his day, to be contrasted with Mark's Gospel written to the people in Rome, Luke's written to Theophilus and John's written to Gentile Christians with his own unique purpose (John 20:31).

Matthew wants to tell the Jewish people that the long-awaited Messiah, the Hope of Israel, has come! As we move through Matthew, it's important to note how many times he makes reference to the prophets and the Scriptures that spoke of Jesus' birth. He's writing to tell these people, "Here He is! The One we've been waiting for!"



Grow Group Guide | Week 4

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

This week we look at the second half of Mark 1 and the variety of things we can learn from and about Jesus, including His divine authority, His compassion, and His own need for solitude and prayer

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 1:21-45

- What different ways did the authority of Jesus “amaze” people in v.21-28?
- What strikes you most about what the demon said in v.24? What did the demon get right about Jesus?
- Why is it possible to have correct theology (like the demon) and still be heading towards hell? What makes our faith different from that of a demon?
- What motivated Jesus to heal the leper? (v.41) What was the social stigma surrounding leprosy in Jesus’ day? Why was it significant that Jesus touched him?
- What insight to Jesus’ ministry do these passages give us by describing both Jesus’ compassion for people, but also His frustration? (e.g., v.25, v.43)
- Why do you think it was important for Jesus to withdraw and spend time alone in prayer? (v.35)
 - Why do we need to spend time alone in prayer? How does this compare to Jesus’ reasons?
 - What have you experienced when you’ve taken the time to be alone in prayer?
- Do you think your lost friends, coworkers, classmates, and neighbors can see the compassion of Jesus in you? Why or why not?
 - How can you ensure that Christ’s compassion is the motivation for your good works (and not something like guilt or outward appearance)?
 - How can you ensure that those you help both see Christ’s compassion in you, *and* hear His message—that your compassion points them toward their need for Christ as their Lord and Savior?
- What is the most difficult thing you are facing in life right now?
 - How does the authority of Jesus encourage you in what you are facing?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.



Grow Group Guide | Week 5

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

In Mark 2 we read of Jesus forgiving the unforgivable and accepting the unacceptable. Both of these are major shocks to the people and Pharisees who are following Him. What can we learn this week from the example Jesus set for us in these verses?

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 2:1-12

- What stands out to you in this opening scene of Mark 2? (What catches the attention of your “biblical imagination”?)
- Let’s explore the faith demonstrated by the friends of the paralyzed man:
 - I think we can all agree that what the friends did was out of the ordinary. Did the friends go about this the right way? Did they do anything wrong? Is there a “too much” when it comes to trying to bring someone to Christ?
 - Would the friends have so aggressively pursued Jesus’ help if all He was offering was the “forgiveness of sins”? Why or why not?
 - When is it worth pursuing radical actions to help bring someone to Christ?
- Why did Jesus first forgive the sins of the paralyzed man rather than heal him? How does this relate to us?
- Why did the teachers of the law merely “think” the things indicated in v. 6-7, as opposed to speaking them out loud? Are their thoughts unreasonable?
- What is the message Jesus was trying to communicate when He asked the question in v. 9?
- How does this healing differ from the healing(s) we read about last week in Mark 1? How are they similar?

Read: Mark 2:13-17

- Mark provides no detail on the content of Jesus’s teaching. What details does he focus on instead, and why?
- Why was it such a shock to the Pharisees to see Jesus eating with tax collectors?
 - Why were tax collectors so despised in that day?
- How did Jesus justify the company He chose to keep?

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- Why does Jesus say He has “not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (v. 17)? Are the “righteous” not in need of a Savior?
 - Why do the Pharisees have a hard time recognizing their need for salvation? Is this difficulty something we see in unbelieving people we know, or even people who claim to believe?
- In v. 16, it’s hard not to hear the disdain of the Pharisees, and see how easily they express their prejudices.
 - How do we label people? How are we cynical toward people who are different than us? Does this affect our church, or who we choose to invite to church?
 - When it came to their idea of salvation, the Pharisees wrote certain people off entirely because they looked down on them. Have we ever done the same?
Encourage people to share real experiences.
 - What are the tell-tale signs when we are being self-righteous? How can we change our attitude to embrace all people the way Jesus did?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.



Grow Group Guide | Week 6

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 2:18-22

- What is Jesus saying here, in essence, to His disciples? Who is the bridegroom? Why can't they fast while the bridegroom is with them?
- Why were John's disciples and the Pharisees upset that Jesus and His disciples were not fasting?
- How is this parable of the old and new cloth relevant? Why does Jesus jump to this? What is being compared here?
- What do the new wine and the old wine represent?
- Is Jesus suggesting that He is radically transforming the old system of doing things, or that He is bringing and starting something altogether new?

Read: Mark 2:23-28

- What was considered unlawful about what Jesus' disciples were doing? What authority made it "unlawful?"
- If the disciples knew the law, why did they pick the grain? Why did Jesus let them pick the grain? What was the purpose of Jesus telling/recalling what David did?
 - Did David and his companions violate the law? Were they wrong?
- What does Jesus mean in v. 27? Was the Sabbath living up to its intended purpose?
- How do you characterize the actions of the Pharisees here? Can we see ourselves in their behavior?
 - Do we nit-pick one another?
 - Do we superimpose our rules onto others or allow others to push their rules onto us?
- Can you think of any modern-day examples where we have taken a God-given gift, like the Sabbath, and allowed it to become a burden more than a gift?
 - How do we appropriately help keep brothers and sisters in Christ accountable without becoming legalistic and self-righteous?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.



Grow Group Guide | Week 7

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

This week, we'll look at how Jesus and the Pharisees saw the Sabbath very differently. As a group we will consider some practical ways that we can make our own Sabbath more God-honoring.

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 3:1-6

- What does v. 2 reveal about the Pharisees' thoughts regarding Jesus's ability to perform miracles? Why does this matter?
- Why are the Pharisees silent after Jesus's question in v. 4? Why is this so saddening, angering, and distressing to Jesus?
- What does the emotion of Jesus described in v. 5 add to this scene? What would have been your emotional responses?
- Think about your life. Do you try to catch people doing wrong, or doing right?
 - Is it easier to see bad and evil in the world, or to see good? Why is that?
- Are all man-made rules bad? At what point can a well-meaning man-made rule cross the line? What happens when we impose them on others?
- What kind of danger or destruction in the church can come from self-imposed rules?

So what should the Sabbath be about?

Read: Exodus 20:8-11

- What does it mean to have a day dedicated to God?
- After creating the earth and man, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). Why does this matter?
- What should characterize the Sabbath for a Christian? What makes this "day of rest" different than a Saturday, or any other "day off"? List as many actions, or non-actions as the case may be, you can think of that could help your Sabbath be the best day of the week.
- Do you have a Sabbath? Is there any conviction or call to action you feel today to make your Sabbath more holy and devoted to God and to make Jesus the Lord of YOUR Sabbath?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.



Grow Group Guide | Week 8

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

This week we will be reading from Mark 3 and discussing how Jesus was misjudged by His family and the religious leaders, but did not let it interfere with His ministry.

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 3:20-35

- Have you ever been misjudged--overestimated or underestimated? Perhaps by family, or friends, or coworkers? *(Take some time to think about this and allow those in your group to share brief stories)*
- What are some of the ways that Jesus was misjudged--misjudged by His family, the religious leaders, the crowds?
- Why do you think Jesus's family, after living and being around Him for 30 years, didn't recognize Him as the Messiah?
 - [Do you think Mary forgot Simeon and Anna's prophecy (Luke 2:25-38)?]
 - What causes us to forget or lose sight of who Jesus is? How have we misjudged Jesus and His abilities?
- Jesus sought to meet the needs of others before His own (v. 20). Is it easy to follow this example--to meet the needs of others before our own? What lesson can we take from this?
- If the two groups of people who should have been most supportive of Jesus (family, religious leaders) rejected Him, why did His disciples and others accept Him? Why would uneducated sinners follow Jesus?
- What do we make of the criticism and dirty name calling done by the Pharisees? Was this hurtful to Jesus? Was this evil able to be used for good?
- In vs. 23-27 Jesus tells a parable with three examples: a kingdom divided, a house divided, Satan divided. How is it that if any of these are divided they fall?
 - What personal experiences or stories come to mind that help illustrate this?
 - Was the position of the Pharisees logical or illogical? How could they have believed what they claimed about Jesus, or why would they have wanted to believe what they claimed?
 - Who is Jesus in vs. 27? What is He doing?

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- In vs. 28-30 Jesus describes what is referred to as the “unpardonable sin.” What are some common misconceptions about what Jesus is talking about here?
 - *As Pastor Ted taught on Sunday, Jesus is saying here that if you die in your unbelief, you will not be pardoned by God—the sin of unbelief will not be forgiven.*
- Is Jesus being disrespectful to His family in vs. 31-35?
 - What do these verses point toward regarding the importance of our human families versus God’s spiritual family?
 - Who, according to vs. 35, is Jesus’s real family? Would that family include you?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.



Grow Group Guide | Week 9

Bible Discussion (45-60 minutes)

A few weeks ago at Grow Night we discussed extensively what the different elements of this parable represent—the birds, the thorns, the different types of soil. To avoid being repetitive the guide will not focus on these elements, but it may be helpful to briefly recap them.

Remember: your goal is good discussion, not to get through all the questions. Choose the best, leave the rest. Feel free to add your own.

Read: Mark 4:1-9

- Why did Jesus open His teaching by shouting “Listen!”?
 - Was the crowd not paying attention? Was this intended to add extra emphasis to what He was preaching? Is this an emotional statement?
- In v. 4, Jesus said the farmer “scattered” the seed. What is significant about this action? ... getting at the fact that the farmer didn’t examine the soil, didn’t carefully place the seeds, but instead scattered it generously.
 - Is it ever wasteful to sow seed generously?
- In v. 9 Jesus states: “whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” Why does He say this, and what does it mean?

Read: Mark 4:10-12

- Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9. What is the context of this passage? What is the purpose of the message God has given Isaiah to carry? Why is it important or relevant to Jesus’ current situation?

Read: Mark 4:13-20

- Are we receptive to God’s word when it is preached to us?
 - What would it look like for us to not be receptive to God’s word? What are some everyday (or every Sunday) examples that come to mind?
 - Is being receptive a one time decision, or a decision that must be consciously and continually made? Why does this matter?
- When God’s word is preached to us, does it take root in our lives?
 - What does it mean for something to take root?
 - How can we know if something is taking root in our lives—what characteristics define a life that is rooted in Christ?
 - If a life is not rooted in Christ, what will occur when persecution and affliction comes?

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- Is there room for God's word in your life?
 - What idols are taking up too much room in your life--what needs to be cleared out?
- Are there things in our lives that are preventing God's word from taking root?
 - What things--whether we consciously recognize them or not--create resistance to God's word and God's will for us?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunity. We recommend splitting into separate men/women prayer groups.